

**2026 Joint Meeting of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and
the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC)**

**From Risk to Resilience: Advancing Social Cohesion Through Job Creation
In Peacebuilding Contexts**

22 June 2026, 10:00 am – 1:00 pm, Trusteeship Council Chamber, New York

Concept Note

I. Background

Peacebuilding contexts are increasingly shaped by complex and interlinked risks, including protracted conflict, economic marginalization, and social fragmentation. In such environments, unemployment and underemployment, especially among youth and women, are not merely economic challenges, but can become sources of tensions and grievances as well as drivers of instability and fragility. Addressing these issues requires approaches that go beyond short-term stabilization and instead fostering resilient, inclusive societies through sustained economic opportunities.

Experience across diverse conflict-affected settings has demonstrated that job creation is a pivotal entry point for advancing social cohesion and building durable peace. Decent employment, including through private sector development, provides individuals with income security, dignity, and a sense of belonging, while simultaneously reducing incentives for violence and exclusion. By creating shared economic opportunities across different groups, employment initiatives can bridge divides and promote trust among communities that may otherwise remain fragmented. And by strengthening opportunities for dialogue among social groups – including between the government, the workers and employers’ organizations – employment programmes may break down stereotypes, increase understanding and trust, and enhance social cohesion¹.

In fragile contexts, labour markets are often characterized by informality, limited public sector absorption capacity, and weak private sector development. This emphasizes the importance of engaging private enterprises, particularly micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs), as drivers of job creation. In this regard, partnerships between the public and private sectors are essential, since employment initiatives, when designed inclusively and implemented in partnership with local actors, can contribute not only to livelihoods but also to reconciliation, trust-building, and long-term resilience.

The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and the high-level political forum on sustainable development, drawing on the thematic reviews of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Voluntary National Reviews, have highlighted the interlinkages between decent work and peaceful, inclusive societies. Job creation and economic participation are central to strengthening resilience, particularly in the context of the 2030 Agenda’s commitment to leave no one behind.

¹ International Labour Organization and United Nations Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, *Sustaining Peace through Decent Work and Employment* (Geneva, 2021).

However, there is mixed progress on SDG 8 on decent work and economic growth, with persistent challenges including youth unemployment, informality, labour rights deficits, and the prevalence of child labour.² Young people continue to face significant labour market barriers, with unemployment rates nearly four times those of adults and 20 per cent not in employment, education or training in 2025. These challenges are further compounded by gender inequalities, with women facing disproportionately higher levels of unemployment, informality and barriers to decent work. As technological transformation continues to reshape labour markets, creating both opportunities and heightened risks of exclusion, the role of effective labour market policies, alongside the private sector, becomes increasingly critical to reducing inequalities, expanding opportunities for youth and women, and fostering social cohesion.

Over the past decade, the United Nations Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) has increasingly emphasized youth employment, women's economic empowerment, and private sector engagement as central to peacebuilding. The Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) has translated these priorities into practice by financing programmes that link livelihoods with social cohesion. These experiences from these programmes underscore that employment interventions are most effective when combined with skills development, access to finance, and conflict-sensitive approaches that promote inclusion and trust.

Governments can provide enabling policy frameworks, infrastructure, and regulatory support, while private actors bring investment, innovation, and job creation capacity. Inclusive hiring practices, local procurement policies, and corporate social responsibility initiatives can further ensure that employment opportunities contribute to social cohesion rather than exacerbating inequalities.

II. Objectives

Kicking off the inaugural annual Peacebuilding Week, the joint meeting aims to:

1. Bring together Member States, United Nations entities, international financial institutions, private sector actors, and civil society to exchange experiences, identify good practices, and promote integrated approaches that link employment generation with peacebuilding outcomes.
2. Advance a shared understanding of how job creation can serve as a strategic entry point for strengthening social cohesion and resilience in peacebuilding contexts.
3. Highlight evidence and lessons learned from ECOSOC and PBC engagements and PBF-supported initiatives on job creation and economic inclusion;
4. Promote innovative public-private partnerships and MSME development as drivers of inclusive growth and stability;
5. Strengthen policy coherence and collaboration between ECOSOC and the PBC in line with the 2025 Peacebuilding Architecture Review (PBAR) recommendations;
6. Identify actionable recommendations to scale up employment-focused peacebuilding interventions, particularly for youth and women.

² United Nations, *Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals: Report of the Secretary-General (Advance unedited version)* (New York, 2026)

III. Guiding questions

- How can we strengthen international cooperation and policy coordination to advance SDG 8 and accelerate progress towards 2030 Agenda?
- How can job creation initiatives be designed and implemented to effectively strengthen social cohesion in conflict-affected contexts? What lessons have emerged from PBF-supported programmes and PBC advisory engagements?
- What role can the private sector, particularly MSMEs, play in generating inclusive and sustainable employment in fragile settings? How can partnerships between governments, international actors, businesses and local financial institutions be strengthened?
- How can employment programmes better target vulnerable groups, especially youth and women, to reduce exclusion and mitigate drivers of conflict?
- What are the key enablers for successful job creation in peacebuilding contexts? How can policies and regulatory environment, skills development, access to finance, and entrepreneurship support be aligned with local market needs?
- What innovative approaches and scalable models exist for leveraging employment as a driver of peacebuilding and resilience?

IV. Format and participants at the meeting

The meeting will be held as a high-level interactive discussion under the joint auspices of ECOSOC and the PBC. It will feature opening remarks, a panel discussion, and an interactive exchange with Member States and stakeholders.

Participants will include representatives from Member States, United Nations entities, international financial institutions, private sector actors (including MSMEs), civil society organizations, and youth and women's groups. Efforts will be made to ensure diverse geographic representation and inclusion of perspectives from conflict-affected contexts.

V. Expected Outcome

The outcome of the meeting will be a joint summary issued by the President of ECOSOC and the Chair of the PBC, highlighting good practices, partnerships, and forward-looking guidance for United Nations policy, programming, and financing.