

## Key Highlights: Webinar on Regional organizations and political missions: cross-regional learning in fostering peacebuilding

### Background

The Report of the UN Secretary-General on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace places great emphasis on national ownership and inclusivity as key to advancing peacebuilding processes. National ownership in peacebuilding and sustaining peace requires capacities for dialogue, facilitation as well as peace and conflict analysis to develop common understanding on the drivers of peace and conflict. Moreover, efforts to build and sustain peace are necessary not only once conflict breaks out but also long beforehand, through the prevention of conflict and addressing its root causes. The same report highlights that the scale and nature of the challenge of peacebuilding and sustaining peace calls for closer strategic and operational partnerships with regional organizations.

Recent trends suggest that the UN Security Council, for a number of reasons, prefers to deploy Special Political Missions (SPMs) rather than peacekeeping operations. This, in combination with a growing importance of regional actors in peacebuilding processes, makes many practitioners believe that regional organizations and peacebuilding communities, including the UN Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA), should engage in a dialogue on how to better foster and support national and inclusive peacebuilding processes, also through further strengthening their strategic and operational partnerships, with a focus on coherence and effectiveness.

On 22 May 2020 the Challenges Forum International Secretariat (CFIS) organised an open webinar as partner of the virtual Stockholm Forum on Peace and Development 2020. The aim was to reflect on regional peacebuilding architectures through the lens of political missions, with a particular focus on the good practices of the African Union (AU) the Organisation of American States (OAS) in a spirit of cross-regional South-South learning.

### Panelists

- **Dr. Roselyn Akombe**, Chief of Policy, Guidance and Learning, Policy and Mediation Division (PMD), UN DPPA.
- **Borja Paladini Adell**, Residence Fellow at the Peace Research Institute of Oslo leading the Effectiveness of Peace Operations Network's (EPON) evaluation of the UN Special Political Mission in Colombia and lecturer in Peacebuilding Practice at Colombian and Spanish Universities.
- **Gustavo de Carvalho**, Senior Researcher at the Institute for Security Studies (ISS) Peace Operations and Peacebuilding Programme in Pretoria, South Africa.

**An international partnership consisting of organizations from:** Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Canada, China, Egypt, Ethiopia, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Japan, Jordan, Nigeria, Norway, Pakistan, Russia, South Africa, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, United Kingdom, United States of America, WFUNA

Challenges Forum International Secretariat is hosted by Folke Bernadotte Academy (FBA) - Swedish Agency for Peace, Security and Development

## Key Highlights

### Colombia

- In Colombia, inclusion by design and not as a concession in peace talks, has resulted in high levels of bottom-up legitimacy and national ownership of the peace building process.
- 'Localisation' through a sustained and coordinated presence of the Organisation of American States (OAS) and UN political missions, including in remote areas, has been key in understanding local realities and needs to build trust and legitimacy.
- Bottom-up processes have created meaningful space for constructive interaction between all actors and all levels.
- OAS and UN political missions in Colombia have been key in bridging top-down and bottom-up approaches and in linking everyday work of local peace mediators to the political peace process.
- In addition to local peace processes it has also been essential to address the structural causes of conflict at the national level.

### Regional peacebuilding practices by political missions and UN support

- There can be no peacebuilding and sustaining peace without national ownership.
- Sustainable political agreements need to go beyond elite bargaining and be inclusive of local communities and needs of all segments of the population, including women and youth.
- Regional political missions are most successful when leveraging their strongest comparative advantage: legitimacy, convening power, and facilitation of processes through leveraging their political capital.
- It is essential for the UN to work closely with Regional Organisations in peacebuilding efforts.
- As part of the UN reform, UN Country Teams and Special Political Missions aim at working in an integrated manner towards coherent political objectives, also in their engagement with Regional Organizations.
- Transitions from peacekeeping to peacebuilding operations (e.g. from AU Peace Support Operations to AU Liaison Office) can sometimes lead to confusion over roles and responsibilities. Advance planning and clearer mandates would strengthen strategic coherence.
- It is key for regional political missions to set reasonable parameters of success and manage expectations. In this regard, The Gambia was given as an example where the AU successfully deployed a small technical team to support Government mediation and peacebuilding efforts.

### Looking forward

- Continued strategic engagement and high-level political dialogue between the UN and regional organisations is vital.
- Regarding the AU, the following recommendations were made<sup>1</sup>:

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<sup>1</sup> No specific recommendations were made for the OAS.

- Clearer mandates on mediation and strengthening AU's own views and internal coherence on peacebuilding.
- Empower AU Mediators and ensure buy-in from the UN Security Council and international community.
- Establish a strong AU Mediation Support Unit (MSU) and strengthen its coordination between AU Liaison Offices and the AU Commission.
- Strengthen the coordination between the AU Centre for Reconstruction and Development (AUC-PCRD) in Cairo, Egypt, the AU Liaison Offices and the AU Commission.
- More interaction between UN peacebuilding and AU-PCRD actors, including the respective funding components, i.e. the UN Peace Building Fund and the AU Peace Fund.