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Lessons Learned and Strategic Operationalisation of Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace in the Americas

2020 Review of the United Nations Peacebuilding Architecture
Expert-Level Consultation

Concept Note

18 May 2020 | 10:00am-12:00pm EST
Via Zoom Online Platform

Background: Sustaining Peace

Sustaining peace, as defined in the dual United Nations General Assembly and Security Council resolutions (A/70/262 and S/2016/2282), is “a goal and process [...] aimed at preventing the outbreak, escalation, continuation and recurrence of conflict”. It shifts the starting point of analysis from looking only at the drivers of risk to also understanding the sources of resilience in a society, putting the focus on preventive rather than reactive actions.

In his January 2018 report on peacebuilding and sustaining peace (A/72/707–S/2018/43), the UN secretary-general called for a shift in not only UN policies on peacebuilding, but also approaches to peacebuilding at the regional and country levels. In implementing this shift, he advocated for changes in four key areas: operational and policy coherence; UN leadership at the country level; partnerships with local and regional actors; and international support for sustaining peace.

Sustaining peace is primarily the responsibility of Member States, as the principle of national ownership was underscored in the dual 2016 resolutions. However, today’s realities dictate that sustaining peace cannot be accomplished by individual Member States alone and solely at the national level. Current conflict dynamics too often have regional and cross-regional trajectories and linkages; capacities of Member States also vary from context to context.

As such, [sustaining peace requires building strategic and operational regional partnerships that include multilateral partners, national actors, local peacebuilders and regional organisations](#). Ahead of the 2020 Review of the UN Peacebuilding Architecture, the commitment to sustaining peace requires strengthening of regional partnerships for effective coordination on peacebuilding in an inclusive and multi-stakeholder manner, and for the advancement of regional norms, frameworks and actions for conflict prevention, sustaining peace and sustainable development.

Context: The Americas

Peace and conflict landscape in the Americas looks dramatically different from other regions of the world. Each country in the Americas is unique in the way it approaches peacebuilding, and, as such, contributes to the creation of a very dynamic and complex peacebuilding architecture in the region. Although the risk of open conflict in the regions is far from non-existent, various peacebuilding and conflict prevention arrangements have proven to be highly successful in the prevention and peaceful resolution of conflict. The last open conflict successfully ended when the Colombian government signed peace agreements with the Revolutionary Armed Force of Colombia (FARC) in December 2016.

To enable successful prevention and peaceful resolution of conflict, Americas' multi-layered architecture for resolution of disputes and promotion of democracy includes a wide gamut of bilateral arrangements, as well as a variety of regional organisations such as the Organization of American States (OAS) and sub-regional partnerships, including with the European Union. At the same time, peacebuilding in the Americas is increasingly locally-owned and locally-driven. Among those most active local peacebuilders are women, youth, and indigenous populations, who are also often times those most marginalised and affected.

Local and national peacebuilding work, coupled with regional arrangements, are all essential to ensure 'operational multilateralism' in the maintenance of peace and security. The creation of inclusive regional platforms as spaces for regular exchange and strategic collaboration would support all actors to effectively engage in a joint effort to counter the regional spillover of national instabilities and strengthen informal regional and hemispheric norm-setting and decision-making processes.

While peacebuilding in the Americas is not likely to mirror other regions of the globe, it must still continue its work to sustain peace and stability at the regional level by harnessing the capacities and mandates of all existing peacebuilding actors at the regional level and call for more discussion on the capacity of these approaches to respond to emerging signs of instability, including social, economic and environmental drivers of conflict and high-levels of gender-based violence in the region.

2020 Review of the UN Peacebuilding Architecture

In 2020, the international community has been offered an opportunity to take stock of progress achieved and to identify challenges and implementation gaps. The 2020 comprehensive review of the UN peacebuilding architecture focuses on the implementation of peacebuilding and sustaining peace at the national and regional levels with a view to assess and learn from the current efforts to operationalise sustaining peace and develop a vision on how existing efforts to build and sustain peace can be better reflective of emerging conflict trends and shocks and be strategically improved moving forward.

Ahead of the 2020 Review, the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC), the Permanent Missions of Colombia and Peru to the United Nations and the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs organise an online expert-level consultation that aims to take stock of the implementation of peacebuilding and sustaining peace in the Americas.

The consultation will serve as a platform to take stock of progress achieved and challenges facing the operationalisation of peacebuilding and sustaining peace in the Americas. In line with the four pillars of the 2018 Report of the Secretary-General on peacebuilding and sustaining peace (A/72/707-S/2018/43), it will draw on specific case studies to provide an assessment of existing efforts to build and sustain peace through partnerships, financial arrangements, operational and policy coherence, and adequate leadership from the United Nations. It will also create a platform to examine the opportunities for further enhancing regional capacities for peacebuilding and sustaining peace across all pillars, including development and peacebuilding, and with various stakeholders, including national governments, regional organisations and local peacebuilders.

Specifically, the consultation will aim at:

- Identifying critical multidimensional challenges and risks to peace, security and development in the Americas, and the key peacebuilding stakeholders in the region who are capacitated to address these;
- Exploring the role, progress made and challenges facing the work of the United Nations (UN) on peacebuilding and sustaining peace in the region;
- Determining priorities and entry points for the strengthening of regional normative frameworks, policies and practice on peacebuilding and sustaining peace.

Participation

Participation is by invitation only. All necessary information to join the virtual conversation will be shared at least two days before the meeting is convened.

The consultation will bring together government officials, experts from relevant regional organisations, the United Nations (UN), development/peace and security partners, financial institutions, local peacebuilders, including women and youth organisations, and other key actors engaged in peacebuilding efforts in the Americas.

Co-sponsors are committed to gender equality and youth inclusion in the composition for the consultation.

Format

The consultation will be conducted through Zoom Online Platform on 18 May 2020 from 10:00am until 12:00pm EST, with an opportunity for the participants and invitees to contribute additional thoughts via an online survey, which will be distributed during the meeting and via email in the follow-up from the conversation.

The consultation will not be recorded; Chatham House rule will be applied. To support an off the record space for participants, the meeting invitation will require participants to use a password to access the discussion.

The consultation will be conducted in English with simultaneous Spanish interpretation available; an online survey will be also available in English and Spanish for additional input.

Expected Outcome

The outcome document will present factors of success for peacebuilding and sustaining peace at the regional level, remaining challenges and potential areas for further scaling up UN support to regional peacebuilding actors.

The outcome document will feed into the 2020 report of the Secretary-General on peacebuilding and sustaining peace and the 2020 Review of the United Nations Peacebuilding Architecture.