

## BRIEF V. ECOSOC's Relationship with the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Peacebuilding Commission and the Human Rights Council

*This brief is part of a series aimed to provide background information on ECOSOC strengthening. Briefs include (i) ECOSOC mandates and evolution of functions; (ii) policy dialogue and guidance; (iii) guiding and promoting a coherent and coordinated UN system; (iv) subsidiary bodies; (v) relationship with the General Assembly, Security Council, the Peacebuilding Commission and the Human Rights Council; (vi) countries in special situations; and (vii) addressing emergency issues.*

### « General Assembly »

While the Charter vested critical functions in the Economic and Social Council, these were to be discharged by the Council under the authority of the General Assembly. As such, the Council reports to the General Assembly annually and follows up on the implementation of the guidance provided by the General Assembly. The presentation of the reports of ECOSOC in the GA has thus far not given rise to a substantive debate. The alignment of the agendas of the GA, ECOSOC and other bodies has been addressed through informal consultations over several recent sessions of the GA, beginning with the 70th session. Since the seventy-third session, there has been unprecedented cooperation between the President of the General Assembly and the President of ECOSOC. This allowed to prevent duplicative meetings similar to what happened on some occasions in the past.

### « Security Council »

Interaction between ECOSOC and the Security Council is enshrined in Article 65 of the United Nations Charter stating that “The Economic and Social Council may furnish information to the Security Council and shall assist the Security Council upon its request”. The two bodies have interacted in the past. In 2008 ECOSOC hosted a special event on the global food crisis with the participation of the President of the Security Council. On a number of occasions, the President of ECOSOC also contributed to debates of the Security Council, speaking on the strong correlation between low levels of development and violent conflict, on the lack of progress on security sector reform in post-conflict countries, women, peace and security and natural resources. So far, however, these interactions have been rather ad hoc.

Earlier efforts included collaboration that led to the creation by ECOSOC of the Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Haiti in 1998. The Haiti model was adapted and led to the creation of the Ad Hoc Advisory Groups on African countries emerging from conflict in 2002, in which the Chair of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Security Council on the Prevention and Resolution of Conflict in Africa participated actively. Before the creation of the Peacebuilding Commission, these ECOSOC Groups represented an attempt to fill the institutional gap between peacekeeping, peacebuilding and development.

Lessons could be drawn from the practice of inviting the President of ECOSOC to address the Security Council on issues related to the economic and social aspects of conflict prevention and peacebuilding on items where a development component is evident.

### « Peacebuilding Commission »

The legislative basis for a relationship between ECOSOC and the Peacebuilding Commission is derived from General Assembly resolutions 60/180 and 61/16. The institutional junction between the two bodies operates at three levels: 1) the presence within the Organizational Committee of the Commission of 7 Members of the Council; 2) the fact that the Commission establishes its agenda based inter alia on requests for advice from the Council “with the consent of a concerned Member State in exceptional circumstances on the verge of lapsing or relapsing into conflict and with which the Security Council is not seized in accordance with Article 12 of the Charter” (para. 12 (b)); 3) the fact that the Council can take action on the recommendations by the Peacebuilding Commission (para.14).

In its resolution 61/16, the General Assembly underlined the experience of ECOSOC in the area of post-conflict peacebuilding and the success of its ad hoc advisory groups on countries emerging from conflict and invited the Peacebuilding Commission to benefit from it (OP21, A/RES/61/16). Meetings between ECOSOC and PBC have been convened regularly since 68/1. In 2016, GA and Security Council resolutions on the review of the peacebuilding architecture (A/RES/70/262 and S/RES/2282(2016)) stressed the importance of closer cooperation between ECOSOC and the PBC, and the centrality of development to sustaining peace. They encouraged the Peacebuilding Commission to draw on the expertise of ECOSOC subsidiary bodies. In these resolutions, the GA and the Security Council called for

a “comprehensive review of United Nations peacebuilding” to be conducted during the seventy-fourth session of the General Assembly.

Over the years, ECOSOC and the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) have forged a working relationship between the respective Bureaux as well as the bodies themselves. Furthermore, the Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission has been providing an oral briefing to the Council during the consideration of the agenda item on African countries emerging from conflict.

In recent years, the joint meetings of ECOSOC and the PBC focused on the situation in the Sahel, looking at interlinkages between sustaining peace and sustainable development, as well as the implications of climate change in the region. This work led to the adoption of a resolution on support to the Sahel region by the Economic and Social Council, aimed at helping address the multidimensional challenges in the region, and strengthening collective engagement of all stakeholders in achieving sustainable development and peace.

#### « ECOSOC and post-conflict development »

While the PBC focuses on peacebuilding in the immediate aftermath of conflict, the Council has a mandate to promote economic and social progress in the context of long-term sustainable development. The Economic and Social Council has played an important role in developing mechanisms to respond to the problems faced by countries emerging from conflict to assist them on their path to long-term development. The Council provides advice to Haiti on a long-term development strategy to promote socio-economic recovery and stability through its Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Haiti. Currently, the Management Segment includes consideration of agenda items related to country-specific situations, such as the report of the Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Haiti and the integrated, coherent and coordinated support to South Sudan, as well as the Sahel region. In recent years, some of the UN organizations working in South Sudan contributed to the discussions on how the political and security crisis in the country has been affecting the development prospects and reversing gains made in the first two years of development. The consideration of these items during the Management Segment, however, does not allow for in-depth discussion to provide guidance for integrated support at country-level.

The work of the ECOSOC subsidiary bodies has also addressed the issues pertinent to countries emerging from conflict. For example, some commissions, including the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (CCPCJ)<sup>1</sup> and the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)<sup>2</sup>, have adopted resolutions with relevant policy advice for countries emerging from conflict. The fifteenth session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) focused on the theme of “indigenous peoples: conflict, peace and resolution” in 2016, and the Committee of Experts on Public Administration (CEPA) focused on public governance for results in post-conflict and post-disaster countries in 2011.

#### « Human Rights Council »

The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) has a strong interest in human rights which is part of its Charter mandate. It receives reports from the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and from the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) is a subsidiary body of ECOSOC. Its mandate addresses key sustainable development goals on poverty reduction, inequality and decent work, among others. The work of the Committee is quite relevant to the 2030 Agenda as it reviews implementation of some of the goals at country level. In doing so, it provides practical advice on ways that countries can ensure that no one is left behind.

The 2030 Agenda is strongly grounded in international human rights standards and strives to leave no one behind. In March 2018, the Human Rights Council adopted a resolution on “The need for an integrated approach to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development for the full realization of human rights, focusing holistically on the means of implementation” (A/HRC/RES/37/25). The Council decided to invite the President of the Economic and Social Council, commencing in 2018, to brief, on an annual basis, the Human Rights Council, during one of its regular sessions, on the discussions of the high-level political forum, including on gaps, challenges and progress in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, focusing on the means of implementation taken together as an integrated package. Both the current ECOSOC President Ambassador Mona Juul and the former ECOSOC President Ambassador Inga Rhonda King briefed the Council accordingly. The Human Rights Council has also held inter-sessional meetings in 2019 and 2020 to contribute to the thematic reviews of the HLPF.

<sup>1</sup> In 2004, ECOSOC adopted a resolution (E/2004/25), at the recommendation of CCPCJ, on “the rule of law and development: strengthening the rule of law and the reform of criminal justice institutions, with emphasis on technical assistance, including in post-conflict reconstruction”. This was followed by resolution (E/RES/2006/25) on “strengthening the rule of law and the reform of criminal justice institutions, including in post-conflict reconstruction”.

<sup>2</sup> In 1998, the CSW considered the issue of women and armed conflict and adopted agreed conclusions for the accelerated implementation of the strategic objectives of the Beijing Platform for Action, in particular the chapter VI.E on “women and armed conflict”. Furthermore, CSW adopts an annual resolution on the situation of and assistance to Palestinian women and a biennial resolution on the release of women and children taken hostage, including those subsequently imprisoned, in armed conflicts.