



Newsletter

March 2020

Welcome message from the Chair



Dear readers, welcome to the first edition of our 2020 newsletter. This being the first for the year, I would like to renew my best wishes to all our member states and the international community for the year ahead of us. The last edition of the Newsletter featured the successful 5th Ministerial Meeting of the g7+ that took place in Lisbon. As the first quarter of 2020 is well underway, I am gratified that we are building on the momentum we generated at the end of 2019.

I would like to express my sincere appreciation to g7+ member states and other member states of the United Nations (UN) for the support and co-sponsoring of the g7+ application that led to the attaining of the UN observer Status on 18 December 2019. This status has energised us to intensify our efforts and continue to work together at the UN in advancing the course of sustaining peace, stability and development in our countries. I entreat us all to work together with the Secretariat in operationalising this Status, and further amplifying our collective voice at the international level.

Let me use this opportunity to commend the member of Sao Tome e Principe and my own country Sierra Leone, for ratifying the g7+ charter. I hope other member states would follow soon. On behalf of g7+, let me congratulate Togo for organising peaceful and successful election.

We hope that the peace agreement signed between the United and the Taliban will help to end the war in Afghanistan. In the same vein, I would like to extend hearty congratulation to the people of South Sudan for peacefully forming a unity government and wish them a stable and prosperous future. We hope that the presidential election in Burundi, Central African Republic and Somalia scheduled for this year are held peacefully and successfully. The planned drawdown of the UN Mission in Guinea-Bissau at the end of December 2020 offers an opportunity for the g7+ to support Guinea-Bissau by sharing experiences of the successful UN transition process in Cote d'Ivoire, Liberia, Solomon Islands, Sierra Leone and Timor-Leste. The g7+ leadership wishes to reaffirm its commitment to supporting our member states in the course of building and sustaining peace and reconciliation to foster national cohesion and development in our countries. We hope this newsletter will set the pace for achieving our collective aspirations for 2020.***

Francis Mustapha Kai-Kai, Minister of Planning and Economic Development of Sierra Leone and Chair of the g7+.

A historic milestone, UN General Assembly grants observer status to g7+.



Photo: INU Online

The United Nations (UN) General Assembly on 18 December 2019 adopted the resolution granting g7+ an observer status at the UN. This is a historical milestone in the journey of g7+. The decision to apply for the observer status was taken during the 5th Ministerial meeting of g7+ in June 2019. Subsequently, the Permanent mission of Sierra Leone to the UN on behalf of the g7+ members submitted the request to the UN Secretary General upon which the item was included in the agenda of the 74th session of the General Assembly. The g7+ Secretariat worked along with the Permanent missions of Sierra Leone, Timor-Leste and other members in New York during September and October to galvanize needed support.

The General Assembly decision 49/426 of 9th December 1994, contains that the granting of observer status in the General Assembly is confined “to States and to those intergovernmental organizations whose activities cover matters of interest to the Assembly”. Hence, achieving observe status manifests the fact that g7+ in an important organization that can contribute to the overarching goals of the UN. This was confirmed by members of the UN and organizations the g7+ Secretariat consulted during its mission in September and October 2019.

With observer Status at the UN, the g7+ will have avenues through which it can provide collective perspective and inputs in related forums and discussions at UN. It will also include the right to speak at the United Nations General Assembly in the order assigned. The group will benefit in its close collaboration with the United Nations and its organs in their struggle to end poverty and achieve lasting Peace and stability in the world. The draft resolution concerning granting g7+ an observer status was supported and co-sponsored through online e-deleGATE system by 31 countries including Angola, Brazil, Canada, China, Cuba, Cabo Verde, Finland, Republic of Korea

Mozambique, Sweden, Portugal, Romania, Samoa and Gambia (on behalf of African Group) in addition to those from g7+ members. Furthermore, several members of the United Nations including the Permanent members of the Security Council (P5) expressed their support and indicated how important the g7+ perspective will be at the United Nations.

The g7+ Secretariat is now working and exploring best ways to operationalize the g7+ observer status New York and registering the g7+ charter at the United Nations.**

Follow up Meeting: Joint Action Plan Access to Justice for All



On November 15, 2019, the g7+ Secretariat and Rule of Law Collaborative held a meeting during the 16+ Forum Annual Showcase in Dili, Timor-Leste, to follow up from the Declaration and Joint Action Plan adopted at Ministerial-Level Meeting on Access to Justice in the Hague in June 2019. The meeting was supported by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands.

The meeting was attended by Ministers of Justice from Solomon Islands and Timor-Leste, representatives of g7+ countries from Sierra Leone and Togo, donor representatives, and civil society organizations.

During the one day meeting the member countries shared an overview of opportunities and challenges facing countries in implementing reforms in Justice sector. Countries with disperse population and limited resources have peculiar challenges in pursuing access to Justice for all. Minister of Justice from Solomon Islands, for example, highlighted that there is one high court and three magistrate courts, in his country that has over 900 islands.

In addition, the size of the national justice budget (currently US\$1M, the smallest of all the Ministries in Solomon Islands) and the flight of lawyers from the public sector to the private sector are significant challenges. The Solomon Islands Ministry of Justice is developing a Traditional Governance Bill, which would empower chiefs and local court adjudicators in resolving cases. The Ministry of Justice in Timor-Leste is drafting laws to regulate traditional justice system in mediation, and land registration. Other participants noted that improved capacity for customary justice mechanisms can help reduce case backlogs in the formal court system and preventing excessive delays. It has the advantage of being close to, known by, and shared by local

people. They also emphasized the importance of recognizing power dynamics inherent in customary justice systems and their effects on marginalized groups, such as women and children.

Given the important role of customary institutions in access to justice in conflict affected countries, the g7+ is considering sharing of experiences in integrating formal and informal Justice institutions where the two can complement each other.

Innovations such as use of mobile courts are useful means to promote access to Justice in g7+ countries. The Minister of Justice of Timor-Leste shared experience on the use of justice clinics, and mobile courts in Suai Municipalities, with the support of UNDP. Timor-Leste is also focusing on training for judicial personnel—including language training—through the Legal & Judicial Training Centre. Laws written in foreign language is a common challenge in some countries in post conflict situation. The meeting was concluded with some actions that include:



- A decision to map and identify good practices and explore possible ways to form people-centred justice compacts among government, civil society, and customary justice actors;
- A decision to explore how best to use the spirit of the New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States as impetus to revitalize the mutual commitment of donors and partners countries to country-led, country-owned justice initiatives;
- A commitment to continue discussions and peer learning among policymakers and Ministers at the regional and national levels;
- A proposal that Solomon Islands will host a similar meeting to appreciate and share lessons in strengthening access to justice in the region. Similar meetings will be conducted in other regions.**

Host Nations Views on peacekeeping Mission - Timor-Leste Experience

Following the launch of g7+ study “Host nations views on the United Nations (UN) peace and security reform proposals”, conducted in collaboration with the Center on International Cooperation (CIC) that was presented to the Secretary-General in April 2018, we are conducting the second phase of the study with an in depth analysis of lessons that the g7+ members have learned during the transition periods.

The reports aims at providing collective inputs to the reform agenda of the Peacebuilding architecture of the UN and to provide useful lessons and help other countries in managing the transition. The second phase is jointly conducted by the g7+ and CIC with the support of the UNDP transition unit.



The g7+ selected several g7+ countries that have successfully ended the UN Mission. The team started conducting a second phase by reviewing the UN peacekeeping and Political Mission in Timor-Leste in 2012. In-depth interviews with political leaders, government officials, civil society, UN representative, and Private Sector were conducted. A preliminary findings has been prepared and will be published in the coming weeks, below are some initial findings highlighted in the report.

The study is timely. Transitions have been highlighted for attention in the 2018 Action for Peacekeeping declaration and in new planning directives from the secretary-general (e.g., 2018/38).

Several countries hosting UN peace operations are undergoing a political transition, leading to the downsizing or closing of peace operations. These transitions, like peacebuilding itself, are fundamentally political processes. Yet the UN has usually focused more on internal planning processes and preparedness, rather than on providing practical advice for actors operating at the political level. The g7+ will also review the transition process in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Cote d'Ivoire and Solomon Islands subject to resources availability.

A combined final report from the g7+ countries will present consolidated findings and specific recommendations for host Nations, the g7+, the UN, and other relevant partners. More importantly, the findings will help in position the g7+ to use its expertise in political transitions to assist other countries going through similar processes, through South-South cooperation.****

Establishing the g7+ Inter-Parliamentary Union Assembly



On 16 October 2019, the g7+ organized a meeting on the sidelines of the General Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) that was held in Belgrade, Serbia. The IPU is the global organization of national parliaments. It aims at empowering parliaments and parliamentarians to promote peace, Democracy and sustainable Development.

The purpose of the g7+ meeting was to present and discuss the initiative proposed by the President of the National Parliament of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, Mr. Arão Noé de Jesus da Costa Amaral, to create a g7+ Parliamentary Assembly. The meeting was attended by representative of Members of Parliament from the g7+ countries such as Afghanistan, Burundi, the Central African Republic, Cote d'Ivoire, Haiti, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Timor-Leste and Yemen.

During the Meeting, there was a wider agreement to create a g7+ Parliamentary Assembly composed of members of Parliament from countries of g7+. Recognizing the increasing role of parliamentary diplomacy and the fundamental role of legislative bodies in peace and stability, the g7+ parliamentary assembly will help in consolidating the g7+ membership. In addition, this will help in sharing the collective perspective and inputs on how democracy evolves in conflict-affected countries.

Recognizing the g7+ as an important platform that defines the interest of conflict affected countries, the representatives emphasized the need to strengthen the group and encouraged financial contribution. The members thanked the role the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste has played in supporting g7+.

Members also suggested to include global warming as a group priority since the populations in some g7+ countries such as Haiti are most vulnerable to the effects natural crisis. The participants agreed to establish the g7+ Parliamentary Assembly.

The day before the meeting, on October 15, 2019, the Secretary General of the g7+, Helder da Costa, met with the Secretary General IPU, Dr. Martin Chungong, who expressed IPU's support for the initiative to create a g7+ Parliamentary Assembly.****

From the desk of the General Secretary



Helder da Costa, General Secretary of g7+

Dear readers, I wish you are all safe and healthy amid the COVID-19 Pandemic. The g7+ Secretariat stands in solidarity with all at this time of global emergency. We are working tirelessly to explore ways how best we can help our member countries curb the pandemic.

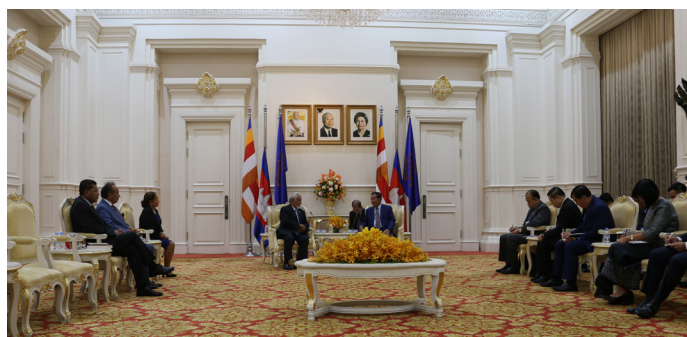
I am thrilled to inform you that we have now officially obtained observer status at the United Nations (UN). The application was adopted unanimously at the UN General Assembly without vote in December 2019. My Deputy, Mr. Habib Mayar, was in New York during September and October 2019 to work with the g7+ missions and mobilize needed support for the g7+ application. In March 2020, the Deputy General Secretary has been conducting a series of consultations with UN officials, diplomatic missions and g7+ permanent representatives in New York, on how best the g7+ as a group can actively contribute at the United Nations as an official observer and to explore ways how to peruse the optimal use of the observer status.

Earlier this year, the g7+ Chief Operating Officer, Felix Piedade participated in the Universal Peace Federation (UPF) World Summit in Seoul, South Korea to expand the g7+ collaboration with the UPF in areas of peace and reconciliation. At the regional level, the g7+ in collaboration with Centro Nacional Chega (CNC) co-hosted a mission from the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao from Philippines to Timor-Leste in December 2019. The objective of the Bangsamoro visit was to learn from Timor-Leste's transition and development experiences ranging from peace and reconciliation, reintegration of veteran into normal life, transforming of the movement liberation front to the political parties, women participation in the parliamentary, governance structure and Timor-Leste participation



at the International organisation including its role at the g7+ under the spirit of South-South Cooperation.

The g7+ was invited to attend the Asia Pacific Summit on "Addressing the critical challenges of our times: Peace, Reconciliation, Interdependence, Mutual Prosperity and Universal Values" in November 2019, Phnom Penh, Cambodia. The summit was jointly organized by the Universal Peace Federation (UPF) and the government of Cambodia. During the summit, the g7+ Eminent Person, Xanana Gusmao had a courtesy meeting with Prime Minister of Cambodia, H.E Hun Sen and briefed him about the g7+ group and its objectives. During the discussion, the Eminent Person expressed the willingness of g7+ to strengthening collaboration with non-g7+ countries such as Rwanda, Cambodia and Colombia whose trajectories on Peace and Statebuilding that provide inspiring lessons. The Prime Minister welcomed the initiative and committed that Cambodia will offer any possible support in this regard.



g7+ member countries Burundi, Central African Republic, Guinea-Bissau, South Sudan participated in the 20th Anniversary of Timor-Leste Referendum Day that took place on 30th August 2019. During the visit, the g7+ delegation also went to the West Side of Timor border between Indonesia and Timor-Leste to witness the peace and reconciliation process.

In early November 2019, the g7+ European Hub organised a meeting with the Embassy of the g7+ member countries that are in Lisbon such as Cote d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Guinea-Bissau, São Tome e Principe and Timor-Leste including Universidade de Coimbra and Clube de Lisboa to brief them on the g7+ Observer Status and the work priorities in 2020.

The g7+ Secretariat launched its first episode of the g7+ Show at the RTTL (National TV Broadcast) that is aired once a month aims to share, educate and motivate young people by doing small changes that can contribute to peace and development in society.

Finally, in April 2020, on the occasion of its 10th Anniversary 2010, the g7+ Secretariat in collaboration with the IRI/PUC-RIO BRICS Policy Centre in Brazil to launch a publication, entitled "Our Voices in a Decade" to celebrate the milestones achieved so far. So please watch the space. ****