

The Initiative for Peacebuilding



Rising to the challenge: how Australia can help strengthen the United Nations Peacebuilding Commission

An issues brief in preparation for the UN Summit of the Future 2024

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Australian preparations for the UN Summit of the Future

The Secretary-General of the United Nations, Antonio Guterres, released a seminal document, *Our Common Agenda*, in September 2021. Its purpose was to draw attention to the criticality of improving the way countries cooperate to manage the world's common resources (oceans, land masses, space) and public goods like global health, peace and security, so as to safeguard the planet and its resources for future generations.

In *Our Common Agenda*, the Secretary-General (SG) highlighted the problems he suggested urgently demanded improved international cooperation, including climate change on the cusp of no return, biodiversity regressing, complex wars with no end in sight, skyrocketing inequalities notably for women, the struggle for gender equality facing major pushbacks, an unhinged digital world and unprecedented humanitarian and human rights crises. The SG noted a deep paradox in which international cooperation is more necessary than ever, but is frequently more difficult to achieve and embraced more often in the breach than in reality.

Among the recommendations of *Our Common Agenda* was the holding of a *Summit of the Future*, now planned for 22–23 September 2024. The Summit will see Member States agree on a package of reforms summarised in an outcome document: the *Pact for the Future*, which is currently under negotiation.

The University of Melbourne's Initiative for Peacebuilding has prepared a series of policy briefs to stimulate discussion of key issues on the agenda for the Summit, with particular consideration to Australia's role and responsibilities.

The third ISSUES BRIEF in this series is *Rising to the Challenge: How Australia can help strengthen the United Nations Peacebuilding Commission* by Russell Rollason AM, Adrian Morrice, Simon Richards and Jacob Berah.

Russell Rollason AM

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In 2005 he began a 14-year career with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade including a 3-year posting in India. During his time at DFAT he led the establishment of the Australian Water Partnership. He has more than 20 years of experience in civil society organisations, having served 12 years as Executive Director for ACFOA (now the Australian Council for International Development) and four years as the elected Chair of the Geneva based International Council for Voluntary Agencies. In 1998, he was appointed a Member of the Order of Australia, for services to international development and humanitarian aid through the Australian Council for Overseas Aid (ACFOA) and promotion of social justice in Australia. He is a science honours graduate from the University of Queensland and Master of General Studies, UNSW.

Adrian Morrice

Adrian Morrice has been a practitioner and researcher in political transitions, conflict prevention and peacebuilding for several decades.

Deploying to UN Force Headquarters, Somalia in 1993 as an Australian Navy staff officer, he later joined the UN in five more peacekeeping operations and political missions (Liberia, Western Sahara, Timor Leste and Sierra Leone). He supported transition elections in Nigeria, Nepal, Mexico, Pakistan, Mongolia and Thailand. Completing a Master of Science from the London School of Economics in 2003, he later joined the UN in New York, working in the Departments of Peacekeeping and Political Affairs. In the latter's Policy Planning Unit he supported new research and policies on peacebuilding in the immediate aftermath of conflict, security sector reform and reform to UN Special Political Missions. In Myanmar, he was the UN adviser to the Joint Ceasefire Monitoring Committee, and, before returning to Australia in 2023, the UN peace adviser in Nepal for three years. There he led political analysis for UN leadership and initiated new research on pandemic governance, aid and politics in the energy sector, climate security and social media hate speech.

Simon Richards

Simon Richards is currently a Strategic Advisor at the Life & Peace Institute. He has over 30 years of experience in the field of peacebuilding, and conflict prevention and management.

He has worked in diverse international environments and organisations within Asia, Africa (particularly in the Horn region), and the Pacific. His technical work and research in conflict-affected, post conflict and fragile states has focused on support to peace processes and peacebuilding, conflict management, and stabilisation. This has involved programme design, implementation and evaluation, as well as provision of technical, policy and strategic advice to stakeholders including multilateral organisations, bilateral donors, national and local governments, civil society organisations, and the corporate sector. He has published numerous reports, papers and articles on the praxis and policy implications of peacebuilding and conflict management (including the prevention of violent extremism).

Jacob Berah

Jacob Berah is a PhD candidate at the University of Melbourne's Initiative for Peacebuilding, researching political engagement by UN peace operations and the politics of peacebuilding.

He previously worked with the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade for seven years, during which he was posted to the Australian Embassy in Afghanistan, and across a variety of policy roles including Indo-Pacific strategy, US bilateral relations, and the Counter-Daesh Coalition. He was also a lead foreign policy advisor for Exercise Talisman Sabre 2015, and was seconded to the Iraq Taskforce in the International Policy Division, Department of Defence. He was the Lowy Institute's 2015 Michael and Deborah Thawley Scholar, which included a research placement at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) in Washington DC. In 2010 he interned for then-Ranking Member of the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Senator Richard G. Lugar. He graduated with Masters degrees in International Relations and Diplomacy with first class honours from the Australian National University.

Rising to the Challenge: how Australia can help strengthen the UN Peacebuilding Commission

Russell Rollason AM, Adrian Morrice, Simon Richards and Jacob Berah

The United Nations was established in 1945 to “save the succeeding generations from the scourge of war.”¹ Today, however, it is failing to realise its core purpose of maintaining international peace and security, even as threats have multiplied and grown. In addition to traditional military threats, we now understand that a wide range of social, political, economic, and environmental factors play an important role in our security, and outer space and cyberspace, some of which “pose an existential threat to humanity.”² A key aspect of the UN architecture dedicated to addressing these global challenges is the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), which Australia will take a seat on in 2025. Ahead of this, and in preparation for the UN Summit of the Future, this policy brief argues that Australia should advocate for the UN to strengthen the PBC in its role and resources, and that there is scope and opportunity for Australia to engage innovatively in our region to support the PBC agenda.

The Secretary-General’s 2021 *Our Common Agenda* report reiterated the need to reinvigorate the Security Council reform agenda, but it also recommended the UN system explore how to bolster and expand its other peace and security institutions, including the PBC.³ Proposals for strengthening the PBC contained in *Our Common Agenda* and other reports described below will be discussed at the *Summit of the Future* at the UN in New York on 22–23 September 2024.⁴

The PBC was established in 2005 via joint UN General Assembly/ Security Council resolutions.⁵ The same resolutions created the UN Peacebuilding Fund (PBF).⁶

The core mandate of the PBC is to:

- Marshal resources and advise on and propose integrated strategies for post-conflict peacebuilding and recovery;
- Provide recommendations and information to improve the coordination of all relevant actors, to develop best practices,

to help to ensure predictable financing for early; recovery activities, and to extend the period of attention given by the international community to post-conflict recovery;

- Provide political accompaniment and advocacy to countries affected by conflict;
- Promote an integrated, strategic, and coherent approach to peacebuilding;
- Serve a bridging role among the principal organs and relevant entities of the UN by sharing advice on peacebuilding needs and priorities.

In 2022, the Commission supported 14 separate country and region-specific settings, broadening its geographical scope; including by holding meetings for the first time on Timor-Leste, South Sudan, and Central Asia. With these additions, the Commission has engaged with a total of 26 different countries and regions since its inception.⁷

Cross-cutting and thematic engagements were undertaken on women, peace and security; youth and peace and security agendas; institution-building; transitional justice and the rule of law; electoral processes; displacement; climate change; socioeconomic development; and partnerships for peacebuilding.⁸

The Commission’s agenda is set at the request of (1) the Security Council, (2) the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) or the General Assembly with consent of the concerned Member State, (3) the Secretary-General, or (4) Member States on the “verge of lapsing or relapsing into conflict.” All decisions are made by consensus.⁹

The PBC and the PBF reinforce each other, with the PBC providing political support for Member States on peacebuilding, and the Secretary-General’s PBF working as the UN’s independent instrument to invest in peacebuilding efforts. Countries considered by the Commission are also recipients of support from the PBF.¹⁰

1 Charter of the United Nations, October 24, 1945.

2 United Nations Summit of the Future, Pact for the Future, revision 1 draft, 14 May 2024. Accessible at: <https://www.un.org/en/summit-of-the-future>.

3 Secretary-Generals’ Report “Our Common Agenda” United Nations, September 2021.

4 United Nations Summit of the Future, New York, September 2024. Accessible at: <https://www.un.org/en/summit-of-the-future>

5 United Nations Security Council, “Resolution 1645, adopted by the Security Council at its 5335th meeting,” United Nations, 20 December 2005, S/RES/1645

6 United Nations General Assembly, “Resolution 60/1, adopted by the General Assembly during its Sixtieth session,” United Nations, 24 October 2005, A/RES/60/1. It also created the UN Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO) as PBC secretariat, reporting to the UNSG. This office was later folded into the current Department of Peacebuilding and Political Affairs.

7 Report of the Peacebuilding Commission on its sixteenth session (New York: United Nations, 2023). Accessible at: <https://www.un.org/peacebuilding/sites/www.un.org.peacebuilding/files/documents/n2305132.pdf>.

8 Ibid

9 S/RES/1645 (2005) and A/RES/60/1 (2005).

10 Permanent Representative of Romania to the United Nations, *General Assembly Debate on the PBC and PBF annual reports, Statement of the former Chair of the PBC*, 20 May 2019.

The PBC's program of work for 2024 builds on the relevant recommendations of the Secretary-General's report *Our Common Agenda*. Following a demand-driven and consultative process, the PBC will also continue to work with 12 countries and five regions in Africa, Latin America, Asia and the Pacific Islands, which the Commission stood ready to consider during the session.

The significance of the PBC is that it is the only global forum whose sole purpose is to assist countries in their peacebuilding efforts.¹¹

Strengths of the Peacebuilding Commission¹²

National ownership: Affected countries are encouraged to highlight their own challenges and successes in grappling with security risks, knowing that they have a say in the response.

Universality of peacebuilding: The PBC has expanded its geographic scope and has considered a range of peacebuilding matters in recent years, including on reconciliation and transitional justice.

Convening power: The PBC's mandate allows it to convene diverse groups of stakeholders, both within and beyond the UN system.

Coherence: The PBC can play a key role bridging the three pillars of the UN, and thus contribute to greater coherence in the UN's peacebuilding work.

Weaknesses of the Peacebuilding Commission¹³

The PBC has some well-recognised weaknesses and has been subject to several critiques.

Limited resources: Without resources of its own, the PBC is asked to advocate for the collective pooling and raising resources for peacebuilding, but with limited success to date.

Lack of enforcement powers: Unlike the UN Security Council, the PBC lacks any enforcement mechanisms and its recommendations are entirely non-binding.

Scope limitations: While recognising prevention at the heart of peacebuilding, the PBC focuses almost entirely on post-conflict peacebuilding.

Political divisions: The PBC's activities can be hampered by just one of its members due to its consensus-based decision-making process, and to date there has been limited appetite from the UN Security Council permanent five members to delegate it more meaningful roles.

Lack of inclusivity: While far more inclusive in terms of the number of Member States than many other forums, the PBC remains a State-led and State-oriented body. It has been criticised for being insufficiently inclusive of local actors, civil society groups, or other players.

Slow response: As with any UN political process, the PBC's decision-making can be slow and inflexible, despite often fast-moving conflict dynamics on the ground.

Proposals for Reform

A head of steam is building for reform of the PBC, not least because the global situation is desperately in need of renewed international effort and commitment "to save the succeeding generations from the scourge of war."

Two high profile reviews delivered their recommendations in early 2023: the High-Level Advisory Board on Effective Multilateralism (HLAB),¹⁴ and the Secretary-General's New Agenda for Peace,¹⁵ Our Common Agenda Policy Brief.

The ambitious recommendations from the HLAB group included:

- An expanded mandate to address a broader range of risks, including non-military threats, climate-driven risks, socioeconomic inequalities, and technological threats;
- Greater investigative and decision-making powers, potentially similar to some of those currently granted to the Human Rights Council (such as the use of special rapporteurs);
- The creation of 'regional resilience councils' or other regional bodies tasked with conflict prevention;

11 "Evaluating Peacebuilding Commission's Performance over Past Year, Speakers Highlight Stronger Advisory Role, Gains in Supporting Countries Emerging from Conflict," *United Nations*, 27 July 2022, <https://press.un.org/en/2022/sc14984.doc.htm>

12 Adam Day and Sophie Buddenhorn, "Elevating the UN Peacebuilding Commission: Proposals for the Summit of the Future," UNU-CPR Technical Note (New York: United Nations University, 2024).

13 Ibid.

14 High-Level Advisory Board on Effective Multilateralism (HLAB), "A Breakthrough for People and Planet: Effective and Inclusive Global Governance for Today and the Future." New York: United Nations University, 2023.

15 United Nations, "Our Common Agenda Policy Brief 9: A New Agenda for Peace." New York: United Nations, 2023.

The *New Agenda for Peace* makes the case for the Peacebuilding Commission to serve as a space for Member States to address issues that lie between peace and development (many articulated in SDG 16), such as the links between inequalities, violence and conflict; the importance of the 2030 Agenda for prevention and peacebuilding; or the linkages between development, climate change and peace. It can create opportunities for South-South and triangular cooperation and help accompany countries that are exiting the Security Council's agenda.

Recommendations from the New Agenda for Peace include:

- Enhance the role of the Peacebuilding Commission as a convener of thematic discussions on cross-pillar issues, with a focus on the interdependent and mutually reinforcing nature of peace and development.
- Create a mechanism within the Commission to mobilise political and financial support for the implementation of the national and regional strategies; and formalise the Commission's relationship with international financial institutions and regional development banks in order to align financing instruments with national priorities and enable the Commission to fulfil its mandate in marshalling resources for peacebuilding.
- Formalise the participation of regional and other organisations in the Commission to enable holistic engagement, coordination and inclusiveness in the deliberations of the Commission.
- The Security Council, the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Human Rights Council should ensure that the Commission is consulted in their proceedings. The Security Council should more systematically seek the advice of the Commission on the peacebuilding dimensions of the mandates of peace operations.

Women, Peace and Security

The *New Agenda for Peace* emphasises the importance of listening to, respecting, upholding and securing the perspectives of women impacted by compounding forms of discrimination, marginalisation and violence. This includes Indigenous women, older persons, persons with disabilities, women from racial, religious or ethnic minorities and LGBTQI+ persons and youth. "For as long as gendered power inequalities, patriarchal social structures, biases, violence and discrimination hold back half our societies, peace will remain elusive."

Women human rights defenders and women peacebuilders, play a crucial role in building trust in societies, by representing the most vulnerable or marginalised and those often unrepresented in political structures. However, gaps in implementing the global *Women Peace and Security* agenda¹⁶ persist and there has been a global backsliding on gender equality in recent years. Secretary-General Guterres said in October 2023, "If you want to stand with women driving change, if you want to support women enduring conflict, if you want to remove barriers to participation, and if you want women's organizations to deliver, we need to pay for it."

The Peacebuilding Fund approved nearly US\$110 million in 2022 for peacebuilding initiatives focused on supporting gender equality. However, the PBC has to date been unable to find consensus on providing advice to the Security Council on increased financing for WPS. It remains a high priority for the PBC is to identify sufficient finance for women and youth peacebuilders and their organisations, and to empower women entrepreneurs to be the agents of change in conflict-affected settings.

Negotiations in New York

Negotiations on the revised first draft *Pact for the Future* (referred to as Rev1) began in New York on 28 May 2024 and the Australian Government is participating through its Mission to the UN.¹⁷ The *Summit of the Future* to be held at the UN in New York on 22–23 September 2024 will adopt the final version of the Pact. At this stage, the proposals for strengthening the Peacebuilding Commission are included in Action 40 in Rev 1 of the Pact.

Action 40 calls on all Member States of the UN to “affirm our commitment to strengthening the Peacebuilding Commission, including through the 2025 review of the peacebuilding architecture, to bring a more strategic approach and greater coherence to international peacebuilding efforts. Proposed actions include:

- Enhancing the role of the PBC as a platform for conflict prevention and sustaining peace, including through sharing good practices among Member States and mobilising political and financial support for national prevention efforts.
- Strengthen the role of the PBC in advising and acting as a bridge to all relevant United Nations bodies.
- Establish a more systematic and strategic partnership between the Commission and the international financial institutions to mobilise financing for sustaining peace and to help align national development, peacebuilding and prevention strategies.
- Ensure the Commission plays a vital support role to countries during and after the transition of a peace operation, in cooperation with the Security Council and United Nations Country Teams.

In 2025, a comprehensive review of the United Nations peacebuilding architecture will be undertaken in response to resolutions at the UN General Assembly.¹⁸ The review will have the task of operationalising the recommendations in the Pact and considering what adjustments need to be made in the Peacebuilding Commission’s methods of work, composition and support capacities so that it can effectively perform these functions.

Recommendations for Australia

Australia will participate in the Summit of the Future in September 2024 and take a seat on the PBC in November 2025 for a two-year term. Preparations for the Summit provides an opportunity to focus on the policies and approaches Australia might take to the Summit and pursue when it takes up a seat in the PBC. It is an opportunity for Australia to develop reform proposals for the comprehensive review of peacebuilding architecture to be undertaken in 2025. The PBC also offers considerable scope for Australia to contribute to increased peacebuilding efforts in Africa as several African countries are on the PBC agenda.

Australia needs to develop policy that responds to the range of issues that lie between peace and development, including the links between inequalities, violence and conflict; the importance of the 2030 Agenda / the Sustainable Development Goals in particular SDG 16 for prevention and peacebuilding; and the linkages between development, climate change and peace. Membership of the PBC will provide an opportunity for Australia to analyse root causes of conflict and develop strategies to strengthen resilience for people who are victims of instability and conflict.

Australia’s contributions in the negotiations on the Peacebuilding section (Action 40) of the Pact should focus on strengthening UN capabilities for conflict prevention and mediation and support strengthening of national prevention strategies, including through the PBC.

There are five areas where Australia might target its efforts at the Summit and during its participation on the committee of the PBC.

1. Enhancing the role of the Peacebuilding Commission

Foreign Minister Penny Wong noted in her statement to the UN General Assembly in 2023, the “modern arms race forever transformed the scale of great power competition and pushed all of humanity to the brink of Armageddon.” The Minister called for countries to “commit anew to building such preventive infrastructure to reduce the risk of crisis, conflict and war by accident.” The risky militarisation of the global community but not be at the expense of conflict prevention.

17 Pact for the Future Rev. 1 2024 <https://www.un.org/en/summit-of-the-future>

18 Resolutions A/RES/75/201 and S/RES/2558 (2020) on the Review of the United Nations Peacebuilding Architecture call for a “further comprehensive review of United Nations peacebuilding in 2025”.

A key task is to enhance the role of the Peacebuilding Commission as a convener of thematic discussions on cross-pillar issues, with a focus on the interdependent and mutually reinforcing nature of peace and development and cross cutting issues such as climate disruption and Women Peace and Security. But, apart from dialogue, the PBC must maintain and strengthen its direct engagement with countries requesting conflict prevention and peacebuilding assistance, with international financial institutions and regional organisations.

While the General Assembly and the Security Council have major peacebuilding roles, the PBC has an important role in assisting peacebuilding in countries managing low level conflicts that do not make it to the agenda of the Security Council or the General Assembly.

With UN Special Political Missions at the forefront of many bespoke mediation, preventive diplomacy and peacebuilding engagements, the PBC could improve advocacy for their more nimble and politically sensitive approaches to peacebuilding, while reflecting the UN's stated aim of centring political solutions at the heart of how future peace operations are mandated and implemented. The PBC could also better advocate to improve SPM funding and backstopping modalities that have remained largely unchanged despite decades of expansion.

With much contemporary armed conflict occurring in countries and regions not on the agenda of the UN Security Council, the PBC could better advocate for the UN Peace and Development Advisers. These national and international peacebuilding experts can provide a valuable role in conflict prevention. The recent severe cut in funding for the Peace and Development Advisers has undermined this valuable program and should be restored.

Effort will be needed to ensure the Commission continues to play a vital support role to countries during and after the transition of peacekeeping operations and special political missions, in cooperation with the Security Council and United Nations Country Teams.

A key issue for the PBC is the need for a greater emphasis on their support role to achieve a sustainable peace and political transition as larger multidimensional peace operations exit. In some of the current situations (for example, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Somalia) the peacekeeping operations are not leaving by choice, they have been asked to leave. It could

be argued that the problems that may now occur due to the severely reduced security situation following their departure are the result of the focus during presence was maintaining the status quo rather than investing in and seeking improved pathways to a sustainable peace. Too often available funds are spent on the peace keeping operations themselves leaving limited resources to find solutions to the causal issues driving the need for the peace building presence. Seeking solutions earlier may enable a smoother exit, without compromising the security of the people.

Australia recognises that gaps in implementing the global Women Peace and Security agenda persist and there has been a global backsliding on fulfilling commitments to gender equality in recent years. To reverse this will require effort to identify sources of funds for women and youth peacebuilders and their organisations, and to empower women entrepreneurs to be the agents of change in conflict-affected settings.

2. Increasing the resources for the Peacebuilding Commission and its work program

There is widespread recognition of the importance and need for investment in conflict prevention and peacebuilding (as evidenced by the increase in requests for peacebuilding support from UN member States) but over recent years there has been a sharp decline in peacebuilding funding. The OECD/DAC reports that “in 2021, their (DAC members) peace ODA amounted to 10.8% of their total ODA (or USD\$5.27 billion) – a fifteen-year record low.”¹⁹ Since then there has been further decline with Sweden cutting its funding to the PBC, and indications that Germany and the Netherlands are following suit (these three are particularly important because of the fund PB organisations in a flexible manner). In 2024 –25, Australia’s aid budget kept funding for PB at last year’s level, with no additional funds being made available. The PBF is at its lowest level of liquidity since its inception.

For Australia, as it takes up its role in the PBC the challenge is to reverse this trend of underfunding and to ensure meaningful global investment in peacebuilding and the development of an empirical evidence base showing the benefits of such investment; Secondly, to consider the best way for the PBC and UN to remain relevant and effective in the PB arena in such a resource-poor sector; and thirdly to advise on how the PBC should operate, prioritise and pursue its mandate in the face of a

19 OECD (2023), “Peace and Official Development Assistance,” OECD Publishing, Paris, p.7.

concerning increase in global conflicts,²⁰ and within such a funding deficient environment. At the Summit of the Future, Australia could speak in support Action 11c in the Pact for the Future which aims to “Ensure that spending on arms does not come at the expense of investment in sustainable development and building sustainable peace.” It would be important for Australia to support this Action in the light of our substantial increase in military spending and for Australia to both model better behaviour (one not at the expense of the other) and advocate for support of this approach in the PBC and other bodies.

3. Strengthening a more integrated UN approach to peacebuilding

An important priority for Australia is to support the creation of a mechanism within the Commission to mobilise political and financial support for the implementation of national and regional conflict prevention and management strategies; and formalise the Commission’s relationship with international financial institutions and regional development banks in order to align financing instruments with national peacebuilding priorities and enable the Commission to fulfil its mandate in marshalling resources for peacebuilding.

While achieving the goal of a more integrated approach will require negotiations within the UNGA and UNSC, Australia is a significant donor to many UN development agencies and often has a seat on governing boards. Given the urgency for conflict prevention, Australia could instruct its representatives to ensure links with peacebuilding are on the agenda of these organisations as and when appropriate. For example, Australia has an Executive Director on the Board of the World Bank and one on the board of the Asia Development Bank. DFAT could link our policy positions at the PBC with the contributions that Australia’s Executive Directors make in Board meeting of the World Bank and ADB, especially in regard to mobilising financing for sustaining peace and to help align national development, peacebuilding and prevention strategies. Investments by the Banks are determined on a range of factors and active peacebuilding /conflict prevention should become a more prominent criterion.

4. PBC relations with regional peacebuilding / conflict prevention organisations

In her speech at the Indian Ocean Conference in February 2024, Foreign Minister Wong noted that “Across our region, we see military power is expanding, but measures to constrain military conflict are not – and there are few concrete mechanisms for averting it.”

We welcome the Minister’s commitment to make preventive peacebuilding a priority and focus for our region and beyond, including through the elevation of active regional organisations. The time is ripe for greater preventive action and reflects Australia’s stated interests and some existing development and aid programming.

Through negotiations and through participation in the PBC, Australia can help ensure the inclusion of regional and other appropriate organisations, enabling more effective coordination and alignment in the deliberations of the commission and the adoption of complementary roles as necessary in support of peacebuilding.

5. Review of the UN Peacebuilding architecture

In 2025 when Australia takes a seat on the PBC, the UN will undertake a comprehensive organisation-wide review of its peacebuilding architecture.

Currently there is an annual review of the PBC, and the reviews have consistently made similar recommendations on the key issues but they have seldomly been implemented. To avoid such an outcome for the 2025 organisation wide review, Australia might assist reform in three ways:

- Determine barriers that are preventing the uptake of recommendations;
- Seek ongoing small incremental ways to improve the effectiveness of the PBC and its working methods while the review mechanism is progressed;
- Seek to be bolder and more experimental in small ways to increase the PBC relevance and effectiveness.

20 Institute for Economics & Peace. “Global Peace Index 2023: Measuring Peace in a Complex World,” Sydney, June 2023. Accessible at: <http://visionofhumanity.org/resources>.

Conclusion

The Pact for the Future and Australia's participation in the PBC provide opportunities to progress some of the objectives laid out in the Foreign Minister Wong's speech to the UN General Assembly in September 2023 and to the Indian Ocean Conference in February 2024.

At UNGA, the Minister recognised that the “modern arms race forever transformed the scale of great power competition and pushed all of humanity to the brink of Armageddon” and called for a new commitment “to building such preventive infrastructure to reduce the risk of crisis, conflict and war by accident.” In Perth in early 2024, the Minister noted that “Across our region, we see military power is expanding, but measures to constrain military conflict are not – and there are few concrete mechanisms for averting it.” She concluded that “Peacebuilding today must rise to this potentially catastrophic challenge.”

Action 15 in the Pact calls for “support and assistance to States, including through the Peacebuilding Commission and the entire United Nations system, upon request, to build national capacity to develop and implement their national prevention strategies.”

Australia could support Action 15 and the move to assist fragile states to develop prevention strategies at national level. This approach has been supported by the G77 countries including ones in our region. Australia could lead the development on a national prevention strategy in partnership with a country in the Pacific and include contemporary issues like climate, security and migration. This might not only assist the Pacific State but also develop a model for the PBC and other countries. Several Australian individuals and organisations with significant experience in assisting countries in the Pacific in conflict prevention and peacebuilding could assist with such an initiative.

Such an innovative initiative would help Australia bring the global PBC agenda to the Asia-Pacific region, support the PBC, and strengthen preventive diplomacy in its engagement with ASEAN and the Pacific Islands Forum. This could also support the proposed annual high-level meeting to discuss matters pertaining to peace operations, peacebuilding and conflicts.



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