

SHARED PRIORITIES: ANTI-CORRUPTION, SECURITY, AND SUSTAINABLE PEACE

Contribution by Transparency International Defence & Security (TI-DS) to the 2025 Peacebuilding Architecture Review (PBAR)

PEACE AND SECURITY RESTS ON FREEDOM FROM CORRUPTION

Sustainable peace relies on citizens' trust in state institutions. When public institutions fail to serve or protect them, support declines. Corruption is a key contributor to this dynamic, and security and defence institutions play a particularly important role here. Security forces that act, or are perceived as acting, abusively or in a biased way, or are absent or ineffective, erode trust and weaken social cohesion. Crucially, given their proximity to political power and lethal equipment, they become a threat to peace and security and undermine sustainable development.

Addressing corruption within security and defence institutions is therefore not just a matter of good governance, but a crucial strategy for conflict prevention, mitigation, and resolution, making anti-corruption measures a powerful tool for managing conflict at all stages of the conflict cycle.

Prevention: Corruption as driver and root cause of violence and armed conflict

Corruption in security and defence institutions is both a root cause and a driver of violence and armed conflict. When civilians experience security forces through human rights abuses and repression, this fuels feelings of [marginalisation, grievances, and distrust in state institutions](#), which [aide non-state armed groups](#) in recruiting by positioning themselves as alternatives. Organised crime, terrorist and other non-state armed networks also rely heavily on corrupting local authorities, judiciaries, and security forces to finance themselves, buy arms and equipment, and create parallel governance structures. Security and defence institutions are also key targets for [state capture](#), a particularly systemic manifestation of corruption. **Good governance and institutional integrity are powerful tools to prevent corruption and the violence and insecurity that follow from it.**

Conflict resolution: The vicious cycle of corruption and conflict

Instability, violence and armed conflict create [favourable conditions for corruption](#) through eroding governance structures. Already in peaceful times, security and defence institutions are [often exempt](#) from the good governance standards applied to other areas of the public sector. Together with their proximity to political power, this creates **heightened corruption risks during times of crisis**, when incentives to corrupt security forces also increase. Breaking this cycle by addressing corruption, organised crime, and illicit arms and financial flows is essential to ending conflicts.

Post-conflict reconstruction: Integrating instead of siloing peace, security, and governance

Corruption can [double the chances of conflict relapse](#). Yet, despite their key role in building resilience and sustainable peace, anti-corruption efforts often remain side-lined in [peacebuilding strategies](#) and [security sector reform efforts](#). The latter often privilege [train-and-equip approaches](#), which leave corrupt networks intact and do not challenge underlying structures. [Hesitancy](#) to invest in long-term institutional reform in post-conflict settings stems from political sensitivities, the misconception of security sector reform as mere operational support, and failure to integrate security governance fully into broader peacebuilding efforts. **Prioritising short-term stabilisation while ignoring corruption and the structures that enable it [harms the success](#) of peace processes in the long-term.** Over time, corrupt networks adapt and entrench themselves in institutions, making it increasingly difficult to build consensus for serious reforms.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE 2025 PBAR

TI-DS recommends the 2025 PBAR to prioritise three areas for change.

A. Strengthen UN PBA's ability to advance good governance and anti-corruption in security and defence institutions

Despite their interconnectedness, anti-corruption and peacebuilding (frameworks, policies, processes, and programming) remain siloed. As a result, the UN's PBA is yet to define its role in addressing security sector corruption within peacebuilding and conflict prevention. Since the 2020 PBAR, the UN has increasingly recognised the link between good governance, peace, and security, **highlighting a key gap** for the 2025 PBAR to address.

1. **Strengthening the advisory and convening role of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC).** Build expertise within the Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO) in anti-corruption, security sector reform and governance to enhance the PBC's advisory role on these and related thematic issues. Corruption, organised crime, and illicit arms flows are key challenge to peace and security in many regions, and have been recognised as such by [Member States](#) (MS). The PBC could convene thematic discussions, gather insights from specialised experts, researchers, and civil society, and provide informed analysis to MS. This would also strengthen South-South-cooperation.
2. **Utilising evidence from impactful examples.** Encourage the Peacebuilding Impact Hub to collect good practices and case studies of successful integration of anti-corruption, peacebuilding, and security and defence sector governance. The Hub could engage experts, UN missions, civil society, and research institutions and identify field-tested solutions (oversight mechanisms for security forces, integrity-building in peacekeeping, community-led anti-corruption initiatives in conflict zones) to support the PBC's advisory role, strengthen UN System coordination, and ensure peacebuilding efforts address corruption as a root cause.
3. **Strengthening the Resident Coordinator's (RC) role:** Increase financial and technical resources to enhance RC Offices' expertise in anti-corruption and security sector governance and enable technical assistance, policy coherence, and coordination – particularly in fragile settings in which corruption and weak institutions fuel instability. In the context of national prevention strategies, this strengthened capacity would align peacebuilding, development, and governance by embedding anti-corruption measures in SSR/G, and improve coordination across UN Country Teams, financial institutions, and regional bodies to ensure targeted, evidence-based support for transparent, accountable, and inclusive security institutions in peacebuilding.
4. **Strengthening the links between the PBC and ECOSOC:** Enhance collaboration between the PBC and ECOSOC to enable more systematic engagement on cross-cutting issues. Establish regular meetings and structured consultations and expand joint initiatives to provide a platform to address peace-development linkages, particularly in countries at risk of conflict relapse not under active Security Council consideration. Focus these discussions on anti-corruption measures, security and defence sector governance, and economic resilience to ensure that peacebuilding efforts are aligned with long-term development strategies.
5. **Addressing the 'security gap' in UN Mission transitions:** Ensuring national institutions can effectively replace UN missions upon withdrawal is critical to preventing [security vacuums](#) and conflict relapses. Efforts have focused on capacity-building for national forces rather than on institutional resilience against corruption, which is a key factor undermining military effectiveness. UN transition plans should incorporate anti-corruption measures, training and operational support to strengthen accountability, governance, and civilian oversight over the security sector. The PBC could play a pivotal role in mobilising political attention, technical expertise, and financial resources to build transparent and capable national security forces.

B. Ensure that anti-corruption and good security and defence sector governance are considered key measures within national prevention strategies.

Building on recommendations in the [New Agenda for Peace](#), the 2024 [Pact for the Future](#) calls for the development of national prevention strategies to address the root causes of violence and armed conflict, as well as drivers of the illicit trade of arms, light weapons and lethal equipment. Integrating the prevention of different sources of instability into a unified strategy offers the opportunity to bridge siloed approaches, address peacebuilding, anti-corruption, and security sector governance more effectively, and advance multiple, interconnected pillars of SDG 16.

1. **Assert the centrality of building transparent, accountable, effective and inclusive security institutions for sustaining peace and preventing conflict.** A broader set of governance reforms is necessary to prevent corruption risks such as state capture, and these need to [cover the security and defence sector](#). Security and defence governance needs to be an explicit part of institution- and state-building efforts, as effective oversight of security and defence forces is key to preventing them from becoming a source of insecurity.
2. **Strengthen independent anti-corruption bodies and oversight mechanisms.** Encourage investment in accountability mechanisms and institutions to uncover conflict-related corrupt networks, particularly in post-conflict settings, where weak institutions enable illicit activities. Provide these mechanisms with the mandate, resources, and independence to operate effectively. The UN system could ensure they receive technical support, funding, and legal backing to investigate and mitigate corruption, tackle illicit financial flows and prevent state capture.
3. **Call for whole-of-government and whole-of-society approaches to national prevention.** Inclusion of all parts of society in the design and implementation of the national prevention strategies is vital to ensure that other actors can put pressure in national contexts in which political will to engage on anti-corruption reform might be lacking. Engaging technical experts, such as UNODC, in the design is also helpful to ensure comprehensiveness.

C. Keep the momentum: Building on recent commitments

The 2025 PBAR is the first review since several UN processes highlighted the relevance of anti-corruption, good governance, and building strong, accountable, transparent and inclusive institutions, for the prevention of conflict and sustainable peace. It offers an opportunity to build on recent calls to **integrate anti-corruption more firmly and more systematically into peacebuilding**.

- 1) The [UN Secretary-General's 2022 Report on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace](#) noted that “[l]inkages between corruption, conflict and fragility” were “becoming increasingly apparent”, and curbing corruption was “vital in post-conflict environments to restore trust in public institutions”. The [2024](#) iteration of the report emphasizes that “**good, effective and inclusive governance and the strengthening of social cohesion represent pathways away from violent conflict and vulnerability towards sustainable peace.**” It further highlights the contribution of good governance to structural prevention through addressing root cases of grievances and violence, and its link to sustainable development.
- 2) In a [2021 Political Declaration](#), the UN General Assembly invited UNODC to increase coordination and cooperation with the UN DPPA and UN DPO to **strengthen the rule of law and anti-corruption measures in UN peacekeeping and peacebuilding efforts**. This call builds on a [previous acknowledgement](#) of the destabilising effects of corruption as a driver of conflict and in post-conflict settings, encouraging the design of peacekeeping and special political missions with a clear anti-corruption perspective.
- 3) The [2020 UN Common Agenda](#) acknowledged **damaging effect of corruption on public trust and social cohesion**. Whilst this was not translated into action in the [Pact for the Future](#), the latter commits to preventing transnational organised crime and illicit financial flows, which, in practice, is only effective with strong anti-corruption measures; as well as to address the root causes of conflict, of which corruption and weak security and defence sector governance are two.