

Deepening PBC–CSO Engagement for Impact: Pathways and Opportunities for Effective Partnerships

Operationalising Sustaining Peace Roundtable Series

4 December 2025

Summary Note

The 2025 Peacebuilding Architecture Review (2025 PBAR) has recently concluded with the adoption of the twin resolutions of the UN Security Council and General Assembly ([S/RES/2805–A/RES/80/11](#)). The resolution “encourages the Peacebuilding Commission to further consult with relevant civil society organizations, especially local peacebuilders, grass-roots organizations, and women-led and youth-led organizations from countries considered by the Commission” (OP11). This builds on the language of the 2016 twin resolutions ([S/RES/2282–A/RES/70/262](#)) that encourages civil society to “provide recommendations [and] develop and share good practices in peacebuilding [...]” (OP4d). The 2025 twin resolutions highlight the focus on the experiences of civil society at the field level in countries considered by the Commission; therefore, building a strong foundation for the increased impact of the Commission’s work.

The 4 December 2025 roundtable brought together peacebuilding experts representing civil society, Member States, and the UN to map existing good practices from the Commission’s engagement with civil society and to identify avenues for impactful and mutually beneficial PBC-CSO engagement. The participants noted the increased engagement of civil society with the Commission; however, the fact that the nature of engagement remains ad hoc and without clear follow-up was also highlighted. In order to transform the engagement of civil society into a strong and operational partnership with impact, the Commission’s Member States could consider articulating what type of information is most useful from civil society and at what point this information is to be made available. This could support civil society coordination and clarity of diverse engagement.

Key takeaways from the discussion include:

Intentional and meaningful engagement of civil society can increase the impact of the Commission’s work. Since the establishment of the Commission ([S/RES/1645–A/RES/60/180](#)), the role of civil society has been recognized and encouraged both in policy language and in practice. Member States highlighted that the expertise of civil society can provide valuable input for the work of the Commission. Some of the added value that civil society organizations were noted for bringing was to 1) provide diverse analyses and unique perspectives (e.g., women peacebuilders) that Member States otherwise do not have access to; 2) provide peacebuilding expertise that delegates at PBC meetings may lack, as they are

not necessarily specialists in the field; 3) contribute to early warning, by identifying issues that, if unaddressed, can become a threat to peace and security; 4) outline needed steps to ensure more impactful peacebuilding action; and 5) implement the policies adopted at the global level in national and local contexts. Access to this expertise can strengthen the impact of the Commission if used effectively. During the roundtable, it was noted that civil society organizations are not monolithic. This, in turn, raised the question of what conditions are necessary for a civil society organization to be trusted by Member States, and how this should influence the selection of speakers at the PBC.

Civil society continues to have challenges in accessing the Commission. Mostly, civil society partners engaged with the Commission are those with access to the UN or New York-based NGOs. As a result, it leads to a narrow and uneven representation of perspectives and interests and skewed messaging supported by the entities providing access. It is critical to bring diverse voices of civil society organizations, including those that do not get funding from the UN, in particular the PBF, and that can provide independent perspectives. Further, the time difference between some locations and New York makes it hard for some civil society partners to engage remotely, and the standard of meetings being held in English with interpretation only in UN languages provides an additional barrier. In this context, the increased focus on regionalisation of peacebuilding is welcomed. Predictability has been highlighted as another challenge, as civil society is often asked to provide input at the last minute. For this, advanced planning and the improvement of working methods could be considered.

Defining 'civil society' in the context of the Peacebuilding Architecture remains a challenge. Referring to diverse non-governmental partners as civil society risks oversimplifying the complex landscape of diverse actors, which encompasses community-based organizations, women's and youth networks, academia, think tanks, advocacy groups, indigenous groups, local peacebuilders, and faith-based organizations—each with distinct roles and mandates. Rather than adopting a single uniform label, participants suggested a more formalized mechanism - similar to the Major Groups and Other Stakeholders for the SDGs - clustered by specific types of civil society actors and expertise the Commission could tap into. This could enable more strategic and purposeful engagement with civil society.

There are several promising practices of CSO-PBC engagement to build on. First, the Core Group for the CSO-UN Dialogue has been instrumental for the Commission as a platform to tap into civil society expertise where relevant. However, it is unclear whether the briefings provided by civil society through the Core Group are useful and how to increase their utility. Currently there is no platform or regular mechanism for Member States to provide this feedback. As the annual CSO-UN Dialogue recently concluded, it would be important for Member States to share reflections on the nature of the PBC Dialogue with civil society to

strengthen the engagement moving forward. Second, the Commission could integrate dedicated briefings by civil society during field visits. The recent field visit to Mozambique was highlighted as a good practice.

The CSO-PBC engagement has led to impact. Civil society highlighted that the engagement with the Commission has had an impact at the field level. In particular, the engagement with the Commission helps civil society to engage better with their own government representatives. As many Member States that are not members of the Commission have limited awareness of the Commission's work, civil society can support communication on how to benefit from the Commission's work and how to approach the Commission. Further, the understanding of the Commission's work and peacebuilding policy can assist civil society in guiding regional arrangements towards a more intentional focus on peacebuilding. A concrete example of this is the engagement of civil society in the Pacific region with the Commission, which allowed them to mobilize Pacific Member States around the 2025 PBAR and supported a stronger focus on peace within Pacific regional policy and action. At the same time, civil society from the Pacific highlighted the limitation of this format of engagement because the recommendations they are bringing to the UN peacebuilding partners, including the Commission, are rarely acted on. For example, one of the consistent points raised by civil society from the Pacific in the global peacebuilding discussions is the need for UN field presences to intensify their efforts in peacebuilding. However, no notable progress has been made. While the 2025 twin resolutions recognize the need for the Commission to engage field presences, there is still a long path towards realizing this commitment in practice.

The CSO-PBC engagement does not have to be exclusively formal. Roundtable participants expressed interest in more informal modes of engagement, as opposed to merely formal statements and briefings. This would allow for relationship-building that could extend beyond one-off briefings. The CSW69 engagement with civil society, organized by the German Permanent Mission, was highlighted as a good example of such engagement. Further, as the UN80 Reforms and the 2025 twin resolutions emphasize the need for increased field-level peacebuilding action, Member States representatives could consider engaging with civil society through their peacebuilding focal points in their capitals, missions, and consulates, directly channelling this information back to colleagues at the permanent missions in New York. This would require a certain degree of internal coordination within Member States.

Impactful stakeholder engagement requires the Commission to clearly communicate its strategy and for Member States to specify what type of information they need. A deeper conversation about the overarching focus of the Commission's work is a subject for continued discussion among Member States and should take into consideration the outcomes

of the UN80 initiative. While the 2025 twin resolutions highlight the need to strengthen the convening capacity of the Commission, there is a lack of consensus about the purpose and the goal of the convenings that the Commission can organize. By clarifying how the PBC can effectively support national peacebuilding efforts, it will be easier for civil society to contribute meaningfully to its work. While civil society's views on the situation in their contexts offer valuable insights, as a non-operational body the Commission has limited power to act directly. This leads to the critique that civil society voices are being “extracted” without real follow up and that their engagement is a rubber stamp for inclusion. It also raises questions about the value of civil society engagement with the Commission. Member States that provide space for civil society could clearly define what expertise is useful and how this information will be used to inform their work. This applies to the CS-UN Dialogue as well as all forms of engagement with civil society. Otherwise, the resources spent to provide space for such engagement are ineffectively used.

Key recommendations emerging from the discussion include:

- **The goals and expected impact of (formal and informal) engagement with civil society need to be clearly defined during the planning stage.** This applies to the Commission’s meetings, as well as engagement organized by other UN actors, including, for example, PBSO and UNCT representatives. Follow-up from these engagements is also critical to ensure a feedback loop and long-term strategic engagement.
- **The Commission’s Member States could consider a more formalized mechanism for civil society engagement.** A good practice example is the Major Groups and Other Stakeholders for the SDGs, clustered by specific types of civil society actors and expertise the Commission could tap into. This could enable more strategic and purposeful engagement with civil society.
- **The Commission’s annual planning could articulate its strategy more clearly.** A more intentional approach to the strategic value of the Commission’s action can guide civil society’s input and more effective engagement of all Member States with civil society.
- **Commission’s Member States could provide constructive feedback on existing modalities of engagement with civil society and the information they need to strengthen the Commission’s work.** Member States should consider ways to clarify what they seek to gain from civil society engagement ahead of time and design interactions accordingly. For example, as the CSO-UN Dialogue recently concluded, it would be important for Member States to openly and constructively reflect on the nature of the PBC Dialogue with civil society to strengthen the engagement moving forward.

- **Leadership in developing a more strategic engagement by the Commission with civil society could be delegated to one of the Member State Co-Chairs.** As the responsibilities of Co-Chairs become articulated, one of the roles that could be considered is to serve as a liaison between civil society and the Commission's Member States to facilitate feedback and more effective engagement in the interest of the Commission's overall work.
- **Member States could commission research to identify examples, good practices and factors that enable effective engagement of CSOs at the PBC,** to inform Member States' discussion on how to better leverage this partnership.