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Mr Secretary-General,  
Mr former Secretary-General,  
Ms Cliffe,

Mr President,  
Dear colleagues,

Sustaining peace – both a comprehensive process and a goal – has never been an easy task for conflict-affected countries. The Covid-19 pandemic has only magnified this challenge: human and health costs have soared, socio-economic problems have proliferated, and the challenges of planning, implementation and follow-up to peacebuilding efforts have multiplied.

Over the last couple of months, we have indeed witnessed unprecedented needs and repeated calls for an urgent and coordinated response. Moreover, on 1 July 2020, we have unanimously adopted Resolution 2532 (2020) - recognizing that the pandemic could reverse peacebuilding gains made by countries in transition and post-conflict countries and calling for all relevant parts of the UN system to accelerate response to the pandemic.

Now is the time to further reflect upon our approach and draw some best practices and lessons learnt. In this regard, we want to table 4 points:

First, **multilateralism** – international cooperation, collaboration and collective responsibility *are* and *remain* essential. As long as the pandemic affects *one* of us, it will affect *all* of us. Collective problems require collective answers and such answers *can* and *will* only be found if we work together; the UN and its members states, regional and sub-regional organizations, international financial institutions, the private sector and civil society.

Second, if effective multilateralism is based on the **shared respect of principles and values**, the same should be true for our further approach to the pandemic. Covid-19 should *not* be used as a pretext to infringe upon human rights or international humanitarian law. Covid-restrictions are indeed sometimes disproportional, unlimited in time and taken without much/any scientific backing.

Third, the whole conflict-cycle has been negatively affected by the pandemic. We therefore need to **be innovative** in *all* aspects of conflict-prevention, peacekeeping, peacebuilding and sustaining peace in order to preserve the hard-won gains of the past, build resilience and lay the groundwork for a better future. The Peacebuilding Fund, for instance, was able to add additional funding to an access-to-justice project in Haïti, to allow for virtual audiences and facilitate legal arbitration to release detainees.

Being innovative requires paying adequate attention to known but intensifying thematic challenges that are closely linked to the pandemic - such as climate and security or mental health - but also to find new ways to secure adequate funding to tackle them - such as exploring further budgetary partnerships with the international financial institutions and the private sector.

Fourth, **best practices and lessons learnt** in tackling the pandemic should **reinforce** our ongoing **review of the UN peacebuilding architecture**. Given its function as both platform and bridge across the whole UN system as well as its early engagement in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) but also the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) have been in a unique position to help tackling the pandemic. It is therefore adequate to incorporate their views and recommendations in the review. Efforts undertaken within the context of peacebuilding and sustaining peace can help in order to further increase national/local ownership, counter fragmentation of the UN-system and its pillars and help to foster further partnerships between the UN and other stakeholders. In short, we need to be more strategic, focussed and unified in tackling the pandemic. The peacebuilding architecture can play a crucial role to this end.

We would like to thank you for your attention.

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