



# Newsletter

## November 2020

### Welcome message from the Chair



Dear Readers, I warmly welcome you to the 3rd edition of the g7+ Newsletter. As we navigate through the COVID-19 global pandemic, I pray you all are safe and healthy. The g7+ Group of continue to stand in solidarity with the world, and wish to remind readers that “no one is safe until everyone is safe”. This means that no country can curb this pandemic on its own.

As a group, we issued a “Statement of Solidarity and Cooperation: A call for concerted support in our efforts to curb COVID19,” highlight-

ing four “asks” to mitigate the impact of the pandemic on people in conflict affected countries: They include calls for an immediate ceasefire, support for Public Healthcare and Institutions, care for Displaced People, and support for economic recovery and Self-reliance. The COVID-19 pandemic has brought to the fore the criticality of international cooperation in addressing its consequences. In this regard, the virtual meeting of the g7+ Ministers of Foreign Affairs in the margins of the 75th UN General assembly was held to reiterate this fact. We emphasized the importance of peer learning and sharing of experiences among Nations that can further strengthen solidarity during these unprecedented times.

On behalf of g7+ members, I thank our development partners for providing generous support during this ongoing crisis. We also appreciate in particular, the World Bank and other International Financial Institutions for the debt relief to countries that have meagre resources to respond to the pandemic. As we continue our engagement, I hope that our collaboration will become more focused and decisive around issues of Fragility, Conflict and Violence, to guide our response to addressing the socio-economic impact of COVID-19.

I congratulate the people and Government of South Sudan for the peace agreement. This is good news for the g7+ family. We also welcome the ongoing intra-Afghan peace talks in Afghanistan, the peace processes in Yemen and elsewhere. The g7+ stand ready to support these peace processes and hope that they result in lasting peace and stability for the people. As a group we remain committed to delivering on the aspirations and goals of Agenda 2030. In this regard, I congratulate g7+ members namely, Democratic Republic of Congo, Union of the Comoros, Liberia, Papua New Guinea, and Solomon Islands for submitting their respective Voluntary National Review (VNR) reports at the 2020 High Level Political Forum.

Finally, I hope the COVID-19 pandemic ends without further damage to people and economies and that peace prevails everywhere. Please stay safe and healthy. Wishing you happy reading. Thank you.

*Francis Mustapha Kai-kai*

*Minister of Planning and Economic Development of Sierra Leone, and Chair of the g7+*

### g7+ held ministers of foreign affairs meeting to identify collective way forward



The g7+ held a virtual meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs on 30 September 2020 in the margins of 75th Session of UNGA. Ministers and Permanent Representative to the United Nations (UN), came together to identify collective way forward on how to mitigate the adverse impact of COVID-19 and optimize the g7+ Observer status to voice the perspective of countries affected by conflict and fragility.

The members expressed their solidarity with the victims of the COVID-19 and the man made crisis such as wars and conflicts. They unanimously called for partnership and global solidarity founded on humane aspiration as the only way to curb the pandemic. Recognizing that pandemic has had unique and severe impact on countries that have already been vulnerable due to decades of wars, the members reiterated the g7+ joint call issued in May 2020. Commending the United Nation for granting observer status to the g7+, the members emphasized on the optimal use of the status in the pursuit of g7+ cause.

In the opening statement the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Sierra Leone (the chairing country), Nabeela Tunis, thanked the members and the secretariat for this timely meeting. She emphasised that “the meeting is crucial to strategies our position to protect our countries’ interest in the vaccine development and to mitigate the risk we are facing amid the global economic depression and political turmoil. The chair of g7+ , Minister Francis Kai Kai, commended the g7+ members in their efforts to contain the pandemic, despite the meager resources they have. Reminding that that fragility is self-reinforcing, he emphasized that the social, economic and political consequences of the pandemic on conflict-affected countries will be dreadful. Therefore, the meeting is important to collectively help in mitigating the adverse impact of the virus.

Special Envoy of g7+ and Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, Jose Ramos Horta, in his keynote speech applauded Afghanistan’s role as one of the Coordinators together with Croatia, that facilitated negotiations for the Omnibus resolution “*comprehensive and Coordinated Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic*”.

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He highlighted on the challenges that g7+ members will have in access to vaccine unless it is declared public good. Therefore, he emphasised that the g7+ members need to advocate for declaring the COVID-19 vaccine a public good accessible by all free of charge. Dr. Horta also called on developed countries and IFIs to “write off debt owned by conflict affected countries, LDCs and Small Islands Developing States”. This will help in strengthening their capacity to respond to the pandemic and achieve economic resilience and self-reliance.

During the plenary session, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Timor-Leste, Adaljiza Magno informed that “Timor-Leste has established Economic recovery plan, centered on people, which will reactivate the national economy, with measures in short, medium and long term”. Believing in the spirit of human care and solidarity to successfully contain the pandemic, Minister Magno supported the calls for the covid-19 vaccines to be declared public good by urging “Universal access to vaccine and other health emergency stimulus package”

Emphasizing strengthening partnership for peacebuilding and sustaining peace amid the COVID-19, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, Central African Republic (CAR), Sylvie Bai-po-Temon, said that the theme of the Meeting “*Safeguarding Peace and Stability is of Peace and Stability in a Changing Global Arena*” is particularly important for Central African Republic. Under the leadership of President of the Republic, Professor Faustin Archange TOUADERA, CAR signed a Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic with 14 armed groups under the aegis of the African Union on February 6, 2019.

The Government of CAR has made progress in reforming the security and defence sector, settlement of refugees and displaced persons, the creation of the Truth, Justice, Reparation and Reconciliation Commission and the restoration of the authority of the State. Minister Bai-po-Temon reaffirmed her country’s support to implement the g7+ Statement of Solidarity and Cooperation: A call for concerted support in our efforts to curb COVID19”. She reiterated the need for solidarity and cooperation among the nations to defeat the common enemy COVID-19 by quoting African Proverb “Alone, we go faster, together, we go further”.

Considering the need of peace and stability in the era of COVID-19, Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs of Liberia, Henry B. Fahnbulleh, shared the country’s experience in developing a plan to respond to the current covid-19 pandemic. This includes adopting fiscal policy to meet the needs of people. He encouraged that the g7+ group should continue sharing of experience through Fragile-to-Fragile cooperation and promote the collective agenda at the global level through its observer status.

Participants reminded how the pandemic presented grim challenges for conflict affected countries that are already in fragile situation. This includes weakening the already fragile economy and service delivery. It has badly affected every sector such as agriculture, petroleum and tourism. Minister of Foreign Affairs of Sao Tome e Principe, Idite Ten Jua informed that the pandemic has made many local Tourism companies to close their businesses that has further increased unemployment. The government through its social protection program helped more than 2000 families and launched a program “Let’s plant to have what to eat” to ensure food security. Praising the cause of the g7+, Ministers Jua reiterated Sao Tome and Principe’s “total commitment and availability to strengthening cooperation and consolidation of g7+ as the group

in the pursuit of its objective” in peacebuilding and statebuilding.

Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Republic of South Sudan, Beatrice Khamisa Wani-Noah commended the g7+ support to South Sudan’s peace process in the past. Speaking of the current peace process, she expressed that her country is keen to engage in Fragile-to-Fragile cooperation and would appreciate assistance in this regard. She also spoke about the humanitarian crisis in South Sudan caused by conflict and the natural disasters. Sharing its boundaries with 6 countries, there are at least 300,000 refugees on its borders. 7 out of 10 districts experienced natural disasters. According to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), heavy rains have caused rivers to overflow their dikes and banks, flooding vast areas and settlement along the White Nile in the center of the country, and estimated that more than 600,000 people have been affected and displaced. Such challenges have been further exacerbated by the outbreak of COVID-19. With the fragile health situation and limited road access in the country, conducting proper test for COVID-19 has been difficult.

Participants welcomed the UN Secretary General call for global ceasefire and the omnibus resolution on COVID-19 that was recently adapted. However, they expressed observation that the unique challenges and needs of the conflict affected and fragile countries have been understated in the discourse on curbing the pandemic. They appreciated the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Mark Lowcock, for his recent briefing to the UN Security Council in which he called for attention to the impact of COVID-19 in conflict-affected countries.

Permanent Representative of Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to the United Nations, Ambassador, Adela Raz, expressed Afghanistan commitment to implementing priorities highlighted in the g7+ joint statement. “The government of Afghanistan has repeatedly called on the Taliban to respect the Secretary-General’s call for a global ceasefire and offered to seize all military operations against the Taliban if they reciprocate”. She shared an update on the ongoing intra-Afghan peace talks, as one of the founding members of g7+, Afghanistan is dedicated to strengthen the voice of conflict affected countries at the United Nations. Afghanistan acted as a coordinator in facilitating the Omnibus resolutions that emphasise the pandemic’s consequences on international Peace and Security. The resolutions recognises the potential impact of the pandemic on conflict-affected states and those at risk of conflict. Ambassador Raz recommended that the g7+ should take full advantage of the observer status at the General Assembly. “Afghanistan hopes to work even closer together with our brothers and sisters in the g7+ at the UN. We would like to see the group coordinate common positions in intergovernmental negotiations and deliver common remarks at major meetings and events” She proposed that regular Ambassadorial Meetings be held in New York to agree on collective advocacy in the areas of conflict prevention and sustaining peace agenda.

Permanent Representative of Cote d’Ivoire to the UN, Ambassador Leon Kacou ADOM shared an update on how COVID-19 as affected the country. Accordingly the pandemic has affected all household. The country’s income drop by 7.8%. Ambassador Adom said that “COVID-19 teaches that country no can win the fight with the virus alone. He further stressed the need to invest in health sector”. Ambassador Adom called on the group for a strong collaboration to ensure “the future vaccine of COVID-19 be distributed in the spirit of solidarity to all countries including conflict affected and poor countries.

Permanent Representative of the Republic of Yemen to the United Nations, Ambassador, Abdullah Ali Fadhel Al-Saadi supported UN Secretary General call for ceasefire. Speaking of the situation in Yemen, he said that the country continues to face challenge as the Houthis militias doesn't respect the ceasefire. Ambassador Al-Saadi proposed that the g7+ through its observer status, should contribute to addressing challenges faced by member countries through concerted advocacy and peer learning. Speaking about managing the impact of the pandemic, Ambassador Al-Saadi said that government monitors all movement on the border and thanked the UN agencies for the support in this regard. However, due to the ongoing war that shattered all the public services, it has been difficult to contain the spread of the virus. The country needs critical support to strengthen capacity of its hospital to respond to COVID-19.

Chargé d'Affaires from the Permanent Representative of the Union Comoros to the UN, Ahmed Abdallah described the meeting as "Unique opportunity" to evaluate the group's achievement and help to mobilise international support and attention to the special need of g7+ members. He informed that the Government took steps to develop a response to the covid-19 pandemic even before the coronavirus arrived in the country, and successfully slowed down the local transmission. Comoros is one of the few countries in the region with a lower fatality rate to date. However, as an archipelago of four Islands, Union of the Comoros shares similar concern as Sao Tome Principe, on the Tourism Sector. He emphasised on the importance of including environmental protection as part of the concerted effort to curb covid-19. Union of Comoros is severely affected by climate change that impacts negatively its economic activities for its citizen to survive in this challenging time.

The meeting was concluded with the agreement on the collective way forward highlighted in the outcome document that includes coordination among the permanent missions and working closely with the g7+ secretariat to enhance visibility and timely representation. Members thanked the g7+ secretariat for organizing the meeting. \*\*\*

## COVID-19 and the role of Mental Health and Psychosocial Support efforts to build and sustain peace.



On 24 September, the Kingdom of the Netherlands in partnership with g7+ and the Center on International Cooperation (CIC), organised a virtual High Level Event on "COVID-19 and the role of Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in building resilience and sustaining social cohesion and peace" in the margins of the 75th UN General Assembly.

The event was co-chaired by the Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation of the Netherlands, Sigrid Kaag and the UN Deputy Secretary General, Ms. Amina Mohammed with the special attendance of the Her Royal Highness, the Queen Maxima. The panel discussion was moderated by Sarah Cliffe, Director of the NYU CIC, focussed on discussing the impact of mental health support on sustaining peace and stability.

Delivering the opening remarks, Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation of the Netherlands, Sigrid Kaag said that "Covid-19 has turned our life upside down and profoundly affected our well being. For people in conflict affected societies where daily life is already a struggle, covid-19 only compound this deep sense of uncertainty, and vulnerability". She further added that "to acknowledge the paramount significance of Mental Health in psychosocial wellbeing for a person capacity to act, to cope, to connect, to recover and to look forward in harmony with a wider community, we cannot just ignore this important feature". To enhance the impact of international support in time of COVID-19, "neither humanitarian efforts nor peacebuilding efforts can be effective if we fail to recognise and address this psychosocial needs and dynamics. If we neglect the pain and the soul; we neglect the biggest opportunity for peacebuilding and building social cohesion". She emphasised the Kingdom of the Netherlands position to "advocate for the integration of mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) not only in humanitarian action but in all effort to prevent conflict and to build and sustain peace" and she called for "the systematic application of the physiological lens to our conflict analyses and as result to our effort to sustain peace"

Speaking on behalf of the g7+ group, Ambassador Alie Kaba, Permanent Representative of Sierra Leone to the United Nations emphasised that the trauma caused by COVID-19 undermine the hard-built peace in g7+ countries. Decades of wars and conflicts have already caused long lasting mental stress. Mental Health and Psychosocial Support must be considered as part of national, regional and Global response. He proposed three points that need to be considered in efforts to integrate MHPSS fully into peacebuilding architecture.

**THE WORLD NEEDS PEACE MORE THAN EVER**  
**21 SEPTEMBER 2020, INTERNATIONAL PEACE DAY**

This year's international Day of Peace comes amid global pandemic of COVID-19 that has paralyzed life on every scale. No country can curb this crisis on its own. We require cooperation founded on humane solidarity above politics to address the pandemic and its consequences. Therefore, nations and their people need to be at Peace with each other.

The g7+ has reiterated our commitment to help in making and restoring peace founded on solidarity, care for humanity and care for our planet. We have joined the call of the UN Secretary-General for an immediate ceasefire all over the world. We need to stop wars so that we can focus our energy and resources on addressing the devastating impact of the COVID-19 that is a test of our love and care for humanity.

We all need to win over our common enemy which at this time is COVID-19 and build a better world that is just, stable and peaceful for our future generation.

@g7plus #PeaceDay #SDG16 #UN75

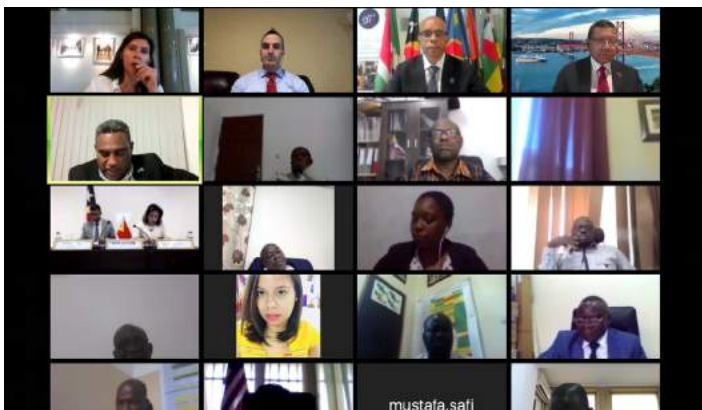
First stopping war and ongoing conflicts through permanent cease-fire is the ultimate source of peace of mind of people in g7+ and other conflict affected countries. People should feel free from fears of wars and crisis, so they can manage the impact of COVID-19.

Secondly, conflict affected countries are home to proportionately huge number of families that earn daily wages, which are barely enough to survive from hand-to-mouth. With the counter measures such as lockdowns and isolation, they are even deprived of those meager source of their income. Therefore, the response should be context specific while undertaking such measures.

Third, the implication of Border closure aimed at supposedly slowing down the spread of the COVID-19 virus has disproportionately inflicted huge pressure and mental stress on migrants, refugees and displaced people that include women and children stranded on borders and ports. International community, regional actors, host countries and donors are encouraged to care for their needs and safety as a gesture of human solidarity.

During the discussion, the UN Deputy Secretary General, Amina Mohammed ensured that the UN is committed to “A world in which everyone, everywhere has psychological support during this pandemic”. \*\*\*

### The g7+ held Technical Meeting with COVID-19 Coordinators to share lessons in managing the Pandemic.



The g7+ held a virtual meeting attended by senior officials including focal points and public health officials on 26 August 2020. Participants also included Wilhelmina Jallah, the Liberian Minister of Health. Recognizing the unique challenges facing g7+ member countries, participants shared lessons learned in managing Covid-19 and called for strengthening government institutions to curb the pandemic.

In anticipation of a wave of global infections, participants informed that their governments had established national taskforces to deal with the pandemic and develop recovery strategic plan to prevent the spread of the pandemic.

However, many g7+ countries that have experienced decades of conflict and war, lack basic health facilities to cope with the virus. This includes insufficient Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) for Public Health staff diagnostic kits, hospitals and medicines. Due to lack of needed infrastructure, it is difficult to access the remote areas to care for people affected. Lack of proper testing and data makes it even harder to report on the exact number of cases and number of deaths.

Representatives highlighted the need to strengthen public health institutions. International support is needed to build capacity and develop skills to cope with the pandemic and its impact.

Officials emphasized on cooperation between local leadership and citizens including civil society which is an important factor to contain the spread of virus. This will help in building trust and confidence in the institutions. In several countries, some part of local population does not believe that Corona exists and hence it is difficult to convince them to take protection measures such as wearing masks. Local and religious leaders have important role to cooperate with governments to change people’s behaviour to follow standard procedures that are put in place to prevent the spread of the virus. The management of Ebola outbreak provided important lessons in this regard. As much as it owes to the support of international community to contain Ebola, local leaders and community chiefs had important role to play. Therefore countries that had experienced the outbreak of Ebola have learned from those experience to manage the pandemic.

The meeting was concluded with recommendations by member countries to work in concerted partnership and solidarity to address the pandemic, and agreement to organise regular meeting among COVID-19 Coordinators for peer learning and updates.

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### The g7+ Foundation “Our facts and Our Stories in our voice”



g7+ foundation

Since its inception, the g7+ group has grown in its influence globally. Its advocacy and peer learning (Fragile to Fragile cooperation) have had impression on global discourse. The group has gained significant recognition and support as it voices the perspective, which is often comprised of untold stories from countries affected by conflict and fragility. The g7+ foundation has had a major role in gathering, documenting, and analyzing those stories that have helped in informing the global discourse and have been helpful in sharing of relative experiences.

The g7+ Foundation was established to support the g7+ members and the secretariat to capture the essence of country led pathway toward peace and resilience. Its objective includes:

- Harnessing the wealth of knowledge and wisdom that exists within member countries, and sharing the same among members, that will further help international partners to better understand the context.
- Building the evidence base, drawing on what has worked and what has not – with the focus on sharing practical measures that can put members on the path of resilience and development.

- And helping in creating space for the voices of conflict affected countries to be heard so that they are active participants in the discussions that affect their future.

The g7+ foundation is hosted by Arent Fox, LLP in Washington DC, USA. Its activities are supervised by a board comprised of experts that include Ambassador Pierre-Richard Prosper, partner at Arent Fox and former Crimes Prosecutor for the UN International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, Noeleen Heyzer, Social Scientist who was the first woman to serve as the Executive Secretary of the UN ESCAP, Mr. Peter Ryan-Ken, Founder of PeRK Advisory, Dr. Helder da Costa, General Secretary of the g7+ secretariat, Mr. Habib Mayar serves as its Executive Director who is also Deputy General Secretary of g7+ Secretary.

The foundation supported the g7+ Secretariat in its mission to attain observer status at the United Nations, which was a major milestone in the evolution of the group. In line with its objective, the g7+ foundation played a critical role in getting a space for the group at the United Nations.

The g7+ Foundation has also had a leading role in peer learning among member countries. It helped the g7+ in conducting research on peace and statebuilding in g7+ members. It conducted a study on Reconciliation between Timor-Leste and Indonesia: A Forward Looking Model. Through this study, it explores the unique bilateral reconciliation process to facilitate a better understanding of what took place and the complex interplay of external and domestic pressures that surrounded the mutual pursuit of peace and development. The study was launched at the g7+ High Level Side Event “The Pursuit of Peace through Nationally Owned Mechanisms; Learning from Countries Experiences” in the margin of the 72th UNGA in New York in 2017. The study was submitted to the United Nations Secretary General Office and has been widely circulated among member states.

Secondly, the g7+ Foundation conducted a study comprised of case studies on Public Finance Management (PFM) in Timor-Leste and Afghanistan (State Building in Conflict Affected and Fragile States: A Comparative Study of Timor-Leste and Afghanistan Public Finance and National Accountability). Undertaken by the Institute for State Effectiveness (ISE), the study highlighted the experience of strengthening capacity in public financial management as a means of delivering better development outcomes. The publication was launched at g7+ side event “The Statebuilding Dilemma: Fragmented Budget equals Unsustainable Development” in the margin of the World Bank Annual Meeting in October 2017 in Washington DC.

The foundation plans to support the g7+ members in establishing a high level peer learning summit with Rwanda. Comprised of peer learning, and meeting of high level officials from g7+ and Rwanda including the President of Rwanda, Prime Minister of Cambodia and leadership from g7+, the summit will focus on exchange of tangible support and lessons in areas of peace, economic growth and stability.

In addition, the g7+ foundation will help in organizing a Ministerial level Meeting on Natural Resource Management in conflict affected countries in 2021. This will be coupled with a flagship publication that will compile practices of managing natural resources in g7+ countries. In line with its objectives, the foundation helps in mobilizing needed resources for the g7+. You can find out more information about the g7+ foundation and its work at [www.g7plus-foundation.org](http://www.g7plus-foundation.org) \*\*\*\*

## From the Desk of General Secretary



Dear readers, the g7+ Secretariat has adapted the new norms of working and conducting meetings. Despite the limitations these norms may have, we spare no efforts to serve the cause of g7+ in this difficult time.

In line with the aspiration of our joint statement of Solidarity and Cooperation “A call for concerted effort to curb the covid-19”, the Secretariat has strived to make the voice of g7+ heard at different fo-

rumms as its members and other conflict affected countries cope with the pandemic and its impact. The Statement was submitted to the Offices of the World Bank President, the managing Director of IMF and the United Nations Secretary General. In addition, our collective asks highlighted in the statement have been advocated for at different forums and through different means. It was highlighted at the Trade for Development website, featured in an interview with Habib Mayar that emphasized cooperation in the battle against COVID-19.

To highlight the specific needs of needs of conflict affected countries and the peculiar impact, the pandemic has had on them, My Deputy, Habib Mayar and Ms. Celine from Center on International Cooperation (CIC) co-authored an article on “Making Sure Peace Isn’t a Casualty of COVID-19 in Fragile States” that was published at World Politics Review. The article highlighted 6 main policies propositions on curbing the pandemic.

In addition to that, Habib was also interviewed by the DEVEX - International Development News Policy on “Q&A: Don’t forget to promote peace during pandemic, warns g7+ representative”, where he reiterated the need to have peace through ceasefire and reconciliation amid natural crisis of COVID-19.

Facilitating peer learning and promoting principles of effective cooperation on peacebuilding and statebuilding have been at the core of our collaboration. My team has been working hard to facilitate sharing of experience and establishing network with non-g7+ countries and organizations to widen our network of peer learning. This includes countries like Rwanda, Cambodia and Colombia. We have been working closely with partners such as Netherlands, Finland, Sweden, World Bank, UNOSSC, African Union, Islamic Development Bank, to enhance collaboration on areas of common interest.

Our members are also working hard to consolidate the group so that we can serve our collective cause even more effectively. The government of Timor-Leste completed ratification process of the g7+ charters, in addition to Afghanistan, Sao Tome e Principe and Sierra Leone and we have been working with other members to that end. Thank you and I hope you have enjoyed reading the newsletter. \*\*\*