



THE PRESIDENT
OF THE
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

29 March 2017

Excellency,

I am pleased to enclose herewith the summary of the High-Level Dialogue on Building Sustainable Peace for All: Synergies between the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Sustaining Peace, held on 24-25 January 2017.

The summary contains the main conclusions from the views shared by Member States and other participants during the plenary and at the three interactive workshops. It is my hope that these conclusions will motivate further action among all Member States, the UN system and other stakeholders, for more effective efforts towards Sustaining Peace and achieving the SDGs within an integrated and inseparable framework.

I take this opportunity to again express my sincere gratitude to the institutions and entities which partnered with the OPGA to organize the High-level Dialogue, and to all who participated in the event and supported it in various other ways.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Peter Thomson', written in a cursive style.

Peter Thomson

All Permanent Representatives and
Permanent Observers to the United Nations
New York

**High-Level Dialogue on ‘Building Sustainable Peace For All:
Synergies between the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Sustaining Peace’
24-25 January 2017**

Summary of Key Messages and Observations

The President of the General Assembly convened the High-Level Dialogue to discuss the mutually reinforcing linkages between Sustaining Peace and the 2030 Agenda and how to best leverage them to assist Member States, United Nations entities, civil society and other stakeholders in implementing the SDGs and sustaining peace.

The Secretary-General, the President of the Security Council, the President of the Economic and Social Council and the Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission participated in the event – marking the first time that these offices had come together to share their views on how the Organization could better promote coordination and coherence across its activities in support of sustainable development and sustaining peace.

Eighty-one Member States and 2 Observers took the floor in the plenary debate, including at the ministerial level. In addition, in three parallel interactive workshops held as part of the event, Member States, along with active participants from civil society and private sector, focused in greater detail on 1) empowering women and youth for peace and sustainable development; 2) the management of natural resources for peace and sustainable development; and 3) strengthening transparent, inclusive, and accountable institutions.

The main conclusions from the High Level Dialogue were as follows:

- Sustaining Peace and the Sustainable Development Agenda are strongly linked and mutually reinforcing, to the extent that neither can be achieved without the other.
- Sustaining peace and sustainable development processes must be driven by national and inclusive ownership that recognizes the needs and contributions of all segments of society, including women and youth.
- To sustain peace effectively and establish an enabling environment for sustainable development, preeminent attention must be accorded to conflict prevention, to addressing the root causes of conflict, to ensuring the rule of law and strong and accountable institutions, to the effective management and equitable distribution of resources, as well as to the protection of human rights. This also demands enhanced collaboration and partnerships, uniting the efforts of all stakeholders at the national, regional and international levels, including a reformed UN delivery system, impervious to ‘silos’ and able to operate as one.

Looking ahead, opportunities for Member States to carry forward the conversation on Sustaining Peace include the framework of the Peacebuilding Commission, the plenary debate of the General Assembly on the topic “Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace”, scheduled in April, and the High-level meeting of the General Assembly at its 72nd session on the same topic, which will have before it a report of the Secretary-General.

PLENARY SESSION:

Member States soundly and broadly affirmed the **mutually reinforcing relationship between sustaining peace and sustainable development**, emphasizing the fundamental reality that there can be no sustainable development without sustaining peace, and no sustainable peace without

sustainable development. In effect, the two agendas on sustaining peace and sustainable development will stand or fall together and, therefore, commitment to both must be reinforced.

Numerous delegations noted that the strong interlinkage between peace and development was reflected in both the 2030 Agenda and the sustaining peace resolutions and shared their own country examples of that linkage. Several speakers also highlighted their universal applicability: development was no longer viewed as a north-south issue, and sustainable development challenges were faced by all the people in the world. The importance of promoting unity of action and pursuing smart, integrated, strategic and coherent implementation approaches was also underscored, especially in addressing the important role of education, rule of law, eradication of poverty, climate change, the management of natural resources, youth employment and the effects of inequalities within and among states.

Speaker after speaker **emphasized the importance of conflict prevention** to creating a firm foundation for sustainable development to thrive. Preventing conflict and sustaining peace would have the best chance of success only if the root causes were addressed and if the pursuit of sustainable development followed an inclusive approach. The SDGs were described as the “best conflict prevention tools available,” and many speakers identified development challenges as drivers of conflict.

In the framework of the **mutually reinforcing nature of the three pillars of the Organization**, many Member States highlighted the fundamental importance of **human rights and SDG16**. They underlined the value of the Human Rights Up Front Initiative and the role of the Human Rights Council, emphasizing the protection of human rights, justice and the rule of law, as well as effective and accountable institutions, as cross-cutting prerequisites for sustaining peace across the entire 2030 Agenda in order to achieve all the 17 SDGs.

Participants also **recognized the importance of inclusivity and a people-centred approach** in the implementation of Sustaining Peace and the 2030 Agenda. Many stressed the call in the 2030 Agenda to leave no one behind and affirmed that sustaining peace stood a better chance when the whole of society was involved, particularly women and youth. Addressing the role of women was described as an unfinished business of our time, and the importance of ensuring equitable access to education, opportunity and employment for young people was also emphasized.

Many Member States noted the centrality of **national and inclusive ownership to both sustaining peace and sustainable development**, while also acknowledging the need for sustained political support and material assistance from the **international community**. Many Member States acknowledged the responsibility of providing the Secretary-General and the system with the required tools, particularly regarding adequate, predictable and sustainable financing of peace and development efforts. Several of them stressed the need to find a “better way to finance” prevention and peacebuilding efforts.

Almost without exception, **Member States reaffirmed their commitment to the 2030 Agenda as a transformative and universal agenda** and took the opportunity to highlight their own progress toward the implementation of the SDGs.

Partnerships was an important theme of the discussion, with numerous Member States highlighting the value of pursuing strategic partnerships that brought together key actors from across governments, the UN system, regional organizations, civil society, the international financial institutions and the private sector, so that their work would be coordinated, complementary and mutually reinforcing. This **demanding urgent reform within the United Nations system, aimed at tearing down “silos” and addressing the fragmentation** of its work among Headquarters

offices and entities and between them and the field. This would strengthen accountability for delivering results and increase coordination and coherence, so that all development, humanitarian, human rights and peace and security actors in the UN-system would work together seamlessly towards the same goal of building sustainable peace and development. References were also made in this regard to the reform initiatives of the Secretary-General for improving coordination and coherence in the work of the Organization.

The Dialogue ended with the understanding that **the discussion should continue** actively among Member States and all other stakeholders on how best to exploit the synergies between Sustaining Peace and the 2030 Agenda to ensure the effective, integrated and coherent implementation of both.

WORKSHOP I

Empowering Women and Youth for Peace and Sustainable Development

Workshop I, organized in collaboration with **UN Women**, examined the roles of women and youth in sustaining peace and achieving sustainable development. It focused especially on the linkages between the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) and Youth, Peace and Security (YPS) agendas, as elaborated in Security Council resolutions 1325 and 2250, respectively.

The workshop witnessed a rich and candid discussion, during which panelists, discussion leaders and the audience reflected on the work and **achievements of women and youth peace activists**, the lessons learned and the key challenges confronting them and the international community as a whole. References were made to a number of countries which had experienced conflict, including Sri Lanka, Libya, Nepal, Liberia, South Africa, Pakistan and Colombia, among others.

Discussions proceeded on the premise that the active participation of women and youth in peace and development processes was validated in the Sustaining Peace framework and in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which both underlined **inclusivity as key to preventing conflict and building sustainable peace and development**.

Inclusivity was vital for advancing national processes and creating a numerical advantage in repositioning women and youth was critical to ensure that the needs of all segments of society were addressed. Participants heard about the vital political role that youth and women were playing in efforts to rebuild Libya and the urgent need to amplify their voice. In Sri Lanka, advocacy research and country-wide consultations on **reconciliation** revealed that **fifty per cent of the women in the population should be involved in the peace process**. In Liberia, the legitimacy provided by the YPS agenda had inspired youth representatives to participate in the country's transition process, but lessons learned in that regard underlined the need to explore their **potential to serve as mediators in conflict resolution efforts**.

Participants also heard from an expert about women and youth in Pakistan, such as Malala and Asma Jahangir, who are striving to change narratives of women in society and whose stories had proven that women were not merely victims but also important peace actors and agents of change in their communities. It was suggested that advantage should be taken of **current paradigm shifts favoring a broad recognition of the work of women and youth**, by putting them in the driving seat of peace and development processes. Similarly, the spirited efforts of young women networks in Colombia who supported and facilitated the country's peace negotiation process were highlighted.

It was pointed out that the common WPS and YPS agendas were underpinned by the pillars of prevention, protection, partnerships and participation, and that both agendas needed to be mainstreamed in the implementation of each of the 17 SDGs, in order to make peace sustainable

and afford **women and young people the opportunity to take co-ownership** of a vital sustainable peace dividend.

The main messages from participants were as follows:

- The WPS and YPS agendas were not just about the participation of women and youth but also about their **empowerment and leadership in peace and development processes**. It was therefore imperative to move away from the stereotype of seeing them as vulnerable people and victims, and to focus on them instead as actors and partners in peace and development processes.
- It was essential to **go beyond a narrow understanding of the root causes of conflict**, which often over-emphasized employment issues, and to accord adequate attention to the fundamental questions of the meaning of hope, belonging and identity for both young people and women.
- A careful consideration of the questions of **inclusivity and participation** should recognize the extent to which young women and youth might have **lost confidence and trust in governmental institutions and the multilateral system**, and there was an urgent need to redress that trust deficit.
- An effective approach to **conflict prevention** needed to recognize that the most effective way to **combat violent extremism was to counter the violence of exclusion**.
- It was important to ensure that women and youth had adequate access to **quality education** to further empower them, as well as to listen to them on how best to maximize their capacity to participate in peace and development processes.
- Engaging on issues relating to youth and women could have an integrative effect and facilitate efforts to break the “silos” that had often undermined **coherent action in sustaining peace**. It was crucial to **move from rhetoric to reality**, in terms of securing the necessary funding to enhance gender-sensitive analytical and programming capacities necessary for taking forward the WPS and YPS agendas.
- Research had illustrated that **societies that had achieved gender equality were more resilient to conflict and the dangers of exclusion**. Women, representing half of the world population should not be left behind. Mechanisms were needed to ensure that they were involved.

WORKSHOP II

The Management of Natural Resources for Peace and Sustainable Development

Workshop II, organized in partnership with the **World Resources Institute**, consisted of presentations and discussions on three main issues: land degradation, water resources and extractive industries.

Among the main **objectives** of the workshop were to **understand better the circumstances** in which natural resources could contribute – directly or indirectly – to tensions and conflict within and between countries; to elucidate how **effective natural resources management and equitable sharing** could mitigate risks of tensions and conflict and to learn what countries and organizations had done effectively to ensure sustainable development for all, making access to, and equitable sharing of, natural resources a source of societal stability and peace.

It was recognized that **management of natural resources played an important role in sustaining peace and sustainable development**. Many countries tended to rely on natural resources during the earlier phases of development. The world's poor were increasingly found in countries experiencing fragility and that many of those countries were facing resource challenges. The unprecedented drought in Syria which triggered migration patterns was seen by many as a contributing factor to the ongoing conflict in that country.

It was also noted that land degradation could lead to conflict and undermine peace. In this regard, **land governance and equitable access to land** was considered important. Work of UNDP in strengthening sustainable land governance and restoring land was acknowledged.

To sustain economic development in the context of instability there was a **need for good governance and strong and inclusive institutions**. Highlighted were the examples of Côte d'Ivoire and Costa Rica establishing a South-South Cooperation mechanism to exchange good practices and the UNDP, FAO and UNEP compact in addressing forest degradation through the Green Forest Fund in the management of natural resources.

If effectively managed, the revenues generated by **natural resources** could promote peacebuilding and sustaining peace.

Many **good practices and positive examples** of managing natural resources were cited including in Timor-Leste (through the establishment of a Petroleum Fund), Niger (re-greening efforts), Costa Rica (through payment for ecosystem mechanisms), Honduras (water management), Botswana (management of diamonds). These examples highlighted how natural resources could be utilized to achieve sustainable development and benefit their societies. Hungary shared its experience regarding international cooperation and water security, highlighting the current process in the General Assembly, aimed at improving integration and coordination of the work of the United Nations on the water-related goals and targets. Indonesia shared information regarding national and regional approaches to water management. Two delegations cautioned against simplifying the relationship between peace and development, particularly when it came to the mandates of United Nations organs.

On several occasions the importance of the **Kimberley Process** in the certification of diamonds was highlighted as an example of inclusive and worldwide partnership in which civil society, governments and industry take joint responsibility.

The main messages from participants were as follows:

- **The Intersection between scarcity of resources and poverty** was increasingly seen as a contributing factor to tensions and conflict, both within and between countries. Participants stated that the poor were particularly vulnerable to worsening natural resource scarcities, as they were in the weakest position to access essential resources like clean water and fertile land.
- Many participants pointed to rising living standards, the resource-intensive consumption patterns of rich countries, **wasteful consumption**, changing demand patterns, and population growth, as placing **increasing pressures** on natural resource availability.
- It was noted that while there were a **number of examples** of how natural resources had been managed in ways that are inclusive and sustainable; the challenge was to get to scale fast.
- It was clarified that matters such as **equitable access and robust institutions** in the natural resources sector are central to realizing the SDGs, peace and climate agendas.

- Conversations on SDG implementation must be brought to bear on **economic planning and public expenditure decisions at the national and local levels**. For instance, with regard to land degradation, if one could demonstrate the employment implications of investing in degraded land, we could begin to get the attention of policy-makers to support a realignment of national policies towards the implementation of the SDGs.

WORKSHOP III: Strengthening Transparent, Inclusive, and Accountable Institutions

Workshop III, organized in co-operation with the **International Peace Institute**, elaborated on quantitative evidence and scholarly research that reveal an inextricable link between peaceful societies and transparent, inclusive, and accountable institutions. It was recognized that **political cultures supporting citizen participation, accountability, and checks and balances, tended to display higher levels of peace, development and good governance**. However, many barriers to strengthening transparent, inclusive, and accountable institutions remained, despite the existence of national and global platforms (e.g., the Open Government Partnership) that could help address those barriers.

Many speakers agreed that in order to be legitimate and effective, efforts to strengthen transparent, inclusive, and accountable institutions should be **nationally owned**. This demands inclusive, multi-stakeholder approaches that ensured no one was left behind and that all voices—including those of civil society organizations, the private sector, and ordinary citizens, particularly vulnerable groups such as women and children— were heard and taken into account in decision-making processes.

The main messages from participants were as follows:

- In order to bridge the gap in trust between citizens and institutions, governments must ensure that **public services and goods were accessible to all citizens**. Building institutions was not enough; governments needed to promote accountability by informing citizens of their rights and responsibilities and raising public awareness of the role of institutions in protecting them. This required strong political will and leadership.
- **The local context was key** to strengthening transparent, inclusive, and accountable institutions. The United Nations and other international actors needed to be more cognizant of the subtleties of each situation, to strengthen local actors, and to support existing initiatives working in furtherance of the SDGs. For example, efforts to strengthen the rule of law required the acknowledgment and consideration of existing local informal justice systems.
- Measuring progress in strengthening transparent, inclusive, and accountable institutions could be challenging, particularly in countries lacking the institutional capacity to do so. **Expanding the scope of existing measurement tools** to include relevant SDG indicators was a crucial first step, particularly for indicators with no known global data sources, such as SDG 16.7.
- Furthermore, recognizing the **role of civil society and international organizations in contributing to official national statistical datasets** was fundamental for building effective monitoring systems. Governments must also vet external data sources to ensure they were used appropriately.