

High Level Meeting of the Peacebuilding Commission and the Executive Board of UN Women

“Integrating Women into Economic Recovery”

18 November 2011, 10am to Noon

Conference Room 1 (NLB)

Chairpersons’ Summary

I. Introduction

1. On 18 November 2011, the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) and the Executive Board of UN Women held a high-level meeting on the topic of “Integrating Women into Economic Recovery”. The meeting was co-chaired by H.E. Eugène-Richard Gasana, Permanent Representative of Rwanda to the United Nations and Chairperson of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), and H.E. Mrs. U. Joy Ogwu of Nigeria to the UN and President of UN Women’s Executive Board. The panel was composed of three speakers:

- Michelle Bachelet, Executive Director of UN Women.
- Judy Cheng-Hopkins, Assistant Secretary-General for Peace building Support.
- Dr Patricia Justino Senior Research Fellow at the Institute of Development Studies, Director of MICROCON and Co-director, Households in Conflict Network.

2. In her opening statement, H.E. Ambassador Mrs. U. Joy Ogwu of Nigeria introduced the theme of the meeting noting that this is the first meeting of the PBC and the UN Women Executive Board. Ambassador Ogwu emphasized the mutual benefits of a strong relationship between the two entities and reminded the audience that both entities were established out of UN reform processes. She recalled the Secretary-General’s 2010 Report on Women’s Participation in Peacebuilding, and its 7-point action plan, offering this as a key framework for mutual engagement. The Co-Chair concluded by recalling the remarks of Ms Bachelet in another forum, ‘that the empowerment of women makes a good economic sense.’

3. The PBC Chair H.E. Eugène-Richard Gasana welcomed the opportunity to engage with the Executive Board of UN Women and noted that the meeting is part of continuing efforts by the PBC to build and strengthen partnerships with UN operational actors. The Chair recalled the PBC’s founding resolution which includes a mandate to integrate a gender perspective into all areas of its work. He emphasized the need for the two institutions to promote the role and status of women in economic recovery. Women, he noted, suffer disproportionately in conflict and concrete steps need to be taken to support women’s employment, education and political leadership post-conflict. He called on the PBC to advocate for more predictable resources to fund specific initiatives for women’s empowerment, welcoming the commitment made by the

Secretary-General to allocate 15 percent of peacebuilding funding to projects that target women's need and empowerment. Ambassador Gasana stressed that the PBC will continue to prioritize women's participation in peacebuilding in the countries on its agenda. To further deepen the collaboration with UN Women's Executive Board he emphasized the need for concrete initiatives such as joint annual thematic meetings as well as targeted in-country processes to facilitate an exchange of views and experience for stronger gender-responsive peacebuilding.

II. Presentations by Panelists:

4. USG and Executive Director Michelle Bachelet welcomed the opportunity to discuss women's engagement in recovery with the PBC and the members of the UN Women Executive Board. She highlighted that data confirms that investing in women's economic capacities and employment is an investment in long-term peace and recovery. She noted with concern that women's involvement in post-conflict economic recovery remains very low and urged the PBC to tackle this challenge with UN Women. In doing this she called on all partners to implement the commitments made under the Secretary-General's Report on Women's Participation in Peacebuilding, in particular to the commitments to promote women as front line service delivery workers, and to target women as a beneficiary group in post-conflict employment programming by ensuring that neither sex receives more than 60 per cent of employment opportunities. In closing, she echoed the suggestions of Ambassador Gasana and proposed three steps through which UN Women and PBC could continue to foster their collaboration: firstly, she called on the PBC to marshal resources for gender equality and women's empowerment and to support the 15 percent spending threshold; secondly, she proposed bi-annual country-specific configuration discussions with UN Women on the progress and challenges of integrating women into peacebuilding; and thirdly, she invited the Chairs of the configurations and host governments to enter into dialogue with UN Women on country priorities for women's peacebuilding.

5. ASG Judy Cheng-Hopkins began by acknowledging the 'perfect' working relationship shared between the PBSO and UN Women. She said women are critical agents of change in peacebuilding contexts and as political actors, connectors, community mediators and entrepreneurs they play essential roles in translating the theory of peacebuilding into concrete action. She noted that post-conflict women break with old patterns of discrimination and violence and define new standards for their emerging nation, and new roles for themselves as stakeholders. Yet women are often not prioritized in the post-conflict peacebuilding process. Peace dividends are created for the "spoilers" – the former warlords, combatants, opposition figures. Ms Cheng-Hopkins noted that to date the Peacebuilding Fund has invested almost a quarter of its funds on economic recovery targeting youth employment, livelihood support and the economic reintegration of IDPs, and a third of these projects include women as beneficiaries. However, while UN entities and Member

States have made some progress, women on the ground are still largely excluded from economic recovery programming. In 2010 the UN recognized the need for a framework to bring partners around key gaps that have hampered women's effective participation in the peacebuilding process, resulting in the 2010 Secretary-General's Report on Women's Participation in Peacebuilding. She concluded by emphasizing that investing in women's participation in peacebuilding and economic recovery must be at the center of all PBC and peacebuilding discussions.

6. Dr. Patricia Justino presented the highlights of an on-going UN Women-commissioned study on the roles of women in economic recovery after violent conflict. She observed that not integrating women into economic recovery can perpetuate a cycle of violence in post-conflict societies and discussed the broad trends data gathered to date:

- On average 30-60% of previously-attached women are widowed or alone post-conflict; this is an usually large number of female headed households after conflict. Female headed households are associated with poverty.
- During conflict numbers of women entering the labour market usually increase by 10-20 percent – but this is usually confined to the in informal sector and this decreases post-conflict.
 - Women return to 'traditional' roles post-conflict; gender roles may change during conflict but gender identities remain unchanged.
- An increase in women's income and control over income results in -
 - Increases in child survival rates.
 - Higher girls' education rate.
 - Higher spending on education and health (up to 6 times higher).
 - Increase in spending on food.

Dr Justino noted that post-conflict societies in the past that recovered most rapidly were those in which women's labour force engagement was at least 70%. In conclusion, Dr Justino noted that there is often a 'mismatch' between what women want post-conflict and the type of support they receive. She remarked that investing in women's economic recovery in post-conflict societies was a responsible investment, and that greater equality is needed between investment in peace dividends for the 'spoilers' such as funds allocated to disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR), versus dividends for communities.

III. Open Discussion

7. Member States warmly welcomed the cooperation between the PBC and UN Women's Executive Board, noting that there has been interest in various PBC working groups on further exploring the role of women in peacebuilding and economic recovery. Members shared positive experiences in bringing women into peacebuilding and recovery from their own countries and

from projects they support. Dedicated funding for support to family-run farms, micro-credit, skills training, small scale entrepreneurship and property rights were all mentioned as key strategies for supporting women's economic recovery. It was noted that just as women need temporary special measures in politics to compensate for historical exclusion, special provisions are needed in economic recovery.

8. A number of Member States reiterated support to the Secretary-General's Report on Women's Participation in Peacebuilding and its 7-point action plan. In particular members noted the importance of reaching the commitment of allocating at least 15 percent of the UN's peacebuilding funds to meeting women's post-conflict needs and priorities. Gender marker systems were noted as an important programme design and monitoring tool. Members also welcomed the steps taken by the Peacebuilding Fund to address women's post-conflict needs and highlighted the Gender Promotion Initiative as good practice. The importance of engaging with the World Bank on addressing specialized challenges for women's employment was noted, particularly in the context of the drafting of the 2012 World Development Report. Members called on the PBC to examine women's engagement in security sector reform (SSR) and DDR in the countries on the agenda and to look more closely at how to ensure that macro-economic policies and frameworks are made gender-responsive

9. In closing the discussion ASG Cheng-Hopkins emphasized the need for both affirmative action and innovation to effect change. She used Sierra Leone's All Women Political Party Association as an example that promotes political collaboration and peace, and noted that the PBF's funding to SSR in Guinea would allocate 50% to the Government and 50% to support civil society engagement in SSR oversight.

IV. Conclusion and Next Steps

10. The Co-Chairs welcomed the 2010 SG Report on Women's Participation in Peacebuilding and the practical and actionable recommendations of the seven-point Action Plan. They noted the seminal nature of the PBC UN Women Executive Board Meeting and the need to sustain the convergence of interest through joint collaboration. It was agreed that the concrete proposals for engagement offered by Ambassador Gasana and Ms Bachelet would be acted upon.