Background and rationale

Following the launch of the 2020 review of the peacebuilding architecture on 22 November, the Peacebuilding Commission will convene all UN Member States in discussions on themes relating to peacebuilding and sustaining peace as part of the informal phase of the review. The first ambassadorial-level meeting of this kind will be dedicated to recommendations and options to enhance intergovernmental and UN system-wide coherence, with the aim of ensuring effective support, with a focus on contexts transitioning between forms of UN presence (e.g. peacekeeping mission, special political mission, country team).

At the launch of the review, the PBC Chair reinforced the importance of the implementation of the 2016 resolutions on the review of the peacebuilding architecture (A/RES/70/262-S/RES/2016/2282), which called for more coherence in international support to Member States in their efforts to build and sustain peace. The resolutions recognised the importance of coherent planning and a phased approach to ensure support, and where appropriate continuity, of peacebuilding programmes, resources and capacities of the UN system during transitions resulting from the drawdown and withdrawal of a UN Mission.

The central message of the report of the Secretary-General on peacebuilding and sustaining peace (A/72/707-S/2018/43) underscored the need for a more integrated, comprehensive, strategic and coherent approach across the UN system and amongst Member States, in our work in peace and security, development, human rights, and humanitarian action, working across the peace continuum and guided by national ownership and people-centered approaches. The report included options for adequate, predictable and sustained financing for peacebuilding, including to address the “financial cliff” in transitions. The report also called for comprehensive gender analysis and effective planning during mission drawdown.

The transition from a UN Mission (peacekeeping operation or special political mission) to a UNCT-only presence, and from one type of UN Mission to another, represent critical moments in a country’s path to sustainable peace and development and require national ownership and leadership, as well as joint planning and coherent implementation with peacebuilding integrated in all stages of UN engagement in a country. Improving the management of transitions, including by generating early and more comprehensive preparations for transition processes, is essential to
set in place conditions for durable peace, and to manage the risk of a reversal of peacebuilding gains – which we have witnessed in some countries in the past.

**Evolving approaches to UN transitions**

Intergovernmental and UN system-wide coherence are the building blocks of effective support to countries undergoing transitions. The peacekeeping missions in Côte d’Ivoire, Haiti, and Liberia all completed transitions recently; the transitions of missions in Darfur and Guinea Bissau are ongoing. The Security Council has requested the Secretary-General to engage with the Government of the DRC to articulate a joint transition strategy and has encouraged the development of a transition plan in Mali.

The UN system has increased efforts to improve the planning and implementation of transitions, building on the lessons from the closure of peacekeeping and special political missions in recent years. In February 2019, the Secretary-General issued a planning directive for the development of consistent and coherent UN transition processes to support early joint planning based on human rights and gender responsive analysis and to ensure financing, operational assistance and adequate staffing for critical peacebuilding tasks. The UN Transitions Project, which brings together the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, the Department of Peace Operations and the United Nations Development Programme, is an innovative mechanism for cross-pillar collaboration as highlighted in the report of the Secretary-General on peacebuilding and sustaining peace of 2018. The Secretary-General’s peace and security reform, as well as the UN Development System reform were also guided by the need for greater coherence and a whole-of-UN approach. The Common Country Analysis and the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework processes will be used to strengthen joint analysis and planning at country-level. The UN system has also developed a joint initiative to integrate gender analysis in the work of the UN Country Teams and UN Missions in transition contexts.

Similarly, Member States have strengthened their focus on planning, overseeing and resourcing transition processes. The Security Council dedicated a retreat to Transitions in April 2019, reviewing lessons from recent cases to assist current and future transitions. Security Council practices have evolved, including by increasingly considering transitions as a reconfiguration of the UN presence in country rather than a mission closure and requesting nationally-owned exit strategies as well as broad, peacebuilding plans to guide transition processes. A Security Council briefing on mission transitions on 18 July 2019 included wide agreement on the centrality of articulated peacebuilding goals to frame transition processes, and for the broader socio-economic needs of the country to be taken fully into account in UN planning.

New approaches to financing peacebuilding priorities in transition contexts have emerged, including the use of assessed peacekeeping budgets to support programmatic activities in partnership with UN Country Teams and other peacebuilding actors, and the opening of a new PBF funding window for transitions. In 2019, 22 percent of PBF investments were in transition settings, including in Guinea Bissau, Haiti, Liberia, Sudan, and Côte d’Ivoire, contributing to
continuity in addressing peacebuilding and development challenges these countries face after mission transitions.

Collaboration and coherence with stakeholders beyond the UN system is essential to strengthen the foundations for sustained peace and development after the withdrawal of peace operations. Engagement with host country counterparts, including at the local level, following good practices for inclusivity and transparency, should inform transition processes. Partnership with sub-regional and regional organizations is key to sustaining political engagement after the end of Security Council mandates. Mitigating conflict relapse risks due to macro-economic and fiscal stress or shocks, which may negatively impact national peace consolidation efforts, should be a key consideration when planning for UN transitions. It is important to seize the increased opportunities for collaboration with international financial institutions, which are adapting their engagement in fragile and conflict-affected countries, including through the World Bank’s forthcoming Fragility, Conflict and Violence strategy.

The PBC offers a unique platform to sustain international attention and provide political accompaniment by bringing together national actors, UN agencies, regional and sub-regional organizations, civil society and international financial institutions in support of nationally-led peacebuilding priorities, with a view to develop and share good practices and identify remaining challenges. The 2016 resolutions emphasize the importance of drawing upon the advice of the Peacebuilding Commission when major decisions that relate to UN mission mandates and transitions are being considered between the UN, national Governments and authorities, and other relevant stakeholders. In particular, and in implementation of Security Council Presidential Statements 2017/27 and 2018/20, the PBC plays an important role in providing the Security Council with relevant peacebuilding perspectives when the Council is considering the formation, review and drawdown of peacekeeping operations and special political missions’ mandates.

In Liberia, the PBC provided advice to the Security Council on the transition of the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) and the development of a national peacebuilding plan, led by national stakeholders and supported by the recovery and peacebuilding assessment by a tripartite framework of the UN, the World Bank and the EU. The PBC also provided a platform for UN leadership in Liberia to discuss with Member States a capacity mapping exercise to identify expected financing and expertise gaps following the departure of UNMIL. The Liberia Multi Partner Trust Fund established to address the remaining root causes of fragility, however, failed to attract donors beyond the Peacebuilding Fund, pointing to the challenge of maintaining the international community’s engagement in support of a country’s peacebuilding priorities after Security Council mandates end.

**Objective**

The objective of the meeting is to inform the formal phase of the 2020 review of UN peacebuilding and provide input for the 2020 report of the Secretary General on peacebuilding and sustaining peace on the theme of effective support in transition contexts.
The meeting will offer an overview of UN and Member States’ efforts and tools to enhance their coherence and to ensure stability and continuity of peacebuilding activities during UN transitions. The speakers’ perspectives and the following discussion will provide the basis for the development of focused recommendations to improve the collective planning and management, as well as impact, of ongoing and future transition processes.

Speakers:
- Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission, H.E. Mr. Marc-André Blanchard
- Deputy Secretary-General, Ms. Amina J. Mohammed
- Deputy Joint Special Representative for the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur, Ms. Anita Kokui Gbeho (via VTC)
- Executive Director, Security Council Report, Ms. Karin Landgren

Guiding questions:
1. What progress has there been on the recommendations of the Secretary-General to strengthen operational and policy coherence, leadership and capacities, of the UN system to strengthen support to peacebuilding and sustaining peace in transition contexts?
2. What are the main obstacles that the UN and member states are facing in ongoing transition processes?
3. How will the UN reforms deliver a more integrated, comprehensive, strategic, inclusive and coherent approach across the UN system in support of Member States in transitions?
4. How can the PBC enhance coherence and complementarity among the principal organs of the UN and with other key partners before, during and after transitions?