

# Upgrading the Peacebuilding Commission into an empowered Peacebuilding Council

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## Recommendation

***Upgrading the Peacebuilding Commission into an empowered Peacebuilding Council*** will allow the United Nations to address second- and third-order conflicts, freeing up the Security Council to focus on first-order threats. This new body would lead on conflict prevention (through a new Peacebuilding Audit tool) and peacebuilding policy development, coordination, and resource mobilization.

## Gaps in Global Governance

Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, global armed conflicts have not subsided. 2020, according to the International Institute for Strategic Studies “witnessed the highest number of conflicts since 1945.” The average duration of conflict has grown and the boundary between conflict and post-conflict has blurred, with more frequent conflict relapses.

Facing this crisis, the United Nations Security Council has failed to provide decisive leadership. Beset by confrontations among the P5, the United Nations has initiated no new Integrated Peacekeeping Missions since 2014 and has insufficiently addressed non-traditional security threats, such as climate change.

Just as important as timely intervention appears in imminent or ongoing crises, however, is the need to sustain peace and prevent conflict recurrence in fragile post-conflict countries. Established in 2005, the UN Peacebuilding Architecture consisting of a Commission, Fund, and Support Office has made progress in these areas. The Member States of the Peacebuilding Commission have played a convening role in regional peacebuilding strategy, while the voluntarily funded, Secretariat-managed Peacebuilding Fund has closely engaged with international financial institutions, such as the World Bank, on peacebuilding priorities.

However, as an advisory subsidiary body of the General Assembly and Security Council, the Peacebuilding Commission does not have independent authority or decision-making power and is, thus, unable to effectively coordinate UN peacebuilding efforts. As noted in the 2020 UN Peacebuilding Architecture Review, there has been very limited progress on securing adequate and sustained funding for peacebuilding activities. The Peacebuilding Fund only received U.S \$178 million in 2021, or less than 3 percent of what was budgeted for UN peacekeeping in the 2021 fiscal year.

Finally, the UN has too often played a reactive role in conflict management. Complex political, social, and economic factors behind armed conflicts make conflict prediction incredibly challenging. Emerging risks and dangerous trends, such as the instability caused by climate change, create further pressure on existing forms of foresight and

prevention. Nonetheless, better foresight and prevention capabilities would allow the UN to do a better job addressing the underlying causes of conflicts before they tip into violence. The human suffering and financial costs spared would make such investments pay for themselves.

## Road to 2023 Innovation Proposals

### **Upgrade the Peacebuilding Commission to an empowered Peacebuilding Council**

Today's worsening security landscape not only requires nimble intervention but also increases the demand for post-conflict peacebuilding. Upgrading the Peacebuilding Commission to an empowered UN Peacebuilding Council (new PBC) can complement and assist in the Security Council's challenging task of maintaining global peace and security. With an expanded mandate, the Peacebuilding Council would have enhanced powers and responsibilities to lead on conflict prevention and peacebuilding policy development, coordination, and resource mobilization on critical second- and third-order conflicts, freeing up the Security Council to concentrate on first-order conflicts that most threaten international peace and security.

The new PBC would focus on countries and regions in non-peacekeeping and post-conflict environments where it can monitor and coordinate actions to prevent conflict recurrence. Furthermore, the new PBC could address issues such as gender equality in conflict-affected regions, climate change-induced instability, human rights abuses, conflict prevention and mediation services, digital disinformation, and, more broadly speaking, post-conflict peacebuilding. The new PBC would allow more Member States to participate in decision-making on peace and security issues.

Creating the new PBC would be in line with *Our Common Agenda's* call to expand the capacities of the Peacebuilding Commission. It would follow the precedent of the UN Commission on Human Rights' transformation, in 2006, into the UN Human Rights Council. Should Member States not repurpose the Trusteeship Council to govern the Global Commons, they could consider supplanting it with the new PBC. This would require appropriate Charter amendments, and it would make the new PBC a principal organ of the UN with considerable authority and convening power.

### **Enhance Foresight and Prevention through a New Peacebuilding Audit Tool**

To better operationalize its mandate on conflict prevention, the new Peacebuilding Council should employ a new Peacebuilding Audit tool, modeled on the Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic Review (UPR). Just as the UPR is used to review Member States' human rights records, this new Peacebuilding Audit would periodically monitor various national indicators linked with conflict outbreaks. Early warning from the audit would better inform decision-making by the Security Council and new PBC, and enable earlier and more effective preventive action. The Peacebuilding Audit would be consistent with current efforts tracking Members States' progress toward meeting their commitment to SDG 16. And with more sophisticated analysis enabled by better data and information technologies, it would allow the world to better understand the underlying causes behind armed conflicts.

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Following the 2020 review of UN Peacebuilding Architecture, the General Assembly and the Security Council requested an interim report in 2022 on the implementation of the 2020 resolutions on peacebuilding (A/RES/75/201 and S/RES/2558). This offers an opportunity to have the above two proposals discussed within the present Peacebuilding Architecture before the Summit of the Future in 2024. Such reforms would likely garner support from emerging powers and countries making significant financial contributions to UN peacekeeping, if not, in the near term, from the Security Council's .