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STUDY GUIDES

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Letter from The Executive Board

Greetings Delegates,

At the outset, we would like to inform you that it gives us immense pleasure to welcome you all to this simulation of United Nations Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and Peace Operations at BESC MUN 2024. The Executive Board members hope that this simulation turns out to be an experience worth cherishing for all of the participants, while accommodating a praise-worthy debate.

Throughout the conference, we will be addressing the *Agenda – Review of Current Missions to prepare the 2024 Roadmap for peace*. This simulation shall be adhering to the UN4MUN Rules of Procedures, with a few necessary amendments which are required for the easy functioning of the committee. The sole purpose of preparing this background guide is to deliver an insight about the committee as well the agenda to the delegates. To begin with, this drive, will serve as the knowledge repository, and will serve as a map for you to navigate through the mass of information which you may come across in your preparation for the conference.

However, this drive and all the files uploaded are by no means the end of the research. The Executive Board will be delighted to hear you all, bringing in solid argumentations while incorporating several new realms to the agenda. Thus, as the name ‘drive’ may be hinting, it will not provide you with all the information on the agenda at hand; you will have to work a bit beyond reading these papers/files. In addition, it is necessary to understand that being in such a competitive environment, we don’t look out to hear what statistics or legislations you have read while researching. Rather, we will recommend you to analyse these facts and present your country’s perceptions over the relevancy of these laws.

All the best!

Executive Board

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- Security Council Affairs Division
- Electoral Assistance Division
- Policy and Mediation Division
- Division for Palestinian Rights
- Decolonization Unit
- **Peacebuilding Support Office**
  - Office of the Assistant Secretary-General for Peacebuilding Support
  - Peacebuilding Commission Branch
  - Financing for Peacebuilding Branch
  - Peacebuilding Strategy and Partnerships Branch

REGIONAL & SHARED

- **Office of Assistant Secretary-General for Middle East, Asia and the Pacific**
  - Middle East Division
  - Asia Pacific Division
- **Office of Assistant Secretary-General for Africa**
  - African Union Partnerships Team
  - Western Africa Division
  - Central and Southern Africa Division
  - Northern Africa Division
  - Eastern Africa Division
- **Office of Assistant Secretary-General of Europe, Central Asia and the Americas**
  - Europe and Central Asia Division
  - Americas Division
- Office of the Director for Coordination and Shared Services

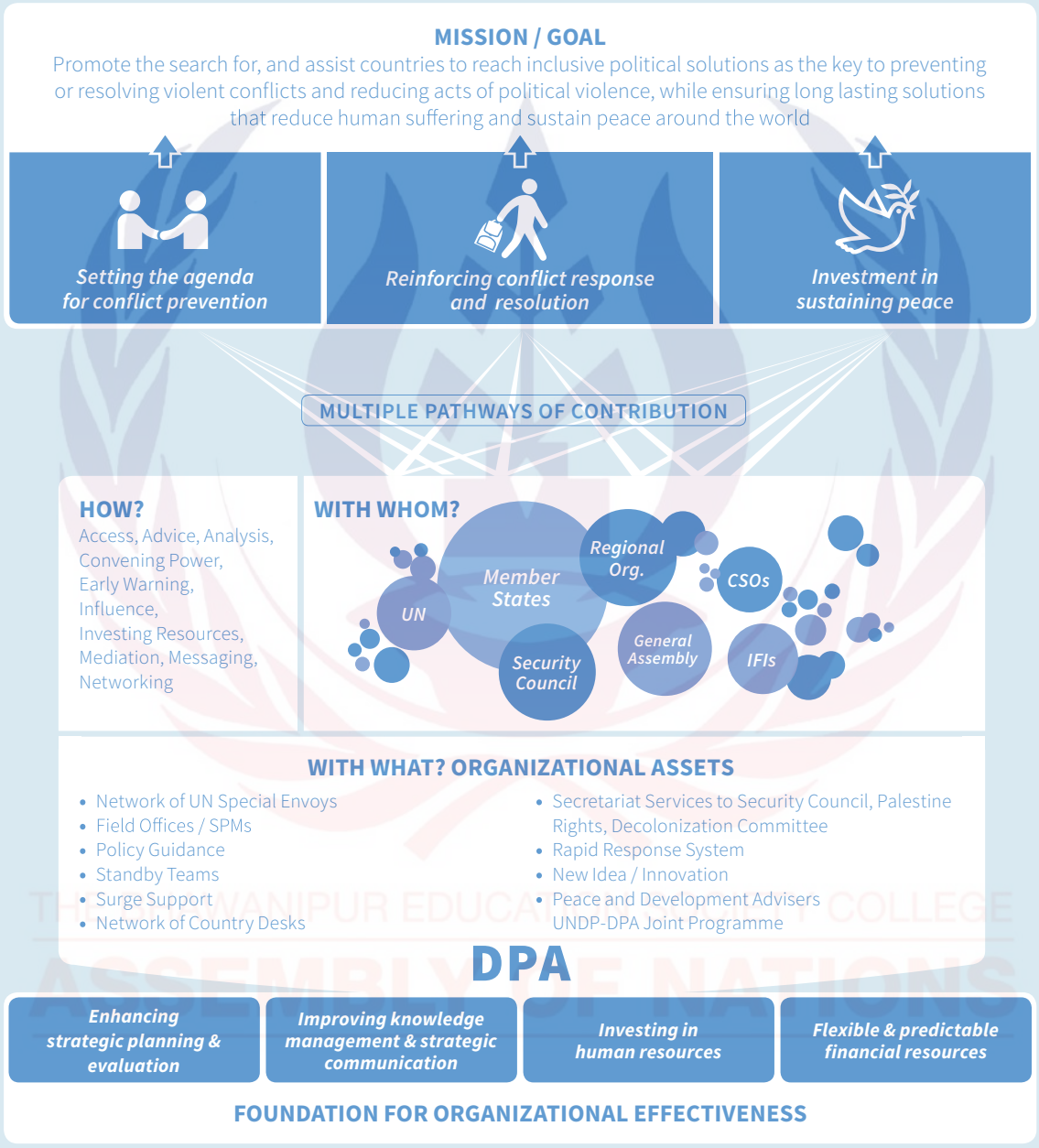
DEPARTMENT OF PEACE OPERATIONS

Office of the Under-Secretary-General (DPO/OUSG)

- DOS Integrated Operational Team
- Integrated Assessment and Planning Unit
- Gender Unit
- **Office of Military Affairs**
- **Office of Rule of Law & Security Institutions**
- Policy, Evaluation and Training Division
- Office of Peacekeeping Strategic Partnerships

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DPA Theory of Change



DPA Theory of Change

- DPA's mission is to help prevent and reduce violent conflicts and sustain peace through inclusive political solutions.
- DPA's Theory of Change recognizes that a multitude of actors and variables affect achievement of the Department's mandate.
- Therefore, deep and effective partnerships, within the United Nations system and outside it, are required to address root or immediate causes that lead to violent conflict. As conflict is complex and its dynamics are embedded in societal, economic, legal and political systems, conflict prevention and management require a non-linear and cyclical approach.
- DPA applies this approach with its partners within the international crisis prevention and response architecture of the Security Council, General Assembly, and the "good offices" of the Secretary-General through: preventive diplomacy and mediation, convening power, influence/trust/relationships, network/access, advice/messaging, analysis/early warning/studies, and investing resources to sustain peace.
- Underpinning our Theory of Change is the importance of ensuring organizational effectiveness through increased capacity and a better resourced DPA for conflict prevention, conflict management and sustaining peace.

Assumptions

- The demand for the UN and DPA to play a "good offices" role is sustained or increased.
- Political willingness of partners to engage in joint activities or in good faith with DPA exists.
- Sufficient financial and human resources are available to support DPA's mandate.
- Effective international response will bring about the desired positive change.

Guiding Principles

(i) the centrality of conflict prevention and mediation; (ii) the primacy of political solutions to existing and potential conflicts; (iii) the need to foster partnerships and build anticipatory relationships for prevention, conflict resolution and sustaining peace; (iv) a call for flexibility in using the different tools at the disposal of the UN; and (v) the promotion of women's empowerment and inclusive participation across all priority areas of work

Pathways of Contribution

As the primary source of political advice to the Secretary-General and the operational arm of his good offices role, DPA employs a range of tools and assets to support Member States, Regional Organizations and civil society in preventing, managing or resolving conflict, while ensuring long lasting solutions that reduce human suffering and make peace sustainable. Depending on the context, multiple pathways may contribute to positive change. Positive change may result from a single, or multiple strategies; it can occur simultaneously, sequentially, or as mixture of the two. The resources, tools and strategies to deploy depend on the context.

Limitations

Preventive diplomacy, crisis management, and sustaining peace are often difficult to measure through linear logic models or causal relationships. For example, if a conflict does not break out it may be difficult to attribute that outcome to the work of the Department, which frequently works discreetly and with many partners in highly volatile and complex environments. At other times, despite the effective engagement of all the tools and approaches at its disposal, the United Nations may not be able to prevent a conflict.



UNITED NATIONS

DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL AFFAIRS

GUIDANCE FOR MEDIATORS

Addressing Conflict-Related Sexual Violence in Ceasefire and Peace Agreements

THE BHAVANIPUR EDUCATION SOCIETY COLLEGE
ASSEMBLY OF NATIONS

DPA

POLICY AND MEDIATION DIVISION

MEDIATION SUPPORT UNIT

GUIDANCE FOR MEDIATORS

Addressing Conflict-Related Sexual Violence in Ceasefire and Peace Agreements

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United Nations
Department of Political Affairs
New York, 2012

Development of this guidance for mediators benefited from material generated during the United Nations Inter-Agency High-Level Colloquium "Conflict-Related Sexual Violence and Peace Negotiations: Implementing Security Council Resolution 1820" in June 2009. The Colloquium was organized by the United Nations Development Fund for Women (now part of UN Women), Department of Political Affairs, Department of Peacekeeping Operations, United Nations Development Programme, and Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs on behalf of UN Action Against Sexual Violence in Conflict and in partnership with the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue. The Department of Political Affairs is grateful for the contributions of these partners and for the financial support provided through UN Action Against Sexual Violence in Conflict.

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Part I.
Global Overview

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Part I.
Global Overview

In attempting to broker durable and comprehensive agreements, the mediator and his/her team face significant demands to include a number of elements. This guidance offers advice to aid the mediator and his/her team in addressing a frequently used method and tactic of warfare: conflict-related sexual violence. It provides strategies for including this security and peacebuilding concern within ceasefire and security arrangements and in framing provisions for post-conflict justice and reparations. This guidance emerged from a United Nations[1] High-Level Colloquium on Conflict-Related Sexual Violence[2] and close consultation with eminent mediators, mediation support staff and subject experts.

In today's violent conflicts, civilians are increasingly caught on the front line. One of the most devastating forms of extreme hostility waged against civilians is conflict-related sexual violence.[3] While women and girls are often primary targets, conflict-related sexual violence is also strategically perpetrated against men and boys.

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1 Organized by DPA, DPKO, UNDP, UNIFEM and OCHA on behalf of UN Action Against Sexual Violence in Conflict and in partnership with the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (HDC).

2 Five guidance notes were drafted by working groups consisting of international subject experts and gender advocates. Development of the drafts into guidance occurred in consultation with eminent mediators, mediation support staff and subject experts. DPA is grateful to Mr. Ahmedou Ould Abdallah for his vital contribution to the framing and development of this guidance, and to UN Action Against Sexual Violence in Conflict for their support for the organization of the Colloquium and finalization of this guidance.

3 Conflict-related sexual violence is not specific to any era, culture or continent. Between 20,000 and 50,000 women were raped during the war in Bosnia in the early 1990s; in Sierra Leone, between 50,000 and 64,000 internally displaced women suffered sexual assault at the hands of combatants; the Rwandan genocide memorial notes that 500,000 women were raped during 100 days of conflict. In 2008 and 2009, the reported cases of sexual violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo totaled 15,314 and 15,297, respectively. In 2010, the volume of cases reported monthly remained constant. See "Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolutions 820 (2008) and 1889 (2009)" (S/2010/604).

Arguably more powerful and less expensive than a gun, it is used to provoke displacement of populations in order to increase territorial control or access to resources (as in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Myanmar, Bougainville, Colombia and Darfur); affect reproduction and ethnicity (as in the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda); promote troop cohesion (as among forcibly recruited Revolutionary United Front fighters in Sierra Leone) and undermine social and community cohesion.

Highly effective, its use humiliates, dominates, instills fear, breaks identity and creates enduring ethnic, family and community divides. Yet, to date, few ceasefire or peace agreements have made provisions for addressing conflict-related sexual violence. Only three ceasefire agreements (Nuba Mountains, Burundi and Lusaka) specifically include sexual violence, for instance, as part of the definition of ceasefire.

Addressing conflict-related sexual violence at the outset of the mediation strategy can increase the durability of peace by mitigating security fears and improving transparency, accountability and confidence among parties.

If left unaddressed, it can be used as a means to continue acts of war outside the purview of agreements and monitoring teams, which can trigger cycles of vengeance and vigilantism, and risk undermining confidence in agreements and possibly the mediation process itself.

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Legal Norms[4]

When is Sexual Violence Conflict-Related?

The United Nations Security Council considers that "*sexual violence, when used or commissioned as a tactic of war in order to deliberately target civilians or as a part of a widespread or systematic attack against civilian populations, can significantly exacerbate situations of armed conflict and may impede the restoration of international peace and security*".[5] Three Security Council resolutions specifically oblige the UN system to address conflict-related sexual violence.[6]

Sexual violence as a "tactic of war" refers to acts of sexual violence that are linked with military/political objectives and that serve (or intend to serve) a strategic aim related to the conflict. Sexual violence, however, does not need to be explicitly orchestrated for military gain to be considered relevant to the Security Council's remit. The Council also considers sexual violence conflict-related when it is "*committed against civilians*", committed "*in and around UN managed refugee and internally displaced persons camps*", or committed during "*disarmament, demobilization and reintegration processes*".

When is Sexual Violence an International Crime?

Depending on the circumstances of the offense, sexual violence can constitute a war crime, crime against humanity, act of torture or

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4 See "Analytical and conceptual framing of conflict-related sexual violence", UN Action Against Sexual Violence in Conflict.

5 Security Council resolution 1820 (2008).

6 Security Council resolution 1820 (2008), Security Council resolution 1888 (2009) and Security Council resolution 1960 (2010), among their provisions, prohibit amnesty for conflict-related sexual violence; require the UN system to develop mediation methods to address conflict-related sexual violence; and provide the accountability architecture to list and de-list perpetrators, as well as to report on patterns and trends in conflict-related sexual violence.

constituent act of genocide. The definition of sexual violence under international law encompasses rape, sexual slavery, enforced prostitution, forced pregnancy, enforced sterilization, trafficking and any other form of sexual violence of comparable gravity, which may, depending on the circumstances, include situations of indecent assault, trafficking, inappropriate medical examinations and strip searches.[7]

Key Principles

The United Nations recognizes the complex and difficult task mediators face in reaching agreements that are not only comprehensive, but can also be effectively and realistically implemented.

In situations where conflict-related sexual violence has been used, or may have been used, UN mediators are obligated to introduce the subject in discussions with parties. At a minimum, sexual violence should be included within the definition of the ceasefire, and detailed or annexed in provisions for ceasefire monitoring. It is important that agreements, where necessary and appropriate, recognize conflict-related sexual violence as a method or tactic of warfare and include it in the framing of security and justice-related provisions. To this end, addressing conflict-related sexual violence can be seen as part of a continuum: from facilitating security, to dealing with the past, to breaking the cycle of impunity and ensuring reconciliation and rehabilitation.

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7 See, for example, statutes and the case law of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, the Special Court for Sierra Leone and the Elements of Crimes of the International Criminal Court.

In order to fulfill specific Security Council mandates[8] on the issue, the mediator and his/her team can draw on the following checklist (and the more detailed guidance that accompanies it) for addressing conflict-related sexual violence as part of the overall mediation strategy.

During Ongoing Hostilities and at the Beginning of a Mediation Process:

- Assess whether there are credible reports of conflict-related sexual violence that may be occurring, or may have occurred.
- Actively seek to engage parties to discuss the immediate termination of conflict-related sexual violence, in discussion of other violations of human rights and international humanitarian law.
- Ensure consultation with and inclusion of women and gender experts in the process and as part of the mediation team.

Drafting and Negotiating Ceasefire and Peace Agreements:

Essential Agreement Provisions should ensure:

- Sexual violence is included as a prohibited act, especially in the definition or principles of ceasefire.
- Monitoring for sexual violence is included in ceasefire agreements, including in relevant annexes.
- Recognition of sexual violence used in conflict as a method and tactic of warfare, as applicable.
- Amnesties for crimes under international law are prohibited, and arrangements for transitional justice are included, particularly prosecution, reparations and truth-seeking bodies.

[8] See Security Council resolution 1888 (2009).

Provisions for Security Arrangements should ensure:

- Command and control structures and codes of conduct for security actors prohibit conflict-related sexual violence and punish misconduct.
- Individuals credibly suspected of committing or being responsible for conflict-related sexual violence are excluded from participation or integration into government and the national security system, including armed forces, police, intelligence services and national guard, as well as civilian oversight and control mechanisms and other similar entities.
- Early, voluntary release and/or registration of those abducted, coerced or forcibly recruited[9] from within the ranks of armed forces or groups.
- Security sector institutions are mandated to combat conflict-related sexual violence and training is provided to develop military and law enforcement capabilities to respond to it, including for military police.

Provisions for Justice and Reparations should ensure:

- Amnesties for crimes under international law are prohibited.
- Provisions for transitional justice processes address issues of conflict-related sexual violence with equal priority to other international crimes.
- Provisions for transitional justice mechanisms incorporate specific reference to conflict-related sexual violence; include

[9] Forced recruits include forcibly recruited female and male combatants, forcibly recruited women and children associated with armed forces and groups, including forced wives and dependants, and domestic support.

measures to protect the security and dignity of victims and witnesses; and include women and gender experts in its design and oversight.

- Provisions for reparations and relief, including for victims of conflict-related sexual violence.

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Part II. Addressing Conflict-Related Sexual Violence During Ongoing Hostilities and Ceasefire Agreements

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Part II.
Addressing Conflict-Related Sexual Violence During Ongoing Hostilities and Ceasefire Agreements

This guidance note provides principles and strategies for mediators and their teams for addressing conflict-related sexual violence during ongoing hostilities and in the immediate, early framing of ceasefire.

At the earliest point of the mediation process, particularly during **ongoing hostilities**[10] and in **ceasefire agreements**, the mediator and his/her team are advised to consider three key areas when addressing conflict-related sexual violence: (1) preparing the ground and confidence-building measures; (2) prohibiting sexual violence and promoting command responsibility; and (3) ensuring robust monitoring arrangements.[11]

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[10] During ongoing hostilities, precursors to a ceasefire agreement can include temporary pauses in fighting, cessation of hostilities and letters of commitment, which can act as confidence-building measures.

[11] See "United Nations guidance notes for mediators on addressing conflict-related sexual violence": security arrangements; and justice and reparations.

Principles

Principle 1: Assess whether conflict-related sexual violence may be occurring, or may have occurred.

At the outset of a mediation process, a mediator and his/her team are advised to obtain information on conflict-related sexual violence that may be occurring or may have occurred. In some cases, conflict-related sexual violence may be widespread, but not widely known, discussed or documented. In others, incidences may be reported by the media that have yet to be verified.

Principle 2: Actively seek to engage parties to discuss the immediate termination of conflict-related sexual violence in discussion of other violations of human rights and international humanitarian law.

United Nations envoys are required to raise conflict-related sexual violence issues in dialogue with parties to armed conflict. Mediators may convene parties to ensure a common level of understanding regarding the mediation and peace process. Early discussions on command responsibility can help to ensure that parties understand the risks and legal, political, economic and personal consequences for the use of conflict-related sexual violence. Parties may, thereby, want to avoid being perceived as perpetrating it. Such leverage can be used to achieve pre-ceasefire commitments to cease acts of conflict-related sexual violence, such as "letters of commitments" and other confidence-building measures.

Principle 3: Include sexual violence as a prohibited act.

In situations where conflict-related sexual violence may have occurred, sexual violence should be included as a prohibited act (as part of the definition or principles of ceasefire) which would breach the agreement. Its inclusion signals the seriousness of the issue to parties, victims and the public at large. It also serves as a reminder that such acts are also prohibited under international law, including the Law of Armed Conflict/International Humanitarian Law.

Principle 4: Ensure monitoring for sexual violence is included in ceasefire agreements, including in relevant annexes.

Provisions for monitoring should also include monitoring for conflict-related sexual violence. Such provisions help ensure that monitors (including the Department of Peacekeeping Operations) have an explicit mandate to monitor for conflict-related sexual violence.

Principle 5: Ensure inclusion of and consultation with women and gender experts.

Women with knowledge of the conflict, influential national and local female leaders, female monitors and gender experts can help mediators and their teams in gaining information and knowledge on conflict-related sexual violence. Such women and experts, particularly those that speak the local language, should be included in planning processes, negotiations, monitoring and investigations/inquiries to ensure that conflict-related sexual violence is effectively addressed throughout.

Implementation Guidance for the Mediator

Timing and staging are key to carefully creating a receptive environment and avoiding unnecessary delays or additional problems. A mediator may face challenges in approaching parties with the issue of conflict-related sexual violence in a way that is not perceived as an affront. Groundwork in advance of the discussion, including initiatives by civil society, including women's groups, can help the mediator to advance discussions on the issue positively.

Knowledge Gathering, Knowledge Sharing and Strategic Communication

- In order to assess whether conflict-related sexual violence may be occurring, or may have occurred, particularly during ongoing hostilities, proactive outreach and coordination efforts by the mediation team is advised with the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, humanitarian actors or a humanitarian liaison,[12] protection clusters,[13] other UN actors, women's groups and networks,[14] victims of conflict-related sexual violence and their communities, police, former soldiers, and religious and political leaders, as appropriate. Such actors can also encourage and empower local communities to monitor, document and report on conflict-related sexual violence early on.

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12 The mediation team could enlist the support of a humanitarian liaison in order to gather knowledge needed from the local level.

13 Protection clusters in mission settings bring together different UN entities and expertise with the goal of promoting protection and human rights.

14 As mandated by Security Council resolutions on women, peace and security.

- Due to the highly sensitive nature of conflict-related sexual violence, a range of ethical and safety issues must be considered before commencing any inquiry, in order to protect individuals participating as well as their families and communities. Researchers/interviewers must make every effort to avoid re-victimization, while fulfilling their objective to collect reliable data. Any data collected on sexual violence must respect established ethical and safety principles, such as security, confidentiality, anonymity, informed consent, safety and protection from retribution, and protection of the data itself.[15]
- Mediators and their teams may consider encouraging civil society, including women's groups, to **convene a public forum(s)** to discuss security and peacebuilding issues, including conflict-related sexual violence. Outcomes of such discussions can be fed back to the mediation team and used in discussion with the parties.
- Mediators may invite leaders and members of their negotiation teams, with the support of key actors and supportive governments or embassies, for **information sessions** on security concerns and important aspects of peace processes, and as an entry point for raising conflict-related sexual violence. Information on conflict-related sexual violence obtained from consultations, including outcomes of civil society forums, can be used to raise the issue in discussion with parties.
- Mediators should seek to make parties aware that sexual violence used as a tactic of conflict against civilians is a violation

15 See "Summary of ethical and safety recommendations for researching, documenting and monitoring sexual violence in emergencies", UN Action Against Sexual Violence in Conflict. See also "Reporting and interpreting data on sexual violence from conflict-affected countries: dos and don'ts", UN Action Against Sexual Violence in Conflict.

of international law and potential war crime or crime against humanity. Mediators may also point out that the perpetration of sexual violence in conflict elicits command responsibility on the part of leaders who fail to prevent and to punish violations by their subordinates, regardless of whether or not they were directly involved.[16] **Dialogue on the consequences** of conflict-related sexual violence may persuade parties to curtail acts that invite the scrutiny of the international community, the United Nations Security Council, international justice mechanisms and domestic constituencies.

- Mediators may remind parties to conflict that it is in their interest to prohibit, prevent and halt sexual violence for many reasons:
  - » Sexual violence during, and in the wake of, conflict weakens the legitimacy of actors (including non-state actors) who are seeking political recognition from the international community and local constituencies.
  - » Sexual violence undermines a state's authority and can expose leaders to criticism for their failure to protect civilians, and can erode public trust and popular support.

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16 The International Criminal Court, as well as the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda and the Special Court for Sierra Leone, have indicted military and political leaders for conflict-related sexual violence.

  - » Under Security Council resolution 1960, such actions may lead to targeted sanctions against armed groups credibly suspected of committing patterns of conflict-related sexual violence and possible International Criminal Court referrals.
- Enlisting the support of gender expertise can help ensure a coordinated, systematic approach to addressing conflict-related sexual violence (and other gender issues) in planning and analysis.

Information and Outreach:

- The mediation team can convene and communicate with radio professionals to support **radio** programming for peace, including on conflict-related sexual violence.
- Mediators can **share relevant information**, as appropriate, on conflict-related sexual violence with the media as well as information on legal norms prohibiting and criminalizing it and international indictments for such crimes.
- Mediators can encourage the organization of **social gatherings** (such as joint prayers or sports events, as appropriate) which can present an opportunity to discuss key issues (such as conflict-related sexual violence) and bring together diverse groups including women, youth, elders, soldiers, etc.

Pre-ceasefire Commitments:

Importantly, pre-ceasefire commitments can act as **confidence-building measures** which can be built upon in subsequent ceasefire and peace agreements. Such measures can include temporary cessation of hostilities, **letters of commitment** by armed

groups and **human rights agreements**,[17] which should contain commitments to cease and prohibit sexual violence. In addition, **humanitarian access agreements**,[18] while necessarily separate from political processes, can help build complementary commitments to halt and prevent conflict-related sexual violence.

Inclusion of Language on Conflict-Related Sexual Violence in Ceasefire Agreements

Language prohibiting conflict-related sexual violence in ceasefire agreements can be included in the following sections:

- The preamble;
- **Definitions or principles of ceasefire**;
- Provisions regarding the occupation of new ground positions or the movement of armed forces and resources from one area to another;
- Sections regarding freedom of movement;
- Provisions for monitoring; and
- Annexes which establish and define monitoring.

[17] Human rights agreements, which have been signed in relatively few instances (such as the 1994 Guatemala Global Human Rights Agreement), have been incorporated into facilitated negotiations between parties to an ongoing conflict. Some agreements include protection of civilian commitments, in which the parties affirm their respect for international humanitarian law (IHL).

[18] Humanitarian access agreements are most commonly negotiated between humanitarian actors and parties to a conflict and have sometimes been signed concurrently with two or more parties to a conflict. This type of agreement tends to focus on facilitating access by humanitarian actors to the civilian population for the monitoring and delivery of assistance, as well as facilitating the civilian population's access to that assistance.

Examples of Language Prohibiting Sexual Violence in the Definition of Ceasefire

- **Nuba Mountains Ceasefire Agreement (2000):** Article II, Principles of Ceasefire: "(d.) All acts of violence against or other abuse of the civilian population, e.g., summary executions, torture, harassment, arbitrary detention and persecution of civilians on the basis of ethnic origin, religion, or political affiliations, incitement of ethnic hatred, aiming civilians, use of child soldiers, **sexual violence**, training of terrorists, genocide and bombing of the civilian population."

- **Lusaka Agreement (1999):** Article 1 (3) "The Ceasefire shall entail the cessation of: all acts of violence against the civilian population by respecting and protecting human rights. The acts of violence include summary executions, torture, harassment, detention and execution of civilians based on their ethnic origin; propaganda inciting ethnic and tribal hatred; arming civilians; recruitment and use of child soldiers; **sexual violence**; training and use of terrorists; massacres; downing of civilian aircraft; and bombing the civilian population."

- **Ceasefire Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Burundi and the Palipehutu — FNL (2006):** Article II "(1.) Ceasefire Agreement shall imply: ... (1.1.5) Cessation of all acts of violence against the civilian population: acts of vengeance; summary executions; torture; harassment; detention and persecution of civilians on the basis of ethnic origin; religious beliefs; and or political affiliation; arming of civilians; use of child soldiers; **sexual violence**; sponsoring or promotion of terrorist or genocide ideologies."

Monitoring Sexual Violence

Ceasefire agreements should contain language that provides for the monitoring of sexual violence, taking into account:

- **Establishing commissions to verify and monitor the ceasefire agreement:** Where there has been significant violence against the civilian population, a ceasefire commission may include a distinct human rights monitoring unit, tasked with the ability to receive complaints, track incidents, including incidents of conflict-related sexual violence, and ensure follow-up.

- **Establishing a ceasefire observer modality, comprised of a civil society or NGO non-violent "peace force"[19] with expertise in conflict-related sexual violence:** Where belligerents are dispersed in many areas, among the population and without clearly defined zones, the mix of United Nations peacekeepers and a civilian force could monitor the positioning, movements and actions of belligerents, including incidents of conflict-related sexual violence.

- **Identification and reporting of sexual violence used as a method or tactic of war:** Conflict-related sexual violence can take many forms. Monitoring teams should be aware of the ***context*** of the sexual violence (is it part of a series of sexual attacks, or a broader attack against the civilian population?), the ***identity*** of the attackers (are they current

[19] Such as in Sri Lanka and Mindanao where third country civilian observers were "interpositioned" between belligerents, or the establishment of a coalition of NGO and civil society actors serving as a neutral civilian monitoring mechanism as in the 1996 ceasefire agreement in Mindanao.

or former soldiers, militia or armed volunteers?) and the ***patterns*** (was the attack similar to other types of attacks in timing or nature?). Monitoring teams may establish regular information-sharing meetings with civil society groups who may be aware of conflict-related sexual violence that may be occurring or may have occurred.

- **Team composition for sexual violence monitoring:** While the responsibility to monitor conflict-related sexual violence should be shared by the entire monitoring structure, the team should include female members, particularly those that speak the local language, and be tasked to document, investigate and report on conflict-related sexual violence incidents. The presence of female monitors can help to ensure access to and interaction with female victims. It can also help in speaking with male victims, who may be less reluctant to speak about incidences with female monitors.

Education and Information Campaigns

- Agreements can call for education and information campaigns which can increase government transparency and public confidence [20] and can educate and inform combatants (rank and file), those associated with armed groups and the wider public of the contents, implications and expectations of the agreement, including those relating to conflict-related sexual violence.

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[20] See "Security and Demilitarization: Peace Agreement Drafter's Handbook", Public International Law and Policy Group.

- **Bougainville Peace Agreement** (Bougainville, 2001) called for "*an active joint programme to promote public awareness, understanding and support of weapons disposal*". As a result, Bougainville DDR monitors held public meetings in villages where they read the peace agreement and DDR provisions, and distributed material on the DDR process. They also organized sports and cultural activities to create forums where general communication could take place between the monitoring forces and communities.

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Mediator's Checklist

- ❑ Have there been credible reports of conflict-related sexual violence? If so, which parties to the conflict may be suspected or accused of using the tactic?
- ❑ Which actors at the local level have knowledge and information on conflict-related sexual violence (e.g., UNHRC, OHCHR, OCHA, local women's groups, etc.)? Is this knowledge being gathered, documented and saved (and by whom)? Are various knowledge gathering efforts being coordinated (and by whom)?
- ❑ Do the mediator and his/her team have the information they need to determine whether conflict-related sexual violence may be occurring or may have occurred? Has the mediation team ensured that information is being channeled to them regarding the number and types of victims, chain of command, and patterns of rape and other forms of conflict-related sexual violence occurring?
- ❑ Have gender experts been consulted for technical advice to the agreement and included in monitoring?
- ❑ Have gender experts, women with knowledge of the conflict, including influential national and local female leaders (including from women's organizations and networks), been identified and engaged in the process?
- ❑ Is outreach being conducted with all parties to conflict to bring them together to enhance their knowledge and to ensure a common level of understanding of aspects of a peace process and

international law, including in regard to sexual violence? For instance, are parties aware that military/political leaders have been indicted for conflict-related sexual violence?

- ❑ Have parties to conflict been brought together to make specific and time-bound commitments to ceasing all acts of sexual violence, such as "the issuance of clear orders through chains of command prohibiting sexual violence" as called for by the UN Secretary-General? [21]

- ❑ In drafting an agreement, has sexual violence been included in the definition or principles of ceasefire? Has language been included on monitoring conflict-related sexual violence, including within annexes defining ceasefire monitoring?

- ❑ In situations with a current or possible UN peacekeeping presence, does the language provide the Department of Peacekeeping Operations with a mandate to monitor conflict-related sexual violence as part of its activities?

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[21] "Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolutions 1820 (2008) and 1888 (2009)" (S/2010/604).

Part III. Addressing Conflict-Related Sexual Violence in Security Arrangements

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Part III.
Addressing Conflict-Related Sexual Violence in Security Arrangements

This guidance note provides principles and strategies for mediators and their teams for addressing conflict-related sexual violence in security-related provisions of ceasefire and peace agreements.

Addressing conflict-related sexual violence in security arrangements can help to protect against and prevent future occurrences and build effective, responsive security institutions. The mediator and his/her team are advised to consider three key areas in addressing sexual violence in security arrangements: (1) command responsibility and accountability of armed forces and groups; (2) community security; and (3) military and law-enforcement capability.

Principles

Principle 1: Recognize sexual violence used in conflict as a method and tactic of warfare.

Sexual violence, when used as a method or tactic of warfare, should be treated as such in relevant provisions of ceasefire and peace agreements, including those which define disengagement and set the rules and responsibilities for demilitarized zones, buffer zones and DDR-related assembly areas/points.

Principle 2: Ensure provisions for the early, voluntary release and/or registration of those abducted, coerced or forcibly recruited[22] from within the ranks of armed forces or groups.

Those who have been abducted, coerced or forcibly recruited from within the ranks of an armed force or group are often subject to high levels of sexual violence. It is important for agreements to contain provisions that specifically call for their early and voluntary release. Such provisions can also act as a confidence-building measure.

Principle 3: Exclude individuals credibly suspected of committing or being responsible for conflict-related sexual violence from participation in or integration into government and the national security system, including armed forces, police, intelligence services and national guard, as well as civilian oversight and control mechanisms, etc.

In efforts to prevent continued perpetration of conflict-related sexual violence in post-conflict environments, it is important to include provisions that call for the exclusion of individuals credibly suspected of committing or being responsible for conflict-related sexual violence from integration into armed forces, police and national guard, as well as civilian oversight and control mechanisms, etc. Provisions should also recommend the referral of such individuals to appropriate investigatory and prosecutory bodies, as well as placement in rehabilitation programmes.

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22 Forced recruits include forcibly recruited female and male combatants, forcibly recruited women and children associated with armed forces and groups, including forced wives and dependants, and domestic support.

Principle 4: Ensure that command and control structures and codes of conduct for security actors prohibit sexual violence and punish misconduct.

It is imperative that sexual violence is addressed in the discipline, mandates and roles of armed groups and transitional security forces. This can have a critical impact on the sustainability of security and peace.

Principle 5: Mandate security sector institutions to combat conflict-related sexual violence and include provisions for training aimed at developing military and law enforcement capabilities to respond to sexual violence, including for military police.

Post-conflict security arrangements and security sector institutions should be mandated and resourced to provide protection against conflict-related sexual violence. Security actors (such as military and police) need specific mandates to address conflict-related sexual violence, particularly targeting vulnerable communities (internally displaced persons (IDPs), refugees). Security forces engaged in transitional security arrangements must also possess the resources, partnerships and integrated structures to combat conflict-related sexual violence effectively.

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Implementation Guidance for the Mediator

Conflict Analysis

In the earliest stages of conflict analysis and assessment, sexual violence used as a method or tactic of conflict should be considered as a relevant conflict factor that may contribute to the resurgence of violent conflict over the short and longer term. Such analysis can help to build comprehensive security plans and threat assessments that include measures to prevent and respond to conflict-related sexual violence.

Inclusion of Language on Sexual Violence in Provisions for Security Arrangements in Ceasefire and Peace Agreements

Where possible, provisions for security arrangements in ceasefire and peace agreements should include sexual violence. Importantly, annexes often elaborate on security arrangements, and can offer practical entry points for specifically addressing it.

- **Language can be integrated into agreements and their annexes which provide for, inter alia:**
  - **Dismantling:** In provisions requiring command responsibility in the dismantling of troops and armed groups operating alongside parties' troops, or on territory under parties' control,[23] parties can be called upon to take all necessary measures to prevent, respond to and punish sexual violence by those under their command.

[23] See Nuba Mountains Ceasefire Agreement (2002), Article 3.3. While this example does not contain language on sexual violence, it is referenced here as an example of where such language could be included.

- **Disengagement:**[24] Provisions for disengagement, particularly definitional clauses,[25] should prohibit the use of sexual violence as a method or tactic of warfare.
- **Withdrawal of Foreign Forces:** In inter-state conflicts, where provisions are made for the withdrawal of foreign forces, force commanders should be called upon to prevent, respond to and punish acts of sexual violence by those under their command.
- **Release of Hostages and Exchange of Prisoners:** Such sections should include and specify the early, voluntary release of those abducted, coerced or forcibly recruited from within the ranks of an armed force or group.
- **Rules of and Responsibilities in Relation to Demilitarized and Buffer Zones:** Provisions for the separation of forces should ensure monitoring of buffer zones by military observers and deployment of special police forces around vulnerable communities, cantonments and IDP and refugee camps. Rules for demilitarized and buffer zones should include provisions for prohibiting sexual violence and for ensuring special protection against it.

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24 In situations where disengagement does not apply, definitions of the cessation of hostilities should specifically prohibit the use of sexual violence. See "United Nations Guidance Note for Mediators: Addressing Conflict-Related Sexual Violence during Ongoing Hostilities and Ceasefire Agreements".

25 See Nuba Mountains Ceasefire Agreement (2002), Article 3.1; Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement (1999), Annex A, 2.1; Article 5, Peace Agreement between the Government of Liberia, the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy, the Movement for Democracy in Liberia and the political parties (2003). While these examples do not contain language on sexual violence, they are referenced here as examples of where such language could be included.

- **Integration of Former Combatants into Security and Other State Institutions:** Such sections should specifically require vetting of those with a history or association with conflict-related sexual violence.
- **Plans for Security and Policing:** Such provisions should address the consequences of conflict-related sexual violence in a post-conflict environment and require training to develop military and law-enforcement capabilities to prevent and respond to conflict-related sexual violence.

Monitoring

- Provisions for monitoring and monitoring mechanisms, including joint military commissions (JMCs) and international stabilization forces, established to assist in and monitor the disengagement and redeployment of combatants should include, inter alia:
  - Verification of disengagement of sexual violence used as a method and tactic of conflict.
  - Monitoring and reporting on incidences of conflict-related sexual violence, including identification of parties credibly suspected of the tactical use of sexual violence.
  - Representation of women and gender experts in monitoring structures to help ensure access to and interaction with female victims, as well as monitor for conflict-related sexual violence.

Control of Weapons

Discussions on collection, documentation, control and disposal of small arms and light and heavy weapons of combatants and of the

civilian population can contribute to preventing conflict-related sexual violence. For instance, it is estimated that 90 per cent of the cases of conflict-related sexual violence in Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo have been perpetrated by men with guns, outside the purview of existing ceasefire and peace agreements. The engagement of women's groups and networks can help with eventual disarmament processes.

Demobilization and Reintegration

Provisions that list categories of people to be demobilized should specifically include those abducted, coerced or forcibly recruited, particularly women and girls, from within the ranks of armed forces or groups. Consideration should be made for delays in the identification and listing of such groups. Provisions should also take into consideration the need to extend time frames and set aside necessary services and financial resources in DDR programmes.

It is also important to consider and include provisions for assistance, health care and counseling services for victims of conflict-related sexual violence who are eligible for the DDR programme. Those who have experienced rape (especially repeated rapes) and sexual abuse sustain damage to internal and reproductive organs and other physical health problems, which often results in physical and psychological disability.

DDR-related provisions in agreements should also recognize the need for gender-responsive reconciliation and public safety programmes for communities receiving large numbers of ex-combatants.

For those with a history of or an association with conflict-related sexual violence, provisions should ensure that such individuals are vetted from entry into security institutions and are brought to

justice. Considerations should also be made for counseling and rehabilitation services.

Examples of Existing Language

- **The Agreement on Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration between the Government of Uganda and the Lord's Resistance Army/Movement** (2008) addresses sexual violence in provisions for Demobilization by requiring, in Article 5.4 (c), "Protection from sexual violence or abuse, appropriate services for pregnant women and lactating mothers, and adequate presence of female staff."

- **Darfur Peace Agreement** (2006), Article 26, para. 278: "AMIS Civilian Police together with GoS Police, and Movements' Police Liaison Officers in their respective areas of control, shall establish separate police counters for the reporting of crimes committed against women, and women police personnel should staff these counters."

- **Darfur Peace Agreement** (2006), Article 26, para. 279: "A significant number of GoS Police, Movements' Police Liaison Officers and AMIS Civilian Police officers shall be women; they shall have specialist gender units to work with women and children; and all their investigations and monitoring shall include at least one woman."

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Mediator's Checklist

- ❑ Do security-related provisions in the agreement include, inter alia:
  - Command responsibility to condone, prevent, respond to and punish acts of conflict-related sexual violence, for instance, in dismantling, disengagement and the withdrawal of forces?
  - Early, voluntary release of those abducted, coerced or forcibly recruited from within the ranks of armed forces or groups?
  - Prohibition of the use of sexual violence as a method or tactic of conflict?
  - Monitoring of the use of sexual violence as a method or tactic of conflict?
- ❑ Are transitional security arrangements mandated to combat conflict-related sexual violence through police and military responses?
- ❑ Have provisions been included to vet former combatants with a history or association with conflict-related sexual violence from entry into security institutions?
- ❑ Have plans been included for the development and funding of training for military and law enforcement capabilities to prevent and respond to conflict-related sexual violence?
- ❑ Are there plans for information and education campaigns on the content, implications and expectations of the agreement, including those relating to conflict-related sexual violence?

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Part IV. Addressing Conflict-Related Sexual Violence in Framing Provisions for Post-Conflict Justice and Reparations

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Part IV.
Addressing Conflict-Related Sexual Violence in Framing Provisions for Post-Conflict Justice and Reparations

This guidance note provides principles and strategies for mediators and their teams for ensuring that provisions for justice and reparations address conflict-related sexual violence.[26]

While an increasing number of peace agreements provide for a range of justice mechanisms to ensure accountability for war-time violations, most peace agreements have been silent on questions of accountability for conflict-related sexual violence, and redress for its victims.[27] Effective transitional justice and reconciliation mechanisms[28] and domestic courts are vital to the prosecution of conflict-related sexual violence and ensuring reparations.

[26] Security Council resolution 1820 (2008) calls for justice for victims of conflict-related sexual violence, and places the onus on those seeking to resolve conflict to ensure that this is addressed during mediation and in peace agreements.

[27] According to research conducted by UN Women, since the end of the cold war, only the Sun City Agreement for Democratic Republic of Congo in 2003 and the Agreement on Accountability and Reconciliation (and its annex) between the Government of Uganda and the Lord's Resistance Army in 2008 include language mentioning sexual violence in relation with questions of accountability. See UN Women (2010), "Women's participation in peace negotiations: connections between presence and influence".

[28] Transitional justice mechanisms can include truth and reconciliation commissions, hybrid tribunals, local customs and rituals.

Mediators can help to lay the groundwork for transitional justice mechanisms that strengthen national legal and institutional environments in which agreements are implemented.

The mediator and his/her team are advised to consider three key areas in addressing conflict-related sexual violence in framing provisions for post-conflict justice and reparations in peace agreements: (1) accountability for those with a history or association with conflict-related sexual violence; (2) protection and participation of victims and witnesses engaged in pursuit of justice and reparations; and (3) reparations for victims of conflict-related sexual violence.

Principles

Principle 1: Justice processes should address issues of conflict-related sexual violence with equal priority to other international crimes.

Conflict-related sexual violence is a constitutive element of several international crimes, and can amount to a war crime, crime against humanity, constituent act of genocide or gross violation of human rights.

Principle 2: Amnesties for crimes under international law are prohibited.

It is the position of the United Nations that the peace agreements it endorses can never promise amnesties for genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity or gross violations of human rights (which

sexual violence, under international law, can amount to).[29] Security Council resolution 1820 (2008) reinforces this position by calling for the exclusion of sexual violence crimes from amnesty provisions.[30]

Principle 3: Ensure provisions for transitional justice mechanisms incorporate specific reference to conflict-related sexual violence; include measures to protect the security and dignity of victims and witnesses; and include women and gender experts in its design and oversight.

Transitional justice mechanisms should include a mix of approaches, from criminal accountability, to truth seeking, and reparations and redress. The mix of mechanisms should be carefully tailored to meet the demands of the specific context, ensuring that cultural issues, resource constraints and statutes of limitations do not bar justice, truth and comprehensive reparations for sexual violence.

It is important to keep in mind that victims seeking accountability and redress for conflict-related sexual violence often face multiple challenges including social ostracism, physical threats and institutional barriers. It is important for transitional justice mechanisms to provide for strategies to protect victims and witnesses, including victim/witness protection programmes, provisions for in camera hearings, support counselors, etc.

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29 S/2004/616, para. 10.

30 Under Security Council resolution 1820 (2008), Member States are also under obligation to prosecute persons responsible for conflict-related sexual violence, and to ensure that victims, particularly women and girls, have equal protection under the law and equal access to justice.

Principle 4: Ensure there are provisions which call for reparations, including for victims of conflict-related sexual violence.

Reparations can assist in mitigating the impacts of harm suffered. Reparations have particular importance for victims of conflict-related sexual violence who suffer not just the physical and mental injuries resulting from the crime, but frequently also the added harm of ostracization and related risks of vulnerability and destitution. Reparations programmes hold the potential to deliver targeted resources to an otherwise marginalized population, providing a vehicle for recovery and contributing to sustainable livelihoods.[31]

Considerations and Challenges

While international humanitarian and criminal law codifies sexual violence in conflict as a war crime, crime against humanity or constituent act of genocide, negotiating justice and accountability for sexual violence crimes requires taking a number of elements into consideration, including:

Truth-Seeking Mechanisms: Many peace agreements provide for a truth-seeking mechanism as a first step to uncovering war-time violations or as a parallel mechanism to criminal prosecutions. Yet, victims seeking accountability for sexual violence crimes face multiple challenges including social ostracism, physical threats (backlash attacks by perpetrators) and institutional barriers when seeking to address transitional justice mechanisms. Unless special measures

[31] Rashida Manjoo (2010), "Thematic report on reparations for women" (Special rapporteur on violence against women).

are provided for in the agreement to protect the dignity and safety of victims, they are at risk of exclusion or re-traumatization.

Criminal Justice: While some peace agreements provide for the establishment of war crime tribunals or chambers, the majority of wartime abuses tend to be referred to the domestic justice system with a strong emphasis on traditional/informal justice processes. Most agreements do not address how these processes can effectively prosecute conflict-related or protect the dignity and safety of survivors of sexual violence. Prosecutions through these mechanisms often focus on the senior-most perpetrators, while "de facto" amnesty continues to exist for the "rank and file". This has an impact on perceived impunity and redress for victims.

Reparations and Relief: The multidimensional impact of violations on victims' physical and psychological health, as well as wider socio-political and economic consequences, resulting from social ostracism once crimes are reported, requires multiple forms of redress and rehabilitation — which need to be taken into account in reparation, relief and compensation programmes.

Implementation Guidance for the Mediator

Amnesty Provisions:

Conflict-related sexual violence is a constitutive element of several international crimes, and can amount to a war crime, crime against humanity, constituent act of genocide or gross violation of human rights. The Roadmap for ending the Crisis in Madagascar (2011):

article 3.18 ensures the exclusion of such international crimes from amnesty:

Article 3.18: "The granting of a blanket amnesty for all political events which happened between 2002 and 2009, except for crimes against humanity, war crimes, crimes of genocide and other serious violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms. The amnesty law shall be ratified by the Transitional Parliament, and no election shall take place to the ratification."

Provisions that address transitional justice mechanisms should incorporate specific reference to conflict-related sexual violence and include measures to protect the security and dignity of victims and witnesses, taking into consideration, inter alia:

- Mechanisms for judicial treatment of conflict-related sexual violence should include criminal accountability, truth seeking and reparations, among others. One mechanism on its own may not be sufficient to address sexual violence after the conflict.
- A transitional justice plan should include an oversight mechanism to ensure that conflict-related sexual violence is effectively addressed. This could take the shape of a national human rights body, established by a peace agreement, and given a mandate over the monitoring and reporting of human rights violations, as well as the establishment of transitional justice processes. Establishment of such a body within the framework of a peace agreement could lead to a harmonized approach to conflict-related sexual violence cases through transitional justice measures.

- The need to strengthen domestic law, institutions and enforcement capacity in order to ensure the proper implementation of a transitional justice strategy, and to guard against future abuses and impunity. Given common gender biases in national law and institutions, legal reforms are of particular importance in addressing conflict-related sexual violence.
- Mediators should be aware of the limitations of informal justice mechanisms, and agreements should help to ensure that criminal accountability and other formal justice processes are not circumvented.

Comprehensive Reparations:

Agreements that contain provisions for reparations, and adequate funding for them, is vital. In Sierra Leone, for instance, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission recommended that the Government establish pensions for certain categories of beneficiaries, including women affected by the conflict, and that the size of these pensions be determined in relation to ex-combatant pensions and demobilization packages.

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Mediator's Checklist:

- ❑ Is outreach being conducted with all parties to conflict to bring them together to enhance their knowledge and to ensure a common level of understanding of aspects of peace processes and international law, including in regard to sexual violence? For instance, are parties aware that sexual violence used as a tactic of war is a violation of international law which may reduce legitimacy before the international community? Are parties aware that military/political leaders have been indicted for conflict-related sexual violence, and that amnesties for crimes under international law are prohibited?
- ❑ Have gender experts and legal experts been consulted for additional technical advice?
- ❑ Do provisions for transitional justice mechanisms address conflict-related sexual violence and call for the inclusion of women and gender experts in their design?
- ❑ Are measures in place to ensure that justice mechanisms facilitate the protection and participation of witnesses and victims of conflict-related sexual violence?
- ❑ Does the agreement contain provisions for reparations?

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In today's violent conflicts, civilians are increasingly caught on the front line. One of the most devastating forms of extreme hostility waged against civilians is conflict-related sexual violence. Arguably more powerful and less expensive than a gun, it is used strategically to provoke displacement of populations, affect reproduction and ethnicity, promote troop cohesion and undermine community cohesion. Highly effective, its use humiliates, dominates, instills fear, breaks identity and creates enduring ethnic, family and community divides.

The United Nations requires its mediators to address conflict-related sexual violence. This guidance offers mediators and their teams principles and strategies for including this critical peacebuilding and security concern in ceasefire and peace agreements.

www.un.org/depts/dpa

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Joint United Nations-African Union Framework for Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security

I. Introduction

Since the establishment of the African Union in 2002, the legislative bodies and senior leadership of both the United Nations and the African Union have strongly endorsed closer cooperation and coordination in peace and security, leading to a more strategic partnership. This endorsement is based on a recognition that African peace and security challenges are too complex for any single organization to adequately address on its own.

Both the United Nations Security Council and the African Union Peace and Security Council, at their 7816th and 628th meetings respectively,[1] reiterated the need to transform the partnership between the United Nations and the African Union into one that is predictable, systematic and strategic. They recognized the imperative for close coordination and cooperation based on their respective comparative advantage and complementarity in peace and security, and burden-sharing on the basis of collective responsibility to respond early, coherently and decisively to prevent, manage, and resolve violent conflict.

In fulfilment of this mutual determination, the United Nations Secretary-General and the African Union Commission Chairperson have endorsed this Joint United Nations-African Union Framework for Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security, as a basis for collaboration through joint mechanisms and regular consultations. Under the Joint Framework, the African Union Commission and the United Nations Secretariat will strive to collaborate from the earliest indications of conflict on the African continent. In particular, they will work together to identify and respond to indicators of potential conflict and plan for prevention, as well as cooperate on early warning. Should preventive efforts fail, the African Union Commission and the United Nations Secretariat commit to work together throughout the stages of conflict management – preventive diplomacy, mediation, peacekeeping, peace enforcement and peacebuilding. These stages are neither separate nor sequential, but form a continuous and integrated response to the "cycle of conflict". A partnership characterized by a continuous and forward-looking

[1] S/RES/2320 (2016) and PSC/PR/COMM.2 (DCXXVIII) of 18 November 2016 and 29 September 2016 respectively.

engagement ensures that any threat of conflict is addressed in a timely manner and emerging conflict receives early attention so that peace will be sustained.

This Joint Framework builds on the Declaration between the United Nations and the African Union entitled "Enhancing United Nations-African Union Cooperation: Framework for the Ten-Year Capacity Building Programme for the African Union", signed in Addis Ababa on 16 November 2006[2]. Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations provides for the role of regional arrangements in the maintenance of international peace and security. United Nations organs have also called for a stronger partnership: The Secretary-General in his *Report on Strengthening the Partnership between the United Nations and the African Union on issues of Peace and Security in Africa, including the work of the United Nations Office to the African Union*[3]; the General Assembly[4]; and the United Nations Security Council, including in Resolution 2320 of 18 November 2016[5]. The need for closer partnership was also recognized in the report of the 2015 High-Level Independent Panel on United Nations Peace Operations[6] and the subsequent report of the Secretary-General, "The Future of United Nations Peace Operations"[7]. The need to build mediation capacity and deepen strategic and operational partnerships in carrying out mediation efforts was also recognized by the Secretary-General in his *Report on the Cooperation between the United Nations and regional and sub-regional organizations on mediation.*[8] The African Union has also been advocating for a more predictable partnership with the United Nations, as provided for in, among others, the African Union Peace and Security Council Communiqué of 29 September 2016 on *Strengthening the partnership between the United Nations and the African Union on issues of peace and security in Africa*, in line with the 2002 African Union Protocol Relating to the Establishment of the Peace and Security Council.

II. Partnership Principles

The United Nations Secretariat and the African Union Commission note the primary role of the United Nations Security Council in the maintenance of international peace and security, recognize the essential role of regional arrangements as elaborated in Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations, and express the desire to forge closer cooperation between the two Organizations in the promotion of peace and security in Africa, in accordance with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

The United Nations-African Union partnership will continue to be guided by a number of basic principles. Both Organizations recognize that the attainment of peace through joining efforts to resolve conflict is critical to the achievement of fundamental development goals. They believe that a priority focus of United Nations-African Union efforts throughout the cycle of conflict

[2] A/61/630 annex
[3] S/2016/780
[4] See for instance, GA resolution 61/296 of 5 October 2007.
[5] Security Council resolution 2320 (2016).
[6] S/2015/446.
[7] S/2015/682.
[8] A/70/328

must be the search for sustainable political solutions in keeping with international standards and principles. Both Organizations further acknowledge that the protection of civilians, the promotion of human rights standards and the prevention of human rights violations, as well as respect for international humanitarian law, are fundamental principles of any peace and security effort. They also agree that the participation of women is key to achieving sustainable peace and that more needs to be done to advance the women, peace and security agenda.

Both the United Nations and the African Union have adopted long-term objectives in development: the United Nations has adopted the Sustainable Development Goals (Agenda 2030), while the African Union has adopted Agenda 2063 as well as the initiative to Silence the Guns by 2020. Both Organizations will continue to collaborate towards facilitating the implementation of these goals.

In addressing conflict, the United Nations and the African Union will strive, wherever possible, to reach a common understanding of the problems and, through consultative decision-making, develop a collaborative approach. Full "jointness" may not always be achievable, but maximum convergence between the Secretariat and the Commission will always be the goal. When determining respective roles in providing an agreed response, the United Nations and the African Union recognize that their efforts must be combined in a complementary and mutually-reinforcing manner. This will be guided by the principles of mutual respect and comparative advantage, on a case-by-case basis and allowing for such advantages to evolve. While ensuring unity of effort in all aspects of the response, a clear division of labour and consultation are also essential for effective implementation. Both Organizations agree that transparency and accountability are also fundamental shared values.

III. The Essential Themes of the Partnership

The United Nations and the African Union have jointly identified the following focus areas on which they will collaborate under the partnership. Specific mechanisms to ensure the effective implementation of these themes are set out in Section IV below.

A: Preventing and Mediating Conflict and Sustaining Peace

1) Identification of root causes of conflict:

The two Organizations will work together to develop a shared understanding of the key factors that give rise to conflict. To that end, they will exchange information and analysis on the root causes of conflict. This will form the basis for subsequent collaborative assessments on particular conflict situations and help identify how the two Organizations can work together to prevent or address them.

2) Conflict Prevention:

Building on a shared understanding of the causes of conflict, the two Organizations will share early warning information and analysis of potential hotspots, then work together to prepare options to respond, coordinate and/or collaborate on prevention.

3) Good Offices and Mediation:

Good offices and mediation transcend conflict prevention and extend throughout the conflict cycle – from the emergence of disputes, to conflict management through peacekeeping and peace support operations, and the implementation of peace agreements. The United Nations and the African Union will collaborate closely in good offices, preventive diplomacy and inclusive mediation activities on the continent, in coordination with sub-regional organizations, as appropriate.

4) Cooperating on Electoral Matters and Governance:

The two Organizations underscore the consequences of poor governance as a source of violence and conflict in Africa and call for a system of good governance, including management of elections, that is inclusive, participatory and development-oriented. They will work together to strengthen cooperation and enhance the sharing of information on electoral matters.

5) Protecting Human Rights:

Human rights violations may be early warning signs of future conflict or indicators of the evolution of conflict. The two Organizations will work together in the field of human rights, in particular to strengthen human rights expertise and capacity.

6) Humanitarian assistance:

In an effort to reduce the impact of both natural and human-induced disasters, including those causing displacement on the continent, the United Nations and the African Union will work on strengthening response mechanisms. In that regard, the collaboration will focus on enhancing the coordination and effective utilization of existing early warning indicators through information sharing and appropriate humanitarian assistance. This will include strengthening the capacity of existing mechanisms to prevent and eliminate forced displacement, as well as the protection of civilians in conflict situations, including refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs).

B: Responding to Conflict

In efforts to address conflicts, or where new conflicts may erupt, the United Nations and the African Union will strengthen their efforts to coordinate their engagement in a mutually-supportive manner, across the range of possible responses - from mediation and conflict management to peacekeeping and peace support operations, and peacebuilding. To that end, the Secretariat and the Commission will support the strengthening of relations between the two Organizations at the policy and working levels, including through discussing and comparing their respective doctrines, policies and practices to ensure more complementarity. Building on the ongoing cooperation in conflict prevention and mediation, the partnership will seek collaboration from the earliest stages of contingency planning to ensure complementarity and unity of action, drawing on a forward-looking assessment of comparative advantages.

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Cooperation in response to conflict will be based on agreed principles, including the primacy of political solutions.

C: Addressing Root Causes

Both Organizations recognize that sustainable peace and continued development require strengthening the capacity of national institutions to address the root causes of conflict in all its forms without recourse to arms or violent confrontation. This work is not sequential to efforts to prevent and address conflict, but should be adequately reflected and addressed in the design of peacekeeping and peace support operations and any other strategy developed to prevent or resolve violent conflict.

D: Continuous Partnership Review and Enhancement

In order to implement, review and continuously update aspects of the partnership, the Secretariat and the Commission agree to undertake regular reviews including lessons learned exercises both on country-specific situations and thematic issues. They will meet regularly at various levels to discuss issues of mutual interest, and review progress in the partnership. In addition to regular bilateral meetings between the Secretariat and the Commission, as listed in Section IV below, each Organization will ensure its own internal consultations and coordination. Such mechanisms will assist the Secretariat and the Commission to implement this Joint Framework.

IV. Partnership Implementation Mechanisms and Processes

In order to operationalize the essential areas of work of the partnership, both Organizations agree to support and participate fully in the coordination and discussion mechanisms described in Sections A through D below. These will evolve and adapt to the changing needs of the partnership, and will include, as appropriate, the participation of the relevant entities within both Organizations.

Detailed modalities and work-plans for each mechanism will be elaborated by the participants of the mechanism in question, in keeping with the goals and principles indicated in this Joint Framework. In developing such work-plans, all relevant best practices and cross-cutting issues and policies will be taken into account. The various work-plans will be incorporated into an annual roadmap of agreed objectives each year.

The Secretariat and the Commission will closely collaborate in the themes defined above through the following mechanisms:

A: Preventing and Mediating Conflict and Sustaining Peace

They will:

1) Hold periodic joint discussions, involving relevant experts and practitioners, on the root causes of conflict in Africa and how to address them;

2) Systematically share and discuss early warning analysis, including emerging human rights issues, from all relevant sources;

3) Continue to hold regular joint "horizon-scanning" sessions to identify emerging conflicts, compare analysis and develop common approaches to prevent the eruption of conflict;

4) Continue to hold annual United Nations-African Union Desk-to-Desk meetings, with the participation of the African Union, United Nations and the Regional Economic Communities and Regional Mechanisms (RECs/RMs), to discuss country-specific situations and collaborate in preventing and resolving conflict;

5) Support efforts to complement the annual consultations between the United Nations Security Council and the African Union Peace and Security Council with regular exchanges when needed, to help both organs reach a shared vision before the adoption of resolutions and communiqués in response to conflicts in Africa;

6) Exchange on efforts and strategies of relevant entities in such areas as counter-terrorism and preventing violent extremism as well as trans-national organized crime, including by sharing information, analyses of trends and threats and lessons learned;

7) Exchange on efforts and strategies of relevant entities to address the persistence of illicit inflows of weapons and ammunition into Africa, as well as proliferation, illegal acquisition, circulation and storage of weapons, including small arms and light weapons;

8) Strengthen cooperation in the promotion of national peace infrastructure to facilitate peaceful cross-border interaction between States and communities, and in assisting member States to address border-related conflicts;

9) Collaborate in processes that promote regional approaches to address peace and security challenges;

10) Undertake joint fact-finding/assessment missions to countries at risk of conflict, as feasible;

11) Exchange on efforts and strategies of relevant entities to strengthen governance institutions and structures, including improving public service delivery, combatting corruption, entrenching decentralization and local governance, promoting inclusive natural resource management, enhancing urban governance and human settlements.

B: Responding to conflict

The Secretariat and Commission will:

1) Develop, through staff exchanges, seminars, workshops and discussions, a shared understanding of each other's doctrines, policies, roles and practices as a necessary foundation for collaboration in responding to conflict;

2) Reinforce coherence, coordination and complementarity in mediation engagements to increase effectiveness;

3) Seek unity of purpose and action in addressing conflict by endeavouring to agree on the goals, vision and end state of their initiatives, and sharing such common understanding with their respective decision-making bodies. In order to achieve this, it is necessary to have early, continuous and multidimensional engagement throughout all phases of peace operations including planning, deployment, management and liquidation. Where feasible, joint assessments and collaborative planning should be undertaken;

4) Regularly review the key issues faced by the peace operations of both Organizations and bring the comparative advantages of each organization to bear in supporting the mandate implementation of all operations;

5) Collaborate towards strengthening the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) by supporting the APSA roadmap and the Silencing the Guns Master Roadmap and their respective work-plans.

6) Work to support the implementation of relevant aspects of the African Governance Architecture (AGA) as a mechanism to address structural causes of conflict.

7) Develop a shared vision for United Nations-African Union policing and collaborate in areas related to police doctrine and training, assessments and planning, as well as, where relevant, operational implementation;

8) Continue to collaborate in developing arrangements for the predictable and sustainable funding of African Union peace operations authorized by the United Nations Security Council, subject to the United Nations legislative framework including the Charter of the United Nations, United Nations financial regulations and rules and all applicable United Nations policies and standards, including the Human Rights Due Diligence Policy (HRDDP)[9] on United Nations support to non-United Nations security forces;

9) Collaborate in assessing and addressing the institutional capacity development needs of the partnership, in particular in the areas of mission management and support, subject to the United Nations legislative framework including the Charter of the United Nations, United Nations financial regulations and rules and all applicable United Nations policies and standards;

10) Cooperate on the development of training curriculum for personnel to be employed in AU peace support operations.

11) Exchange and coordinate, as appropriate, with United Nations entities with a humanitarian mandate to respond adequately to humanitarian crises;

12) Work jointly in support of the implementation of the AU humanitarian policy framework, including its Humanitarian Assistance in Natural Disasters (HANDS) policy and its Aide Memoire on the Protection of Civilians (POC).

[9] A/67/775-S/2013/110, annex.

C: Addressing Root Causes

The Secretariat and the Commission will:

1) Work to include peacebuilding strategies in all of the relevant coordination and discussion mechanisms described above, in particular in the collaborative planning of conflict prevention and peace operations, taking full account of cross-cutting themes, such as justice, human rights, children's rights, youth unemployment, gender and reconciliation;

2) Strengthen coordination and cooperation on peacebuilding, including where feasible through joint assessment missions of countries emerging from conflict or countries on the agenda of the Peacebuilding Commission and joint advocacy and resource mobilization in support of peacebuilding activities;

3) Work jointly in support of the implementation of the African Union Policy Framework on Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development, including the African Solidarity Initiative;

4) Continue to develop United Nations-African Union cooperation programmes to stem the illicit flow of weapons and ammunition into Africa, including Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW), and collaborate in Security Sector Reform (SSR), Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR), Mine Action, Child Protection, Counter Terrorism and other areas of mutual interest.

D: Continuous Partnership Review and Enhancement

The two Organizations will conduct regular discussions and review of the partnership, and the implementation of this Joint Framework, through:

1) Regular meetings between the Special Representative of the Secretary-General to the African Union and the African Union Commission, as appropriate;

2) Annual retreats between the United Nations Office to the African Union, representatives of relevant United Nations Departments/Offices, the African Union Peace and Security Department and Department of Political Affairs to develop joint work-plans and take stock of the implementation of previous work-plans;

3) Annual Desk-to-Desk meetings, bringing together desk officers from the United Nations and the African Union, as well as officers from RECs/RMs, to enhance relations at the working level and to identify joint programmes;

4) Regular periodic video tele-conferences between United Nations and African Union desks on current issues, to enhance common understanding and forge collaborative approaches;

5) Regular video tele-conferences at the Director level to enhance collaboration and information-sharing and strengthen the work done between the desks, as well as to prepare Joint Task Force meetings;

6) Joint Task Force meetings at the Principal level once a year, with additional discussions by video tele-conferences, as needed. Joint Task Force's recommendations would provide guidance for cooperation on peace and security between the two Organizations;

7) Participate in and facilitate as appropriate the annual consultations between the African Union Peace and Security Council and members of the United Nations Security Council. They will encourage collaborative and informed decisions by the two Councils to enhance partnership between the two Organizations. Regular consultation between United Nations Security Council and African Union Peace and Security Council member States, including between their respective Presidents, will also be encouraged and facilitated to enhance mutual understanding and the exchange of information. Joint field missions could also be organized;

8) Consult, as appropriate, in the drafting of reports on conflict situations to their respective Councils;

9) Convene the United Nations-African Union Annual Conference between the United Nations Secretary-General and the Chairperson of the African Union Commission and their meetings on the margins of the African Union Summit and the General Assembly General Debate in order to assess progress in the partnership between the two Organizations, and provide strategic direction.

E. <u>Enhancing the predictability, sustainability and flexibility of financing for AU-led peace support operations</u>

Building on the "Decision on the outcome of the retreat of the Assembly of the African Union" (Assembly/AU/Dec.605 (XXVII)) on the financing of the Union, in particular the Peace Fund, as well as on United Nations Security Council Resolution 2320 (18 November 2016), the two Organizations have expressed the willingness to consider options to enhance the predictability, sustainability and flexibility of financing of African Union-led United Nations Security Council-authorized peace support operations, as part of their partnership in the area of peace and security.

Signed on 19 April 2017:

Moussa Faki Mahamat	António Guterres
Chairperson	Secretary-General
African Union Commission	United Nations

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2023 FACTSHEET CLIMATE, PEACE AND SECURITY

While not traditionally a key consideration for Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA), understanding climate risks is now essential to the Department's work in conflict prevention, peacemaking, and peacebuilding. The climate emergency is a crisis amplifier and multiplier. Where climate change dries up rivers, reduces harvests, destroys critical infrastructure, and displaces communities, it exacerbates the risks of instability and conflict, in particular in contexts where conflict and fragility have weakened coping capacities. It is no coincidence that 70 per cent of the most climate vulnerable countries are also affected by conflict. Women and girls often carry an outsized burden as socio-economic norms and expectations limit their coping capacities and exclude them from decision-making processes. DPPA's work in this area is led by a dedicated team within the Policy and Mediation Division. 2023 represents a crossroads on climate, peace and security. Strategic opportunities exist to strengthen the evidence base and undertake climate-informed prevention, peacebuilding, peacekeeping, and stabilization efforts.

The MYA, along with the Peacebuilding Fund, is critical to supporting DPPA's continued strategic and operational capacity to support UN entities, Member States and regional and sub-regional organizations, including through the deployment of Climate, Peace and Security Advisors.



Increased demand for climate proofing in DPPA's work:

- **11** contexts in which the Security Council has recognized the destabilizing effects of climate change, including 5 where special political missions are deployed[1]
- **8 out of 15** most climate exposed countries in the world host a UN special political mission or peacekeeping operation
- **The majority** of field-based special political missions are deployed in climate-stressed regions or countries

What we do

In 2018, DPPA, UNDP and UNEP jointly launched the **Climate Security Mechanism (CSM),** which now also includes DPO. Drawing on the different strengths of its members, the CSM seeks to build UN capacity and strengthen intersectoral collaboration. This includes providing technical support to UN field entities on risk analysis and the integration of climate considerations into peacemaking and peacebuilding strategies, deploying and building capacity, and synthesizing good practices.



Four special political missions now have dedicated **Climate, Peace and Security Advisors[2],** with plans to deploy more. The Advisors enable missions to better analyze and address the impacts of climate change on mandate delivery and lead the integration of climate risks into peacemaking and peacebuilding strategies. Partnerships across and beyond the UN system are critical to their success, in particular with regional and sub-regional stakeholders, such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) or the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD).

In addition, DPPA is also working with **Resident Coordinators and UN Country Teams** and building the capacity of Peace and Development Advisors to address climate-related security risks in a holistic manner.

DPPA is leveraging its convening power and technical expertise to ensure policy reflects lessons from around the world. In 2022, DPPA released two practice notes on climate and gender, and climate and mediation.

[1] The Security Council has recognized the destabilizing effects of climate change in the context of Central Africa, Iraq, Somalia, Sudan, and West Africa and the Sahel. In addition, it has noted the destabilizing effects of drought in Afghanistan and previously mentioned extreme weather events as a threat to the stability of Haiti.

[2] Office of the Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM), the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS) and the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA).

2022 Highlights

In **West Africa and the Sahel**, the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS) completed five country-specific climate-related security risk assessments. Led by the newly deployed Climate, Peace and Security Advisor, the mission is currently compiling findings into a regional report to synthesize takeaways and entry points for collaboration between UNOWAS, ECOWAS and UN Country Teams.

In **Central Africa,** the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) conducted the first in-depth assessment of climate-related security risks in the sub-region and developed recommendations for coordinated action. Findings have informed regional discussions - led by the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) - and will feed into the development of a conflict-sensitive climate change strategy for Central Africa.

In **Iraq and Sudan**, our missions – United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) and United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan (UNITAMS) – undertook risk assessments, which yielded recommendations for concrete action, including by integrating a climate lens into political strategies, providing advice to governments, and coordinating UN efforts to address the gendered impacts of climate change on the security of vulnerable communities. A dedicated Climate, Peace and Security Advisor is slated to deploy to UNAMI in early 2023.

In **Asia and the Pacific**, in April 2022, DPPA briefed at the first United Nations-Association of Southeast Asian Nations dialogue on climate, peace and security, which highlighted opportunities for peace positive climate action in the region. This has paved the way for further collaboration in 2023, including a regional climate, peace and security risk assessment in Southeast Asia.

At **COP27**, DPPA for the first time sent a delegation to a UN climate conference to organize and participate in side events, including to demonstrate a virtual reality experience on climate, peace and security in the **Pacific Islands.**

How we track results

- Senior Leadership Compacts
- 2023-2026 Results Framework
- Mid-Year and Annual MYA reports
- Reporting through the CSM

Global

We fund political work across the world

Flexible

70% of our funding is unearmarked

Fast

We can allocate funding within 72 hours of a crisis

Innovative and Inclusive

We use innovative approaches to peace and security with emerging technologies

PEACE IS PRICELESS AND POSSIBLE.

Multi-Year Appeal 2023-2026

For further information on the Multi-Year Appeal, please contact the Donor Relations Team.

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United Nations Special Political Missions

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2023 FACTSHEET ELECTORAL ASSISTANCE



Elections, when conducted in a fair and inclusive manner, can encourage conciliation, give voice to citizens, and support peaceful transitions. As the UN system-wide Focal Point for electoral assistance, the Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, Ms. Rosemary A. DiCarlo, is responsible for advising the Secretary-General on requests from Member States and ensures consistency in the delivery of UN electoral assistance. She is supported by the Electoral Assistance Division in this regard.

The Department assists Member States – either at their request or as mandated by the Security Council or General Assembly – to hold elections that legitimately express the people's will and are deemed credible by national stakeholders. DPPA also conducts a variety of training activities on electoral matters, capacity-building and knowledge-sharing initiatives, for regional and sub-regional organizations. As the Focal Point, the Department also ensures coordination and coherence across the United Nations system, including through provision of relevant guidance.

DPPA's electoral assistance activities rely on funding from the Multi-Year Appeal (MYA). This has critically enabled the Department to provide technical assistance to over 100 Member States to date. The Department combines technical assistance with political engagement aimed at supporting national efforts to ensuring peaceful elections and preventing violence around elections. Going forward, it is anticipated that DPPA will need to conduct around 55 electoral missions of various types annually between 2023-2026. The MYA's continued support will be critical in this regard.

What we do

DPPA provides tailored electoral assistance, including with a good offices lens, depending on the specific needs of Member States and regional organizations. In doing so, the Department coordinates with other UN entities including the Department of Peace Operations (DPO), UN Women and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

DPPA provides a range of electoral assistance, but most of our support focuses on tailored technical assistance. This can include, for example, legal, operational and logistical assistance to develop or improve electoral laws, processes and institutions. Assistance is delivered on the basis of Needs Assessment Missions, aimed at understanding the needs and capacities of the various election stakeholders and making recommendations for UN support to related electoral processes. DPPA also conducts a variety of capacity-building and training activities, for Member States, and regional and sub-regional organizations.

Gender equality and women's participation continued to be a fundamental consideration in all electoral assistance activities in 2022. For example, all electoral needs assessment reports contained analysis and recommendations on women's electoral/political participation and where appropriate incorporated dedicated analysis and recommendations on temporary special measures, including quotas. Promoting women's electoral and political participation was a key guiding principle for regional trainings initiated, co-organized or supported by DPPA.

For more information on UN electoral assistance, please visit the dedicated website.

2022 Highlights

Provision of electoral support to around 50 Member States, including with regard to 19 specific electoral events (including in Chile, Fiji, and São Tomé and Príncipe and Timor-Leste)

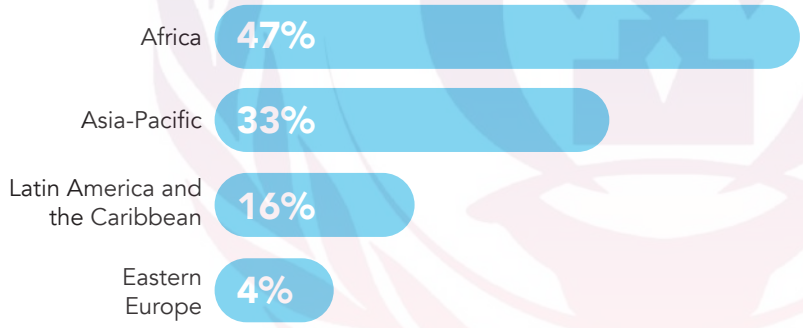
Conduct of 51 electoral missions, including 16 Needs Assessment Missions

Coordinated responses communicated to Member States within four weeks of receiving their requests for electoral assistance in 88 per cent of cases

100 per cent of electoral needs assessment and desk review reports contained specific analysis and recommendations regarding women's electoral/political participation

100 per cent of needs assessment and desk review reports included analysis and recommendations on election-related violence

Focus of electoral support in 2022



How we track results

- Senior Leadership Compacts
- 2023-2026 Results Framework
- Mid-Year and Annual MYA Reports

Global

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International Labour Organization

World Health Organization

DPPA Preventing Conflict. Sustaining Peace

Interpeace
INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR PEACEBUILDING

From crisis to opportunity for sustainable peace

A joint perspective on responding to the health, employment and peacebuilding challenges in times of COVID-19



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From crisis to opportunity for sustainable peace

A joint perspective on responding to the health, employment and peacebuilding challenges in times of COVID-19

November 2020

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About this paper

This paper examines key policy and programmatic considerations for international health and employment interventions responding to COVID-19 in conflict-affected countries. It outlines a range of important peacebuilding considerations and highlights significant contributions the World Health Organization (WHO) and the International Labour Organization (ILO) are making to mitigate the impacts of the pandemic.

By doing so, this paper aims to shed light on the risks and resilience factors that are particularly relevant in countries recently or currently affected by armed conflict, or where the risk of an outbreak, escalation of, or relapse into violence is high (for the sake of readability, these situations are hereafter referred to as "conflict-affected"). It suggests how these considerations can best be incorporated into COVID-19 policy responses and programming, and provides general and practical guidance for how programmes and interventions may need to be adapted to become optimally effective, do no harm and strengthen prospects for peace. Thus, one of the main added values of this paper is the link of peace to health.

The paper stems from a partnership among WHO, ILO, Interpeace and the UN Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO) of the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs.[1] This publication targets national governments/donors, international agencies and civil society engaged in the COVID-19 response specifically in the areas of health, decent work and employment, and peacebuilding in conflict-affected settings.

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1 The Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA) provided financial support for ILO. Global Affairs Canada and the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office of the United Kingdom provides financial support for Interpeace's Peace Responsiveness Facility.

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Preface

Initially, some referred to the COVID-19 crisis as a "great equalizer," yet it is anything but equalizing. The pandemic is exacerbating persistent political, social and economic structural inequalities that render some groups more vulnerable than others. In many contexts, it is reinforcing patterns of inequality and grievance that undermine trust and the social contract among individuals and communities with the states that must represent, protect and govern them. Beyond the enormous direct health impacts of the virus itself, these patterns are undermining access to decent jobs, health services, education, food and livelihoods – triggering new grievances and exacerbating pre-existing conflict dynamics. Besides being the greatest health crisis of our time, COVID-19 is a multidimensional crisis that threatens broader peace and stability.

The potential of increased conflict and violence at such a time must command our collective attention. The virus spreads far and fast and does not know, nor care, for boundaries. In some contexts, fragile peace agreements and containment measures have kept violence to a minimum. In many others, armed groups and other actors have exploited the crisis to their advantage, increasing violence while undermining public health responses.

Potential conflict threatens not only peace and stability but also the effectiveness of public health responses to meet the COVID-19 challenge. While the primary response to the pandemic must come from both local and national levels, the role of international actors is still crucial.

The question of how conflict sensitive and peace responsive approaches are integrated into international technical health responses and broader socio-economic responses - such as employment programs - will determine their effectiveness and sustainability but also how they impact peace and conflict dynamics. Therefore, how peacebuilding approaches are integrated into multidimensional humanitarian and development actions of governments, INGOs, social partners (employers and workers organisations) and UN actors – or not – is not an abstract question, but a critical operational imperative.

This joint paper by the World Health Organization, the International Labour Organization, Interpeace and the UN Peacebuilding Support Office aims to outline practical guidance on how our interventions in conflict-affected settings may need to be adapted to be more effective, more integrated, ensure they do no harm and strengthen prospects for peace. When dealing with the multidimensional and complex nature of peace in societies it is key we do not view our contributions in isolation but realize a holistic, integrated and connected understanding of how our teams and partners operate on-the-ground.

We hope the guidance helps our teams and partners around the world to develop, enable and support others in crafting COVID-19 policies and programmatic interventions that avoid inducing or exacerbating conflict, better achieve their important technical outcomes and make a positive contribution to peace.

As the interconnectedness of our world has never been more evident, and the need for collaboration never more urgent, we hope this paper encourages and equips our respective organizations and colleagues to realize collective outcomes and enable local leadership. While the pandemic has exposed serious vulnerabilities, it has also revealed unseen levels of generosity, courage and faith in human nature, offering new opportunities for collective action and innovation. Jointly and in solidarity, we believe that all of us can contribute to more inclusive, resilient and peaceful societies for all.

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Executive summary

The COVID-19 pandemic is overwhelming health systems, interrupting supply chains, exacerbating unemployment and/or underemployment, and diverting resources and capacities from other health needs. The crisis is aggravating persistent political, social and economic structural inequalities that render some groups more vulnerable than others. The risk of contracting the disease is particularly high among already disadvantaged groups, such as the unemployed, those working in the informal economy, refugees, displaced people and migrants living in camps and informal settlements.[2]

Pre-existing inequity in access to health care, social protection and decent work for financial, logistical or even political reasons has become more apparent or worsened, potentially further deepening inequalities between social groups. In many contexts, this reinforces patterns of inequality and grievances that undermine trust and the social contract between individuals and communities and the states that represent, protect and govern them.

The containment measures deeply affect the economies of conflict-affected states – especially those economies and households that rely heavily on international exchanges and remittances. Women and youth tend to suffer disproportionately from the socioeconomic impacts, both in the immediate term and in relation to prospects. Decent work is further reduced, as remaining labour opportunities are scarce, and households may need to resort to negative coping strategies. Child labour and trafficking may increase as a result.

Social protection mechanisms are unable to provide sufficient livelihood support, particularly for those relying on the informal economy. Government strategies to protect economies are often inadequate to mitigate negative effects on livelihoods and remain primarily geared towards formal businesses.

Government responses to manage the pandemic, rapidly upgrade health-care systems and tackle the socioeconomic consequences for livelihoods may be perceived as unsatisfactory by the population, particularly in situations where confidence in the state is low. This underlines an important aspect of policy responses to the crisis: in many settings, the impacts are directly and indirectly conflict inducing. This means it is more important than ever to consider how and when peacebuilding approaches ought to be integrated into multidimensional humanitarian and development actions.

This is relevant not just for peace, but for the outbreak of COVID-19 itself. The extent to which international humanitarian and development responses are conflict sensitive and peace responsive to the direct and indirect impacts of the pandemic will be critical in determining their effectiveness.

In conflict-affected settings, the impacts of the virus on health, livelihoods and decent work fuel dynamics of conflict and violence and erode social cohesion. They can create instability, reduce trust and social cohesion, and increase the risk of violence. They can also lessen the effectiveness of the measures taken to contain the virus, which can forge a vicious cycle where the disease and conflicts are mutually reinforcing.

The pandemic may also affect structural factors underpinning the potential for conflict and thus reduce prospects for sustainable peace. The direct and indirect impacts of COVID-19 may deepen structural inequalities and social injustice, fueling dissent and increasing mistrust, especially in situations where misinformation is widespread. The real or perceived inability of governments to respond to the crisis adequately and fairly can erode trust in state authorities. This, in turn, may create conflictual dynamics, and illegitimate, criminal or non-state actors can gain greater legitimacy by providing services.

2 International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), 'Least Protected, Most Affected: Migrants and Refugees Facing Extraordinary Risks during the COVID-19 Pandemic' (IFRC, 2020) <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/IFRC-report-COVID19-migrants-least-protected-most-affected.pdf> accessed 17 June 2020.

As the pandemic unfolds and intensifies, frustration may lead to more social dissent and protest. This could turn violent, especially if security forces have heavy-handed responses. Criminal and interpersonal (including gender-based) violence may increase, due to shrinking business opportunities and fragile livelihoods. Health-care professionals and international responders may be attacked if responses are not conflict sensitive – a phenomenon that hampered the Ebola response in West Africa and eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Although these impacts occur in some contexts, they are not necessarily present everywhere. In many countries and communities around the world, people understand why their governments have taken certain measures, despite the pain they have caused. Still, the risks of diminishing the prospects for sustainable peace are real and must be considered when designing and implementing interventions.

Approach a multidimensional crisis with a multidimensional response

Epidemiological responses to tackle the virus, including containment measures, and actions to mitigate the socioeconomic impacts must be designed in close connection to each other, considering indirect impacts in other sectors and maximizing synergies among different sectoral responses. Multidisciplinary competencies and expertise are required. Humanitarian, development and peace actors must link their responses towards collective outcomes rooted in a sound understanding of local needs and enable local leadership.

Youth and gender need to be integrated as disproportionally affected groups, as well as to maximize their potential to contribute to more effective approaches. Importantly, a multidimensional approach should also consider the impact of the crisis on civil rights and ensure their protection.

Commit to conflict-sensitive, peace-responsive and tailored policy and programmatic approaches

National and international agencies must progressively invest in capacities to analyse the impact of COVID-19 on the broader context, including on conflict dynamics. National and international organizations supporting health care, livelihoods and decent work in the context of the pandemic must always ensure the conflict sensitivity of their interventions, and establish the necessary capacity, systems and processes to do so.

Beyond conflict sensitivity, ensuring that the response to the crisis supports sustainable peace requires applying peace-responsive approaches[3] – that is, proactively identifying how health, employment and other interventions can contribute to peace. Ensuring conflict sensitivity and peace responsiveness requires senior-level commitment and the dedication of specialized human and financial resources. WHO, ILO, PBSO and others have developed conflict-sensitivity guidance tailored to specific programming interventions that national and international actors operating in this field can use.

Use the COVID-19 crisis as an opportunity to shift to locally led responses

Effectively addressing various dimensions of the pandemic in conflict-affected contexts depends heavily on context-specific as well as locally informed and led responses. The response is compounded by the operational limitations faced by international – and even national – actors due to containment measures.

The pandemic can thus serve as a key lever to advance the localization agenda and integrate it more centrally into the broader humanitarian-development-peace nexus. In practice, this will require new funding and operational modalities that incentivize a bigger role in decision-making for local actors. It is also necessary to intentionally strategize how to achieve this without unevenly transferring risks to local partners, but rather seeking to manage risks jointly between local and international actors. This requires a greater degree of programmatic and financial flexibility than is available today, and adapted accountability mechanisms more based on trust and partnership.

3 Interpeace, 'Peace Responsiveness,' <https://www.interpeace.org/our-approach/peace-responsiveness/> accessed 10 July 2020.

Adapt programmatic and communication approaches to local realities and capacities

Containment approaches have strong negative socioeconomic impacts on labourers in low- and middle-income countries, especially those with a relatively large informal sector and weak social protection coverage. Trust in government responses and the efficacy of communication efforts are crucial in determining the success of mitigation strategies. Communicating transparently about the rationale and priorities for the responses is a key element that can only succeed when working with and through trusted sources and intermediaries.

Responses must operationalize partnerships beyond the state and establish collaborative efforts whereby stakeholders (including communities, civil society, local leaders, workers, employer organizations and authorities) design locally suitable strategies and gather support for them. To be peace responsive, all efforts must be designed through an "inequality lens," meaning no effort should – or be seen to – further increase inequality among social groups.

Integrate a peace and conflict lens to maximize positive and mutually reinforcing direct and indirect impacts

Technical agencies working in the spheres of health, employment and decent work can make valuable contributions to mitigate the conflict and peace dynamics of COVID-19. The ILO Handbook and the WHO Peace and Health Initiative elaborate the pathways through which technical interventions can potentially help sustain peace. Considering the strong linkages between health, socioeconomic impacts and conflict dynamics, these kinds of interventions can have multiplier effects beyond their direct technical outcomes.

Short-term emergency public works schemes, for instance, can help mitigate the socioeconomic impact and support the health response by upgrading infrastructures for primary health care and access to clean water, sanitation and hygiene. Skills development programming can strengthen the health response by creating a workforce skilled in contact tracing to prevent the further spread of the disease. Small firms could be supported to domestically produce protective equipment required for the health response.

In all such efforts, equity – whether in access to health care or socioeconomic opportunities – must be at the forefront of the operational programme design approaches of national and international response planners. Potentially important direct impacts can also be leveraged for peace. In the realm of health diplomacy, it may be possible to address conflicts between parties by temporarily suspending hostilities to allow for crossline cooperation in health. This could underpin confidence-building efforts, providing more fertile ground for future negotiation and peacebuilding.

Lay down foundations for structural changes and build resilience

While immediate measures are necessary, they should be part of a wider, long-term vision for recovery that addresses the underlying factors of fragility that made society and the economy particularly vulnerable to shocks in the first place. Programming therefore must ensure explicitly that short-term responses help lay the foundations for the transformation of these more structural challenges.

Existing public employment programmes can be rapidly scaled up when new crises hit. Some countries may need such programmes in the long term. Investment in productive infrastructure must be increased, for instance, through these employment programmes. Social protection schemes should be upgraded and their coverage expanded to cater to the most vulnerable. Similarly, health-care systems need to be overhauled and moved closer to universal coverage.

All such reforms, whether in the health or the socioeconomic sphere, must be developed through participatory and inclusive methods that ensure these policies are appropriate and in line with people's needs and desires. By doing so, they ought to enhance trust in state authorities and strengthen social cohesion. The limited fiscal space of many conflict-affected and fragile contexts may stymie many of these reforms, such as expanding social protection and health care. Therefore, more international collaboration and solidarity will be required in the coming years.

Seizing the occasion for transformative change

The magnitude of the pandemic boosts its potential to change fundamentally unsustainable political and social conditions, thereby creating an environment conducive to deeper reform and genuine peacebuilding processes. It may give development actors a better chance to collaborate with government counterparts as well as social partners (worker and employer organizations), local leaders and communities, to initiate more inclusive processes for more far-reaching policy reforms for sustainable peace.

The pandemic may also help to advance long-discussed changes to the humanitarian and development sector, including the humanitarian-development-peace nexus and the connected localization agenda. This work is urgent, as the crisis has exposed the degree to which the different sectors of our societies are interlinked.

> We are living through a difficult time, but we can turn the COVID-19 crisis into an opportunity for sustainable peace and greater inclusion.
>
> ▸ The UN Secretary-General



1

Introduction

The unprecedented magnitude of the pandemic means its impact is wide-ranging. Although COVID-19 originated as a health crisis, most, if not all, sectors of society and the economy have been affected. Measures taken to slow the spread of the virus have had serious social, economic and political implications.

Conflict-affected countries are particularly exposed to the effects of the pandemic. In these societies, the sudden onset of a new disease can easily aggravate social, economic and political challenges and disrupt already fragile social contracts.

The specialized agencies in health (World Health Organization) and employment and decent work (International Labour Organization) can make important contributions to mitigate the direct impacts of the pandemic, as well as the broader impacts on peace and conflict through collaboration with peace actors. Recommendation 205 of the International Labour Organization provides the key international normative framework and underscores the central role of employment and decent work in prevention, recovery, peace and resilience with respect to crisis situations arising from conflicts and disasters.

WHO has also heeded the call by the UN Secretary-General to contribute proactively to building and sustaining peace. Its recent Health and Peace Initiative explores how its comparative advantage as the leading global health agency can help lessen the impact of armed conflict and violence and improve the prospects of lasting, local peace within the scope of its mandate.

Beyond the immediate humanitarian and socioeconomic challenges of the crisis, the implications for building and sustaining peace are diverse and sobering. Containing and addressing COVID-19 in conflict-affected contexts will require serious consideration of the complex multidimensional risks and resilience capacities present in these settings. While mitigation measures mainly target the immediate and direct needs to contain the disease, these national and international responses must be conflict sensitive and peace responsive. They must not exacerbate conflict dynamics or mistrust, yet they should proactively seize opportunities to help ease tensions and strengthen peace (for example, by fostering social cohesion).

This paper will draw on emerging findings on how the epidemic has affected these multiple dimensions in society. Important lessons in this regard have also been learned from recent Ebola outbreaks in Central and West Africa; these have been incorporated at relevant points in this paper.

The global and local impact of COVID-19 is of a nearly unrivalled nature as a risk, shock and stressor. As such, the pandemic is a critical juncture in which there may be scope for transformative change to unsustainable and broken social contracts. It has brought to light social fault lines of inequality, little trust in authorities and the weak ability of the public sector to quickly and appropriately. It is therefore the right time to understand how international support for national and local capacities can help both recover from the shock and stress of COVID-19 and "build back better" for sustainable peace.

This paper sets out the most relevant considerations for effective, conflict-sensitive and peace- responsive approaches to mitigate the effects of the pandemic in conflict-affected contexts. It provides general guidance on how to adapt programmes and interventions so they are the most effective, do no harm and strengthen (prospects for) peace.



2

Understanding the impact of COVID-19 in conflict-affected settings

The pandemic has taken a major toll on health systems, which are struggling to cope with the surge in demand for complex health-care treatment. At the same time, the nature of the virus and the effectiveness of treatment options are still unclear.[4] Measures taken to contain COVID-19, such as lockdowns, have significant socioeconomic impacts on individuals and households, compounding the already precarious nature of livelihoods in areas affected by conflict or violence.

This section identifies the main threats the pandemic poses to access to health care and the health-care systems in conflict-affected countries. It also examines the socioeconomic impacts of the crisis and containment strategies, including the impact on labour conditions and decent work.

These threats do not take place in a vacuum. Broader conflict dynamics and structural factors already limit the extent to which peace can be achieved and sustained. Therefore, this section also analyses how the effects on health care, employment and livelihoods may directly influence violence and instability, and more indirectly – but perhaps more profoundly – the structural factors underpinning conflict and peace, including the levels of social cohesion and trust in society.

2.1 Impact on access to health care and health-care systems

The public health impact to date

- As of 4 September 2020, more than 26 million confirmed COVID-19 cases and over 863,000 deaths had been reported to WHO. The Americas accounted for more than half of both all cases and deaths, followed by Europe (17 per cent of all cases; 26 per cent of all deaths), South-East Asia (17 per cent; 9 per cent) and the Eastern Mediterranean region (8 per cent; 6 per cent). Africa and the Western Pacific together made up only 6 per cent of the cases and 4 per cent of the deaths.[5]
- In early August, there were more than 53 per cent male confirmed COVID-19 cases in the countries for which sex-disaggregated data were available, yet the average male-female ratio of deaths was close to 1.4.[6]

4 World Health Organization (WHO), 'Rolling Updates on Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19)' (WHO, 2020) <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/events-as-they-happen> accessed 1 July 2020.

5 'WHO Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Dashboard' (WHO 2020), <https://covid19.who.int/> accessed 4 September 2020.

6 'COVID-19 sex-disaggregated data tracker', Global Health 50/50 <https://globalhealth5050.org/covid19/sex-disaggregated-data-tracker/#1593530303289-1a59fb7f-b2b7> accessed 4 September 2020.

Health systems may be overwhelmed or at risk of collapse

- The rapid rise in the number of COVID-19 patients requiring immediate care may devastate fragile health systems. Limited medical and paramedical personnel, lack of medical material – including tests – and insufficient numbers of hospital beds may complicate the immediate health response to the pandemic.

  There may be too few hospital beds to manage the influx of patients in conflict-affected areas such as Afghanistan (which has five beds for every 10,000 people), Burkina Faso (4), Myanmar (9) and South Sudan (7.2), especially when compared with figures of high-income countries like Germany (more than 82 beds for every 10,000 people) or the United States (29).

  Suitable equipment to treat the most complicated cases may also be in short supply. Venezuela, where half of the doctors left the country during the pre-pandemic humanitarian crisis, has 84 beds in intensive care units for a population of 32 million. South Sudan has 24 intensive care unit beds and four ventilators for its 11.7 million inhabitants.[7] Conflicts also often lead to the disruption of health systems and the collapse of essential medical supply chains.[8]

  Diverting health systems' scarce resources to the pandemic response can reduce the availability of health services for other major diseases. In some West African countries in 2014–2015, the disruption of routine health service delivery, vaccination programmes and disease-specific interventions due to a focus on the Ebola outbreak led to higher morbidity and mortality rates for endemic diseases such as malaria.[9]

Disadvantaged groups and individuals are most affected by the virus

- Although they are not necessarily more susceptible to COVID-19, disadvantaged groups (such as the unemployed and working poor, as well as refugees and other forcibly displaced people living in camps and settlements) have a higher risk of becoming infected.[10] Inadequate and crowded housing conditions, the inability to maintain social distancing recommendations, poor hygiene and lack of water and sanitation facilities contribute to the spread of the virus. These vulnerable groups often cannot afford or have no access to health services, which increases the risk of the virus spreading.
- The vast majority of workers in the informal economy are highly exposed to occupational health and safety risks and lack appropriate protection. Most of these workers do not have guaranteed access to medical care or sickness or employment injury benefits. Those who can access health care may be forced into debt or compelled to sell productive assets, plunging them into deeper poverty. Before the crisis, 100 million people fell into poverty annually due to catastrophic health expenses.[11]
- The pandemic has significant direct repercussions for women because of their prevalence as front-line workers and caregivers.[12] The indirect effects are also substantial, due to the impact on the funding and availability of other health-care services on which women depend, such as sexual and reproductive health services. The downstream impacts on health services for women can be devastating in low-capacity health systems.

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7 'Hospital Beds (Per 10 000 Population)', The Global Health Observatory (World Health Organization (WHO) 2020); and International Rescue Committee, 'COVID-19 in Humanitarian Crises: A Double Emergency' (International Rescue Committee (IRC) 2020) <https://www.rescue.org/sites/default/files/document/4693/covid-19-doubleemergency-april2020.pdf> accessed 21 June 2020.

8 World Health Organization (WHO), Health and Peace Initiative (WHO 2020).

9 Alyssa S. Parpia and others, Effects of Response to 2014–2015 Ebola Outbreak on Deaths From Malaria, HIV/AIDS, and Tuberculosis, West Africa' (2016) 22 *Emerging Infectious Diseases* <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4766886/> accessed 25 May 2020; Kim J. Brolin Ribacke and others, 'Effects of the West Africa Ebola Virus Disease on Health-Care Utilization – a Systematic Review' (2016) 4 Frontiers in Public Health <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpubh.2016.00222/full> accessed 25 May 2020; and Laura Sochas, Andrew Amos Channon and Sara Nam, 'Counting Indirect Crisis-Related Deaths in the Context of a Low-Resilience Health System: The Case of Maternal and Neonatal Health During the Ebola Epidemic in Sierra Leone' (2017) 32 *Health Policy and Planning* <https://academic.oup.com/heapol/article/32/suppl_3/iii32/4621472> accessed 25 May 2020.

10 United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), 'Coronavirus Emergency Appeal UNHCR'S Preparedness and Response Plan (REVISION)' (UNHCR, 2020) <https://reporting.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/COVID-19%20appeal%20-%20REREVISED%20-%2011%20May%202020.pdf> accessed 2 July 2020.

11 International Labour Organization (ILO), 'COVID-19 Crisis and the Informal Economy Immediate Responses and Policy Challenges' (ILO 2020) <https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_protect/---protrav/---travail/documents/briefingnote/wcms_743623.pdf> accessed 4 July 2020.

12 United Nations, 'Policy Brief: The Impact of COVID-19 on Women' (UN, 2020) <https://www.un.org/sexualviolenceinconflict/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/report/policy-brief-the-impact-of-covid-19-on-women/policy-brief-the-impact-of-covid-19-on-women-en-1.pdf> accessed 8 July 2020.

Unequal access to health care is exacerbated

- Equitable access to health care was far from the reality in many conflict-affected countries, and the pandemic is likely to further entrench or deepen these inequalities. In particular, the disadvantaged groups most at risk of contracting the virus may be the least able to access health care, for financial or logistical reasons. Especially in rural areas, health-care services may simply not be available.
- Issues related to inequity in access to quality health care will probably return after a possible COVID-19 treatment or vaccine is found.
- Insecurity and other challenges where armed conflict is ongoing may further undermine the availability of and access to information and health care, forcing people to seek shelter or flee.
- Political patronage or even outright political manipulation may determine who can access health care, as means to manipulate the situation for political gain. In some cases, authorities may exploit the crisis to deprive specific groups of much-needed access to health care during the pandemic, e.g. in opposition-held areas. For instance, the Cameroonian authorities initially halted humanitarian flights within the country to prevent the spread of the virus, a decision that was interpreted as undermining the COVID-19 response in disputed zones.[13]

Government responses may be inadequate or insufficiently supported by the population

- The inability of state institutions to design and implement suitable and tailored health responses or to rapidly upgrade health systems so they take local or group particularities into account may foment distrust in authorities. This can be further fueled by a lack of clear communication by crisis authorities, and perceptions of a discriminatory response to, or mismanagement of, the pandemic.
- With containment strategies relying heavily on lockdown and social distancing, freedoms have been temporarily curtailed. In some cases, the temporary withdrawal of oversight mechanisms – parliament, judiciary, civil society – for the sake of expediency means the executive branch could prolong the state of emergency and use coercive powers disproportionately, further shrinking the civic space and using the pandemic for political reasons.[14]

2.2 Impact on livelihoods and decent work

Containment measures deeply affect economies of conflict-affected states

- Conflict and violence feature mostly in middle- and low-income economies, including the least developed countries. In these settings, both the overall economy and large swathes of the population are even more vulnerable to the sudden social and economic shocks of the pandemic.
- Socioeconomic vulnerability to local and global containment policies hinges on several factors, including the share of the informal economy, the importance of remittances, the ability of the economy to re-employ returning emigrants and reliance on international exchanges. Restrictions on the movement of people disrupt supply chains and reduce export-oriented production. Travel bans may hurt critical sectors, including tourism, leading to loss of income and food insecurity.
- Informal enterprises, which employ about 80 per cent of the adult workforce in low- and lower middle-income countries,[15] are very vulnerable. They have low productivity, low rates of savings and investment, and negligible capital accumulation, which makes them particularly susceptible to economic shocks.[16] A review of the initial measures taken in Africa to reduce the impact on the economy reveals that the focus so far has been primarily on the formal economy, such as airlines, trade, infrastructure, energy and insurance.[17]

13 Human Rights Watch, 'Cameroon: Allow Aid Access Amid Pandemic' (HRW 2020) <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/04/10/cameroon-allow-aid-access-amid-pandemic> accessed 23 May 2020.

14 International Crisis Group (ICG), 'COVID-19 and Conflict: Seven Trends to Watch' (ICG 2020) <https://www.crisisgroup.org/global/sb4-covid-19-and-conflict-seven-trends-watch> accessed 23 May 2020.

15 International Labour Organization (ILO), 'ILO Monitor: COVID-19 and the world of work. Fourth edition' (27 May 2020) https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/documents/briefingnote/wcms_745963.pdf accessed 14 July 2020.

16 ILO, 'COVID-19 Crisis and the Informal Economy Immediate Responses and Policy Challenges.'

17 International Labour Organization (ILO), 'The Impact of the COVID-19 on the Informal Economy in Africa and the Related Policy Responses' (ILO 2020) <https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---africa/---ro-abidjan/documents/briefingnote/wcms_741864.pdf> accessed 4 July 2020.

Socioeconomically vulnerable groups are most deeply affected in their livelihoods

- Workers in the informal economy, including migrants and refugees, have seen their income opportunities shrink dramatically.[18] Informal employment represents 90 per cent of total employment in low-income countries and 67 per cent in middle-income countries, compared to 18 per cent in high-income countries.[19] Women are more exposed to informality in low- and lower middle-income countries and are often in more vulnerable situations than men.[20]
- Lockdowns may be more costly for poor urban consumers due to the difficulty of accessing informal economy markets and the associated increase in prices of basic goods. This may lead to more rural-urban migration or create an incentive for informal trading and flows of these goods between rural and urban areas, which can contribute to the spread of the virus.[21]
- Households relying on remittances face significant drops in income due to the crisis. In low- and middle-income countries, 800 million relatives of migrant workers need this vital financial support.[22] This year, the World Bank projects a 19.7 per cent decline in remittances to USD 445 billion from USD 554 billion in 2019.[23] Money sent from abroad usually has a countercyclical effect, helping households in times of hardship and providing tax revenue to governments. But in a truly global crisis, remittances may not be sufficient to offset income losses.[24,25]

Women and youth suffer disproportionately from the socioeconomic impacts

- The COVID-19 crisis affects men and women differently. Early sex-disaggregated data suggest that more men than women die from the virus. However, the social and economic effects of the pandemic are likely to affect women and girls disproportionately. [26,27,28]
- Women comprise the health workforce of most countries – especially nurses working on the front line of the COVID-19 response – thereby increasing the risk of infection among female health workers.[29] The socioeconomic crisis is expected to take a bigger toll on lower-wage, low-skilled jobs, which tend to be occupied by women, further exposing women to loss of income.
- Social norms in many settings mean that female members of households will carry the increased caregiving burden at home – for the sick, older relatives and children – further impeding an already restricted access to education for girls and to livelihoods for women.[30] With the enforcement of stay-at-home orders and school closures, women and girls are also more likely to suffer from sexual or physical violence perpetrated by an intimate partner or family member.[31]

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18 See, for instance, the impact on Syrian refugees in Jordan: Tewodros Aragie Kebede, Svein Erik Stave and Maha Kattaa, 'Facing Double Crises: Rapid Assessment of the Impact of COVID-19 on Vulnerable Workers in Jordan' (International Labour Organization (ILO) 2020) <https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---arabstates/---ro-beirut/documents/publication/wcms_743391.pdf> accessed 9 July 2020.

19 International Labour Organization (ILO), 'ILO Monitor: COVID-19 and the world of work. Fourth edition' (27 May 2020) https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/documents/briefingnote/wcms_745963.pdf accessed 14 July 2020.

20 ILO, 'COVID-19 Crisis and the Informal Economy Immediate Responses and Policy Challenges.'

21 ILO, 'The Impact of the COVID-19 on the Informal Economy in Africa.'

22 United Nations Network on Migration, 'International Day of Family Remittances: The Global Pandemic Highlights the Crucial Role of Remittances for Migrant Families' (2020) <https://migrationnetwork.un.org/international-day-family-remittances-global-pandemic-highlights-crucial-role-remittances-migrant> accessed 10 July 2020.

23 Antoinette Sayeh and Ralph Chami, 'Lifelines in Danger' (International Monetary Fund (IMF) 2020) <https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/fandd/2020/06/pdf/COVID19-pandemic-impact-on-remittance-flows-sayeh.pdf> accessed 10 July 2020.

24 Ibid.

25 Antoinette Sayeh and Ralph Chami, 'Lifelines in Danger' (International Monetary Fund (IMF) 2020) <https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/fandd/2020/06/pdf/COVID19-pandemic-impact-on-remittance-flows-sayeh.pdf> accessed 10 July 2020.

26 'COVID-19: Emerging Gender Data and Why it Matters' (UN Women Data Hub, 2020) <https://data.unwomen.org/resources/covid-19-emerging-gender-data-and-why-it-matters> accessed 27 May 2020.

27 Clare Wenham, Julia Smith and Rosemary Morgan, 'COVID-19: The Gendered Impacts of the Outbreak' (2020) 395 *The Lancet* <https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(20)30526-2> accessed 27 May 2020.

28 David Evans, 'How Will COVID-19 Affect Women and Girls in Low- And Middle-Income Countries?' <https://www.cgdev.org/blog/how-will-covid-19-affect-women-and-girls-low-and-middle-income-countries> accessed 27 May 2020.

29 International Labour Organization (ILO), 'Women Health Workers: Working Relentlessly in Hospitals and At Home' (ILO, 2020) <https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS_741060/lang--en/index.htm> accessed 3 June 2020.

30 CARE, 'Gender Implications of COVID-19 Outbreaks in Development and Humanitarian Settings' (CARE 2020) <https://insights.careinternational.org.uk/media/k2/attachments/CARE_Gender-implications-of-COVID-19_Full-Report_March-2020.pdf> accessed 2 July 2020.

31 UN Women, 'The Shadow Pandemic: Violence Against Women and Girls and COVID-19' (UN Women 2020) <https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2020/issue-brief-covid-19-and-ending-violence-against-women-and-girls-infographic-en.pdf?la=en&vs=5348> accessed 1 July 2020.

- Youth employment vulnerability, already at a high level, is rising quickly. Even before the crisis, young people (aged 15 to 24) were more likely to be unemployed or in worse quality jobs than adults (aged 25 and above), with the global youth unemployment rate standing at 13.6 per cent in 2019.[32] The youth informality rate ranges from 32.9 per cent in Europe and Central Asia to 93.4 per cent in Africa, making young people particularly vulnerable to the socioeconomic impacts of COVID-19.[33] Recent data from developed countries point to a dramatic jump in the youth unemployment rate since February 2020, particularly for young women. Although accurate data on the increase in youth unemployment in conflict-affected states is not currently available, it is likely to be high.[34]

Decent work is further reduced

Box 1. Decent Work – ILO definition

Decent work sums up the aspirations of people in their working lives. It involves opportunities for work that is productive and delivers a fair income, security and representation in the workplace and social protection for families, better prospects for personal development and social integration, freedom for people to form and join organizations and express their concerns, organize and participate in the decisions that affect their lives, and equality of opportunity and treatment for all women and men.[35]

- The COVID-19 crisis has revealed the significant deficits in decent work that still prevail in 2020. The crisis highlights the vulnerability of millions of working people and worsens labour-market vulnerabilities for many already disadvantaged groups, including people with disabilities, indigenous peoples and members of disadvantaged ethnic groups, refugees, internally displaced people, smallholder farmers and others.
- The economic downturn and scarcity of demand for labour may further increase the exploitative, precarious and informal nature of the remaining work opportunities. To ensure immediate household survival, vulnerable workers may fall prey to underpaid or forced labour or seek credit with a high risk of debt bondage. They may also seek income in illegal or riskier lines of work, including sex work, trafficking and smuggling.
- Children are particularly susceptible, and the COVID-19 crisis may cause recent gains on combatting child labour to go into reverse. Households may be more inclined to resort to child labour to compensate for the loss of jobs or the cost of health care. Children are often the most available labour in households and more likely to accept work for less pay and in risky conditions. Children may even be sent away, or left behind when family members relocate, leaving them even less protected and more vulnerable to the worst forms of labour. After the 2015 earthquake in Nepal, for instance, the breakdown of private and public protection mechanisms drove increased human trafficking of children.[36]
- In addition, governments and the private sector are placing more restrictions on the rights of workers to organize and negotiate collectively. The COVID-19 crisis may have contributed to this trend.[37]

Social protection mechanisms cannot provide sufficient livelihood support

- Social networks – e.g. extended family, neighbours and friends – usually act as a support system in difficult times as part of community resilience mechanisms, especially for workers in the informal economy. As lockdowns and other containment measures disrupt social contacts and travel, some people may be

32 International Labour Organization (ILO), 'Global Employment Trends for Youth 2020' (ILO, 2020) <https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_737648.pdf> accessed 8 June 2020.

33 International Labour Organization (ILO), 'ILO Monitor: COVID-19 and the World of Work. Fourth Edition. Updated Estimates and Analysis.' (ILO 2020) <https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/documents/briefingnote/wcms_745963.pdf> accessed 2 July 2020.

34 *Ibid.*

35 'Decent Work' (ILO) <https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/decent-work/lang--en/index.htm> accessed 1 July 2020.

36 International Labour Organization and United Nations Children's Fund, 'COVID-19 and Child Labour: A Time of Crisis, a Time to Act.' (ILO and UNICEF 2020) <https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---ipec/documents/publication/wcms_747421.pdf> accessed 27 May 2020.

37 International Trade Union Confederation, '2020 ITUC Global Rights Index: Violations of Workers' Rights at Seven-Year High' (2020) <https://www.ituc-csi.org/violations-workers-rights-seven-year-high> accessed 1 July 2020.

deprived of this valuable source of resilience (though most reports highlight the continued importance of these connections and the emergence of new support groups as the key means for survival).

- Social protection schemes only partially absorb socioeconomic shocks. Just 45 per cent of the world's population is covered by at least one social protection benefit, and this share drops to 39 per cent in Asia and the Pacific and 18 per cent in Africa.[38] Workers in the informal economy are mostly excluded from these social protection mechanisms. Gaps in coverage disproportionately affect those workers in the care economy who are critical during the current crisis, notably in the cleaning, delivery, domestic work and transportation sectors.[39]
- The fiscal space to establish adequate social protection mechanisms is a serious obstacle. An estimated 5.6 per cent of gross domestic product is required for least developed countries to build a social protection system, which is unrealistic for many governments.[40]

Government strategies to reduce containment and protect economies are often insufficient

- Governments play a critical role in crisis response and in stimulating the economy with counter-cyclical measures. At times, they act as the employer of last resort to ensure livelihoods of the most vulnerable. Yet, many governments do not have the fiscal space, or the level of institutional preparedness, to apply the necessary measures.
- Various lockdown policies implemented in high-income countries may be ill adapted to conflict-affected economies and societies. As discussed above, many socioeconomically vulnerable groups and people living in dense settlements cannot afford confinement. Containment efforts may therefore be difficult to maintain for a longer period. In India, for example, lockdown measures motivated informal workers in large cities to return to their rural homes, causing large-scale displacements that could offset the very virus suppression objective of quarantine measures.

2.3 Impact on conflict dynamics[41]

In conflict-affected settings, these impacts on health, livelihoods and decent work may fuel dynamics of conflict and violence and erode social cohesion. This may directly increase violence and instability, or it may affect the more fundamental factors underpinning conflict and peace, including the level of social cohesion and trust.

▶ Box 2. Social Cohesion

Social cohesion can be described as "the extent of trust in government and within society and the willingness to participate collectively towards a shared vision of sustainable peace and common development goals."[42]

A useful way to understand social cohesion is to depict it along two axes: vertical and horizontal. Vertical social cohesion refers to the relationships between social groups and the government. Horizontal social cohesion designates interactions among groups across divisions such as language, religion, ethnicity, class and other dimensions of identity.

38 International Labour Organization (ILO), 'World Social Protection Report 2017–19' (International Labour Office – Geneva 2020) <https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_604882.pdf> accessed 25 May 2020.

39 International Labour Organization (ILO), 'Social Protection Spotlight. Social Protection Responses to the COVID-19 Crisis: Country Responses and Policy Considerations' (ILO 2020) <https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_protect/---soc_sec/documents/publication/wcms_742337.pdf> accessed 26 May 2020.

40 International Labour Organization (ILO), 'Fiscal Space and the Extension of Social Protection. Lessons Learnt from Developing Countries' (ILO, 2020) <https://www.usp2030.org/gimi/RessourcePDF.action;jsessionid=gKrUScS3miO3EXDvNFlaw5EWxcXqeDl64PXy3yuhprv0plY5yucm!-692971084?id=34168> accessed 5 July 2020.

41 Interpeace, 'Why peacebuilding should be part of the COVID-19 response' (Interpeace 2020) <https://www.interpeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Interpeace-COVID19-BriefingPaper.pdf>

42 United Nations Development Programme, 'Strengthening Social Cohesion: Conceptual Framing and Programming Implications' (UNDP 2020) <https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/democratic-governance/conflict-prevention/strengthening-social-cohesion--conceptual-framing-and-programmin.html> accessed 1 July 2020.

Societal capacities to absorb and adapt to the shock of the pandemic can depend on many factors, including a sense of solidarity and the perceived legitimacy of and popular confidence and trust in state actors. Societies with a history of cooperative interactions among people and between people and the government may be better equipped to tackle the negative impact of a crisis. Divided societies and countries prone to or emerging from armed conflict may lack these assets, as societal fault lines may have deepened and societies fractured.

Even with strong bonds within society, the COVID-19 pandemic has hit the core of the social fabric, affecting everyone's daily physical and social interactions and economic exchanges. In contexts where the socioeconomic consequences are enormous, social support systems and mutual trust may succumb to the pressures. Both the relations between the population and state institutions – vertical social cohesion – and the ties that bind individuals and groups – horizontal social cohesion – are likely to be affected.

2.3.1 Potential effects on fundamental factors underpinning conflict and peace

Increased visibility and deepening of horizontal inequalities

- The pandemic has revealed and aggravated underlying structural fault lines in many countries. As noted above, the crisis has had a greater impact on already disadvantaged and vulnerable groups, such as the working poor, indigenous and tribal populations, women, migrants, refugees and other politically or socially marginalized groups.
- The disproportionate effect on specific groups heightens the sense of inequality and discrimination. It may also lead to more grievances and real or perceived exclusion among certain social groups that may already have been marginalized and perhaps were ready to rise up. When the measures to contain COVID-19, particularly those relating to access to health care and livelihood support, are perceived as excluding certain groups, it can further spark resentment and a sense of injustice.

Deterioration of trust in authorities (vertical social cohesion)

- The increased strain on basic services, and the inability of many states to deliver these services to the entire population in an equitable manner, can significantly undermine confidence in state bodies at different levels, including the health system and other social institutions. These services cover basic needs of the population and are critical in and of themselves. But for ordinary people, they are also the most tangible – and often the most positive – manifestation of state authorities, and an important source of their popular legitimacy.
- Governments are facing dilemmas and must strike a difficult balance between measures that contain the virus and those that protect the economy. In most countries, strongly opposing views may exist on how to manage these perceived trade-offs between the economy and health considerations. This can lead to high degrees of frustration and anger against government responses.
- Lack of clarity on the reasons for the containment strategies, the selection criteria and sections of the economy that are prioritized can further erode trust in the authorities. This is particularly relevant in situations where the pre-pandemic levels of trust were low, and information coming from the authorities may be a priori mistrusted. This mistrust in government communication hampered the effectiveness of early efforts to combat Ebola in West Africa, for instance.
- Governments and the private sector may impose more restrictions on the rights of workers to organize and negotiate collectively.[43] This may damage the perception of the institutions governing the country, including state authorities, as well as private sector actors and employer organizations, and deepen socioeconomic frustrations and grievances.
- Postponing elections and restricting public gatherings constitute major risks to maintaining state-society dialogue – precisely at a moment when critical decisions require societal buy-in. In the absence of such dialogue, and in contexts where state legitimacy rests solely on provisioning public services, the risks of violent conflict are accentuated.

43 International Trade Union Confederation, '2020 ITUC Global Rights Index.'

Deterioration of trust among people (horizontal social cohesion)

- As with other crises, people may tend to revert to their in-group for security and blame others for the sudden adversity they face. Separation along ethnic, religious, sectarian and other lines may be aggravated, fueling isolation and intergroup mistrust. This may lead to new grievances, or exacerbate existing ones, thereby providing fertile ground for tension and conflict.
- In many countries, misinformation about the pandemic is spreading on social media and elsewhere. Left unchecked, rumours, inaccurate information and accusations can fuel suspicion, fear and negative stereotypes against specific groups. In several countries, members of religious groups have been stigmatized and discriminated against after confessional gatherings were identified as the source of important infection clusters. Xenophobic and racist reactions against foreigners and outsiders, blamed for "importing" the virus, have been documented, and other marginalized groups associated with outbreaks have also been targeted. COVID-19 patients as well as front-line health-care workers themselves have also been affected by stigma.
- In divided societies, containment measures such as physical and social distancing may strain the ties that bind people together. Suppression measures may undermine the network of relationships that acts as a support mechanism for vulnerable groups, weakening the "social glue" that is a source of resilience in the face of adversity.
- Restrictions on gatherings may also jeopardize peacebuilding activities. Efforts to rebuild social cohesion are often based on people-to-people approaches and must bring individuals and groups together, especially at the local level.
- In countries with histories of violent conflict, the sometimes highly securitized response to COVID-19 or the ease with which violence may flare up can revive traumatic memories of the violence of war – as occurred during the Ebola outbreak in Liberia – and thus undo hard-won gains in trust-building, psychological healing and social welfare.[44]

Potential increase in power and perceived legitimacy of non-state actors

- When authorities are unable to provide basic protection services, criminal or armed groups and illicit activities may fill the vacuum. In the long term, this can tilt the balance of power towards more non-democratic and illegitimate forces, causing changes in the political economy that may not be easily reversed.
- Insurgents, extremists or organized criminal groups may exploit the lack of economic opportunities to recruit new fighters and sympathizers, offering food, income and protection as incentives. Or they may use this opportunity to demonstrate their ability to meet people's needs. Mexican cartels, for example, are reportedly providing aid to poor communities.[45]
- Non-state actors, sometimes opposed to the incumbent regime can capitalize on lack of governmental capacity.[46, 47, 48]

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44 Platform for Dialogue and Peace (P4DP), 'Documenting the Resilience of Liberians in the Face of Threats to Peace and the 2014 Ebola Crisis.' (P4DP and Interpeace 2015) <http://3n589z370e6o2eata9wahfl4.wpengine.netdna-cdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/2015_11_17_Liberia-Country-Note-2015.pdf> accessed 1 July 2020.

45 Vanda Felbab-Brown, 'Mexican Cartels are Providing COVID-19 Assistance. Why That's Not Surprising.' (The Brookings Institution 2020) <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2020/04/27/mexican-cartels-are-providing-covid-19-assistance-why-thats-not-surprising/> accessed 14 May 2020.

46 Rachel Brown, Heather Hurlburt and Alexandra Stark, 'How the Coronavirus Sows Civil Conflict. Pandemics don't Bring People Together – Sometimes, They Pull Societies Apart' *Foreign Affairs* (2020) <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/world/2020-06-06/how-coronavirus-sows-civil-conflict> accessed 9 July 2020.

47 Tom Perry and Laila Bassam, 'Hezbollah Deploys Medics, Hospitals Against Coronavirus in Lebanon' Reuters (2020) <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-hezbollah/hezbollah-deploys-medics-hospitals-against-coronavirus-in-lebanon-idUSKBN21C3R7> accessed 3 July 2020.

48 Josheph Hincks, 'With the World Busy Fighting COVID-19, Could ISIS Mount a Resurgence?' *Time* (2020) <https://time.com/5828630/isis-coronavirus/> accessed 27 May 2020.

2.3.2 Potential direct effects on levels of violence and instability

Violent protests and crackdowns

- Patterns of exclusion, mistrust of government, misinformation and fear of the virus all provide fertile ground for violence to occur. In highly tense contexts, the imposition of stringent isolation policies has been met with violent resistance, including protests, roadblocks and armed attacks. In Niger, for instance, the population widely contested the closure of mosques and the suspension of collective prayers for social distancing purposes; this led to violent demonstrations.[49]
- Governments' heavy-handed approach to enforcing containment measures may also create instability. Poorly trained and overwhelmed security forces could turn to violence – especially against the vulnerable and marginalized – including at borders and checkpoints and when controlling crowds. Other security providers, such as the military, have been deployed as backup in some countries, and they perform policing duties for which they are not properly educated and equipped.
- Against the background of an upsurge in authoritarian measures, high-profile events, such as the death of a protester, can act as triggers for violent collective action against state authorities or opposing groups. Riots broke out in the city of Kayes in southern Mali after an off-duty police officer killed a young man, amid heightened tensions due to an unpopular curfew introduced to prevent the spread of the coronavirus.[50] Although it is difficult to disentangle the various factors that spark social unrest and protests, discontent over the handling of the pandemic has likely fueled pre-existing frustrations and brought people onto the streets. In some cases, urban young people have rallied to express dissatisfaction with the authorities' handling of the pandemic.[51]

Attacks on health-care professionals and international responders

- COVID-19 response teams and health-care workers have themselves been targeted by violence. Since the virus was officially declared a pandemic, health-care and COVID-19 response facilities have been hit by air strikes and shelling, and health workers have been killed and kidnapped.[52]
- Pandemic response efforts are more likely to face resistance in places where people do not trust authorities. During the recent Ebola outbreak in eastern DRC, response teams and infrastructures were met with aggressive and sometimes violent behaviour. Rumours spread that the disease had been fabricated to serve political interests; local private health service providers saw their turnover directly harmed by external responders offering free medical care and drugs; and there was an overall impression that Ebola was brought in by outsiders.[53]

Upsurge in crime and opportunistic violence

- Violent organizations can become magnets for individuals seeking immediate income and support, and crime networks may use instability to recruit new members or expand their activities. In Central America, a rise in gang violence appears to be linked to restrictions in criminal business activity and greater competition over a shrinking market.[54]

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49 International Crisis Group, 'Covid-19 au Niger : Réduire les Tensions Entre Etat et Croyants Pour Mieux Contenir le Virus' (2020) <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/sahel/niger/covid-19-au-niger-reduire-les-tensions-entre-etat-et-croyants-pour-mieux-contenir-le-virus> accessed 3 July 2020.

50 Will Ross, 'Mali Riots After Police Officer Kills 18-year-old' BBC Africa (2020) <https://www.bbc.com/news/topics/cq23pdgvrqwt/mali> accessed 12 June 2020.

51 Shraddha Pokharel, 'Nepal's Summer of Discontent: Young Protesters in Nepal Say "Enough is Enough" as the Government Struggles in its Fight Against COVID-19.' *The Diplomat* (2020) <https://thediplomat.com/2020/06/nepals-summer-of-discontent/> accessed 3 July 2020.

52 Insecurity Insight, 'Attacks on Health Care During The COVID-19 Response January and May 2020' (Insecurity Insight 2020) <http://insecurityinsight.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/2020-Jan-May-Fact-Sheet-COVID-19-and-Conflict.pdf> accessed 4 July 2020.

53 Interpeace, 'Cartographie des Acteurs Engagés Positivement ou Négativement dans la Lutte Contre la Maladie à Virus Ebola (MVE)' Interpeace Internal Document (2019).

54 The Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED), 'Central America and COVID-19: The Pandemic's Impact on Gang Violence' (ACLED, 2020) <https://acleddata.com/2020/05/29/central-america-and-covid-19-the-pandemics-impact-on-gang-violence/> accessed 4 July 2020.

- Mob violence and spontaneous violence by unarmed or crudely armed groups have risen since the pandemic. This is largely mob engagements with state forces enforcing lockdowns and attacks on health-care workers and individuals thought to be infected with the virus.[55]

2.4 Experience and capacities gained during previous health crises

As shown above, health and socioeconomic impacts have a strong bearing on conflict, violence and trust. These dynamics, in turn, have a strong bearing on the effectiveness of the approaches to contain the virus and mitigate its effects. Although some of these interaction factors already shine through clearly in the early signs of the impact of COVID-19, important lessons can also be drawn from the Ebola crisis in West Africa (2014–2016) and eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (2018–2020).[56]

Box 3. Lessons from the Ebola epidemic in West Africa and DRC (2014–2016)

Key issues faced in the Ebola response:

- One of the primary reasons for the rapid spread of the disease was the **deep-rooted mistrust of government, security forces and health workers.** These are countries that had recently emerged from civil war and political crisis, and relationships within and among communities and with government institutions were still tenuous.[57]
- **Information** that was shared with the population, either through governments or via social media, **was often inconsistent.** This further compounded the feelings of mistrust towards government institutions, as well as humanitarian agencies.[58]
- **Suspicion towards the authorities significantly reduced the effectiveness of national and international responses.[59]**
- The **monopolization of Ebola response resources** caused the most tension in communities. Support was inevitably focused on Ebola survivors and health workers, while the epidemic affected everyone.[60]
- In Democratic Republic of the Congo, most resistance to the measures resulted from weak capacities of local leaders involved in the pandemic response to persuade community members of its importance. Thus, the need to build the capacity of community leaders in mediation and negotiation techniques must be emphasized.[61]

Solutions that significantly increased the effectiveness of the response:

- **West Africa adopted locally led responses to deal with the epidemic.** Collaboration with local peacebuilders and trusted and respected community members, created the right environment where the local population could start to believe and collaborate with health workers and government institutions.

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55 The Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED), 'COVID-19 Disorder Tracker Spotlight: Mob Violence.' <https://acleddata.com/2020/05/21/cdt-spotlight-mob-violence/> accessed 4 July 2020.

56 Michael R. Snyder, 'DRC'S Success in Containing Ebola Serves As Lesson To Countries Battling COVID-19 - Democratic Republic Of The Congo' (ReliefWeb, 2020) <https://reliefweb.int/report/democratic-republic-congo/drc-s-success-containing-ebola-serves-lesson-countries-battling> accessed 8 July 2020.

57 Janet Adama Mohammed, 'The Role of Community Peacebuilders in a Pandemic: What We Learnt from the Ebola Crisis' (Conciliation Resources, 2020) <http://www.c-r.org/news-and-insight/role-community-peacebuilders-pandemic-what-we-learnt-ebola-crisis> accessed 12 June 2020.

58 *Ibid.*

59 Interpeace, 'Cartographie des acteurs engagés positivement ou négativement dans la lutte contre la maladie à virus Ebola'.

60 Mohammed, *op. cit.*

61 Interpeace, 'Cartographie des acteurs engagés positivement ou négativement dans la lutte contre la maladie à virus Ebola'.

▶ **Box 3. (cont.)**

- In Democratic Republic of the Congo, Interpeace facilitated dialogue among the population, civil society, response teams and the authorities to improve confidence and coordination and ensure that the measures put in place to combat the pandemic were sensitive to local conditions. In particular, the focus was on using existing resilience capacities and local dialogue structure, and ensuring that actors involved in the response understood the actual and potential impacts of their interventions, and the way they could be perceived or reinforce the dynamics of conflict and power.[62]
- Local **peacebuilders played an important role.** In the border regions of Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone, locally owned peacebuilding structures – where networks included trusted and respected community members – became a vital bridge between the communities and health workers, humanitarian organizations and government institutions.[63] Their dialogue sessions also gave **people who were not recognized as direct victims a space to talk** about the collective suffering of the community and the nation, which helped maintain social cohesion.[64]
- A key lesson learned from the Ebola experience is the **importance of disseminating clear information** about the disease and how it spreads, and proactively finding means to **prevent and debunk rumours,** especially in remote areas.
- **Local actors invented and adopted microsolutions to help slow the spread of the virus.** The Veronica Bucket, for instance, a dustbin-sized plastic receptacle with a tap attached and a bowl to collect wastewater, enabled people to wash their hands in the absence of running water. Now again, the bucket is appearing outside offices and malls, and in villages and slums across West Africa.[65]
- The main lesson for Africa and other parts of the world from Ebola for COVID-19 is that **shared learning between communities and medical professionals is a key aspect of human adaptive response to emergent diseases.** In any disease for which community mobilization is an important aspect, *"families need to think like epidemiologists, and epidemiologists need to think like families"*[66]
- For Democratic Republic of the Congo, the main lesson was that response strategies implemented at the national level must also consider the realities on the ground and be sensitive to the dynamics of conflict. It was therefore essential to take into account the security context (and plan a conflict resolution strategy), the political context (especially to prevent the response to the pandemic from falling prey to political manipulation), the economic context (to avoid the response causing or reinforcing economic struggles), and social and cultural conflicts of interest, as well as the peculiarities of different health zones.[67]

However, it is also necessary to point to the significant disease-response capacities that have been built up in some conflict-affected areas as a consequence of dealing with previous epidemics. Although the previous sections have focused primarily on negative impacts and risk factors for exacerbating conflict and violence, all is not "doom and gloom" in conflict-affected countries.

Having navigated Ebola, HIV and other epidemics, several African countries – many of which can be considered conflict-affected – have significantly upgraded their disease-response capacity. Although health systems remain weak in many places, investments by national governments and the African Union, along with international initiatives, have built important public health capacities. In the context of COVID-19, African

62 *Ibid.*
63 Mohammed, *op. cit.*
64 *Ibid.*
65 David Pilling, 'Africa's Covid-19 Response is a Glimpse of how Things Could be Different' *Financial Times* (2020) <http://Africa's Covid-19 response is a glimpse of how things could be different> accessed 15 June 2020.
66 Paul Richards, 'What Might Africa Teach the World? Covid-19 and Ebola Virus Disease Compared' <https://oxfamblogs.org/fp2p/what-might-africa-teach-the-world-covid-19-and-ebola-virus-disease-compared/> accessed 15 June 2020.
67 Interpeace, 'Cartographie des acteurs engagés positivement ou négativement dans la lutte contre la maladie à virus Ebola.'

governments are offering examples of effective international cooperation. The African Union, for instance, started early to strengthen its coordination on a continental strategy.[68]

Africa's experience in dealing with both HIV/AIDS and Ebola has also given rise to innovative strategies to trace, treat, isolate and care for the sick. Countries have begun to engage communities, communicate risks and adopt local and innovative practices.[69] African civil society actors and the private sector are forming unprecedented partnerships to fight the coronavirus. In Nigeria, for instance, the Coalition Against COVID-19 has brought together local banks to mobilize resources to support social protection and the purchase of personal protective equipment.[70]

In summary, some broad lessons can be drawn from the ways past and current responses have taken into consideration the specificity of conflict-affected contexts. These include:

- building on existing capacities and thinking beyond the state;
- acknowledging the pivotal importance of trust and strengthening trust or finding alternative means;
- investing in awareness and communication efforts and adapting these to local realities.

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68 Matthew M. Kavanagh and others, 'Access to Lifesaving Medical Resources for African Countries: COVID-19 Testing and Response, Ethics, and Politics' (2020) 395 The Lancet <https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(20)31093-X/fulltext> accessed 3 July 2020.

69 United Nations, 'Policy Brief: Impact of COVID-19 in Africa.' (2020) <https://unsdg.un.org/sites/default/files/2020-05/Policy-brief-Impact-of-COVID-19-in-Africa.pdf> accessed 3 July 2020.

70 *Ibid.*



3

Recommendations for effective, conflict-sensitive and peace-contributing responses

3.1 Approach the multidimensional crisis with a multidimensional response

Multidimensional responses are necessary to address a multidimensional crisis. In conflict-affected contexts, the pandemic will be one additional layer of complexity in an already complex situation. This is more than a public health and a socioeconomic crisis. Responses need to factor in these multiple dimensions but based on a human and employment-centred approach. Science-based responses to contain the virus and socioeconomic responses and other relevant sectoral interventions must be designed in relation to each other, taking into account secondary impacts in the other dimensions and maximizing synergies between sectors.

Approaches should be designed across the humanitarian-development-peacebuilding nexus. In addition to sectoral cooperation, the gaps between humanitarian, development and peacebuilding interventions must be closed. Domestic actors and their international partners intervening to mitigate the health, socioeconomic and peacebuilding risks of the pandemic should work together to achieving the desired outcomes.

For the United Nations, this crisis is an opportunity to put into practice the New Way of Working, with its emphasis on inter-agency context and risk analysis, collaborative response planning and achieving collective outcomes.[71] However, responses will need to go further than cooperation among international agencies. They will have to engage local actors directly to better understand local needs and capacities and ensure those local actors have a leadership role in addressing needs, whether they are humanitarian, development or peace related.

Youth and gender must be mainstreamed across all approaches. Gender and youth sensitivity and responsiveness should be maintained across all these interventions, in line with United Nations Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security and Resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security.[72]

71 United Nations, 'The New Way of Working' (2020) <https://www.un.org/jsc/content/new-way-working> accessed 17 May 2020.

72 Gender Action for Peace and Security (GAPS), 'Call to Action: Now and the Future, COVID-19 and Gender Equality, Global Peace and Security' (2020) <https://gaps-uk.org/covid-19-and-gender-equality-global-peace-and-security/> accessed 1 July 2020.

▶ Box 4. Women, Peace and Security and the COVID-19 response[73,74,75,76,77]

As we celebrate the 20th anniversary of UN Security Council Resolution 1325, the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda that has gained growing support over two decades, provides a compass for navigating the pandemic. Its people-centric approach to security threats is more relevant than ever. From a pragmatic perspective, gendered analysis, the systematic use of sex-disaggregated data and gender sensitivity are proving to be indispensable to build a comprehensive picture of the COVID-19 pandemic and design effective responses.

Echoing the call of the WPS agenda for women's participation and agency in local peacebuilding efforts, women's activists in conflict-affected settings are harnessing their networks and influence to prevent and combat the virus. In refugee settlements in Uganda, South Sudanese women mediators are shifting activities from resolution of daily conflicts to informing the displaced on the risks of the coronavirus and what to do to prevent infections.[78] Created a year ago to seek influence over male-dominated decision-making bodies, the Libyan Women's Network for Peacebuilding has engaged in awareness-raising activities and started to produce protective equipment for health-care workers.[79]

However, this grass-roots engagement is not matched with the critically important involvement of women in high-level decision-making, for both health matters and peace and security issues. Effective and decisive crisis management by female leaders has been highlighted in a handful of countries. Yet women remain underrepresented in senior roles to combat the pandemic, with less than 20 per cent female health ministers and only 25 per cent of senior positions in health agencies held by women.[80]

Women and girls must be empowered to play a major role in decision-making on COVID-19 responses to ensure their rights and needs are met and avoid aggravating gender inequalities in conflict-affected settings.

73 Ibid.

74 North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), 'COVID-19: At the Heart of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda' (2020) <https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_175694.htm> accessed 1 July 2020.

75 Thania Paffenholz and others, 'Making Women Count - Not Just Counting Women: Assessing Women's Inclusion and Influence on Peace Negotiations.' (Inclusive Peace and Transition Initiative [The Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies] and UN Women 2016) <https://www.inclusivepeace.org/sites/default/files/IPTI-UN-Women-Report-Making-Women-Count-60-Pages.pdf> accessed 2 July 2020.

76 United Nations Secretary-General, 'Deputy Secretary-General's Remarks at the Virtual High-Level Meeting: The Impact Women Leaders are Having in the Fight Against the Covid-19 Pandemic' (2020) <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/dsg/statement/2020-06-05/deputy-secretary-generals-remarks-the-virtual-high-level-meeting-the-impact-women-leaders-are-having-the-fight-against-the-covid-19-pandemic-prepared-for-delivery> accessed 2 July 2020.

77 UN Women, 'Women Peace and Security, and Covid-19 in Asia-Pacific' (UN Women Asia and the Pacific 2020) <https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/03/women-peace-and-security-and-covid-19-in-asia-pacific#view> accessed 30 June 2020.

78 UN Women, 'Women Peace Mediators Become Key Actors on the Front Lines of COVID-19 Prevention in Refugee Settlements in Uganda' (2020) <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2020/6/feature-women-mediators-during-covid-19-in-refugee-settlements> accessed 2 July 2020.

79 UN Women, 'Connected by Their Phones, Women Peacebuilders Lead COVID-19 Prevention Efforts Across Libya' (2020) <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2020/6/feature-women-peacebuilders-lead-covid-19-prevention-efforts-across-libya> accessed 27 June 2020.

80 International Finance Corporation (IFC), 'Women's Leadership in Private Health Care' (IFC, 2020) <https://www.ifc.org/wps/wcm/connect/a062e443-5503-4e87-af07-593db1bed033/IFC+Women+Leaders+Healthcare_FinalWeb4.pdf?MOD=AJPERES&CVID=mCRl3Yb> accessed 2 July 2020.

▶ Box 5. Empowering youth in COVID-19 responses

Health risks associated with COVID-19 appear to increase with age. However, the socioeconomic impact of the pandemic disproportionately affects young people, and this is exacerbated for the one in four young women and men who live in conflict-affected regions.[81] Young people are disproportionately affected by poverty, livelihood difficulties due to restrictions on the informal economy, rising unemployment rates and bars to entering the labour market, as well as precarious labour conditions.

Furthermore, school closures may reverse gains made in access to education, worsen educational inequalities and lead to more gender-based and domestic violence and early pregnancies. Some of the most negative consequences of the pandemic involve its impact on the psychosocial, mental health and wellbeing of young people. This includes the creation of barriers that impede young people's transition to adulthood, which often depends on factors such as access to education, jobs or independent livelihoods, land or an independent home, marriage and/or childbearing.[82]

As young people appear to be a relatively lower-risk group from a health perspective, they play a key role in the immediate responses to the pandemic. National governments and international partners should therefore avoid exacerbating youth exclusion and should instead proactively seek to include and empower them as part of the COVID-19 response.

In countries such as Cameroon, Haiti, South Sudan and Syria, young people have devised innovative ways to mitigate the spread of the coronavirus, including by tackling misinformation on social media, raising awareness on health risks, and producing and distributing protective material such as hand sanitizers and masks.[83] Official responses should build on and invest in positive initiatives developed by youth, and include them in each phase of programming, as well as in the development of national and international policy responses tackling consequences of the pandemic, and particularly its socioeconomic impacts.

The COVID-19 recovery and reconstruction response should not only be sensitive to the immediate peace and security concerns of young people but should be shaped and designed through a youth lens so as to "build back better" for future generations.[84]

Governance aspects should not be overlooked in a multidimensional approach. Health and socioeconomic interventions are embedded in a broader sociopolitical context. Civic rights such as freedom of assembly have been curtailed – in most situations temporarily and for good reason. But in some cases, the pandemic is being used as a pretext to reduce civic space disproportionally or more permanently, or to advance specific political agendas. Health and socioeconomic responses can also be used for political purposes, including by guiding support or contracts for health products to political allies.

Diplomatic actors have an important role to play in putting these governance issues on the agenda, as part of the international response. Local actors, such as civil society actors and labour rights proponents, can (be supported to) advocate for civil rights to be maintained.[85]

81 United Nations Secretary-General, 'Secretary-General's Remarks to Virtual Security Council Meeting on the Maintenance of International Peace and Security: Youth, Peace and Security' (2020) <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/statement/2020-04-27/secretary-generals-remarks-virtual-security-council-meeting-the-maintenance-of-international-peace-and-security-youth-peace-and-security-delivered> accessed 18 June 2020.

82 Graeme Simpson, 'The Missing Peace: Independent Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security' (UNFPA and PBSO 2018) <https://www.youth4peace.info/system/files/2018-10/youth-web-english.pdf> accessed 22 May 2020.

83 Jayathma Wickramanayake, 'Meet 10 Young People Fighting COVID-19 1st Edition' <https://medium.com/@jayathmadw/meet-10-young-people-leading-the-covid-19-response-in-their-communities-685a0829bba8> accessed 12 June 2020.

84 United Nations Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development (UN IANYD), 'Statement on COVID-19 and Youth' (2020) <https://www.youth4peace.info/system/files/2020-04/IAYND%20Statement%20on%20COVID-19%20and%20Youth%20FINAL.pdf> accessed 6 July 2020.

85 See, for instance, an example from India, where the COVID-19 situation has led to a deterioration of labour rights:
Roli Srivastava and Anuradha Nagaraj, 'Workers' Rights at Risk as Indian Labour Laws Face Post-Lockdown Challenge' Reuters (2020) <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-india-workers-trfn/workers-rights-at-risk-as-indian-labour-laws-face-post-lockdown-challenge-idUSKBN22P00H> accessed 22 May 2020.

A multidimensional crisis has implications on the range of competencies and expertise needed in the response. Although the crisis originated as a health emergency, official bodies planning the response should not consist solely of medical and public health specialists. They should also involve non-medical staff such as human resource specialists, anthropologists, lawyers, economists and communication specialists, as well as further sectoral expertise reflecting the breadth and diversity of sectors considered in response planning.

3.2 Commit to conflict-sensitive, peace-responsive and tailored policy and programmatic approaches

National and international agencies must invest in capacities to analyse the impact of COVID-19 on the broader context, including conflict dynamics. Despite massive efforts to advance scientific understanding of the virus, considerable uncertainty surrounds its spread, the effects of mitigation measures, and the scale and scope of its social and economic impacts. This unpredictability implies that the agencies will need to upgrade their capacities to monitor the context continuously, factoring in new COVID-19 developments, and create scenarios around the possible impacts.

▶ Box 6. Pointers on conflict analysis

The rapid spread of the virus and its effects on operations means time may be limited to conduct full-scale context or conflict analyses. Nonetheless, minimal efforts can rapidly produce sufficient conflict analyses:

- Quick assessments can be conducted to detect the early impacts of the pandemic;
- Previous context and conflict analyses can be updated based on early observations of the pandemic;
- A multidimensional and participatory approach will be necessary to capture the variety of potential impacts and risks.

Elements of particular importance in the context of COVID-19 include:

- Pre-existing inequalities, grievances and sense of social injustice;
- Disproportionate effects of containment strategies and relative vulnerability of specific social groups;
- Levels of trust in authorities and the main contributing factors;
- Trust among different groups and societal fault lines;
- Members of society that are trusted and may serve as intermediaries;
- Social and cultural practices, specifically in relation to large gatherings (funerals, weddings, etc.);
- Elites, including politicians, and non-state actors aiming to benefit from the situation and their strategies (e.g. militia and criminal networks).

Useful guiding documents:

- UN Development Group's *Conducting a Conflict and Development Analysis:* guidance to conduct in-depth conflict analysis;[86]
- ILO's *How to mainstream conflict sensitivity, social cohesion and peacebuilding in COVID-19 socioeconomic/labour-market assessments;*[87]
- UN Sustainable Development Group, *Guidance Note on Conflict Sensitivity, Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace* (forthcoming);
- Recovery & Peacebuilding Assessment 2020, *Conflict Sensitivity Guidance for RPBAs* (forthcoming).[88]

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86 United Nations Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG), 'Conducting a Conflict and Development Analysis Tool' (United Nations 2020) <https://unsdg.un.org/resources/conducting-conflict-and-development-analysis-tool> accessed 25 May 2020.

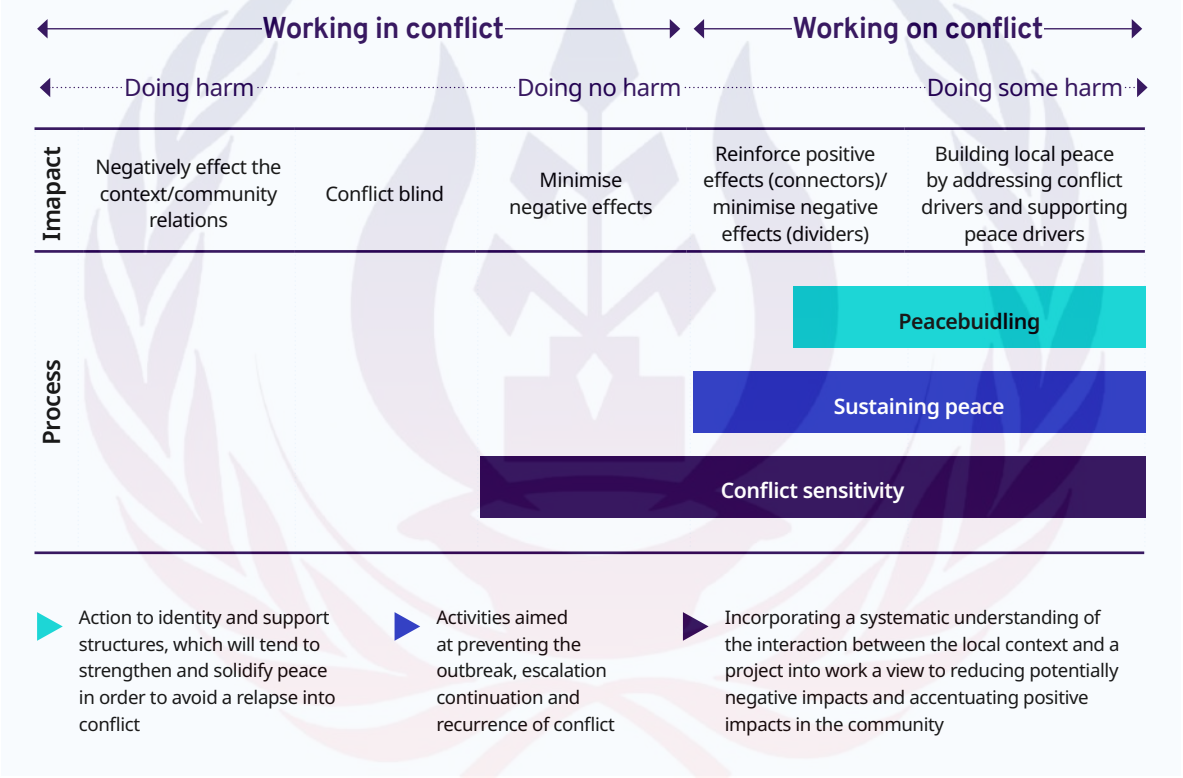
87 International Labour Organization (ILO), Annex 1 to the Guidance Note on Jobs for Peace and Resilience: A Response to COVID-19 in Fragile Contexts (ILO 2020) <https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/documents/instructionalmaterial/wcms_742185.pdf> accessed 31 May 2020.

88 Phil Vernon, Conflict Sensitivity Guidance for RPBAs (Recovery & Peacebuilding Assessment 2020).

National and international organizations supporting health care, livelihoods and decent work in the context of the pandemic must always ensure the conflict sensitivity of their interventions. Conflict sensitivity means paying attention – before, during and after interventions – to how these interventions may affect the risks of conflict and violence and vice versa. As this paper has shown, technical interventions to contain the virus affect the risks of conflict and violence, both in the short term and the long term.

Conflict sensitivity is foundational and always needs to be ensured when operating in all contexts where conflict may be a factor. Minimizing negative effects (doing no harm) comes before efforts of doing some good, as these can very easily be undermined by lack of basic conflict sensitivity.

Figure 1. Spectrum of interventions in fragile and conflict-affected contexts (Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), 'Pathways to Sustaining Peace at the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations')



Conflict sensitivity guidance that is tailored to specific programming interventions may increase the ease of use by programme staff. WHO has outlined the key steps for building peace-responsive and conflict-sensitive interventions in its recent Health and Peace Initiative paper, to be followed by more detailed operational guidance.[89] ILO has developed practical guidance on conflict sensitivity in designing and implementing programmes based on decent work in its handbook How to Design, Monitor and Evaluate Peacebuilding Results in Jobs for Peace and Resilience Programmes (see Box 7).[90]

89 World Health Organization (WHO), Health and Peace Initiative (WHO 2020).

90 International Labour Organization (ILO), *Handbook: How to Design, Monitor and Evaluate Peacebuilding Results in Jobs for Peace and Resilience Programmes* (1st edition, ILO 2020) pp. 3–18 <https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/documents/instructionalmaterial/wcms_712211.pdf> accessed 10 June 2020.

▶ Box 7. Pointers on conflict sensitivity for employment interventions

The ILO handbook provides detailed guidance on developing conflict- and gender-sensitive employment-based interventions, which can be used in COVID-19 programming. It suggests key questions to be kept in mind to mitigate potential harmful effects, in particular:

- What potential risks are involved in selecting certain areas and participants (ethnic background, gender, etc.)?
- What are dividers and sources of tensions between groups, gender and social partners? Social partners and civil society?
- How could a project affect dividers and tensions, especially among social partners?
- Who would benefit from the resources distributed through the programme?
- How will the project affect gender relations?
- What are options for programme adjustment so it will do no harm, particularly for excluded groups?
- What is the relative importance of the formal and informal rules that govern how the state and society work? How does it affect gender relations?
- What is the legitimacy of the state among elites? Among diverse social groups? Among social partners?
- Are we sure we are not creating parallel structures outside the state? (ILO handbook, p. 18)[91]

The selection of direct partners and recipients, e.g. local administration or civil society organizations, and ultimate beneficiaries of the employment intervention is an important and delicate aspect of conflict sensitivity. Targeting should prevent the project from being perceived as favouring one group or a region over another, or lacking transparency. The findings of context and conflict analysis should underpin the selection of partners and beneficiaries. Unambiguous and clearly communicated criteria of eligibility for the programme will also help avoid misunderstandings and tensions.

Some important questions to be asked to guide targeting decisions include:

- How do unemployment or underemployment and decent work deficits affect specific societal "antagonistic" groups?
- What is the relevance of age, gender, displacement, ethnicity, religion, geographic location, disabilities, etc. in mediating access to employment and decent work?
- What are the different and common implications for the host community/refugees/internally displaced people and migrants, disaggregated by sex?
- What is the specific implication for women in conflict?
- What is the role of the worker and employer organizations? (ILO Handbook, p. 16)[92]

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Moving beyond conflict sensitivity to peace responsiveness (See Box 8).[93] The sustaining peace approach calls for humanitarian, development, stabilization, human rights and peace actors to work cross-sectorally towards locally led peace. It is important to uphold this imperative and continue to travel down the path towards operationalizing it that most agencies have embarked upon. This requires identifying, when following the steps outlined above, how health, employment and decent work, and other primarily technical interventions can also contribute to peace by, for example, strengthening intergroup relations or participatory governance processes.

91 *Ibid.*
92 *Ibid.*
93 Interpeace, 'Peace Responsiveness,' *op. cit.*

Such opportunities to foster resilience and peace often exist in situations of crisis but require intentional analysis and programme design. Conflict-sensitive and peace-responsive approaches are central to the immediate effectiveness of measures to respond to the health and socioeconomic impacts of the pandemic in conflict-affected contexts. They are also necessary to build long-term resilience and build back better by strengthening resilience, from the perspective of livelihoods and peace. As outlined below, working with local actors in meaningful partnerships[94] and towards genuinely locally led responses is essential to achieving this.

Ensuring conflict sensitivity and peace responsiveness requires senior-level commitment, and the dedication of specialized human and financial resources. High-level policy commitments need to be coupled with specific guidance and dedicated institutional support. Conflict sensitivity and peace responsiveness must be ensured at the policy level, institutional level and project level. Especially in the context of COVID-19, operational issues related to the selection of partners and targeting of beneficiaries also become highly salient.

▶ **Box 8. Peace Responsiveness – Definition**

Peace Responsiveness[95] refers to the ability of actors operating in conflict-affected or fragile contexts to deliberately design for, and realize, peace-contributing outcomes through their technical programming, regardless of the specific sectoral area in which they operate, in accordance with their mandates.

Peace responsive programming explicitly addresses conflict drivers or strengthens drivers of peace, in a manner that enhances collective impact, supports locally-led change, strengthens resilience to conflict and violence, and ultimately contributes to sustaining peace. In addition to these peace impacts, peace responsive programming will also benefit the effectiveness and sustainability of technical interventions and their expected development outcomes (for instance, in terms of food security, decent work and livelihoods or health).

3.3 Use the COVID-19 crisis as an opportunity for a genuine shift to locally led responses

Successfully addressing the pandemic in conflict-affected contexts will depend heavily on context-specific and locally informed responses, so effective local leadership becomes central. A strong complementarity of international, national and local actors, with their respective resources, capacities, access and ingenuity will be required.

This gets to the heart of recent commitments to increased localization of humanitarian response, which was highlighted at the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016 and outlined in the Agenda for Humanity (2016), the Grand Bargain (2016) and the Charter for Change (2015).[96] Yet, relatively little progress has been made on their implementation, even in pre-pandemic times.[97]

In the lead-up to the World Humanitarian Summit, Interpeace conducted research in three contexts and shared recommendations on how to move towards meaningful partnerships between international and local actors to strengthen the effectiveness of interventions as well as local capacities for resilience to violent conflict. This work, aimed at enabling localization, is now more relevant than ever.[98]

94 Interpeace, 'How Humanitarian Response Can Strengthen Resilience to Violent Conflict and End Need Insights and Recommendations' (Interpeace 2020) <http://www.interpeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Interpeace_Case_Study_Format_Insights_200516-v3.pdf> accessed 10 June 2020.

95 Interpeace, 'Peace Responsiveness,' *op. cit.*

96 Interpeace, *Mapping Incentives in the Humanitarian System for Conflict Sensitive and Peace Responsive Action* (Interpeace 2020) – Forthcoming.

97 *Ibid.*

98 Interpeace, 'How Humanitarian Response Can Strengthen Resilience to Violent Conflict and End Need Insights and Recommendations' (Interpeace 2020) <http://www.interpeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Interpeace_Case_Study_Format_Insights_200516-v3.pdf> accessed 10 June 2020.

The COVID-19 pandemic can advance the localization agenda and integrate it more centrally into the broader humanitarian-development-peace nexus. The need for locally led responses is clear, especially in light of the operational limitations faced by international – and even national – actors amid containment measures.

In this sense, the pandemic constitutes a crossroads for the localization agenda: it will either engender sustainable changes to the modus operandi and power dynamics of international assistance or just temporarily empower local actors until the effects of the pandemic subside. To move from a temporary 'empowerment' and the transfer of risk to local actors, several key considerations must be integrated in the international response:

- **More funding and a bigger role in decision-making:** Local actors will need more funding and to play an integral role in decision-making and coordination bodies. Devolution of decision-making on distribution of resources can support this localization of funding.
- **Manage risks jointly:** Rather than simply transferring the risk to local actors at the forefront of delivering assistance, security, supply chain and institutional risks must be shared between international and local actors. Local actors will need to be able to manage risk adequately and to be given the resources to do so effectively.
- **Ensure programmatic and financial flexibility:** Shaping programmes to local realities and priorities requires programmatic and financial flexibility – moving beyond short-term, project-based frameworks and budgets that deepen the spiral of unsustainability for local actors. National and international actors must use this opportunity – while all operational realities have been upended – to put in place programmatic and budgetary adaptations so programming is be truly responsive to the current situation and locally defined priorities.
- **Adapt accountability mechanisms:** International and local actors can jointly develop accountability mechanisms, placing at equal value the requirements of donors, project managers and local actors. The pandemic has led to donors giving significant leeway on funding implementation, considering the unique conditions under which the international assistance system needs to operate. This creates an opportunity to base these mechanisms more heavily on learning as well as trust.
- **Provide capacity development and accompaniment support:** Localization calls for a change in the role of international actors, from implementers to enablers of locally led action. This means jointly assessing what additional capacities, skills and tools local actors may require, and jointly creating capacity development strategies grounded in local realities and needs.
- **Enable long-term planning:** Localization matters not just for the immediate humanitarian needs created by the pandemic. Local actors are best placed to see opportunities in which short-term actions can create conditions for longer-term transformative changes. Rather than supporting these actors only for their role in humanitarian action, their long-term vision needs to be taken seriously and supported.

3.4 Adapt programmatic approaches to local realities and capacities

Design containment approaches based on a careful weighing of health risks and socioeconomic impacts

In an emergency like the COVID-19 pandemic, responders tend to act quickly and operate based on models tested in other crises and turned into "best practices" that seem universally applicable. Yet, experience has shown that context-specific solutions that draw on existing capacities are more likely to work. The trajectory and impact of the coronavirus depend on various factors including demography, urbanization rates, people's mobility and the burden of pre-existing diseases. The socioeconomic impacts are in turn influenced by the share of the informal economy, the importance of remittances and the reliance on international exchanges, among other factors. In the face of such diversity, one-size-fits-all approaches to suppression should be avoided. In each context, an appropriate balance needs to be found, where strict health-care parameters cannot be the only guiding consideration.

Invest in awareness and communication efforts and adapt these to local realities

Close attention must be paid to communication about the measures taken to contain the virus, whether in the health or socioeconomic arenas. Government authorities need to communicate transparently on reasons for measures, selection criteria and prioritization, especially vis-à-vis the availability of hospital beds, personal protective equipment and other critical resources (and later, regarding possible treatments and vaccines) in the health sector, as well as any on social protection and livelihood support mechanisms that may have been put in place.

Miscommunication about the virus, measures to contain it and livelihood support programmes must be avoided and mitigated. This is particularly relevant in places where local communities' trust in state institutions was already limited or eroded.

For the messages to be received, heard and acted upon, the language must be understood, and the sources of information trusted by the communities.[99] It is therefore essential to collaborate with trusted intermediaries, which could include religious and customary leaders, local peacebuilders, grassroots organizations and other civil society groups, local elected authorities, and even union leaders and employers' representatives (see Box 10).

Reduce or avoid exacerbating inequality

Policy responses will need to consider the disproportionately affected and most vulnerable groups, to explicitly address inequities in access or quality of health care. They must also pay specific attention to groups most affected by the socioeconomic impact of the pandemic. Measures to alleviate the impact on the informal economy can include protecting the health of workers, ensuring business continuity, stimulating demand and supporting employment and incomes while respecting International Labour Standards, for instance through emergency social protection schemes.[100,101]

Such schemes can serve as real opportunities to address inequality and reduce tensions. As an example, a special allowance granted to all households or those most affected by containment policies would mitigate the negative socioeconomic impact of the crisis. It could also ease grievances about lockdown measures and their impact on livelihoods, thereby improving perceptions of the government's response and trust in the authorities (see Box 9).[102]

Policy responses need to carefully consider how they affect inequality and how they are perceived. The rationale for certain measures and the targeting criteria must be communicated transparently. At the same time, stigmatization of particular groups or an excessive focus on victims from certain groups should be avoided. This requires a careful balancing act of even-handed approaches, clear communication and careful targeting (see Box 7).

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99 Bhavya Dore, 'How Do You Translate a Pandemic?' *The New Humanitarian* (2020) <https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/feature/2020/06/23/Coronavirus-India-language-translation?utm_source=The+New+Humanitarian&utm_campaign=875b288e0d-RSS_EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_ENGLISH_ASIA&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_d842d98289-875b288e0d-75570337> accessed 3 July 2020.

100 International Labour Organization, 'ILO Standards And COVID-19 (Coronavirus): FAQ' (2020) <https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---normes/documents/genericdocument/wcms_739937.pdf> accessed 15 June 2020.

101 ILO, 'The Impact of the COVID-19 on the Informal Economy in Africa.'

102 *Note:* Non-contributory social protection transfers require no prior direct contribution from beneficiaries or their employers to be eligible to receive benefits. Contributory schemes are based on contributions made by beneficiaries and their employers, such as social insurance systems.

▶ Box 9. Some considerations for expanding social protection to mitigate the socioeconomic impact of COVID-19

Virtually all countries and territories around the world have introduced or strengthened social protection measures to alleviate the health and socioeconomic impact of the pandemic. Responses have ranged from income protection, unemployment and sickness benefits, and special grants to housing subsidies and food distribution. Most measures are non-contributory and consist of new benefits or adjustments to existing programmes.

To be effective in conflict situations, social protection components of pandemic response should be informed by the following considerations:

- **Social protection measures need to be designed and implemented in a conflict-sensitive manner to avoid creating or adding tensions.** The selection of beneficiaries for new or extended allowances must be based on clear equitable criteria and a sound understanding of the needs and expectations of the targeted communities. This will ensure the measures do not exclude certain segments of the population, e.g. refugees, internally displaced people and migrants. When appropriate, governments should waive conditionalities to make the social protection response more inclusive.
- Reaching vulnerable groups, including the self-employed and workers in the informal economy, may prove challenging, especially where existing social security schemes have limited coverage and reliable databases and registries are absent. In these situations, a **"universal" approach to social protection that reaches everyone may be preferable. Such an approach would help avoid tensions** and perceived or actual discrimination, which could increase trust in and the legitimacy of authorities. Innovative strategies must be developed for social protection to reach those excluded from formal systems, e.g. through mobile phone numbers or identity cards.
- **Humanitarian cash transfers supported by donors and international organizations should be aligned with and built on existing social protection systems**, thereby complementing the national response. Linking humanitarian cash distribution with social protection not only helps avoid duplication and fragmentation of efforts, but it also contributes to **laying the foundations for expanded national social protection policy.** As they extend protection to previously uncovered groups, stopgap measures introduced in response to COVID-19 can later be turned into more sustainable social protection mechanisms based on a fair distribution of costs among employers, governments and workers.

Build on existing capacities and think beyond state institutions

Where trust in institutions is low or has been put to a test due to the pandemic, people may be wary of top-down approaches used by governments to inform about the disease and containment measures. The same way that trusted intermediaries are necessary to communicate and create awareness about the virus, participatory methods and co-creation are essential to foster locally led approaches.

Community resilience is important for coping with the pandemic and must be built upon. Existing dialogue platforms can be used or adapted to collect the concerns and ideas of local communities, health-care workers and civic and business leaders. In such creative spaces, locally appropriate mechanisms may be devised, and recommendations channelled upwards to higher-level coordination and planning bodies. Women and youth would need to be explicitly included in such mechanisms. Similar approaches were used – and proved effective – during the Ebola crisis in West Africa.[103]

Besides creating stronger societal acceptance of the measures taken to contain the epidemic, such an approach also takes advantage of lessons learned and capacities built up during previous epidemics, including micro-level solutions and other innovative and locally suitable mechanisms to slow the spread of the virus or deal with its consequences.

103 Mohammed, *op. cit.*

Social dialogue on issues of common interest relating to economic and social policy can be useful to facilitate community inclusion and build support for response efforts (see Box 10).[104] In South Africa, for example, the National Economic Development and Labour Council, which brings together labour, business, government and community constituents, was activated early on to coordinate measures on workplace adaptation, social protection, support to businesses and preventing discrimination.[105]

▶ Box 10. Employing social dialogue in developing appropriate responses to the pandemic

Social dialogue, as defined by ILO, includes all types of negotiation, consultation or simply the exchange of information between, or among, representatives of governments, employers and workers, on issues of common interest relating to economic and social policy.

Worker groups and employer and business membership organizations (EBMOs) – also known as "social partners" – play important roles in the response to COVID-19. They advocate for business continuity and income security and collaborate with government authorities to ensure that occupational safety and health measures are adapted to new workplace risks, especially in essential sectors such as health care.

Unions and EBMOs can use their trust capital, networks and convening power to facilitate crisis response. As a **trusted source of information for their respective constituencies**, they can pass on messages about containment and other measures, combat the "infodemic" and ultimately help stem the spread of the coronavirus. Where state institutions are weak, distrusted by the population or absent, respected employer and worker organizations may temporarily fill governance gaps and act as "trusted brokers" in areas that are critical for effective crisis response.

Acting individually or jointly, **social partners have shown their potential in easing tensions and preventing violent conflicts** in several contexts. Unions and EBMOs bring their constituents together beyond divisive lines such as ethnicity and language, so they are in a good position to bridge conflicting groups. In Kenya, against the backdrop of serious electoral tensions in the past 13 years, social partners used their influence and stature to prevent the escalation of violence and address grievances of opposing groups, including in the workplace.

Where social partners have a history of constructive engagement – either in a bipartite set-up or with the inclusion of government ministries – **social dialogue[106] mechanisms offer an alternative platform to discuss crisis management**. Social partners should proactively work together and provide the neutral grounds where innovative, locally adapted and inclusive responses to COVID-19 can be devised. Social dialogue can be activated to channel discontent with and resistance to response efforts, and ensure they are both expressed and tackled in non-violent, constructive ways that could increase trust in institutions.

Special effort will be needed to ensure that **excluded and vulnerable groups, such as workers in the informal economy, women, internally displaced people and refugees, are included in such social dialogue institutions and processes,** as they are the most affected by containment strategies.

104 International Labour Organization (ILO), 'Social Dialogue' (ILO, 2020) <https://www.ilo.org/ifpdial/areas-of-work/social-dialogue/lang--en/index.htm)%20%20a> accessed 27 May 2020.

105 International Labour Organization (ILO), 'The Need for Social Dialogue in Addressing the COVID-19 Crisis' (ILO 2020) p.3 <https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_dialogue/---dialogue/documents/briefingnote/wcms_743640.pdf> accessed 14 June 2020.

106 Social dialogue includes all types of negotiation, consultation or simply exchange of information between, or among, representatives of governments, employers and workers, on issues of common interest relating to economic and social policy. It can exist as a tripartite process, with the government as an official party to the dialogue or it may consist of bipartite relations only between labour and management (or trade unions and employers' organizations), with or without indirect government involvement (International Labour Organization, 'Dialogue').

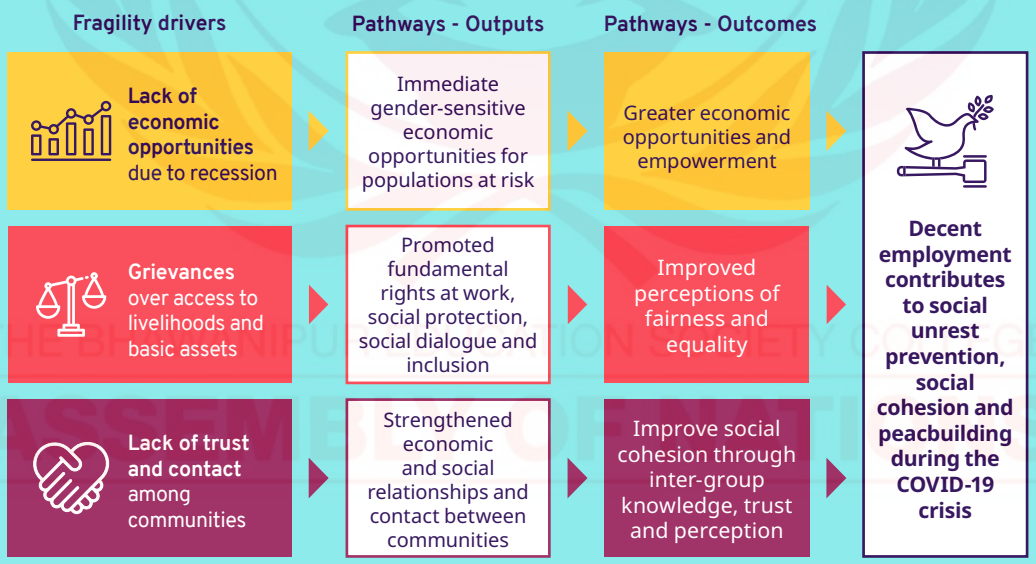
3.5 Use and adapt approaches to maximize positive secondary impacts

Technical agencies working in the spheres of health, employment and decent work can make valuable contributions to mitigating the impact of COVID-19. Both ILO and WHO have elaborated the pathways through which their technical interventions can potentially contribute to sustaining peace, in the WHO Peace and Health Initiative and the ILO handbook. Considering the strong linkages between health, socioeconomic impacts and conflict dynamics, these kinds of interventions can have multiplier effects beyond their direct technical outcomes.

Interventions related to employment and decent work can have secondary impacts in the health sector, and the other way around. Both can also contribute to the resilience of households, and potentially contribute to social cohesion and sustaining peace – when designed and implemented in conflict-sensitive and peace-responsive ways. These potential synergies will show up in different ways in different contexts. In practice, this requires programme staff to proactively assess such opportunities in every context.

▶ Box 11. Potential pathways to sustaining peace: Jobs for Peace and Resilience programme

Launched in 2016, ILO's Jobs for Peace and Resilience (JPR) programme is a way to operationalize the guidance of ILO Recommendation 205 on employment and decent work for peace and resilience. Recommendation 205 helps governments and employer and worker organizations address world-of-work issues in crisis situations. It outlines the potential of technical interventions related to the world of work – e.g. job creation, skills development and enterprise support – to address three broad drivers of conflict and violence: the lack of positive contact among groups and individuals, the lack of economic opportunities and the existence of grievances and sense of injustice. Through a number of pathways, these technical interventions have the potential to contribute to sustaining peace.



The JPR programme works towards more peaceful and resilient societies through four technical approaches that can be applied individually or combined in integrated projects: (1) providing direct job creation and income security, through so-called employment-intensive investments; (2) enhancing skills for employability; (3) supporting self-employment, enterprises and cooperatives; and (4) bridging labour supply and demand via employment services. Beyond its technical modalities, JPR also integrates a governance and rights-based approach by focusing on institution building, social dialogue and the promotion of fundamental principles and rights at work.

Health or employment and decent work interventions will not automatically help sustain peace. However, they may do so if they i) actually address a factor that is a salient driver of conflict in a given context, ii) are conflict sensitive in design and implementation, and iii) are adapted to local realities. ILO developed a specific guidance note on how JPR can be adapted to COVID-19 programming, with a set of immediate and more long-term measures that can be adapted to the specificities of the context.[107]

With creative thinking, some of these measures could be designed so that, beyond their contribution to sustaining livelihoods, they also positively affect the health sector or social cohesion. Some examples include:

- **Employment-intensive investments.** Short-term emergency public works schemes, for instance, can help mitigate the socioeconomic impact and perhaps even support the health response. They create immediate job opportunities for the most vulnerable, provide short-term income security and help maintain productivity. Based on careful targeting underpinned by conflict-sensitivity considerations, such schemes could specifically hire vulnerable and excluded groups, and favour intergroup interactions in selecting participants (e.g. displaced/host communities).

  South Africa's Expanded Public Works Programme, which employs several hundred thousand vulnerable workers, paid participants' wages despite the lockdown, continued providing essential services such as waste collection, and partnered with health NGOs to hire 20,000 young people to distribute handwashing materials in high-risk areas.[108]

  Such public works schemes can be geared towards infrastructures for primary health care and access to clean water, sanitation and hygiene. In pre-pandemic Mauritania, ILO and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees used the employment-intensive approach to strengthen cohesion between host communities and Malian refugees by creating decent jobs in the construction of basic community infrastructure.[109] This model could be replicated to support health infrastructure building during or after the COVID-19 crisis.[110]
- **Skills development.** JPR programming can strengthen the health response by helping to build a large workforce skilled in contact tracing, a key COVID-19 control method to prevent the further spread of the disease.[111] This intervention would not only enhance employability for a sector in high demand (as all segments of society need to be covered for contact tracing to be effective), but it could also reinforce intergroup relations that may have been strained, e.g. by training and composing tracer teams across dividing lines. The training could further include conflict management and peacebuilding skills into vocational training curricula in conflict settings, to increase its potential contribution to social cohesion.
- **Enterprise support.** When the disruption of international supply chains has affected the economy, small-scale firms could be supported to produce essential equipment that can no longer be imported, such as gowns, masks and head coverings.[112] Local businesses could be incentivized to train and hire young people who would be particularly at risk of engaging in illicit activities or being recruited into violent or extremist groups.

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107 International Labour Organization (ILO), 'Jobs for Peace and Resilience (JPR) a Response to COVID-19 in Fragile Contexts Key Recommendations from the JPR Task Team' (ILO, 2020) <https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/documents/instructionalmaterial/wcms_742182.pdf> accessed 28 May 2020.

108 International Labour Organization (ILO), 'Coping with Double Casualties: How to Support the Working Poor in Low-Income Countries in Response to COVID-19' (ILO 2020) <https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/documents/publication/wcms_743215.pdf> accessed 27 May 2020.

109 International Labour Organization (ILO) and United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), 'UNHCR and ILO Facilitate the Integration of Malian Refugees in Mauritania' (UNOWAS, 2020) <https://unowas.unmissions.org/unhcr-and-ilo-facilitate-integration-malian-refugees-mauritania> accessed 8 June 2020.

110 International Labour Organization (ILO), 'Jobs for Peace and Resilience' (ILO 2020) <https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/documents/publication/wcms_738531.pdf> accessed 28 May 2020.

111 *Note:* Contact tracing is the process of identifying, assessing, and managing people who have been exposed to a disease to prevent onward transmission.
World Health Organization (WHO), 'Rolling Updates on Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19)' (WHO, 2020) <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/events-as-they-happen> accessed 1 July 2020.

112 See, for instance, Rañatela Cooperative in Argentina, SEWA Cooperative Federation in India, Ganesh Sugar Mill in India, Die and Mold Cooperative in Korea, Co-op Couturières Pop in Canada.

▶ Box 12. Potential pathways to sustain peace: The Health and Peace Initiative

WHO's recently developed Health and Peace Initiative explores how health programming can help sustain peace and social cohesion. The visual shows the global theories of change that underpin the concept.

Interventions in the health sector can address drivers of conflict, such as grievances against state institutions (e.g. over lack of access to health care) or social divisions (e.g. a legacy of intergroup mistrust in post-conflict settings). They can also offer a platform to promote collaboration across conflict divides.

If

Individuals and groups enjoy equitable access to health services fulfilling their rights to physical and mental health, and Health actors design health interventions that promote trust and dialogue and Communities are empowered to cope with violent conflict.

Improving citizen state cohesion through Health Equity:

If dialogue is facilitated between state authorities, local medical practitioners and communities in conflict zones; and authorities and humanitarian actors adapt health reforms and service delivery to address needs and grievances expressed by the population.

Facilitating Cross line cooperation in health Governance

If healthcare professionals from across line conflict divide are provided with a neutral platform facilitated by a credible technical 3rd party that allows them to work together to address mutual health concerns amidst ongoing conflict.

Promoting health & wellbeing through Dialogue and Inclusion

If community members engage in processes of healing and inclusive dialogue to overcome social divisions, as well as the physical and mental scars of war, and are provided with the opportunities to voice their grievances in a safe and constructive manner.

Then

Health coverage is more universal, grievances can be heard and addressed to generate trust around emergency health concerns, affected communities are more likely to make meaningful contributions to peace and reconciliation, and resist incitements to violence.

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The Health and Peace framework can be used to address some of the effects of COVID-19 in conflict contexts, using the pathways shown in Box 12.

- **Increasing health equity:** As they make critical decisions in their COVID-19 responses, political leaders and response planning bodies can align them with the need to ensure access of all people and communities to health services. In the immediate term, state health agencies could conduct participatory health needs assessments to determine the inequities and strengthen the service delivery to those with least access. In combination with effective communication and a deliberate emphasis on the equity of access to health care (without stigmatizing specific groups), this can help build trust in authorities.

  Facilitating crossline cooperation in health governance: Conflicts between parties may be suspended to allow for crossline cooperation in health. Health is often viewed as a superordinate goal for all sides of a conflict, allowing health initiatives to serve as a neutral starting point to bring together rival parties. In ongoing conflicts, respected health organizations and practitioners can use their networks and influence

to negotiate access with opposing groups to carry out much-needed coronavirus testing and community-based prevention around COVID-19 health risks. Such crossline collaboration around emergency health issues can help lessen mistrust among parties.

In past decades, WHO and others brokered "days of tranquility" or "corridors of peace" so immunization campaigns and other health interventions could take place amid violent conflict in numerous countries, starting in El Salvador in 1985.[113] These efforts not only led to significant public health outcomes; they also offered opportunities to establish channels of communication between warring factions and to create an atmosphere of confidence – a necessary ingredient to launch serious peace talks.[114]

3.6 Lay down foundations for structural changes and build resilience

National governments and their partners are under pressure to act swiftly. In emergency response, there is an understandable focus on the immediate provision of essential goods and services. While such measures are necessary, they should be made part of a wider, long-term vision for recovery, which not only promotes self-sufficiency and sustainable livelihoods, but also addresses the underlying factors of fragility that made the society and economy particularly vulnerable to external shocks in the first place.

This would also ensure that the immediate support provided to countries affected by COVID-19 will not leave a vacuum afterwards or leave the institutions and support systems even more vulnerable. Programming thus needs to deliberately and explicitly ensure that short-term responses help lay the foundations to transform structural challenges. It should focus on increasing the resilience of society to cope with future multidimensional shocks – be they health-related or of a different nature – not only in absorptive and adaptive ways, but also in transformative ways.

An important early finding was that countries that had invested in stronger health systems and benefited from some form of social security system were better prepared to address the public health and socioeconomic consequences of COVID-19. This positive perception of key social services could be built upon when linking short-term measures with opportunities to overcome structural barriers in access to health care and decent employment. Some examples are provided below:

- **Reforming and expanding social protection schemes.** Emergency measures to protect income and livelihoods in the short term could be expanded to achieve lasting gains. Cash and broader social safety net programmes, including those funded under the COVID-19 Global Humanitarian Response Plan, could also be integrated into more long-term support for the development of national social protection systems.[115] These could target the most vulnerable, providing a minimal employment guarantee for its beneficiaries.[116]

  In Togo, the national authorities provided cash transfers for workers of the urban informal economy, reaching more than half a million people within a month. They may build on this stopgap COVID-19 measure to include beneficiaries in a newly designed, sustainable social insurance scheme for independent and informal workers.[117] Government and social partners could work together with associations and cooperatives of informal economy workers, such as street vendors, taxi drivers, waste pickers or domestic workers, to devise more formal, long-term, contributory social protection schemes tailored to their situations.[118]

113 Neil Arya, 'Peace Through Health?' (Neilarya, 2020) <https://www.neilarya.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/AryaPeacethroughHealthWebelandGaltungchap24.pdf> accessed 2 June 2020.

114 World Health Organization (WHO), *Health and Peace Compendium – Selected Examples of health interventions in and on conflicts*. (WHO 2019) – Unpublished.

115 International Organization for Migration (IOM) and UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), 'Increasing Links Between Humanitarian Cash and Social Protection for an Effective Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic – World' (Relief Web, 2020) <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/increasing-links-between-humanitarian-cash-and-social-protection-effective-response> accessed 1 July 2020.

116 ILO, 'Coping with Double Casualties.'

117 ILO, 'Social Protection Spotlight.'

118 ILO, 'The Impact of the COVID-19 on the Informal Economy in Africa.'

- **Strengthen or create national public employment programmes.** Response policies that create immediate, temporary jobs in the wake of the crisis could be turned into large-scale public employment programmes (PEPs). Existing PEPs can be scaled up quickly and use prevailing networks, while continuing to provide livelihoods and job opportunities to the most vulnerable, building needed assets and services, and addressing inequality issues. Where they do not exist, development partners could refocus their financing from simple short-term cash transfers and cash-for-work schemes and contribute to designing such a coherent national programme.

  PEPs contribute to universal social protection and create sustainable employment recovery, while households and private sector businesses may be reluctant to invest as long as the economic future is uncertain. In some countries, structural problems mean PEPs may be needed in the longer term to sustain temporary employment, especially to ensure that the most vulnerable are not left behind. Developing such systems in a collaborative manner through social dialogue with social partners will be essential to ensure the needs and aspirations of the most vulnerable are met.

- **Increasing investment in productive infrastructure.** Short-term investment in infrastructure, as part of PEPs, can lead to more long-term infrastructure investment that can help generate long-term employment opportunities. A focus on building infrastructure, assets and services that promote social and economic development, increasing agricultural productivity, providing care work, supporting education and health, and addressing environment and climate-related challenges is investing in the future.

  These investments are best aimed at addressing inequalities (notably horizontal inequalities among social groups) in access to health care and other basic services, as well as to productive resources. This can be coupled with additional investment in skills development, employment services and strengthening the business environment that can promote inclusive and effective labour-market governance in the longer term – including the social and economic empowerment of women, which is essential for sustaining peace and resilience in conflict situations.[119]

- **Adopting inclusive and participatory approaches to reform health systems and expand access to health care.** Building on efforts to design appropriate and locally led responses to the pandemic, initiatives could bring about more wide-ranging health sector reforms aimed at universal health coverage and promoting health and well-being. Such reforms should focus on breaking down economic, geographic and epidemiological barriers to access to health, and tackling obstacles resulting from a lack of sensitivity to specific cultural and social norms and practices.

  Involving people and communities goes a long way in designing health care systems, social protection systems and employment measures that are in tune with the needs and expectations of people and in line with budgetary and capacity constraints. Providing such a safe space for inclusion, participation and decision-making can improve perceptions and rebuild positive ties with the authorities.

  Tunisia adopted such a participatory method in the post-revolution context. A Societal Dialogue for Health System Reform was launched to capture the needs, perceptions and ideas of Tunisians for a new national health system.[120] The WHO handbook, *Strategizing national health in the 21st century*, provides practical guidance on participatory approaches based on the experiences of Tunisia and other countries, as well as on broader policy and strategic considerations to strengthen health systems in conflict-affected settings.[121]

- **Sowing the seeds of sustainable mental health services.** Beyond the focus on universal health care, emergencies such as COVID-19 provide opportunities to reshape key areas of the health system, including mental health, over the long term. The mental health impact of COVID-19 will also be significant and context specific. Emergencies tend to increase mental health issues, but they also make political leaders more aware of the psychological welfare of people who survived disasters and wars – a topic the media often address in the aftermath of emergencies.

119 International Labour Organization (ILO), 'Tunisia: Empowering Women Through the Induced Effects of Investments for Economic Diversification' (ILO 2020) <https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/documents/publication/wcms_675196.pdf> accessed 3 July 2020.

120 World Health Organization (WHO), Health and Peace Initiative (WHO 2020).

121 Gerard Schmets, Dheepa Rajan and Sowmya Kadandale, 'Strategizing National Health in the 21St Century: A Handbook' (WHO 2016).

In both Aceh (Indonesia) and Sri Lanka, the mental health and psychosocial support response initiated in areas most affected by the 2004 tsunami continued beyond the emergency phase.[122] Indeed, they led to the development of mental health policies, community-based systems, budgets and infrastructures, dramatically improving mental health-care services compared to the pre-tsunami period. In its report Building back better: sustainable mental health care after emergencies,123 WHO highlights successful instances of where more sustainable mental health systems emerged from disasters and conflicts and can be used as guidance in the COVID-19 response.

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122 United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), 'UNHCR's Response to the Tsunami Emergency in Indonesia and Sri Lanka, December 2004 - November 2006' (UNHCR, 2020) <https://www.unhcr.org/afr/461504522.pdf> accessed 8 July 2020.

123 World Health Organization (WHO), 'Building Back Better: Sustainable Mental Health Care After Emergencies' (WHO 2013) <https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/85377/9789241564571_eng.pdf;jsessionid=1177B66AEA1753108667E87F6CD3B720?sequence=1> accessed 17 June 2020.


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Seizing the occasion for transformative change

The pandemic has devastating consequences for large parts of the global population, in terms of its profound health and socioeconomic impacts. There are strong interlinkages of the health and socioeconomic dimensions with governance, inequality and conflict. Yet, because of its very magnitude, **the pandemic will change critical political and social conditions,** thereby creating important moments for deeper reform and genuine peacebuilding processes. Seemingly intractable issues may suddenly be put into context, as has been seen in different situations around the world.

While the virus is still wreaking havoc across the globe, it is nonetheless important to look to the future – or different futures – into which the pandemic may lead us. The *UN Framework for the immediate socioeconomic response to COVID-19* calls this "an opportunity to reverse the trend of shrinking civic space; institutionalize community led-response systems; rely on social dialogue; empower local governments; scale-up community and city level resilience; and enhance legal and institutional frameworks."[124]

What can be done to "build back better"? And what can be done now to increase the chance of positive structural and societal transformations that bring about a more sustainable peace? How can social cohesion and social justice be at the centre of all interventions? And more broadly, how can all interventions help address the structural barriers to sustaining peace? It is necessary to look at these questions from a technical as well as a governance perspective to understand what overarching reforms are necessary to boost the resilience of conflict-affected contexts to multiple shocks beyond epidemics.

Unfortunately, the limited fiscal space of weak state institutions will hinder initiatives to expand coverage of social protection and health care.[125] For instance, the average financing gap for implementing an adequate social protection floor in low income countries is equivalent to 5.6 per cent of their gross domestic product – fiscal space that many of these countries do not have.[126] Similarly, upgrading health-care systems will come at a high cost, although creative design can help keep costs at manageable levels, as places like Kerala (India) and Costa Rica have shown.

Coordinated global support to investments in the public sector will be required. Partnerships with the private (financial) sector are needed to support businesses and address structural challenges. Aid-for-trade resources could help build trade capacity and the infrastructure that is necessary for trade-related adjustments. Such investments should be accompanied by measures to enhance the transparency and effectiveness of public spending. [127]

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124 United Nations, 'A UN Framework for the Immediate Socio-Economic Response to COVID-19' (UN 2020) <https://unsdg.un.org/sites/default/files/2020-04/UN-framework-for-the-immediate-socio-economic-response-to-COVID-19.pdf> p.40 accessed 23 May 2020.

125 *Note:* Fiscal space is defined as the resources available as a result of the active exploration and use of all possible revenue sources by a government. (Isabel Ortiz and others, 'Fiscal Space for Social Protection: A Handbook for Assessing Financing Options' (ILO 2019) <https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_protect/---soc_sec/documents/publication/wcms_727261.pdf> accessed 27 May 2020.)

126 ILO, 'Coping with Double Casualties.'

127 *Ibid.*

The COVID-19 crisis can serve as an opportunity for development actors to start collaborating actively and effectively with government counterparts, as well as social partners (worker and employer organizations), local leaders and communities, to initiate inclusive processes for more far-reaching reforms. While a deliberately technical, expert-led approach and a reference to international best practice can serve to depoliticize a topic, these kinds of structural transformation processes are inherently highly political in nature, with specific constituencies likely to gain or lose out. Technical agencies must be responsive to the political economy at play and determine if the conditions are in place for a constructive, multi-stakeholder approach to devise such structural reforms. The suitable role for donors and technical agencies is that of facilitator and supporter of participatory approaches, broad coalitions and social dialogue that may enable local leadership and local elaboration of such reforms.

The **pandemic has also highlighted the need to make progress on structural changes to international humanitarian and development assistance itself.** Specifically, the situation can give a strong boost to operationalizing the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus and implementing the New Way of Working. It can also give a push to the localization agenda, as this opportunity should be seized to bring positive and lasting change to the business model of international development and humanitarian assistance, creating real shifts in power and leadership to local actors.

The COVID-19 crisis has exposed everyone to the multidimensional nature of the situation, and many technical agencies have incorporated elements related to broader societal dynamics and conflict drivers into their rapid assessments. This **heightened awareness of these interlinkages can generate momentum around further institutionalizing conflict sensitivity and peace responsiveness into institutional policies and processes.** Although conflict sensitivity is and remains the basis, these first attempts to contribute explicitly to sustaining peace can teach us about the effectiveness of such approaches. They can also start to create a stronger evidence base on how and under which conditions sectoral interventions can help sustain peace.

To end with the words of the UN Secretary-General: *"We are living through a difficult time, but we can turn the COVID-19 crisis into an opportunity for sustainable peace and greater inclusion."*[128]

"a moment in which the UN must be able to address the peoples of the world and appeal for a massive mobilization and for a massive pressure on governments to make sure that we are able to respond to this crisis, not to mitigate it but to suppress it, to suppress the disease and to address the dramatic economic and social impacts of the disease. And we can only do it if we do it together, if we do in a coordinated way, if we do it with intense solidarity and cooperation, and that is the raison d'être of the United Nations itself."[129]

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128 Antonio Guterres, 'Saturday Marks the 100-Day Countdown to #Peaceday.' <https://twitter.com/antonioguterres/status/1271654779408842753> accessed 13 June 2020.

129 United Nations, 'COVID-19: UN Chief Calls for Global Ceasefire to Focus on 'The True Fight of Our Lives" (2020) <https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/03/1059972> accessed 26 May 2020.

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Guidance on Gender and Inclusive Mediation Strategies

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In 2013, when few formal mediation processes had effectively included women, the UN Department of Political Affairs (DPA) developed a curriculum based on interviews with 30 mediators and initiated a series of High-level Seminars on Gender and Inclusive Mediation Processes. Hosted by the Governments of Norway and Finland and their respective implementing partners the Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO) and the Crisis Management Initiative (CMI), the seminars provided a space to explore alternative ways of designing more inclusive and effective peace processes. This Guidance draws on the seminar materials and guidance notes and feedback provided by seminar participants and senior mediation experts, including UN envoys and members of the UN Standby Team of mediation advisers. The Department of Political Affairs is grateful for the support of these partners and for the financial support provided by its donors through its Multi-Year Appeal.

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Guidance on Gender and Inclusive Mediation Strategies



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Part I:
Introduction

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I. Introduction

Mediation is identified by Article 33 of the Charter of the United Nations as a means for the peaceful settlement of disputes.[i] It is a process whereby a third party assists two or more parties, with their consent, to prevent, manage or resolve a conflict by helping them to develop mutually acceptable agreements. Mediation, which has proven to be an effective instrument in both inter-state and intra-state conflict, is a voluntary endeavour that varies in scope, sometimes tackling a specific issue in order to contain or manage a conflict and sometimes tackling a broad range of issues within a comprehensive peace process. Such processes offer a critical opportunity for states and societies to reshape their political, security and socio-economic landscapes in order to lay the foundation for a sustainable peace.

Security Council Resolution (SCR) 1325 on Women and Peace and Security, adopted in 2000, was the first resolution to link women to peace and security, acknowledging that armed conflicts impact women and girls differently from men and boys. The 1325 agenda, driven by grassroots organizations and by women living in war and working for peace, recognizes the role and contributions of women in wartime and to peacemaking, as well as their fundamental right to be included in peace processes. The participation of women-led civil society groups and the need to address the different needs of women and men in relief, recovery, and post-conflict efforts were key motivating factors for the advocates behind the resolution.

In the following 15 years, seven further resolutions of the UN Security Council and three resolutions of the General Assembly have called for greater and more effective participation of women in conflict mediation processes; for the inclusion of dedicated gender expertise in all peacemaking efforts; for the specific needs and concerns of women and girls to be addressed; and for the prevention of conflict-related sexual violence. Even so, the participation of women in mediation processes and the gender sensitivity of peace agreements have increased only gradually, demonstrating a need for greater efforts to bridge the gap between aspirational global and regional commitments and the lived experience of women in conflict and peace processes.[ii]

i This Guidance builds on the UN Guidance for Effective Mediation (2012).

ii See the Report of the High-Level Independent Panel on United Nations Peace Operations, the Review of the United Nations Peacebuilding Architecture, and the Global Study on the Implementation of Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000), all published in 2015.

The *UN Guidance for Effective Mediation* (2012) defines "inclusivity" as the extent and manner in which the views and needs of conflict parties and other stakeholders are represented and integrated into the process and outcome of a mediation effort. Inclusive mediation rests on the assumption that building sustainable peace requires integrating diverse societal perspectives, those of conflicting parties and other stakeholders, into the peace process. Inclusive processes will provide multiple entry points and diverse mechanisms for participation. Broader constituencies increase the potential to identify and address the root causes of conflict and to ensure that the needs of those affected by the conflict are addressed. An inclusive process, however, does not imply that all stakeholders can participate directly in formal negotiations; it will rather facilitate a structured interaction between the conflict parties and other stakeholders to include multiple perspectives in the mediation process.

The call for inclusion in mediation processes is not limited to women, but applies to social, demographic, religious and regional minority identities as well as to youth and to organized civil society and professional organizations. In response to increasing demand for targeted expertise in this area from mediation actors and the international community more broadly, the focus of this *UN DPA Guidance on Gender and Inclusive Mediation Strategies,* however, is the gender dimension of inclusivity.

With this focus, the Guidance seeks to enhance gender-sensitive mediation capacity at international, regional and national levels and to create more consultative mediation processes through the promotion of both the effective participation of women and gender sensitivity in the design and substance of peace agreements. It gives an overview of the relevant normative frameworks and modalities by which women participate in mediation processes as part of mediation teams, conflict party delegations and civil society organizations (CSOs). It also offers practical strategies and tools for mediators and their teams working to prepare and design gender-sensitive mediation strategies, as well as recommendations on gender-sensitive provisions within peace agreements.

The Guidance aims to be of utility to UN envoys, senior mediators and their teams engaged in or contemplating formal peace processes; UN partners in mediation efforts, including representatives of regional organizations, Member States and civil society organizations; as well as, critically, conflict parties. It recognizes that mediation is a complex endeavour, whose outcomes will be

determined by many different factors, including the regional and international environment; that not all conflicts are amenable to mediation; and that while mediators may have significant room to make procedural proposals, the scope for substantive recommendations varies and can change over time.[iii]

Gender, Inclusive Mediation and Sustainable Peace

Gender refers to the social attributes, challenges and opportunities as well as relationships associated with being male and female. These are constructed and learned through socialization; they are context- and time-specific and changeable. Gender affects power relations in society and determines what is expected, allowed and valued in a woman and a man in a given context. A culturally informed approach is of particular importance when promoting the effective participation of women in a peace process, as gender relations are perceived differently in different cultures.

Women and girls play varied roles during violent conflict. Women may be combatants or provide services to combatants, or they may be peacebuilders working to resolve conflicts in their communities. When men are absent, injured or killed, women take over as breadwinners, decision-makers and often become more active in public life. Women leaders can also be effective peacemakers at the community level. Yet, women and girls tend to be identified first and foremost as victims of violence, as they constitute the majority of the world's internally displaced and refugees, and are at risk of grave physical harm, including conflict-related sexual violence. A rights-based attention to their needs is of paramount importance, but should not overshadow the active roles women play in conflict situations.

Conflict dynamics tend to change gender relations, both positively and negatively. In wartime, women may acquire different social and political roles, gaining access to opportunity, leadership and decision-making within their communities when men are away, engaged in or escaping from the armed conflict. This can enhance their ability to mobilize constituencies and advocate with combatants for an end to the violence. Recognition also needs to be given to the role and participation of young women. Young women are frequently part of movements demanding change, but tend to be excluded from peace and transition processes, which, if they include women at all, will commonly engage older and better-connected woman leaders.

iii See UN Guidance on Effective Mediation (2012)

This Guidance builds on the premise that mediation strategies that systematically include women, and civil society more broadly, are more likely to generate broad national ownership and support for a negotiated settlement and to lead to a more sustainable peace. Drawing on the body of research and practice developed in the framework of SCR 1325,[iv] it holds that:

- Women's participation can expand the range of domestic constituencies engaged in a peace process, strengthening its legitimacy and credibility.

- Women's perspectives bring a different understanding of the causes and consequences of conflict, generating more comprehensive and potentially targeted proposals for its resolution.

- Peace agreements that are responsive to the specific needs of women and girls, men and boys, contribute to sustainable peace.

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iv Including Nilsson, D., "Anchoring the Peace: Civil Society Actors in Peace Accord and Durable Peace" (2011), in *International Interactions: Empirical and Theoretical Research in International Relations,* 38:2; Paffenholz, T., "Results on Women and Gender", Briefing Paper. (2015), Centre on Conflict, Development and Peacebuilding and Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, Geneva, http://graduateinstitute.ch; and *Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing the Peace: The Global Study on the Implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000).*

Part II:

International Normative Frameworks on Women, Peace and Security

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II. International Normative Frameworks on Women, Peace and Security

Mediators conduct their work on the basis of the consent of the negotiating parties and – in many but not all formal processes – the mandate(s) they receive from the appointing entity. UN Mediators work within the framework of the Charter of the UN, relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions and the Organization's rules and regulations, global and regional conventions, as well as the international humanitarian, criminal, and human rights law applicable in a given situation.

Eight Security Council Resolutions (SCR) provide a framework for the United Nations and Member States to promote the women, peace and security agenda. These can be divided into two categories. Four resolutions on women, peace and security promote women's active and effective participation in peacemaking and peacebuilding. The foundational SCR 1325 (2000) recognizes the impact of conflict on women and their role in preventing and resolving conflict and calls for women's equal participation in peacemaking efforts. The subsequent resolutions urge mediators to have women and women's civil society organizations effectively represented in peace processes and institutions, and to ensure adequate protection and funding for their needs. The resolutions also lay out a mechanism for regular monitoring and reporting on the implementation of SCR 1325 and call for an active role of the senior UN leadership and increased accountability.[v] Three UN General Assembly resolutions addressing the need to strengthen the role of mediation in the peaceful settlement of disputes, conflict prevention and resolution cross-reference these four resolutions to endorse the need for mediation to incorporate the women, peace and security agenda.[vi]

The second group of four resolutions, starting with the adoption of SCR 1820 in 2008, aims to prevent and address conflict-related sexual violence. SCR 1820 (2008) acknowledges that conflict-related sexual violence, when used as a method or tactic of war, can pose a threat to international peace and

v S/RES/1325 (2000), S/RES/1889 (2009), S/RES/2122 (2013) and S/RES/2242 (2015); as well as A/RES/65/283 (2011), A/RES/68/303 (2014) and A/RES/70/304 (2016).

vi There are additional Women, Peace and Security policy frameworks and programmes, such as those adopted by regional organizations (see, for example, that of the African Union, available at http://www.un.org/en/africa/osaa/pdf/pubs/2016womenpeacesecurity-auc.pdf), as well as human rights instruments such as the The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). At the national level, 64 countries have adopted National Action Plans on SCR 1325 (2000), as of November 2016.

security, and, depending on the context, may constitute a war crime, a crime against humanity or an act of genocide. Subsequent resolutions called for: the appointment of an Special Representative to the Secretary-General (SRSG) to provide dedicated UN leadership on this issue and the deployment of Women Protection Advisers in mission settings; accountability mechanisms and judicial expertise; and monitoring and reporting arrangements. In 2012, DPA published *Guidance for Mediators Addressing Conflict-related Sexual Violence in Ceasefire and Peace Agreements,* which will be cross-referenced in this Guidance.[viii]

Regional and sub-regional organizations, such as the African Union, the European Union, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the Economic Community of West African States have adopted region-specific agendas or action plans to integrate the SCR 1325 (2000) commitments in continental, regional and national legal and policy instruments and programmes, and to set up annual reporting mechanisms on women's empowerment and equality.

Consistency with international law and other norms contributes to bolstering the legitimacy of a peace process and may help marshal international support for implementation. Under international humanitarian law, the Geneva Conventions extend specific protection measures to women in armed conflict situations.[ix] Under human rights law, especially the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, all forms of slavery, torture, and inhuman or degrading treatment and the right to be free of these abuses are explicitly denounced.

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) prohibits discrimination and disparaging treatment on the basis of gender. Two CEDAW recommendations provide particular guidance on the application of temporary special measures to promote the participation of women (recommendation 25) and on the role of women in conflict prevention, conflict and post-conflict situations (recommendation 30).[x]

vii S/RES/1820 (2008), S/RES/1888 (2009), S/RES/1960 (2010) and S/RES/2106 (2013).

viii The development of this Guidance for mediators benefited from the materials generated in the United Nations Inter-Agency High-Level Colloquium "Conflict-Related Sexual Violence and Peace Negotiations: Implementing Security Council Resolution 1820" and was produced with financial support from UN Action Against Sexual Violence in Conflict.

ix Specifically, article 27 of the Geneva Convention (IV) of August 12, 1949, Article 76(1) of Additional Protocol I and Article 4(2) of Additional Protocol (II) to the Geneva Conventions adopted in 1977.

x See CEDAW/C/GC/25 and CEDAW/C/GC/30

Guidance on core UN Gender Inclusive Mediation Commitments

Mediators and their teams should:

- Use normative and legal frameworks (including relevant regional and national frameworks) to promote the **effective participation of women** in the peaceful settlement of disputes, particularly in formal conflict mediation processes.
- Develop and resource concrete **strategies on gender and mediation** to increase the meaningful inclusion of women, particularly at the senior level in formal peace negotiations.
- Provide **gender and inclusion expertise** to all mediation processes from the onset.
- Engage **parties to armed conflict** in dialogue to seek time-bound commitments to cease all acts of conflict-related sexual violence, in compliance with international law.
- Conduct **systematic consultations with civil society**, women's organizations and survivors of sexual violence in all peacemaking efforts.
- Encourage parties to increase **women's political participation** (elected and appointed), including through the promotion of temporary special measures (TSMs), such as quotas, where relevant.
- Encourage the incorporation of **gender-relevant language and provisions** in all ceasefire and peace agreements.

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Part III:
Mediation Preparation

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III. Mediation Preparation

Preparedness

The strategy for an effective mediation process takes into account the specificity of the conflict; the causes and dynamics of the conflict; the positions, interests and coherence of the parties; the needs of the broader society; as well as the regional and international environments, which will play critical roles in the viability of the mediation effort. Mediation preparedness combines the individual knowledge and skills of a mediator with a competent and cohesive team of specialists, as well as the necessary political, financial and administrative support from the mediating entity or entities. It enables the mediator to guide, navigate and monitor the process and helps strengthen the capacity of the conflict parties and other stakeholders to reach a negotiated agreement, manage expectations and galvanize support (including from international actors) for the implementation phase.

Mandating entities and mediators can send an important signal to the conflict parties when they demonstrate inclusivity in the composition of their mediation teams and reflect it in their actions. Consideration should be given to the following options when selecting and preparing mediators and mediation support teams:

- Appointing women as lead mediators.
- Aiming for gender parity in the mediation support team.
- Ensuring that all team members have a good understanding of the gender dimensions of their thematic or geographic areas of expertise.
- Including gender and mediation expertise in the mediation team or engaging external expertise.
- Organizing context-specific gender and inclusion workshops for the mediation team at the start of the mediation process and when specific issues of the conflict are negotiated.

Gender-sensitive Conflict Analysis

Gender-sensitive conflict analysis is a first and essential step towards a gender-sensitive mediation process. Conflict analysis is the systematic study of the structures, stakeholders and dynamics of conflict to provide a better understanding of the causes, triggers and forces promoting either violent conflict or peace. Gender perspectives should be applied throughout the conflict analysis process. The analysis needs to go beyond documentation of practices of discrimination, exclusion and the gendered impacts of conflict and assess underlying gender dynamics – the political and economic power dynamics between men and women within a society – and their links to peace and security. It should also help identify opportunities and capacities for peacemaking.

Relations between men and women intersect with many other elements of social cleavage, such as class, race, ethnicity, geographical location, economic inequality and access to resources. Sexual and gender-based violence against women or men can trigger violent defensive reactions or acts of vengeance, e.g. when armed groups systematically commit acts of sexual violence against particular groups, creating a cycle of violence. The analysis should also assess whether the (informal) influence of women may have increased when they take on social and political leadership roles in their communities during men's absence as result of the armed conflict.

Consultations, Engagement Strategies and Strategic Partnerships

Mediation teams with the mandate to address an extensive range of issues need to speak with a broad range of stakeholders to forge understanding of the situational dynamics and perspectives that contribute to a conflict context. Local and community-based actors, including women's groups, should be engaged in this process. In consultation with women leaders and their organizations, mediators should develop a strategy for outreach to/the involvement of Track II actors at the start of the mediation process in order to encourage broad support for a mediated solution of the conflict.

Women hold many different roles in a conflict setting – as combatants; as supporters, mothers, sisters or wives of combatants; as business owners, teachers, politicians etc – and can serve as a resource on many aspects of a

conflict besides their specific (immediate) needs. In addition to the inclusion of women in the process in their own right, it is important to assess how women have been involved in preventing and resolving conflict within their societies and to consider how to incorporate these experiences within a peace process. Mediation teams should solicit guidance from women's groups and networks, and consult gender experts for advice on how to engage with customary and religious traditions appropriately. These insights will contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the situation and enhance the ability of the mediators to explore alternative proposals for the resolution of the conflict.

More broadly civil society organizations (CSOs) including women's groups, can play a critical role in increasing the legitimacy and quality of a peace process.[xi] CSOs active in peacebuilding are potentially important assets, as conflict parties cannot be assumed to always represent the interests of the wider population. However, CSOs – which are not by definition inclusive of women – can also be hardliners, partial to conflict parties or reject a mediated end to the conflict. Mediators are advised to initiate consultations with CSOs from the outset. While in some very violent contexts a ceasefire may need to take the form of an exclusive interim arrangement before the process can be expanded to include other actors, gender perspectives still need to be taken on board. Mediation efforts involving only armed groups risk signalling that violence is rewarded, and can generate resentment within other sectors of society or, perversely, encourage other parties to resort to violent means in order also to get a place at the negotiation table.

Inclusive mediation processes invariably add complexity and require careful planning in order to ensure that adequate resources are in place to conduct broad consultations at the mediation's start-up. Mediation teams should identify logistical, security, financial and other constraints preventing actors from participating, conscious that these will frequently be of a different nature for women.

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xi "Civil society organization" is a broad inclusive term comprising non-governmental organizations, charities, trusts, foundations, advocacy groups and national and international associations.

Coherence, Coordination and Complementarity

In international conflict mediation, UN entities, regional organizations or Member States formulating the mediation mandate or financing the mediation can strongly influence the process. Coherence tends to increase when the different mediation approaches and actors are acting in support of a lead mediator. The increasing number and range of actors involved in promoting inclusivity and gender equality in peace processes makes coordination of mediation and mediation support efforts essential, but challenging; complementarity can be enhanced through a clear division of labour based on the comparative advantages among mediation actors operating at different levels.

Coherence, coordination and complementarity also pertains to aspects of the process related to gender inclusivity, such as the conduct of consultations with women's organizations and other Track II actors and building mediation capacity with respective national partners. Joint partnership strategies and trainings and guidance to develop dedicated gender inclusive mediation expertise can all be helpful.

Women peace lobbyists, often with support from global advocacy networks, can play an important role in advancing inclusivity by offering alternative approaches and holding mediation actors and conflict parties to account. An active engagement strategy with women peace lobbyists can enable mediators and their teams jointly to seek more amenable and innovative solutions to enhance the effective participation of women, including, in some circumstances, supporting a mediator by taking on a direct advocacy role with the parties.

Good practice indicates that international contact groups or "friends of mediation" forums, comprising Member States and relevant international and regional actors, can play an important role in the advocacy and coordination of efforts to promote effective participation of women. These groups could also be called upon to consider providing dedicated funding to civil society organizations in conflict and post-conflict situations, and women's organizations in particular, as called for in UN Security Council Resolutions on Women Peace and Security.[xii]

xii SCR 2122 (2013) OP7b and SCR 2242 (2015) OP3.

Guidance on Mediation Preparation

Mediating entities, mediators and their teams should:

- Select a mediator with the knowledge, skills and experience in the specific conflict situation; women candidates should be actively identified and considered in the selection of lead mediators.
- Be strategic when composing a **mediation support team**; aim for gender parity, include gender expertise and ensure or instil, as needed, gender inclusive mediation expertise among all team members through training workshops and guidance materials.
- Undertake **gender-sensitive conflict** analysis and regular internal assessments of the process in order to make adjustments to the mediation strategies, as needed, including by:
  - Assessing the **differentiated impact** of armed conflict on men and women and acknowledging that **gender dynamics** create unique opportunities and challenges for peacemaking.
  - Analysing the many **different roles of women** in conflict (from combatant to peacemaker) and exploring the types of knowledge, information and networks they may offer.
  - Exploring how **normative frameworks and cultural settings**, the country's position on international/regional and national normative frameworks and regional good practices can assist the mediator in promoting inclusive mediation.
- Prepare to deal with **opposition to inclusive mediation approaches**, e.g. assess how culture or local traditions affect opportunities for women's participation in mediation processes.
- Ensure consistent **political and financial support** for the effective participation of women in the mediation process, e.g. through coordination mechanisms among international actors. Consider constraints for women's participation such as security needs, chaperones, family obligations, meeting hours etc.
- Acknowledge the role of **international contact groups** in advocating for and coordinating efforts to promote the effective participation of women and call on these groups to harmonize efforts to build the capacity of and provide dedicated funding to support women's civil society organizations.

Part IV:

Process Design

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IV. Process Design

Inclusive Process Design

Mediation process design refers to the formulation of a plan/strategy on the approach and organization of the mediation, in order to facilitate a successful resolution or management of a conflict. An inclusive process is more likely to identify and address the root causes of conflict and ensure that the needs of the affected sectors of the population are addressed. It can also deepen national ownership, engaging communities who have suffered the impact of the conflict and other sectors of society who must work towards a peaceful future.

Inclusive process design creates multiple entry points and diverse mechanisms for participation. It involves systematic outreach to integrate the perspectives of conflict parties and of other stakeholders, particularly women, and to create new constituencies for peace. The urgency of reaching an initial ceasefire agreement, however, may in some instances result in a more limited participation in the early stages of a process. Balancing the humanitarian imperative to stop the killing with the demands of conflict parties and normative commitments is a complex task for mediators.

Mediators need to promote understanding among conflict parties of the value of the broad participation of women. They must recognize, however, that conflict parties will largely determine who, how and when different actors are brought into the process. Mediators can nonetheless encourage conflict parties to include senior women in their delegations and to convene regular consultations with women representatives, for example by:

- Encouraging the conflict parties to include at least one-third senior women representatives in their negotiating delegations.
- Considering design options such as granting conflict parties extra seats at the table to be filled by women.
- Assisting the conflict parties in regularly convening consultations with their constituencies, including women representatives.

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Ensuring equal access to funding, space, facilitation and security for women delegates of conflict parties, as well as for women participating in Track II processes, will further help to facilitate more effective participation. Threats to their physical security are a major constraint for women, an issue which requires careful consideration by the mediation team. Options include:

- Providing physical protection to women delegates engaged in formal talks, but also to women participating in dialogue and technical meetings.
- Organizing support facilities, like child care and additional related costs, to allow women delegates to attend all sessions, and planning meetings at hours that facilitate maximum participation of women.
- Enabling women delegates to participate in trainings and to meet separately or across parties to determine and strategize on shared interests and priorities.
- Providing equal funding (e.g. for airfare, hotel, meals and incidentals) to party representatives, regardless of their gender.

Multi-track Engagement

Mediation processes become more complex when the consultation base expands and multiple forums are used to engage actors at different levels. Mediators may have to grapple with the potential tension between inclusivity and a timely resolution of conflict. It may also be difficult to engage interest groups that are not easily defined or lack clear leadership, such as social movements, youth, and women's groups, which are not organized constituencies such as political parties or armed movements. This puts a premium on stakeholder mapping, planning and management of the process.

Women leaders and civil society representatives perform a variety of roles in a mediation process: they can be members of party delegations, technical advisers, observers, members of special committees to advise the mediator or delegates to a separate but linked Track II process. Or they can be their own grouping influencing a mediation process. Mediators and conflict parties are advised to actively explore different options for women's representation in multi-track processes, including:

- Convening a women's advisory committee to the mediator to ensure that women have the mediator's ear and are invited to provide inputs to the mediator.

- Creating structures for dialogue and negotiation to allow women civil society groups underrepresented in the formal talks to communicate with conflict parties and mediators and their teams.

- Initiating civil society forums with representatives from trade unions, business sector, human rights groups, women's organization, religious institutions, indigenous groups, etc. to give the general public a chance to be heard and linked to the mediation process and to attempt to address their concerns.

- Linking up with national/local peace initiatives that are commonly called upon to resolve disputes and to promote dialogue, trust and peace within communities.

- Identifying women leaders and organizations early in the mediation process to be members of the implementation bodies of the future peace agreement or to support and promote its equitable implementation.

Women and their organizations may have distinct political affiliations, reflecting the divisions within their societies. Mediators and conflict parties considering which women's representatives to involve in a multi-track process will therefore want to assess who their organizations are representing and what their specific interests and contributions to the mediation process can be. Transparent and consistent selection procedures are crucial for enhancing the legitimacy of a multi-track mediation effort – without them there is a risk of deepening rifts. Careful consideration should be given to:

- Criteria for selection (political, demographic, geographic, etc.).

- Modes of selection (self-selection, designation, election, etc.).

- Responsibility for selection (insiders, outsiders, or both).

- Modes of participation (direct, indirect, observer, etc.).

Outreach towards women and the society at large can increase support for the mediation effort and include more representative voices with different constituencies. This in turn can assist conflict parties and mediators in generating buy-in and a sense of ownership of the process, as well as stronger and more sustainable agreements. Formulating a two-way communication strategy – i.e. informing the wider society of the mediation progress and soliciting suggestions for consideration at the table – is an important means of building trust. This might involve discussing an actual or perceived lack of security with women and then ensuring that the peace agreement will adequately reflect their needs and perspectives.

Capacity Building and Capacitating

Conflict parties and other stakeholders may need advice and assistance to strengthen their capacity for negotiation. Technical assistance may also be required to galvanize national and international support for implementation. Mediation teams may need to identify partners early in the process to help build the capacity of women's organizations and other CSOs to engage effectively in the process. Such technical assistance can help create space for women CSOs, or enable them to develop their networks, a common agenda for change and negotiation strategies.

When circumstances allow, mediators should also work with the parties to create space for women delegates. Options include:

- Offering training on negotiation and substantive issues and providing international expert advice and exchanges with different conflict settings to enable them to effectively participate in peace talks (including modules to unpack international mediation approaches and UN terminology).

- Helping diverse groups of women form coalitions with broad constituencies to create common platforms of interest and agendas to present to conflict parties, mediators and observers.

- Soliciting position papers from women and other civil society groups on negotiation topics, and setting aside time on the agenda for negotiating teams to discuss these inputs.

- Facilitating regular meetings between women leaders and leaders of conflict parties, as well as with the mediator and the mediation team, to discuss issues on the agenda and to generate greater political will for women's equal participation.

- Assisting women in overcoming specific challenges, such as the need for additional funding to facilitate accompaniment; helping obtain visas; and access to information.

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Guidance on Process Design

Mediators and their teams should work with conflict parties to:

- Design **inclusive mediation processes** with multiple entry points and diverse mechanisms for participation in order to integrate perspectives of conflict parties and other stakeholders, including women.
- **Identify civil society organizations**, in particular women's groups, for inclusion in Track II efforts and develop an engagement strategy at the outset of the mediation process, with actors such as representatives from trade unions, business sector, human rights groups, women's organizations, religious institutions, and indigenous groups.
- Explore all **options** for including women and civil society in a mediation process, e.g. as official members of delegations, technical experts, observers, delegates in Track II and III consultations, or facilitate access to conflict parties in the peace process.
- Facilitate women's **effective participation** by creating space and providing technical advice, as needed, for women to build their capacity and networks and to develop their own agenda for change.
- Facilitate **regular meetings** between women leaders and leaders of conflict parties to discuss issues and generate greater political will for women's equal participation.
- Identify and address **security, logistic, travel and financial constraints** that may restrict women from participating in a mediation process.
- Enable systematic consultation of and **outreach** towards women across societies to increase support.
- Plan for inclusion of women in the **implementation arrangement** of the peace agreement and consider their role when designing oversight and dispute resolution mechanisms (see section on Implementation of Peace Agreements).

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Part V:

Mediating Agreements: A Gender Lens on Substantive Issues

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V. Mediating Agreements: A Gender Lens on Substantive Issues

Gender-relevant Language for Ceasefires and Peace Agreements

Peace agreements aim to end violence and provide a platform for the transition to peace by addressing the causes of conflict directly, including through the establishment of new mechanisms or institutions through democratic processes. Different kinds of agreements are reached over the course of a mediation process. Some – such as ceasefires or procedural agreements on the nature of talks – are limited in scope and address a specific issue in order to contain or manage a conflict. Comprehensive peace agreements, in contrast, tackle a broad range of issues, amongst which a ceasefire agreement might be a constituent element.[xiii]

The viability of a peace agreement is determined by the characteristics of the process and the contents of the accord. Its durability is generally based on some combination of: the degree of political commitment of the conflict parties; buy-in from the population; the extent to which it addresses the root causes of the conflict; the degree of international support it can gather and sustain; and whether it can withstand the stresses of implementation.

Operative paragraph 8 of SCR 1325 (2000) calls on all actors involved in negotiating or implementing peace agreements to adopt a gender perspective and consider:

- Addressing the special needs of women and girls during repatriation, resettlement, rehabilitation, reintegration and post-conflict reconstruction.

- Supporting local women's peace initiatives and indigenous processes for conflict resolution and involving women in all of the implementation mechanisms of the peace agreement.

xiii For the purpose of annual Women, Peace and Security data collection, the UN Department of Political Affairs includes, under the term "peace agreements": cessation of hostilities, ceasefire, framework and overall peace agreements signed between at least two parties to a conflict, intended to end, prevent, or significantly transform a violent conflict so that it may be addressed more constructively.

- Ensuring protection of and respect for the human rights of women and girls, particularly with regard to the constitution, the electoral system, the police and the judiciary.

Gender aspects of substantive issues should be clearly articulated, as peace agreements that are gender "neutral" or "blind"[xiv] have proven detrimental to the security and peacebuilding needs of women. Women should be identified as contributors and agents, not only as victims or persons with specific needs. Agreements should also incorporate clear gender-sensitive modalities for implementation, monitoring and dispute resolution to address disagreements that may arise during implementation, and make provisions for women's active involvement within them.

Detailed knowledge of cultural, traditional or religious concepts, principles and institutions is essential, as they are likely relevant to an appropriately gendered approach. Agreements should draw on these constituent elements – as well as other sources such as a country's legal framework or international standards – to advance women's rights and gender concerns.

In many processes mediators can influence drafting processes, encouraging conflict parties to include gender-relevant language from the start. But the mediation team should also be ready to respond to the parties' doubts or resistance. When the inclusion of gender-specific provisions in ceasefire or peace agreements proves too difficult, mediators should consider suggesting "hooks" for later, such as references in the preamble to relevant United Nations Women Peace and Security resolutions, relevant humanitarian or human rights law, CEDAW, or other frameworks relevant in the particular conflict context.

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xiv Gender-blind agreements do not make any reference to the differential impact of conflict on men and women or make gender-relevant recommendations.

Guidance on Gender-relevant Language for Ceasefire and Peace Agreements

Mediators and their teams should work with conflict parties to:

- Use inclusive **terminology and pronouns** that designate neutral concepts covering both men and women (e.g.: "the people, men and women, of country X"; "s/he") where possible and avoid terminology that is gender exclusive (e.g.: "he").
- Anticipate how the **translation of gender terminology** into other languages may alter the meaning or result in unintended restrictions.
- Cite **gender principles** found in international and national norms and standards (including SCR 1325, CEDAW, the Beijing Platform for Action, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, UN-issued guidance, National Constitutions and laws, National Actions Plans, etc.) in the preamble and state the commitment of parties to those obligations and to compliance at the national, regional and local levels.
- When **specifying women**, do so separately and as actors in the political, economic and social realms, rather than as (only) part of a list of "marginalized" or "victimized" groups or as "women and children" or "women and youth"; but also note their special post-conflict needs as victims where applicable.
- Where possible, include **determinative** rather than aspirational language in women-related clauses (such as "will" or "must" rather than "should") to ensure specific action in the implementation phase.
- Include provisions for **equal rights of men and women** and inclusion of women in interim or transitional administrations, including temporary special measures for women, including quotas where appropriate.

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Security Arrangements

Cessation of Hostilities and Ceasefire Agreements

Cessation of hostilities or ceasefire agreements may set the stage for a comprehensive peace process including other aspects of security arrangements. While in some contexts the conflict dynamics necessitate an exclusive interim arrangement to address a high level of violence, gender perspectives should still be reflected in a cessation of hostilities or ceasefire agreement. This can be done through:

- Gender-sensitive analysis/information gathering.
- Inclusion of gender-sensitive provisions within a code of conduct identifying permitted or proscribed actions towards military and civilian populations.
- Planning for appropriate facilities for men, women and children during the separation of forces and in cantonment sites.
- Undertaking demining/providing security sensitive to the different needs of men, women and children, for example by safeguarding agricultural paths, wells and firewood collection areas.

Conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) should be treated as a method or tactic of warfare and addressed early and directly in any cessation of hostilities or ceasefire agreement so that persons with command responsibility understand their obligations to prevent or ensure punishment of such crimes. If left unaddressed, conflict-related sexual violence may continue outside the purview of the agreement and monitoring arrangements. Beyond the serious consequences for victims and the need to ensure accountability for such violations, CRSV risks triggering renewed violence or vengeance, and can undermine confidence in the mediation process and the peace agreement. Conflict-related sexual violence should be included as a prohibited act in the definition of principles or codes of conduct of ceasefires or peace agreements and be excluded from amnesties in line with international law. It should therefore be addressed across an agreement including in provisions on accountability and monitoring arrangements.

Monitoring, verification and reporting mechanisms are critical for the implementation of cessation of hostilities or ceasefire agreements. Women should be identified as contributors and agents, not just as victims or persons with specific needs. Their participation in monitoring and implementing bodies, including dispute resolution mechanisms, is essential, and may contribute to enhancing the sustainability of ceasefire agreements. The inclusion of women in such mechanisms facilitates access to information and the reporting of violations against women and men survivors and witnesses.

Security Arrangements

Security arrangements vary in scope and nature. They may include disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration; reform of the national security architecture, including defence or police sector reforms; and the protection of civilians or internally displaced persons, amongst other agreed issues.

When including disarmament, demobilization and reintegration provisions in peace agreements, conflict parties and mediators need to be mindful of the various roles women have played in the armed conflict (i.e. as combatants or providers of combatant support as cooks, messengers or sex slaves) in order to identify them as beneficiaries of recovery and reintegration programmes. Gender-sensitive eligibility criteria should be formulated, acknowledging the special needs of women beneficiaries, whether as members of armed groups, or as members of the communities receiving demobilized combatants. Mediators are advised to consult extensively with women on the design of security arrangements that seek to address or prevent sexual violence and to gain their support for the laying down of arms. Women are influential actors, whether as mothers, sisters, spouses or co-combatants.

Although the full range of security sector reform-related provisions may not be addressed by the mediation process, Mediators should nonetheless seek to secure with the text a clear commitment by the parties to gender-sensitive security sector reform. Commitments might include: legislation to tackle discriminatory practices and address violence against women; the recruitment of women into armed forces, including the national police; gender-sensitive selection criteria for recruitment and the vetting standards of ex-combatants

for integration into security organs; and mandatory conflict-related sexual violence training for security forces.

Recognizing that the majority of internally displaced persons in conflict or post-conflict areas are women and girls, mediators should promote inclusion of women in all safety and security arrangements relevant to displacement, such as the management of displaced persons' camps, including facilitating conflict resolution between different wards. Early warning systems, monitoring and verifications mechanisms are some of the areas in which the parties are more likely to agree on gender-sensitive frameworks.

Transitional justice measures seek to redress the legacies of massive human rights abuses, to recognize the rights of victims, promote civic trust and strengthen the rule of law. Measures such as criminal prosecutions, truth commissions and reparations programmes – where they are applicable – need to incorporate provisions to address violations perpetrated against women, including but not limited to conflict-related sexual violence, and establish that amnesties for serious crimes under international law are prohibited. Individuals credibly suspected of committing or being responsible for conflict-related sexual violence are to be excluded from participating in government and the national security system, including the armed forces, police, intelligence services and the national guard, as well as civilian oversight and control mechanisms.

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Guidance on Gender Aspects of Security Arrangements, including Conflict-related Sexual Violence

Mediators and their teams should work with conflict parties to:

- Identify whether conflict-related sexual violence has been used as a method or tactic of warfare and include it as a **prohibited act** in the definition or principles of ceasefire and peace agreements, as well as in security, accountability and monitoring arrangements.
- Put in place **gender-sensitive monitoring and verification arrangements** for ceasefire agreements, including gender expertise, women monitors and translators and effective dispute resolution mechanisms; create an enabling environment for women and men to safely report conflict-related sexual violence violations; and pursue adequate and timely funding to ensure effective implementation, monitoring and verification of ceasefires and peace agreements.
- Include additional provisions for **protection for women and children** in communities facing greater security threats; insist on detailed security arrangements such as the provision of security escorts, regular patrolling and command posts (e.g. for sanitation areas, water and firewood collection points and markets).
- **Acknowledge that amnesties are prohibited** for serious crimes under international law, including conflict-related sexual violence; arrangements for transitional justice, including prosecution, reparations and truth seeking bodies need to address conflict-related sexual violence crimes among acts of violence perpetrated against women and men.
- Systematically gather **early warning information,** then investigate and report it.
- Address conflict-related sexual violence, where relevant, when **dismantling, disengaging and withdrawing armed forces** and integrating former combatants into security or state institutions.
- Mandate **security forces** to combat and monitor conflict-related sexual violence, provide training on effective military response and law enforcement, and develop a code of conduct to vet security actors, prohibit CRSV and punish misconduct.
- Ensure that **disarmament, demobilization and reintegration provisions** are gender-sensitive, acknowledge the role of women in the conflict (e.g. as combatants) and their special needs, and identify women as beneficiaries of post-conflict programmes.

Political Participation and Powersharing

Intra-state conflicts are often a violent contestation over the manner in which the territory is governed or its resources shared. Powersharing arrangements are thus the main response for ensuring that aggrieved groups are adequately represented in political decision-making. Among other things, powersharing arrangements review and establish new institutions and rules to facilitate a more inclusive architecture and the implementation of the peace agreement, in which the diversity of the society is reflected in an effort to engender civic trust. While vertical and horizontal powersharing options provide multiple opportunities and entry-points for inclusivity, particularly of women, in public life, they must also provide for effective decision-making which avoids paralysis, including through vetos and unanimity requirements.

Mediators should always assess the differential impact of powersharing mechanisms on women's participation in public life.

- Mechanisms that (typically) increase opportunities for women include:
    - Proportional representation of large electoral districts with a substantial number of electable seats tends to optimise opportunities for women.
    - Federalism and other forms of decentralisation generally provide for several levels of elected bodies, creating more opportunities for women to get elected.
    - However, women's representation in politics will only substantially increase when the electorate is sympathetic to the idea of this increase and willing to adopt temporary special measures to promote it, including quotas where relevant and appropriate.
- Mechanisms that can negatively impact women's representation include:
    - Powersharing between groups, which can limit the willingness to consider powersharing on the basis of gender.

xv "First Past The Post" is the simplest form of a plurality/majority system, using single member districts and candidate-centred voting. The winning candidate is simply the person who wins the most votes.

- Single member constituency with a first-past-the-post system.[xv]

- Autonomy for minority groups, including the right to self-organization, which, depending on the values of the group, can potentially jeopardize women's participation.

Powersharing arrangements between conflict parties can also be a source of new conflict, making it essential to seek broader societal support from the start of the mediation. In some circumstances, national dialogues might be considered in order to probe the opinion of the population, promote mutual understanding and build broader consensus. Constitutions are generally better negotiated separately from peace agreements (see next section).

Where special remedial measures are deemed necessary, powersharing mechanisms in peace agreements can be combined with sunset clauses[xvi] to secure the effective participation of women. Measures to ensure greater women's political representation in the structures of the key institutions (e.g. executive, legislature, parliamentary committees, judiciary and administration, army and police) include:

- Minimum requirements for women's representation in constituent assemblies and transitional governing bodies (e.g. at least 30 per cent of the participants).

- Legal quotas for reserved seats, reserved constituencies, and quotas for women candidates to elected or appointed offices in the legislature, executive, judiciary.

- Targets and affirmative action or positive discrimination for recruitment to the civil service, police, and army.

- Coordination and advocacy, such as the establishment of women's caucuses or intra-parliamentary alliances.

xvi A sunset clause is a measure within a statute, regulation or other law that provides that the law shall cease to have effect after a specific date, unless further legislative action is taken to extend the law.

Guidance on Gender Aspects of Political Participation and Powersharing

Mediators and their teams should work with conflict parties to:

- Design powersharing mechanisms with **gender-sensitivity**; in particular, consider measures that have a positive impact on women's representation.
- Include a clause calling for the meaningful representation and participation of women in **elected and appointed positions**, including at national, regional and local **levels of government**, throughout the country. This might include **minimum requirements** for women's representation in constituent assemblies and transitional governing bodies (e.g. at least 30 per cent of the participants) or **legal quotas** for reserved seats, reserved constituencies, quotas for women candidates to elected or appointed offices in the legislature, executive, judiciary.
- Specify mechanisms (e.g. criteria based selection/election processes) to ensure **qualified candidates** are chosen for such positions.
- Consider **temporary special measures and sunset clauses**, including quotas where relevant and appropriate, to ensure the inclusion and effective participation of women in key bodies and processes, such as commissions and constitutional and electoral processes.
- Make explicit that quotas are a "**minimum" requirement**, rather than a cap on women's representation.

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Constitutions

A constitution-making process can be a central aspect of a comprehensive political transition in the aftermath of conflict. Constitution-making provides an opportunity to create a common vision of the future of a state, and can have a profound and lasting impact on peace and stability. UN engagement and assistance to constitution-making processes is in some circumstances therefore a core component of peacebuilding, and requires a coherent, multifaceted and gender-sensitive strategy.

To be successful, constitution-making should be nationally owned and led. Constitution-making processes can include broad representation and public outreach. Most countries do not adopt completely new constitutions, but instead adapt familiar procedures, perhaps drawing on a constitution that was applied before or used by a neighbouring country. The UN is committed to making every effort to support and promote inclusive, participatory and transparent constitution-making, with special attention to the equal participation of women, and to consistently promote compliance with international human rights, norms and standards.

A common challenge is to avoid pressure to complete the constitution-making process too quickly. Divided societies with deep disagreement on fundamental issues will almost always require time to reach consensus. There are usually rational and understandable reasons to expedite the process to return control to civilian authorities or hold constitutionally based elections as soon as possible. However, short timeframes often result in limited public involvement, and penalise women especially. Inclusive constitution-making can be boosted through early civic education workshops and the distribution of educational materials to broaden participation, with such an effort ideally supported by a comprehensive media strategy. Special attention is required to include women of diverse age groups and from minority populations in public consultation processes. The outcome of these consultations with women groups needs to be carefully analysed and systematically fed into the process.

Recurrent issues with regard to gender and constitution-making include:

- Discrimination (i.e. prohibition and elimination of).
- Equality (i.e. realisation in law and in fact).

- Participation (equal and effective).
- Protection (both in the public and private sphere, including conflict-related sexual violence).
- Special needs (notably health, education and work).
- Special roles and responsibilities (notably child and family care).

Decision-making in constitution-making processes is frequently exclusive and dominated by elites, predominantly men, even in highly participatory processes such as constituent assemblies and national dialogues. Hence, mediators need to promote effective women's representation in bodies that govern these transition processes. Options include:

- Providing for positive temporary special measures and dedicated resources to support the participation of women.
- Introducing special leadership/chairing arrangements, speaking/procedural rules and decision-making mechanisms, for example for constituent assemblies and national dialogue processes.
- Creating specialized, independent bodies such as Human Rights Commissions and Commissions on the Status of Women and Girls, with consultative, administrative and even judicial powers.

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Guidance on Gender Aspects of Constitutions

Mediators and their teams should work with conflict parties to:

- Promote effective **women's representation in constitution making and other bodies** that govern transition processes, by adopting positive temporary special measures and allocating dedicated resources; or making special leadership/ chairing arrangements, speaking/procedural rules and decision-making mechanisms, for example for constituent assemblies and national dialogue processes.
- Encourage the perception of constitutions as a framework for an inclusive society in which all people, women and men, are included in the **language and institutions of the constitution**, which should avoid gender prejudicial language like 'he/his'.
- Include a clause with explicit reference to women prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sex, sexual preference, marital status, and pregnancy, and require **special measures** to ensure equality for women in law and in fact, including for women belonging to minorities or indigenous peoples.
- Ensure that the constitution does not permit **civil and customary law** to discriminate against women and girls in any way (particularly in the areas of citizenship, nationality, personal status, family, education, labour, property and inheritance).
- Secure women's representation in public life, notably in **elected and appointed positions**, including the executive, legislature and judiciary, public administration, and security services (e.g. through quotas).
- Secure **protection from all forms of violence** against women and men, boys and girls.
- Protect **social and economic rights** and spell out aspects of these rights that affect women in special ways such as health, pregnancy and maternity.
- Create opportunities for women and men to **engage in public life** (e.g. protect the right to associate, assemble and free speech; secure access to information and require public bodies to act in a transparent way; etc.).
- Require the state to **establish institutions and processes for advancing and monitoring respect for women's rights**, such as establishing a separate government agency or specialized bodies (e.g. Commission on the Status of Women and Girls) or assign existing government departments and public services with special responsibility for women and girls.

Implementation of Peace Agreements

Ceasefire and peace agreements can fail in the implementation phase for different reasons:

- Limited commitment of parties and their constituencies to implement the agreement.

- The fragility of agreements that were negotiated in exclusive processes and lack national ownership, or contain vague language that did not lay out clear responsibilities for the parties involved.

- A breakdown of transitional security arrangements as a result of weak monitoring and verification mechanisms, or the absence of dispute resolution mechanisms.

- Partial implementation of the agreement due to lack of funding or unfulfilled donor commitments; a lack of consultation between mediation teams and implementing entities, as well as among implementing agencies.

Inclusive mediation processes that build relationships between conflict parties and other stakeholders in the course of the mediation help forge joint ownership of the agreement. Time may be an important element in this process, and mediators may need to resist pressure from donors and other international actors to find quick solutions to end the conflict.

Active engagement of women civil society organizations during both the mediation and implementation is likely to increase the legitimacy and sustainability of an agreement. Efforts should be made to promote women's representation in decision-making positions, such as signatories to peace agreements and as chairs or active members of transition or implementation bodies, for which quotas or other special measures for the effective inclusion of women may be required. Conflict parties and mediators could also consider establishing national thematic working groups for the implementation of agreements – including a "1325" group to monitor and ensure gender sensitivity – whilst also assigning women to all other thematic groups. Other possible initiatives include hosting regular meetings for women's organizations with international missions, diplomatic teams and envoys

during implementation and inviting women representatives to speak at and participate in international preparatory, strategy or donor meetings.[xvii]

Peace agreements often contain provisions pertaining to implementation support by third parties (such as donors, development agencies, electoral advisery groups and peacekeeping forces), sometimes without much consultation between the mediation teams and the implementing entities. Well before the negotiations are concluded, conflict parties and mediators are advised to draw upon the skills of implementation experts with the necessary tools and expertise. Mediators should also ensure that there is sufficient gender expertise in the implementation teams, as gender-sensitive analysis is often lacking in the design of immediate post-conflict security and economic recovery programmes.

Where appropriate, mediators should also seek support for the implementation phase from International contact groups or "friends of mediation" forums, commonly comprising Member States and relevant international and regional actors. Such groupings can provide helpful political and material support for an effective transition process (i.e. by contributing funds, expertise, and coordinated action). A special focus on monitoring the realisation of gender-relevant provisions in the peace agreements is warranted, most notably the political participation of women. Mediators should encourage donors to adhere to the UN commitment to dedicate 15 per cent of all post-conflict peacebuilding funds to projects addressing the specific needs and empowerment of women. Contact groups can provide dedicated funding to support civil society in conflict and post conflict situations.[xviii] International actors can also be encouraged to support documentation of good practice including analysis of efforts, challenges and successes of gender inclusive mediation approaches, thereby helping to contribute to reliable data on women's actual participation in peace processes and the implementation of agreements.

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xvii See the International Civil Society Action Network "Better Peace Tool" (2015) for more recommendations at www.betterpeacetool.org

xviii As called for in UN Security Council Resolutions on Women Peace and Security SCR 2122 (2013) OP7b and SCR 2242 (2015) OP3.

Guidance on Gender Aspects of Implementation Arrangements

Mediators and their teams should work with the conflict parties to:

- Promote **women's representation in decision-making positions**, such as signatories to peace agreements and chairs and members of transition or implementation bodies, for which quotas or other temporary special measures may be required.
- Involve **women as planners, implementers and beneficiaries**, to support a sustainable transition process; and make sure that women have access to post-conflict programmes and technical assistance.
- Invite women civil society representatives to speak and participate in international preparatory, strategy, or donors' meetings/summits and advocate for **dedicated funding to support women's civil society** initiatives in conflict and post conflict situations.
- Continue or establish international contact groups during the transition phase to provide **political and material support for effective implementation**, with a special focus on the realisation of gender-relevant provisions, most notably the political participation of women.

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Part VI:
Conclusion

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VI. Conclusion

This UN Department of Political Affairs' Guidance responds to the need to realize aspirations and commitments made by the international community, and reinforced at the regional and national level, with regard to the effective participation of women in mediation and peace processes as well as the introduction of a more gender-sensitive approach to the substance and implementation of peace agreements. It recognizes that mediation is a complex endeavour, whose outcome is determined by many different factors. It also acknowledges that the role, reach, and influence of the mediator – who engages only on the basis of the consent of the conflict parties – will vary greatly. The Guidance nonetheless rests on the premise that mediation strategies that include women systematically, and prioritize attention to gender inclusive provisions in the agreements that are eventually reached lay the foundation for a more durable peace. Far from being prescriptive, the Guidance contains a number of practical suggestions for consideration by mediators and their teams, as well as conflict parties. Not all of them will be possible to implement in every situation, but if more of them are implemented more frequently, the building of sustainable and inclusive peace, and the achievement of the normative goals for Women, Peace and Security that were first set out by the Security Council in Resolution 1325 (2000) will be increasingly realized.

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www.un.org/undpa

http://peacemaker.un.org

Review Report on

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PBC GENDER STRATEGY

Prepared by DPPA/PBSO and UN Women

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1. Executive Summary

In September 2016, the Peacebuilding Commission adopted a gender strategy to ensure a more structural and systematic integration of gender perspectives across its work, including in its country and region-specific engagements, thematic discussions and dialogues with other intergovernmental organizations. This was the first such strategy to be adopted by a UN intergovernmental subsidiary body and followed a series of consultations throughout 2015 and early 2016 with Member States, practitioners, experts and representatives of relevant entities of the United Nations system, as well as with civil society organizations. In the Report of the Peacebuilding Commission on its thirteenth session, issued in January 2020, the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) called for a review report on the implementation of its gender strategy to be prepared in the context of the 20th anniversary of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000).

This review report was prepared by PBSO/DPPA and UN Women with support from an independent expert consultant. It complements consultations undertaken during the 2020 Peacebuilding Architecture Review and the Commission's commitments contained in the in the July 2020 letter to the Presidents of the General Assembly and of the Security Council, as well as to the Secretary-General to: enhance the implementation of its gender strategy by more systematically including women and representatives of women's groups in its meetings; streamline gender dimensions of peacebuilding in its country-specific and regional activities and within its analysis and advice to other UN intergovernmental bodies; support the creation, adoption and enforcement of legal frameworks that outlaw domestic violence and sexual and gender-based violence at large; and improve stocktaking of women peacebuilders' messages from the field, including by compiling and sharing good practices with PBC Member States on a regular basis.

A desktop review of PBC documents and interviews with Commission members, including those representing countries which engage with the PBC, DPPA/PBSO staff, and women peacebuilders, found noticeable progress in the overall support and promotion of the PBC Gender Strategy and for gender-responsive peacebuilding. However, this is most evident through statements of broad support and advocacy instead of from concrete gender analysis and specific priority areas or focus on gendered root causes of conflict and instability. The review report notes that PBC documents tend to refer to women as a homogenous group instead of there being recognition that women's opportunities and experiences will vary depending on their ethnicity, religion, culture, age, ability/disability or gender identity.

It further found that while consultations with women's organizations are regularly referenced, the information exchanged during these sessions is not systematically reported on or incorporated into future PBC meetings on that country or regional context or thematic discussion. The report also states that beyond highlighting PBF projects supporting gender equality and women's empowerment, the Commission has rarely advocated for strengthened gendered resourcing or expertise, which is one of the strategic actions outlined in the Gender Strategy.

Encouragingly, the review found that gender considerations across the PBC have improved in 2019 and 2020 and these have led, in some instances, to richer discussions informed by women peacebuilders and local women business leaders.

Identified recent good practices in the report include: strengthened gender references in the Commission's advice to the Security Council on peace operation mandate renewals; the promotion of gender responsive peacebuilding approaches during meetings with International Financial Institutions; and the broadening of women peacebuilders who have been invited to engage with the Commission either in New York or during field missions to include women business leaders, ex-

combatants and survivors of conflict related sexual violence. The upcoming dedicated Ambassadorial-level meeting on women, peacebuilding and development in the Great Lakes region, which is being informed by three regional consultations in which diverse women briefers have participated, was also considered as a new good practice which should be expanded upon. The report also noted that meetings held this year to discuss the impact of COVID-19 on peacebuilding efforts have contained more detailed gender references and analysis drawn in part from consultations will local women's organizations.

The review report outlines three triangular key factors which were identified during the interviews which determine the quality of gender considerations by the PBC. These relate to:

- The overall support and leadership from the PBC Chair, Vice-Chairs and Configuration Chairs;
- The level of in-country gender expertise or availability of context-specific gender analysis drawn from UN Country Teams, peace operations, Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) projects or from the wider UN system; and
- The receptiveness of national governments to embed gender peacebuilding priorities within their overarching development and peacebuilding plans.

Following the desk review, the interviews and an expert level meeting held on 4 September 2020, four key recommendations are proposed for PBC consideration to strengthen the systematic implementation of the gender strategy. These are:

1) **Improved intersectional gender analysis as way of building on progress to date and moving towards more substantive gender discussions which address the gendered root causes of conflict and inform funding decisions where possible;**

2) **Regular monitoring and review of the gender strategy including through the development of a gender strategy action plan or monitoring and evaluation framework;**

3) **Strengthened and more diverse consultations with women leaders as part of thematic, country specific and regional discussions, to not only promote the participation of diverse women peacebuilders within PBC decision making processes but to also enrichen and broaden the perspectives being presented to PBC members, and to ensure the PBC's gender responsive peacebuilding messages are informed by and reflect these engagements with women peacebuilders; and**

4) **Enhanced advocacy across the UN system including the Security Council and with Regional Organizations and International Financial Institutions to promote gender responsive peacebuilding as being among its key diplomatic priorities.**

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2. Background

In September 2016, the Peacebuilding Commission adopted a gender strategy to ensure a more structural and systematic integration of gender perspectives across its work, including in its country and region-specific engagements, thematic discussions and dialogues with other intergovernmental organizations. This was the first such strategy to be adopted by a UN intergovernmental subsidiary body and followed a series of consultations throughout 2015 and early 2016 with Member States, practitioners, experts and representatives of relevant entities of the United Nations system, as well as with civil society organizations.

In the Report of the Peacebuilding Commission on its thirteenth session, issued in January 2020, the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) called for a review report on the implementation of its gender strategy to be prepared in the context of the 20th anniversary of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000). This review report aims to complement and build on consultations undertaken during the 2020 peacebuilding architecture review and to inform both the PBC's annual meeting on women, peace and security (WPS), as well as its advice to the UN Security Council ahead of the October 2020 annual debate on the WPS agenda.

Prior to the development and adoption of the 2016 PBC Gender Strategy, the Peacebuilding Commission Support Office (PBSO) and UN Women undertook a desk review of PBC documents to ascertain the number of outcomes which rereferred to gender considerations. The findings from the 2016 Light Review serve as a useful baseline for the 2020 implementation report of the PBC gender strategy and include:

- 38 percent of documents reviewed reflected gender language;
- From PBC's inception to 2016, there was a demonstrated increase in support for gender equality and women's empowerment. However, considerations were inconsistent;
- All country-specific instruments of engagement did recognize the role of women in building peace, with varying degrees of emphasis;
- Formal PBC commitments to gender-response peacebuilding were not consistently translated into concrete action on the ground and relied on the personal engagement of the Chair and on the capacity of national actors and the country teams to follow up on those commitments;
- Field-level meetings with women's organizations were not systematically reported on or reflected in policy-level discussions;
- When the situation in a country or region worsened, gender commitments were no longer captured in formal and informal discussions and women were seen only through a victims lens rather than as agents for change.

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3. Methodology

There were two research phases which informed preparation of this draft gender strategy implementation report. The first involved a desk review of 126 PBC documents from September 2016 to mid-August 2020 to determine the degree to which the seven strategic action areas of the PBC Gender Strategy are reflected in country and region-specific outcomes and within broader thematic discussions. Documents reviewed included:

- Seven documents relating to the 2020 peacebuilding architecture review;
- Four PBC Annual Reports from 2017-2020, as well four meeting summaries on the informal adoption of the annual reports;
- 30 documents relating to the PBC's engagement with and advisory role to the Security Council (including advice on thematic issues such as youth, peace and security and women, peace and security; mandate renewals; statements by PBC and Configuration Chairs; and

letters to the Presidents of the Security Council and General Assembly and to the Secretary-General);
- Six documents on the PBC meetings with ECOSOC;
- 12 documents relating to PBC visits;
- 58 other country and region-specific documents not captured in the engagement with the Security Council or PBC visits; and
- Five meeting summaries on thematic discussions relating to women, peace and security; peacebuilding and sustaining peace; South-South cooperation; and youth, peace and security.

Following the desk review, informal interviews were conducted with Commission members, including those representing countries which engage with the PBC, and PBSO/DPPA staff to expand on the initial findings identified in the text-based analysis. Interviews were also conducted with women peacebuilders who have engaged with the PBC either as part of New York meetings or during field visits to get their perspective on how this engagement impacted on their work and could potentially be strengthened. An expert-level meeting was then scheduled on 4 September to discuss the overall findings and future steps which can be considered by PBC members at the ambassadorial-level meeting scheduled on 2 October to further strengthen the implementation of the gender strategy.

4. 2020 Peacebuilding Architecture Review

In October 2019, the President of the General Assembly and the President of the Security Council launched the 2020 Peacebuilding Architecture Review to take stock of work done by the UN on peacebuilding and sustaining peace and to identify ways to further strengthen the UN Peacebuilding Architecture, taking into account the ongoing UN reforms. As part of this review, the PBC held a series of consultations on peacebuilding in UN transition contexts; women's role in peacebuilding; the importance of institution building; UN system-wide engagement; financing, and partnerships for peacebuilding.

The 2020 review process also considered the fast-evolving COVID-19 pandemic and its implications for peacebuilding. Documents relating to the 2020 review provide important considerations for future efforts to strengthen the implementation of the PBC gender strategy, as they outline the areas of progress, challenges and recommendations on gender responsive peacebuilding already identified by the PBC and capture the recommendations put forward by Member States to enhance the work of the PBC in support of women's participation in peacebuilding.

The July 2020 letter to the PGA and President of the Security Council and to the Secretary-General contains a specific section on women's participation in peacebuilding. Among the listed challenges is an acknowledgement that women in certain country-specific contexts continue to face gender-based discrimination and structural barriers to equal opportunities for participation in decision making and peacebuilding processes. The Commission also notes that gender dimensions are often considered as an afterthought instead of being an integral part of conflict analysis and planning that feeds into peacebuilding strategies. It commits to enhancing implementation of its gender strategy by more systematically including women and representatives of women's groups in its meetings, streamlining gender dimensions of peacebuilding in its country-specific and regional activities and within its analysis and advice to other UN intergovernmental bodies, supporting the creation, adoption and enforcement of legal frameworks that outlaw domestic violence and sexual and gender-based violence at large, and improving stocktaking of women peacebuilders' messages from the field, including by compiling and sharing good practices with PBC Member States on a regular basis. While the research conducted for this gender strategy implementation report was separate to

the 2020 Peacebuilding Architecture Review process, the key findings and suggested areas for improvement are similar, in part, to those already identified by Member States and the Peacebuilding Commission in various meetings.

5. Key Findings and Observations from the 2020 Desk Review

While PBC meeting summaries, statements, annual reports and meeting concept notes may not capture all of the detailed discussions and considerations pertaining to a particular context or thematic issue, they do highlight the key priorities and areas of focus for the Commission. As such, the reviewed documents point to important trends on how gender considerations are being integrated across the work of the Commission and the degree to which the seven strategic action areas contained within the gender strategy are being advanced.

Quantitative analysis of the 126 reviewed documents shows that:

- 111 document (88 percent) contain gendered references. The majority of those without gender refences are from 2018 and earlier, with 29 percent of 2018 documents reviewed including no language on gender. No 2020 document to date, is without at least a broad gender reference.
- 63 documents (50 percent) make direct reference to consultations with women's organizations. Out of these 63 documents, 41 (65 percent) convey to various levels of details the key issues raised by women peacebuilders and women leaders.
- 37 documents (30 percent) include some form of gender analysis as well as broad references supporting women's participation in peacebuilding.
- Of the 66 PBC meeting summaries which were reviewed, 44 of these (67 percent) include references to expressions of support by Commission for gender responsive peacebuilding, usually emphasizing the importance of women's participation and the ongoing need to consult with women civil society representatives.

The two annexes below contain more detailed analysis on how the **seven strategic action** areas identified in the gender strategy as well the gender considerations are progressing per country, region and thematic engagement. Annex One illustrates the uneven way in which the seven strategic action areas are being applied:

- Of the seven strategic actions, the **first** on strengthening substantive integration of gender perspectives in all PBC country and region-specific, thematic and strategic engagement, is the one which is most advanced. However, most references are general in nature, instead of substantive and drawn from specific gender analysis.
- Interviews confirmed the findings from the desk review that specific gender priority areas for gender responsive peacebuilding for country and region-specific engagement are rarely identified as it relates to the **second** strategic action area of the strategy.
- There is only one reference on engaging men and youth, the **third** strategic action. This dates back to a September 2016 meeting on the Mano River region.
- The **fourth** strategic action, on ensuring the whole PBC supports the implementation of the gender strategy, has also seen progress. This includes the annual reports of the PBC where there has been an overall improvement in the quality of gender references and gendered elements incorporated into the final sections on actions and best practices. Similarly, in 66 percent of reviewed meeting summaries, PBC members are reported to have expressed their support for gender responsive peacebuilding efforts.
- In terms of the **fifth** strategic action on gender considerations during PBC field visits, all visits since June 2018 have included meetings with women civil society organizations and women leaders and there has been to different degrees promotion of local women's peacebuilding work.

- The **sixth** strategic area on strengthening systematic coordination and information sharing on gender responsive peacebuilding at UN Headquarters and with other regional organizations is also progressing, especially in the last 18 months. Progress is particularly evident with regard to the Commission's engagement with the Security Council.
- The **seventh** and final strategic action encourages the Commission to advocate for dedicated expertise and funding for gender-responsive peacebuilding. The PBC regularly highlights PBF projects that support gender equality and women's empowerment. However, beyond this there are only a few instances, as captured in the reviewed documents, where the Commission has advocated for strengthened gendered resourcing or expertise.

Five overall observations can be drawn from the desk review:

1. There is noticeable progress in the overall support and promotion of the PBC Gender Strategy and for gender-responsive peacebuilding. However, this is most evident through statements of broad support and advocacy instead of from concrete gender analysis and specific priority areas or focus on gendered root causes of conflict and instability.
2. Other than broad support for women's empowerment and participation in political and peacebuilding processes, it is not always clear what the specific gender priorities are in particular countries and regions being considered by the PBC.
3. Women are referred to as a homogenous group instead of there being recognition that women's opportunities and experiences will vary depending on their ethnicity; age; sex, etc.
4. While consultations with women's organizations are regularly referenced, the information exchanged during these sessions is not systematically reported on.
5. Beyond highlighting PBF projects supporting gender equality and women's empowerment, the Commission has rarely advocated for strengthened gendered resourcing or expertise.

6. Key Takeaways from the 2020 Interviews

Overall impressions on the implementation of the gender strategy

Interviews with Commission members and PBSO/DPPA confirmed and expanded on the findings identified during the desk review. Everyone interviewed to date considered there had been overall progress and support for the implementation of the strategy at the normative level. A shift was seen in official discourses in terms of both recognizing the central role women peacebuilders play in peacebuilding and sustaining peace and the need to integrate gender perspectives in peacebuilding discussions and decision-making processes.

The strategy and the twin 2016 resolutions on the review of the peacebuilding architecture, adopted by the UN Security Council and General Assembly, are credited with improving the understanding among Member States for more systematic integration of gender perspectives and for providing helpful guidance on how to do so. Member States and UN Secretariat representatives that were engaged with the Commission prior to the adoption of its gender strategy recounted that past efforts to promote gender perspectives and women's participation in peacebuilding discussions, while well-intentioned and strategic, had always been ad hoc. This is reflected in the 2016 light review of PBC's engagement on gender, which found that only 38 percent of then documents reflected gender language within them. This is in contrast with the 88 percent of documents which include gendered language since the adoption of the strategy.

According to those interviewed, the gender strategy also led to increased support for consultations with women civil society organizations and their representatives. Interviewees considered that the

quality of gender considerations across the PBC had most improved in 2019 and 2020 and have led, within some meetings at least, to richer discussions informed by women peacebuilders and local women business leaders. Several PBC members pointed to the increased consideration of gender perspectives in meetings on the impact of COVID-19 on peacebuilding and the upcoming dedicated Ambassadorial-level meeting on women, peacebuilding and development in the Great Lakes region, which is being informed by three regional consultations in which diverse women briefers have participated, as recent good practice examples which should be expanded upon.

Broad but non-systematic or substantive support for gender perspectives

While interviewees agreed that the gender strategy enjoys broad support among PBC members, there was also consensus on it not yet being systematically institutionalized across all discussions or it regularly leading to substantive discussions on gender dimensions. Some Member State acknowledged that the promotion of gendered elements still largely relies on the individual championing by Member States, both at expert and ambassadorial levels. This then points to the strategy not yet being completely institutionalized across the PBC.

A lack of consistency and systematic implementation were the terms most commonly referred to by Member States to describe the current status of the gender strategy. Some described this as a gap between general rhetoric and prioritized action. There is a recognized need among interviewees to move from broad statements of support on gender dimensions to more detailed considerations of gendered realities within the context or theme being discussed. This reflects the findings from the desk review that while gendered references have increased, for the most part, they remain general in nature instead of being substantive and based on gender analysis or data from the specific context being considered. The desk review identified only 30 percent of documents which included any gendered analysis or specific data pointing to the lived experiences, challenges or opportunities faced by women and girls in a particular context or as relating to a theme being discussed.

Three triangular key factors were identified during the interviews which determine the quality of gender considerations by the PBC. These relate to:

1. The overall support and leadership from the PBC Chair, Vice-Chairs and Configuration Chairs;
2. The level of in-country gender expertise or availability of context-specific gender analysis drawn from UN Country Teams, peace operations, Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) projects or from the wider UN system; and
3. the receptiveness of national governments to embed gender peacebuilding priorities within their overarching development and peacebuilding plans.

Ownership, accountability and monitoring of the gender strategy implementation

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Member States who were interviewed identified the lack of specific accountability and monitoring mechanisms as hindering the full implementation of the gender strategy. It was emphasized that PBC members should assume ownership of its gender strategy, with PBSO/DPPA assisting in its implementation. While it was acknowledged that PBSO/DPPA has a key role to play in strengthening the level of specificity and targeted gendered information considered, including in preparatory documents, Commission members are seen as having responsibility in institutionalizing and implementing the gender strategy with the consent of the country being considered. Collaboration with national governments and regional and sub-regional organizations is seen as critical.

The Commission no longer having a gender focal point was raised as a detriment by several Member States, as this led to there being no PBC member specifically responsible for ensuring the advancement of the gender strategy or consistent gender considerations during context specific and

thematic discussions. As the Commission has moved away from having thematic focal points, several interviewees suggested that informal gender champions could take on this role, in a less formal way, in promoting the implementation of the strategy and incentivizing other members to do so as well. That said, ensuring the mainstreaming of gender considerations across all discussion areas was also seen as needing to be the responsibility of all PBC members.

Adding to the issue of responsibility and accountability is the lack of metrics to monitor the strategy's implementation. This was an issue that was identified by nearly all Member States interviewed. There is no perceived systematized way to either integrate or track the gender strategy into the PBC's daily work. The checklist which accompanies the strategy as an annex is used by some experts in missions and in PBSO/DPPA; however, this is not considered as a sufficient tool to monitor the progress of the strategy which needs to be more actionable and measurable.

Synergies between the PBC and PBF

Interviewees noted as a positive that in recent years there have been strengthened synergies between the PBC and PBF and 40 percent of the Fund's investments support gender equality and women's empowerment related initiatives. PBF information is incorporated into preparatory documents ahead of PBC meetings and visits and gendered projects supported by the Fund are regularly referred to in statements and meeting summaries. Without undermining the separate decision making processes, this synergy between the two entities was considered as mutually beneficial as the PBC can bring more visibility, political support and resource mobilization to PBF projects and in return the Fund can be a conduit for strengthened gender analysis and highlight the impact that gender projects are having locally.

Member States credit the PBF with bringing to the PBC more tangible information on the situation facing women and girls in specific contexts and of showcasing good practice examples which could be further supported and promoted. PBF projects are considered as useful entry points for PBC discussions and during visits, especially as visits now regularly include field trips to gender projects supported by the fund. Two Member State representatives thought that without the availability of PBF information, their Ambassadorial statements would often mostly be broad statements of support rather than being able to draw on specific experiences of women peacebuilders in that county. However, highlighting the importance of strengthening the available gendered information for consideration by PBC members, it was noted that PBF project information should ideally complement broader gender data and not be solely relied upon as the only source of detailed gender analysis. The promotion of gendered peacebuilding dimensions should extend beyond references to PBF projects.

Capacity constraints

The limited resourcing of gender expertise in Member State missions and at the DPPA/PBSO was identified by most PBC members interviewed as a further challenge contributing to the inconsistent implementation of the gender strategy. Within missions, the gender expert is usually a separate person to the one who engages with the PBC. Member State representatives explained how this can lead to a siloed approach and fragmentation on how important gender dimensions of peacebuilding are mainstreamed in the daily work of the PBC by Commission members.

PBC members interviewed also acknowledged the limited gender capacity within PBSO/DPPA relating to the one UN Women seconded post. Several Member States interviewed recognized that it is challenging for one seconded focal point within PBSO/DPPA to support all of the gender

integration required for the full implementation of the strategy. PBSO/DPPA staff interviewed also understood that integrating gender dimensions needs to be the responsibility of all staff.

Feedback from women peacebuilders and women leaders

The five women peacebuilders who were interviewed following their briefings to the PBC, expressed gratitude at the opportunity to present their perspectives to the Commission. They considered this engagement important to ensure high-level decision-making processes can consider the lived experiences of local women peacebuilders. However, a common reflection was that the briefings feel like a one-off statement which does not lead to further dialogue or follow up at the expert level.

Two women peacebuilders wondered what the concrete impact or outcome was from the high-level meetings at which they briefed and recommended the PBC consider alternative forms of engagement which promote more dialogue and engagement over a longer-period. This reflects the findings from the desk review that only 50 percent of documents reviewed make direct reference to consultations with women's organizations and women leaders, and of those only 2/3rds convey to various levels of details the key issues raised by women peacebuilders and women leaders.

7. Recent Good Practice Examples

Based on the desk review and interviews, the following is a list of identified recent good practice examples in terms of gender considerations and enhanced consultations with women leaders and civil society representatives. These provide concrete examples on ways the PBC could expand on the work it has already commenced in order to improve the overall integration of gender perspectives across its work.

- The July 2020 **PBC letter to the PGA and President of the Security Council** and to the Secretary-General **on the 2020 Peacebuilding Architecture Review** acknowledges that women across different contexts face ongoing participatory barriers and that gender considerations are still not integral parts of conflict analysis and planning that feed into peacebuilding strategies. The Commission commits to, among other measures, further mainstreaming gender into its activities, analysis and advice to the General Assembly and the Security Council.
- **Liberia**: in June 2020, the Chair of the Liberia Configuration held, due to travel restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the first virtual meeting with civil society, including women's civil organizations and conveyed messages raised in the discussion back to the Commission; and **the virtual visit on Liberia to the World Bank and International Monetary Fund** in May 2020 appears to be the first of such meetings to refer to gender dimensions of peacebuilding.
- The October 2019 PBC **advice to the Security Council on the MINUSCA mandate** renewal includes important gender recommendations including urging the mission to enhance its communication with women leaders in communities to better understand how to address protection needs that emerge as a result of violations of the peace agreement.
- The PBC held an **Ambassador level dedicated meeting on the WPS agenda** in October 2019 ahead of the annual Security Council open debate. The first such dedicated meeting was held in March 2019 during the Commission on the Status of Women.
- During both the **visits to Burundi in May 2019 and to Central African Republic in March 2019**, the Chairs of those country configurations went on field trips to see projects supported by the PBF dedicated to enhancing local women's mediation efforts and participation.

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- During the **January 2020 Ambassadorial meeting in Cartagena in Colombia**, PBC members met with women former combatants and survivors who described opportunities and challenges they faced in their reintegration and entrepreneurship efforts. This form of engagement is considered unique for the PBC and highlights the importance of Commission members hearing directly from local women with lived experience of conflict and their peacebuilding recommendations.
- The PBC is planning a dedicated Ambassadorial **meeting on women, peacebuilding and development in the Great Lakes region**, which will be informed by three consultative dialogues attended by regional women leaders, government representatives, members of the Advisory Board for WPS in the Great Lakes Region, women entrepreneurs and business leaders, regional Fora and civil society representatives, as well as international partners. This diversity in women briefers is a new good practice, including by women business leaders, which should be further encouraged to allow the Commission to hear different perspectives and possible recommendations to peacebuilding challenges.
- The Commission's **meetings to discuss the impact of COVD 19 on peacebuilding efforts** have contained more detailed gender references and analysis drawn in part from consultations will local women's organizations.

8. Recommendations for PBC Consideration

Following the desk review, the interviews and the expert level meeting, four key recommendations are proposed for PBC consideration to strengthen the systematic implementation of the gender strategy. These are:

1) **Improved intersectional gender analysis as way of building on progress to date and moving towards more substantive gender discussions which address the gendered root causes of conflict and inform funding decisions where possible;**

2) **Regular monitoring and review of the gender strategy including through the development of a gender strategy action plan or monitoring and evaluation framework;**

3) **Strengthened and more diverse consultations with women leaders as part of thematic, country specific and regional discussions, to not only promote the participation of diverse women peacebuilders within PBC decision making processes but to also enrichen and broaden the perspectives being presented to PBC members, and to ensure the PBC's gender responsive peacebuilding messages are informed by and reflect these engagements with women peacebuilders; and**

4) **Enhanced advocacy across the UN system including the Security Council and with Regional Organizations and International Financial Institutions to promote gender responsive peacebuilding as being among its key diplomatic priorities.**

Improved Gender Analysis

The systematic incorporation of gender analysis and data into preparatory documents would enable the PBC to have significantly more substantive gendered discussions on the peacebuilding elements being considered. Ideally, this would occur ahead of all Ambassadorial-level meetings and visits and not just prior to meetings with a dedicated gender focus. As part of ensuring PBC discussions move away from considering women as a homogenous group, gender analysis which informs Commission discussions should aim to be intersectional and address the different and overlapping factors that

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result in discrimination and exclusion such as ethnicity, religion, culture, age, disability or gender identity.

In addition to highlighting data from PBF projects, PBSO/DPPA should be encouraged and supported to consistently draw on already available UN system-wide information from across the UN system to identify targeted and specific gendered considerations which could be promoted and stimulate more impactful discussions by PBC members. Potential starting points could include the Integrated Assessment and Planning (IAP) documents, Common Country Analyses (CCAs) and UN Sustainable Development Co-operation Frameworks (UNSDCF).

The availability of gender analysis and information is a recognized challenge across the UN system. For instance, in his 2019 WPS report, the Secretary-General underscored that the UN's ability to respond to the challenges of ensuring women's human rights and development, is contingent on the consistency, quality and coherence of the gender analysis employed. New York based civil society working on peacebuilding issues could also be invited to submit information drawn from their vast networks of women peacebuilders working at the national, provincial and grassroots levels. As was pointed out by a PBC member, Commission members could as well seek out additional gendered information from their own capitals and embassies, if present in the country or region being considered, in addition to from the countries being discussed.

While PBSO/DPPA recognizes its role in compiling more detailed and succinct gender data for PBC consideration, it is also Member States responsibility to then ensure this information is acted upon and integrated into discussions and outcomes. Without improved gender analysis informing Commission discussions, the risk remains that the issuing of broad statements of support, which neither lead to tangible impact for women peacebuilders nor address the gendered root causes of conflict, remain the norm. There was support among those interviewed to replicate on a yearly basis, and for different regions, a similar gender deep dive process which is being undertaken this year on the women, peacebuilding and development in the Great Lakes region.

Regular Monitoring and Review

To overcome the challenge identified during the interviews relating to the lack of accountability for and monitoring of the gender strategy implementation, several MS expressed a need to develop a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation framework or action plan to accompany the gender strategy. This could lead to more substantive and systematic gender considerations by the Commission and should include specific metrics that can be referred to throughout the year to monitor implementation progress. Such a plan is considered as essential to move from rhetorical support for gendered dimensions of peacebuilding to the context specific operationalization of the strategy and to identify forward looking opportunities for the PBC to progress it gender equality objectives.

In addition to assessing the potential impact that PBC targeted gendered promotion and advocacy is having in particular contexts through ongoing engagements with local women peacebuilders, possible gender strategy metrics to consider include:

- whether specific gender data relating to the peacebuilding priority being promoted by the PBC has been identified and regularly acted upon;
- if key issues and recommendations put forward by women leaders are integrated into PBC outcome documents, annual reports and advocacy messages;
- the percentage of PBC documents which include country and region-specific gender analysis and sex disaggregated data; and

- the degree to which PBC's engagement with the Security Council, ECOSOC, regional organizations and International Financial Institutions integrate targeted gender messages.

In addition to a gender strategy action plan, strengthening reporting on the gender strategy in the PBC's annual reports, as already committed to as part of the 2020 Peacebuilding Architecture Review, and holding bi-annual gender focused expert-level meetings would enable Member States to operationalize the gender strategy by identifying and agreeing on gender priorities for the various contexts on the Commission's agenda to promote throughout the year and also to track progress on the implementation of the strategy.

Strengthened and more diverse consultations with women leaders

The last 12 months have already seen positive developments relating to the diversification of women leaders invited to engage with the Commission during visits and in meetings held either face to face or virtually. These include the interactions with women ex-combatants and survivors in Colombia in January 2020; the virtual consultation with Liberian civil society on the impact of COVID-19 in June 2020; and the briefings by women business leaders and entrepreneurs during the July 2020 Great Lakes consultation on the economic empowerment of women and their effective participation in peacebuilding within the evolving context of COVID-19.

These diverse interactions with women leaders enable Commission members to hear directly from women across different facets of society on their peacebuilding perspectives, lived experiences and recommendations on how to achieve sustained peace within the countries or regions that they live in. Significantly, they recognize the different roles women have in society and that their active involvement in peacebuilding and sustaining peace extends beyond civil society organizations or as local mediators. By facilitating such opportunities for engagement, the Commission is directly promoting the importance of women's participation in decision making processes and therefore supporting one of the central tenants of gender-responsive peacebuilding. These briefings also enable PBC members to be informed by unique points of view which they may not hear elsewhere and be presented with analysis not captured in UN documents. While there is a recognised benefit in Commission members hearing from women peacebuilders engaged in PBF projects, for instance members of the Burundi Women Mediators' Network, it is also worthwhile identifying additional briefers who are not affiliated with PBF projects to engage with the Commission to further strengthen the diversity of views being considered.

The ability to engage with the Commission virtually broadens the scope of individuals who could participate in New York based meetings and recount their unique perspectives without the concern of needing to make travel arrangements, secure visas or undertake lengthy and costly trips. Video briefings by women civil society representatives from conflict affected countries have successfully been integrated into Security Council meetings and could similarly become common practice during PBC meetings.

In addition to seeking input from local women peacebuilders via Regional Coordinators and UN Country Teams, another way for the PBC to strengthen this engagement is by regularly inviting inputs from New York based peacebuilding civil society who represent international peacebuilding networks. These could act both as a conduit between local women peacebuilders and the Commission and be a valuable source of context specific gender analysis, data and recommendations.

Importantly, this strengthened engagement with diverse civil society and women peacebuilders then requires for the PBC to act upon the information provided to it as part of these engagements and

incorporate the key calls and recommendations put forward in these briefings in its broader advocacy messages including to the Security Council, regional organizations and International Financial Institutions (IFIs). Without acting on the information received, these interactions risk being perceived as somewhat tokenistic and performative. A gender strategy action plan or monitoring and evaluation framework should capture and report on this enhanced engagement with women peacebuilders and outline how this will be undertaken.

Enhanced advocacy across the UN system, with Regional Organizations and International Financial Institutions

The PBC is recognized as being a unique convening, resource mobilizing and advocacy platform whose members represent the broad UN membership. As such it has a unique opportunity to promote gender responsive peacebuilding as being among its key diplomatic priorities in its advice to the Security Council, when meeting with other UN bodies such as ECOSOC and when engaging with IFIs, including the World Bank and the IMF. There has already been noted progress in how the Commission has recently incorporated gender perspectives into its advice to the Security Council. The commitment within the July 2020 letter to the Presidents of the General Assembly and the Security Council and to the Secretary-General to strengthen ties with the Informal Expert Group on WPS, is a natural entry point to further enhance the Commission's gendered messaging, analysis and advice to the Security Council particularly as it relates to the gendered dimensions of conflict prevention and peacebuilding.

As highlighted above, during the May 2020 virtual visit to the World Bank and IMF, the Chair of Liberia configuration stressed the importance of adopting a gender sensitive approach to the COVID-19 response. This appears to have been the first time that such an emphasis was made. Future engagements with IFIs should expand on this and highlight not only the need for gender responsive approaches but also the importance of promoting women's economic empowerment and participation, as well as key recommendations on how to do so put forward by women business leaders the Commission has heard from. This would also complement the World Bank's 2016-2023 Gender Strategy.

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Annex One -Progress Advancing the Seven Strategic Actions

Strategic Action 1 – Strengthen substantive, cross-cutting integration of gender perspectives in all PBC country-specific thematic and strategic engagement

Of the seven strategic actions, the first one is the one which has most progressed. Of the 110 documents which include language on gender, 90 of these (81 percent) can be categorized as advancing or contributing to Strategic Action 1. The quality of these references however differs, with the majority of these only offering broad support for women's inclusion or emphasizing the importance of empowering women and youth, instead of including tangible analysis on the situation facing women and the participatory and economic barriers they may face.

PBC's annual reports are a good example of this. For instance, the 2017 report welcomes the adoption of the Gender Strategy; refers to inviting women civil society representatives from Sierra Leone to brief on women's participation in the upcoming election; and also mentions consultations ahead of the Liberian elections and the UNMIL drawdown, but offers no gender sensitive analysis on either of these countries or others captured in the report. Similarly, the 2018 report references consultations with women civil society representatives, the importance of inclusive processes which promote women's participation and of considering gendered dimensions of peacebuilding, but provides no specific details on the outcome of the consultations or specific gendered priority areas the PBC will work on alongside Member States which engage with the commission. The 2019 report includes the broad support for women's empowerment and inclusion and general references to consultations but encouragingly also makes specific reference to efforts to adopt legislation on gender quotas in Guinea-Bissau and identifies as a potential area of support women's involvement in the Sierra Leone election.

In the January 2020 report summarizing 2019 activities, support is given to Chad's peacebuilding efforts including as it relates to gender equality; the full involvement of women and youth is emphasised in relation to the Sahel, Lake Chad Basin and Mano River Union regions and there is explicit support for the full implementation of the gender strategy and a commitment to holding an annual discussion on best practices on "women and peacebuilding" to feed into the Security Council's annual open debates. It specifically welcomes the efforts of The Gambia to promote human rights and gender equality, including the Government's intent to repeal all discriminatory laws and its appointment of women to senior leadership positions. This is the only specific reference in the report, while sections on Guinea-Bissau, Liberia - including meetings with the AU and ECOWAS, Papua New Guinea and Sri Lanka include no gendered references or advocacy, nor do they mention consulting with women civil society organizations. While the gendered references have increased in consecutive annual reports, they remain in most part general in nature, instead of substantive.

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Strategic Action 2- Identify thematic priority areas of gender responsive peacebuilding for region and country specific engagement.

The priority areas listed under strategic action 2 include: peacebuilding and mediation processes and prevention; good governance and leadership; rule of law; integration of gender equality within SSR and DDR; economic empowerment; women's recovery processes and protection strategies; and access to basic social infrastructure. From the documents reviewed, it appears that this strategic action is relatively inconsistent in its application and it is not clear what specific gender priorities are designated for each country and region. Interviews confirmed that this level of specificity is rarely included in country and region-specific discussions.

Peacebuilding and mediation processes and prevention

Support for women's participation in peacebuilding and mediation processes and prevention is the area which receives most emphasis in the documents reviewed. This usually take the form of the Commission expressing its continued commitment and support for the meaningful participation of women in peacebuilding processes. In some instances, this includes calling for the removal of barriers to women's meaningful participation, but these are not usually identified. In the PBC July 2020 letter to the PGA and President of the Security Council on the 2020 peacebuilding architecture review, the Commission restates its commitment to advancing the full, effective and meaningful participation of women in peacebuilding. Among the outstanding challenges, the letter mentions the continued presence in country-specific context of gender-based discrimination and structural barriers to women's participation. More specific advocacy focusing on the concrete barriers women face would strengthen this priority area considerably.

Good governance and leadership

While few in number, there are some positive and specific examples of the PBC promoting the good governance and leadership priority area. These include welcoming The Gambia Government's appointment of women to senior leadership positions (2020 annual report); supporting gender quotas in Guinea-Bissau (2019 annual report); welcoming the appointment of 11 women to the Government (2019 statement by Guinea-Bissau Configuration Chair), and the Gender Parity Law (2018 Statement by Guinea-Bissau Configuration Chair); noting as a positive development the Central African Republic parliament discussing setting a quota for female politicians in August 2018 and in its October 2019 advice to the Security Council on MINUSCA's mandate suggesting the council address various obstacles for participation and representation of women in the elections; and discussing during the December 2017 visit to Sierra Leone the negative trend in women's participation in parliament which at the time was 'significantly below the aspired 30 percent'.

Rule of Law

In terms of rule of law, there are fewer specific examples than those relating to good governance but include: welcoming the repeal of discriminatory laws in The Gambia (2020 annual report); emphasizing the importance of gender sensitive approach to peacebuilding, including good governance, justice and rule of law in Burundi (October 2019 statement by Chair of Configuration to Security Council); and noting that legislation on violence against women was still outstanding in Liberia (April 2018 Configuration Chair Statement to Security Council and the PBC Meeting on Liberia: Chair's Summary; June 2017). As part of the 2020 Peacebuilding Architecture Review, the PBC commits to supporting the creation, adoption and enforcement of legal frameworks that outlaw domestic violence and sexual and gender-based violence at large, end impunity regarding such violence.

Integration of gender equality within Security Sector Reform (SSR) and Disarmament Demobilisation Reintegration (DDR)

Within the documents reviewed there were only two identified substantive references to gender sensitive SSR and DDR. The first during the October 2019 Ambassadorial-level meeting on The Gambia, in which the Director and Deputy Head of the Peacebuilding Support Office commended the government for its commitment to embedding SSR within the democratic transition. With the support of the PBF this included conducting gender-responsive security sector reform training for gender focal points in all the country's security institutions, and the rollout of a "gender caravan"

throughout the country that created space for security sector personnel to discuss gender issues with community and civil society representatives.

The second reference was during the October 2016 meeting on Financing for Peacebuilding in Kyrgyzstan, whereby participants acknowledged PBF investment which supported the training of law enforcement officers on gender sensitivity, human rights and effective communication. This resulted in an increase of women in law enforcement by 11.9 percent over a three-year period.

Economic empowerment, women's recovery and protection strategies, and access to social infrastructure

References to these priority areas tend to be generic in nature and grouped within broader references encouraging the adoption of gender-sensitive peacebuilding approaches. Within the reviewed documents, only a handful of specific references on these priority areas were identified.

Among those on economic empowerment include the recounting of powerful testimonies by Burundi women mediators mitigating tensions at the community level who, during the 2019 Chair's visit to Burundi, underscored the importance of accompanying mediation efforts with income-generating activities. Importantly, in July 2020 the PBC held a dedicated consultative roundtable on women's economic empowerment in the Great Lakes region within the evolving context of COVID-19. Commission members heard of the likely widening social and economic inequalities faced by women in the region and that the restrictive measures put in place in response to the pandemic have further marginalized the economic participation of women especially in the agribusiness supply chain. The roundtable aimed to develop concrete recommendations on ways to support women-led businesses and ensure women's economic participation in post COVID-19 recovery efforts. This level of analysis and detailed focus on women's economic empowerment was not replicated in other documents reviewed.

As it relates to women's recovery and protection strategies, the PBC has acknowledged several times in the last couple of years, including most recently in April and July 2020, that violence against women peacebuilders impedes their ability to carry out their work and that they need safer environments to work within. Specifically, the PBC referenced the intimidation of female candidates in Sierra Leone in 2017 and in its 2019 advice to the Security Council on the MINUSCA mandate renewal recommended the mission in CAR enhance better communication with women leaders in communities to better understand how to address protection needs that emerge as a result of violations of the peace agreement. In November 2016 the Chairs also called for the curtailing of sexual and gender-based violence in Liberia. None of the documents included distinct mentions relating to access to basic social infrastructure.

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Strategic Action 3 – Engage men, including youth in gender-responsive peacebuilding

The one mention of engaging with men and male youth in gender-responsive peacebuilding was from the Chair's Summary of a PBC meeting on peacebuilding in the Mano River in September 2016, where one delegation highlighted the relevance of engaging with men and boys. It is also important to note that references to youth peacebuilders rarely distinguish between young women and men, so this group of peacebuilders are conveyed as being one homogenous group.

Strategic Action 4 – The whole PBC should play an active role in the implementation

Among the actions encouraged within this fourth strategic area are for all members of the PBC to promote key messages on gender-responsive peacebuilding; the holding of yearly substantive meetings on gender responsive peacebuilding; and for the Commission's annual reports to have a dedicated section addressing the implementation of the gender strategy. The reviewed documents point to noticeable progress within this strategic action.

Of the 66 PBC meeting summaries which were reviewed, 44 of these (67 percent) include references of Commission members expressing support for gender responsive peacebuilding usually through emphasizing the importance of women's participation and the ongoing need to consult with women civil society representatives.

In October 2019 during an Ambassador-level meeting on the WPS agenda, Commission members stressed the importance of addressing the obstacles in implementing the agenda and for it to be at the heart of PBC discussions and field missions. In 2020, the PBC agreed to report annually on the implementation of the gender strategy and committed to continue holding an annual discussion on women and peacebuilding, a practice which started in 2019. It also held consultations on women and peacebuilding as part of the 2020 peacebuilding architecture review and is conducting three expert level consultations and an ambassador-level meeting considering the women, peace and security agenda in the Great Lakes region. In January 2018, the Commission convened an expert-level meeting on gender-sensitive peacekeeping transitions.

Since the January 2018 report, the implementation of the gender strategy is included in the future actions and best practices sections of the reports. There has also been an increase in gender references in the last few years within the annual reports but as highlighted above, these largely provide support for gender-responsive building approaches and for consultations with women peacebuilders rather being informed by gender analysis.

Strategic Action 5: Include gender-responsive peacebuilding in the Terms of Reference (ToRs) of all PBC field missions, in coordination with the host government and reporting back findings to the PBC members.

Available documents were reviewed relating visits to: Burundi and Tanzania in March 2017; Sierra Leone in December 2017; the World Bank to discuss the Central African Republic in February 2018; Chad March 2018; Burundi March 2018; Sierra Leone June 2018; Central African Republic in March 2019; Burundi 2019; the November 2019 joint PBC-SRSG UNOWA visit to the Mano River Union (Sierra Leone, Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire); Colombia January 2020; and the virtual visit to the International Monetary Fund and World Bank on Liberia in May 2020.

There were no gender references or mentions of meeting with women civil society representatives in documents pertaining to the February 2018 visit to the World Bank on CAR; the March 2018 Burundi visit; or relating to the Sierra Leone visit in June 2018. All of the other visits do appear to have met with women civil society organizations and there has been to different degrees, promotion of local women's peacebuilding work and on the importance of women's inclusion.

Supporting women's engagement and participation in the 2020 Liberian senatorial election was noted as being among the objectives of the visit there in November 2019 as part of the joint PBC-SRSG UNOWAS trip to the Mano River Union. However, there was no additional analysis provided on some of the participatory challenges Liberian women may face. This could be an example of the challenge related to a lack of available gender analysis. During both the visits to Burundi in May 2019

and to CAR in March 2019, the Chairs of those country configurations went on field trips to see projects supported by the PBF dedicated to enhancing local women's mediation efforts and participation. As already noted above, the negative trend in women's participation in the Sierra Leone parliament was raised during the Chair's meetings with government and political parties during the visit in December 2017. These are all positive examples of integrating gender perspectives and advocacy during country field visits and this practice should be further encouraged and mainstreamed both during the visits and then in reports and further follow ups.

Strategic Action 6: Strengthen the systematic coordination and sharing of information and approaches on gender-responsive peacebuilding

This Strategic Area is progressing, particularly in terms of the Commission's engagement with the Security Council and sharing of information with other regional and intergovernmental bodies.

Of the 30 documents reviewed relating to the PBC's advisory role to or engagement with the Security Council, gender references were absent from eight of these (27 percent), with seven of these being between October 2016 and December 2018. Since 2019, only one document, the one in May 2019 summarizing an informal meeting to discuss recently adopted presidential statements on peacebuilding, have included gendered references. Recent good practices worth citing include the advice of the PBC to the Security Council on the renewal of the MINUSCA mandate in October 2019; as well as the statement by the PBC Burundi Configuration Chair also in October 2019 which called for a multidimensional, gender sensitive approach to peacebuilding, including good governance, justice, rule of law and economic development and which addresses root causes of conflict and removes barriers to women's meaningful participation, such as limited access to resources and economic insecurity. In the Commission's 2019 letter to the Security Council ahead of the WPS annual open debate, the PBC outlines its intention for closer collaboration with the Security Council Informal Expert Group on WPS.

Gender references have been included in all but one of the six documents reviewed relating to joint meetings between the PBC and ECOSOC since July 2018. Only the Chair's statement at the joint meeting in November 2018, discussing the linkages between climate change and the challenges of peacebuilding and sustaining peace in the Sahel, does not include any gendered references. In contrast the December 2019 statement at the joint meeting by the PBC Chair emphasizes that the effects on climate change will most dramatically affect those living in extreme poverty, the majority of whom are women, despite the fact that only a very small percentage of development aid is provided to women-led environmental programs. At the July 2020 ECOSOC Management Segment meeting, the PBC Chair highlighted the importance of ensuring that the COVID-19 pandemic not reverse progress in gender equality, women's empowerment, and the implementation of the women, peace and security agenda. He further stressed the need to strengthen the engagement of women and youth in COVID-19 responses and improving respect for human rights, gender equality, and empowering women and youth.

Gender considerations during discussions with regional and intergovernmental bodies as well as with international financial institutions are outlined below in the thematic engagements and partnerships section.

Strategic Action 7: Advocate actively for dedicated technical expertise on gender-responsive peacebuilding as well as dedicated funding within the UN, and national and international partners.

While specific PBF investment projects are routinely referred to during meetings, especially by PBSO/DPPA leadership, there was minimal evidence within the reviewed documents of the Commission advocating for strengthened gendered resourcing or expertise. Listed below are the only identified instances of such advocacy and focus placed on gendered resourcing:

- In March 2018, the Commission convened an expert-level meeting on financing the gender dimensions of peacebuilding, at which PBC members were briefed on the financial challenges and gaps hindering gender-responsive peacebuilding. (2019 annual report)
- During the April 2018 Security Council Open Debate on Youth, Peace and Security, the PBC Chair expressed the Commission's support for the work undertaken by young women and men peacebuilders in conflict-affected countries and acknowledged that their work is done with limited financial resources and that they face challenges in accessing funding streams.
- As part of a PBC-AUPSC informal interactive dialogue in July 2018, PBC members raised the need for better financing of empowerment mechanisms for youth and women.
- In its October 2019 letter to the Security Council ahead of the annual WPS open debate, the PBC Chair called for gender expertise, analysis and resources to be included in all UN global, regional and country level strategic planning initiatives and transition processes. The PBC also encourages continuous mobilization to adequately resource the implementation of the WPS agenda and to invest in women peacebuilders.
- Also in October 2019, the PBC advice to the Security Council on the MINUSCA mandate outlines PBF investment projects in the hope that this will catalyse further donor support on local peacebuilding initiatives, especially those focused on promoting the inclusion of women and young people.
- At the December 2019 joint ECOSOC-PBC meeting, the PBC Chair raised that the effects on climate change would be most dramatically felt by those living in extreme poverty, the majority of whom are female and this is then at odds with the fact that only a very small percentage of development aid is provided to women-led environmental programs.
- In a May 2020 letter update to PBC members, the Chair of the Burundi configuration wrote that the PBF is ready to consider project proposals that aim to scale up or replicate the peacebuilding work achieved by the women's mediation network, and he called on Member States to consider supporting or co-funding such initiatives.
- As part of consultations to inform an Ambassador level meeting on WPS in the Great Lakes, a virtual roundtable was convened in July 2020 on women's economic empowerment which among its aims was to develop recommendations for improved and coordinated advocacy for resource mobilization to support women-led peacebuilding.
- The PBC outlined the substantial lack of funding for women's organizations and recommended adequate funding for women-led peacebuilding organizations and networks in its letter to the PGA and President of the Security on the peacebuilding architecture review.

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Annex Two -Country and Region-Specific Gender Considerations

Burkina Faso

There were four reviewed documents relating to Burkina Faso: the informal interactive dialogue with the Security Council on the Sahel and Lake Chad Basin in June 2017; and country-specific Ambassadorial-level meetings in May 2019; September 2019 and March 2020. All of these included broad support for gender-responsive peacebuilding and women's participation in peacebuilding efforts. The March 2020 meeting included a briefing by representative of women's civil society organization in Burkina Faso. None of the documents captured any gender analysis or outlined what the gender responsive peacebuilding priorities for Burkina Faso are.

Burundi

There were 13 documents on Burundi reviewed dating back to October 2016 to the most recent being the Configuration Chair's letter to PBC members in May 2020. Four of these (31 percent) are without any gender language, the last one being the Statement of the Chair of the Burundi Configuration to the Security Council in November 2018.

Following the visit to Burundi in February 2020, the Chair of the Burundi Configuration highlighted during a configuration meeting and to the Security Council, that there were more women registered voters than men in the upcoming election. Member States were also encouraged to support or co-fund initiatives aimed at enhancing or replacing the peacebuilding work undertaken by the women's mediation network who the delegation again met with during the visit.

The May 2019 report on the Chair of Configuration visit to Burundi recounts a field trip to a PBF supported project jointly implemented by UN WOMEN, IOM and UNDP, where the delegation heard from local women on the importance of accompanying mediation efforts with income-generating activities to further strengthen women's ability to participate in peacebuilding efforts and within the political sphere. The report's recommendation on reconciliation and dialogue calls for local-level initiatives focusing on women and youth to be continued and expanded. However, there are no gender elements or sex disaggregated data in the report's other recommendations on the 2020 elections; socioeconomic development; realization of all human rights; or relating to the orderly and voluntary return of Burundian refugees.

The October 2019 statement to the Security Council outlines the need for a multidimensional, gender sensitive approach to peacebuilding including good governance, justice, rule of law and economic development, and which should also promote addressing root causes and removing barriers to women's meaningful participation, such as limited access to resources and economic insecurity. This is a marked improvement from earlier statements in 2017 (which included no references at all) and the one in 2018 whose only gender mention was a reference to a PBF initiative which among its aims was to address gender-based violence.

Central African Republic

There has been a notable improvement in gender refences in Central African Republic documents, especially as there was no gender language in any of these from October 2016 to February 2018. These account for over 60 percent of documents on CAR and include the 2017 and 2018 statements to the Security Council; the 2018 visit to the World Bank; and the 2016 and 2017 joint meetings with the Security Council.

Then in August 2018, the PBC highlighted as positive developments the increased number of women mediators and the Parliament's recent discussions on setting a quota for female politicians. The 2019 visit to Bangui involved meeting with women working on a PBF funded project led by UNDP and UN Women on promoting women's political participation and engagement in national dialogue processes and which was exploring new ways to ensure women's equal participation in the implementation of the peace agreement and at upcoming elections. Following the visit, PBC members further emphasized the need to ensure the inclusion of women and youth in local peacebuilding efforts.

Finally, the advice to Security Council on the renewal of the MINUSCA mandate renewal should be considered as good practice and further built on and replicated across other mandate renewal processes. In its advice, the PBC calls for concrete way to be found to involve women and young people in the appropriation and implementation of the peace agreement and for MINUSCA to enhance better communication with women leaders in communities to better understand how to address protection needs that emerge as a result of violations of the peace agreement. It also encourages the Security Council to champion the equal participation and representation of women in the elections.

Colombia

The PBC discussed Colombia at a meeting in November 2017 where two women Colombian civil society leaders shared their personal stories of living through the conflict. Then in January 2020, the Commission held an Ambassadorial meeting in Cartagena, Colombia. On the margins of the official panel, all PBC members visited an exhibition of products of former combatants, survivors, and communities, where the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Presidential Counsellor for Stabilization and Consolidation, and the SRSG for Colombia provided context. Many of these representatives were grassroots women, entrepreneurs and peacebuilders who had a chance to discuss with PBC members opportunities and challenges in their reintegration and entrepreneurship efforts. During the official panel, a member of a victims' association who was also at the exhibition, presented her personal trajectory to craft making and entrepreneurship. She stressed the importance of supporting and empowering women peacebuilders at the local level. PBC members' interaction with women former combatants and survivors who are now entrepreneurs or craftswomen was described as a unique experience and an example of a new form of engagement which should be considered as good practice.

The Gambia

Between April 2017 and July 2020, there were eight available documents relating to The Gambia and only one of these, on the April 2017 meeting, did not include any gender references. There is a noticeable improvement in gender considerations across the five documents from May 2019 onwards.

In May 2019 the ASG for Peacebuilding Support stressed the testimonies of women as fundamental to the integrity of the transitional justice process and PBC members further welcomed the promotion and participation of women in all areas of life and in the justice system, including the number of women judges and TRRC commissioners. PBC members described the participation of women as witnesses, senior officials and decision makers in the judiciary sector as unleashing the true potential of women in all aspects of peacebuilding. These comments are the most detailed support the PBC has given towards gender responsive transitional justice across all of the contexts reviewed. Similar messages were reiterated during the October 2019 meeting on The Gambia,

where the Deputy Head of PBSO/DPPA also outlined specific gender-responsive security sector reform initiatives which were being undertaken with PBF support.

In the June 2020 meeting focusing on the impact of COVID-19 in The Gambia, PBC members acknowledged the particularly severe consequences for women and highlighted the pivotal role played by women in promoting economic development and in helping the society address challenges emerging from the pandemic. They committed to work with The Gambia in further promoting the critical role played by women and youth in peacebuilding and in addressing the socio-economic impact of COVID-19. The June 2020 Ambassadorial meeting on The Gambia echoed similar sentiments and noted that the pandemic risked exacerbating inequalities, hence the need to focus on human security, gender equality and youth engagement as part of addressing the socio-economic consequences of the pandemic.

Guinea-Bissau

There were 18 documents reviewed on Guinea-Bissau including those relating to country specific meetings and statements, as well as meetings in which Guinea-Bissau was one of several contexts considered. Only two of these, (the October 2016 meeting with the Security Council on Burundi, Central African Republic, Guinea-Bissau and Liberia and the April 2017 Security Council meeting covering the Sahel, Central African Republic, Guinea-Bissau and Liberia) omit any gender language.

Since August 2017, the PBC has consistently expressed its support for PBF projects aimed at strengthening the participation of women and youth in Guinea Bissau's peacebuilding efforts. Representatives of the Women's Council, formerly the Women's Facilitator Group, briefed the PBC in August 2017 and August 2018, and the Chair of Guinea-Bissau Configuration also met with them during country visits. The PBC has repeatedly supported and welcomed efforts to increase the number of women in Guinea-Bissau's parliament, including the December 2018 promulgation of the Gender Parity Law which established a quota of 35 percent women candidates for parliament and representation in public sector institutions. The PBC supported advocacy efforts leading up to the bill being considered, and then welcomed its adoption. In September 2019, the Commission further commended the 11 women who were appointed to the Government and further encouraged similar progress in other institutions.

In November 2019, the Chair of the PBC Guinea-Bissau Configuration while reporting on the recent visit there, advised that interlocutors in Guinea-Bissau had acknowledged the continuous engagement of the PBC and the catalytic contributions of the PBF and expressed appreciation for ongoing initiatives that aimed to empower women and youth in peacebuilding and sustaining peace efforts. Guinea-Bissau is a positive example of the whole of the PBC engaging in ongoing promotion of women's meaningful participation within peacebuilding and political processes. During the June 2020 meeting, Commission members were briefed on how the PBF projects in Guinea-Bissau had adjusted their workplans or reoriented activities to respond to new tension triggers as a result of COVID-19 and to empower youth and women leaders to play a key role in peaceful sensitization and community response. Commission members welcomed the flexibility of the PBF in the context of COVID-19 in continuing to support women in political and peacebuilding processes and underscored the need to ensure that important peacebuilding gains including rule of law, security sector reform and gender equality are safeguarded during the UN transition. In his August 2020 statement to the Security Council, the Configuration Chair also acknowledged that among the COVID-19 risks in Guinea-Bissau was the worsening of gender inequalities.

Liberia

Of the 15 documents reviewed which considered Liberia, three (20%) of these did not include any gender references, the last one being in March 2018. Since October 2016, the noticeable gender priority has been on promoting women's meaningful participation in the 2017 and 2020 elections. This is a clearer priority than in other country contexts reviewed. Among the objectives of a joint PBC, SRSG-UNOWAS, PBSO/DPPA visit to Mano River Union in November 2019, was to map future PBC support in respect to the upcoming Liberian senatorial election processes, in order to achieve peaceful elections. Women's engagement and participation was noted as being an important focus in this regard. There is no analysis however detailing the particular participatory challenges Liberian women may face or how lessons learnt from the 2017 election can be applied to strengthen women's participation rate in 2020. Though this may be included during the scheduled October meeting to the discuss the senatorial elections. The reviewed documents also point to PBC advocacy being undertaken in support of domestic violence laws needing to be passed.

It is important to highlight the strong gender emphasis which has been placed in the three 2020 meetings held on Liberia and the impact of COVID-19. This includes the virtual visit in May to the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, where the Chair of the Liberia Configuration stressed the importance of adopting a gender sensitive approach in the response, including considering the situation for women and girls. This is also significant as this appears to be the first meeting with the World Bank and International Monetary Fund where gender responsive peacebuilding was discussed. At an April 2020 meeting, PBC members also noted the particular situation for women related to the lockdown measures. In June, the Chair of the Liberia Configuration held a virtual discussion with Liberian civil society organizations to hear how local organizations were being impacted by the pandemic. Among the concerns raised by the participants were the decrease in availability of essential services and that the pandemic is exacerbating existing inequalities. An assessment was being undertaken to ascertain how women-led small and medium sized enterprises had been affected. The Chair of the Configuration echoed participants' calls relating to the impact the pandemic was having on women and youth and the need to support their organizations.

While the reviewed documents describe regular engagement with women civil society organizations and PBC Liberia Configuration, either through being invited to brief PBC meetings or holding meetings with them during country visits, this dedicated consultation with civil society appears to be the first of its kind. This is a new practice which could be replicated across different PBC configurations and country or regional considerations as a way of further emphasizing the perspectives of women civil society representatives.

Sierra Leone

There were eight documents reviewed on Sierra Leone between December 2016 and November 2019. Of these only the summary on the working level visit of the Sierra Leone configuration to the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund in June 2018, does not include any gender language within it. During the joint PBC, SRSG-UNOWAS, PBSO/DPPA visit to Mano River Union in November 2019, it was stated that supporting the empowerment of women and youth in political processes has been a key focus of the PBC in its engagement with Sierra Leone. PBC members in the last couple of years have regularly conveyed broad statements of support for the Government's efforts to enhance inclusiveness and empower women and youth, but no further analysis or detail is provided. The last document with any gender specificity in it was the December 2017 visit summary whereby the Chair of the Sierra Leone Configuration emphasized with government and other political party representatives the then negative trend in women's parliament which was well below

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the 30 percent goal; the intimidation of female candidates and allegations of some politicians paying for Rites of Passage ceremonies of girls in exchange for votes.

Central African Region

The PBC convened an Ambassadorial-level meeting for the first time on Central Africa region on 9 June 2020, in order to discuss the regional impact of COVID-19 on peacebuilding. The Head of the UN Regional Office for Central Africa outlined how the pandemic was exacerbating long standing regional challenges. The Secretary-General of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) described the increase in gender inequalities occurring during the lockdown period due to women's increasing domestic workload, an increase in domestic violence against women and the risks of sexual violence against women and young girls, particularly in conflict areas. Member States from the region expressed concern at the disproportionate effect of the pandemic on women and girls as well as operational restrictions in the work of local civil society and peacebuilding organizations. In his Concluding remarks the PBC Chair called on all UN country teams in the region to break silos and join forces with the private sectors and NGOs to help the governments in the region to address youth employment and protect women and girls.

Great Lakes

Guiding PBC discussions on the Great Lakes is the UN's Great Lakes Regional Strategic Framework in which the importance of gender mainstreaming is emphasized, as is the need to empower women as economic agents and promote their participation and leadership in conflict resolution and recovery processes. Following a July 2020 Ambassadorial meeting on the Great Lakes region, where among other issues members of the Commission emphasized the pivotal role that women and youth could play as key agents of change and the need for the WPS agenda to be fully integrated into regional peacebuilding efforts, it was agreed to hold a dedicated meeting on women, peacebuilding and development in the Great Lakes region later in 2020. To inform this meeting, three virtual dialogues have been planned on: women as agents of change for socio-economic transformation; effective measures to guarantee women's meaningful political participation and their contribution to peacebuilding; and on prevention of all forms of violence against women.

The background documents prepared for these dialogues contain a new level of specificity in their gender references. For instance, they note that women in the Great Lakes Region make up 70 percent of the workforce both in small-scale business enterprises and in agriculture and that the restrictive measures put in place in response to the pandemic will further marginalize the economic participation of women in the agribusiness supply chain. In regard to the second session on violence against women held on 11 August, the concept note outlined that gender inequality, economic insecurity and poverty-related stress are key elements in the relationship between GBV and the COVID-19 pandemic. Participants heard the need for Member States to take measures during the pandemic to ensure that monitoring, reporting and legal systems continue to function, and to follow up by providing robust support to women survivors of violence. During this second virtual session speakers also outlined the importance of responses being informed by intersectional gender analysis.

Among those participating in the virtual dialogues include regional women leaders, government representatives, members of the Advisory Board for WPS in the Great Lakes Region, women entrepreneurs and business leaders, regional Fora and civil society representatives, as well as international partners. The virtual dialogues and the Ambassadorial meeting aim to develop recommendations on how to fully integrate the WPS agenda in peacebuilding and development

efforts in the Great Lakes region and ensure effective participation of women in the design of gender sensitive policies and programmes in the response to and recovery from the COVID -19.

This is the first time such a process focusing specifically on the regional implementation of the WPS agenda and how to strengthen the role of women in peacebuilding efforts is being undertaken by the PBC.

Mano River Union

In November 2019 the PBC visited the Mano River Union countries of Sierra Leone, Liberia and Cote d'Ivoire to inform renewed engagement with the Commission and identify possible avenues of support. Based on the trip's concept note and meeting summary discussing the visit, some gender dimensions were integrated within the three-country visit. For instance, among the stated objectives of the Liberian portion of the visit, was to support women's engagement and participation in the upcoming election. However, no additional information was captured on the potential participatory challenges facing women in the Liberian electoral context. In Sierra Leone, the Chair recounted a meeting with an NGO working to empower adolescent girls, which called on the Commission to amplify girls' voices and support innovation in grassroots programming with and for girls. For the Côte d'Ivoire section of the visit, documents highlighted the PBC's ongoing support to the National Peacebuilding Programmes which among its priorities included women's and youth participation in peacebuilding. Following the trip PBC members emphasized the importance of gender equality in decision making mechanisms at the local and national levels, however it is not does appear that the trip led to more detailed considerations on how the Commission could further support gendered dimensions of peacebuilding across Mano River Union countries.

Lake Chad Basin, West Africa and the Sahel

Documents relating to Lake Chad Basin, West Africa and the Sahel include the December 2018 statement to the Security Council on the Sahel; the December 2019 advice on the UNOWAS mandate renewal; the July 2019 meeting on Chad; and the Chair's Summary on the annual meeting on the Sahel, Lake Chad Basin and Mano River Union in December 2019.

For the Lake Chad Basin, PBC discussions are informed by the August 2018 regional strategy for the stabilization, recovery and resilience of the Boko Haram-affected areas of the Lake Chad Basin Region. This calls for gender to be mainstreamed throughout all stabilization work in the region, for there to be effective protection measures that empower women and girls as beneficiaries, and for the full and effective inclusion and participation of women and girls in the stabilization, recovery and resilience process. Similarly, for the Sahel the Commission is guided by the UN Integrated Strategy for the Sahel (UNISS) framework, which also calls for the mainstreaming of gender perspectives and lists as one of the priorities the empowerment of women and youth for peace and development in the Sahel.

The 2018 PBC meeting on Sahel included briefings by women civil society representatives however details of their statements or key calls are not included in the meeting summary. The advice to the Security Council on the UNOWAS mandate renewal lists low levels of gender equality as being among the ongoing serious challenges facing parts of West Africa and the Sahel and calls for the mission to support for meaningful participation of women and youth in political processes and peacebuilding efforts in the region. During the July 2019 meeting PBC members expressed their support for efforts relating to gender equality following a briefing by the Minister for Economy and Development Planning for the Republic of Chad, on laws which had been adopted to promote gender parity, and to prohibit child marriage and human trafficking.

At the December 2019 annual session on the Sahel, Lake Chad Basin, and the Mano River Union, the Chair briefed the commission on his meetings with women's organizations during the Mano River Union visit and how women mediators are championing dispute resolution in their communities. The Executive Secretary of the Lake Chad Basin Commission spoke of the need to empower and promote the inclusion of women as well as build their capacity. The Commission also heard from a women civil society representative from Sierra Leone who is working to empower adolescent girls. She described entrenched practices of discrimination and oppression experienced by women and girls and her organization's work to combat discriminatory practices by amplifying girls' voices, providing financial resources, building solidarity between and across girls' movements, and supporting innovation in grassroots programming with and for girls. At the meeting PBC members emphasized that the inclusion of gender equality in decision making mechanisms at the local and national levels is vital for peacebuilding.

Pacific Islands

In the period under review, the PBC has met twice on Papua New Guinea (PNG), in October 2019 and July 2020. During the October meeting the ASG for Peacebuilding Support addressed the importance of women's full participation in the upcoming referendum in Bougainville. He also outlined two PBF supported projects which saw the establishment of a quota for women in all of the regional and urban community governments across Bougainville and the holding of the Bougainville Regional Women's Unification Conference to discuss issues concerning women across faction lines. At the meeting Commission members also stressed the importance of women participating in both the referendum and broader peacebuilding efforts. During the July meeting, PBC members commended the commitment of the PNG government to women's representation in parliament and emphasized the need for further progress on women's political participation, gender equality and women's empowerment.

In addition, on the 28 July 2020 the PBC held a meeting on the impact of the pandemic in the Pacific. The meeting summary indicates that PBC members were briefed on the region having among the highest rates of domestic violence and intimate partner violence in the world and the need for response measures to guarantee fundamental human rights, including gender equality, political participation of women, and access to justice. A woman civil society leader from Fiji also told the PBC that COVID-19 had led to an increase in economic insecurity, domestic and community violence. She called for strengthened gender-sensitive analysis throughout all phases of the response, greater linkages with the human security approach and for flexible peacebuilding funding to reflect the changing nature of threats.

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Thematic Engagements and Partnerships

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As well as holding country and regional specific meetings, the PBC has also convened thematic discussions on youth, peace and security; leadership, accountability and capacities; the women peace and security agenda; South-South cooperation; building and sustaining peace and on the impact of COVID-19 on peacebuilding. Engagements with regional organizations such as the African Union and international financial institutions represent other important opportunities to promote gender responsive peacebuilding approaches.

During the September 2018 PBC meeting on leadership, accountabilities and capacities, Member States welcomed the Secretary-General's UN gender parity strategy and emphasized that women's leadership is vital to peacebuilding and sustaining peace. However, there were no references relating to accountability measures to ensure the full implementation of PBC's gender strategy. The

only gender reference included in the Chair's remarks to the March 2019 dialogue, convened by the General Assembly and PBC on peacebuilding and sustaining peace, was in relation to the Commission's continued implementation of its gender strategy. The Chair's summary of the Ambassadorial-level meeting on South-South and Triangular Cooperation for Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace, held September 2019, omits any mentions to gendered peacebuilding.

Unsurprisingly, the October 2019 meeting on the women, peace and security agenda is vastly different in its gender considerations. Senior UN and regional organization officials, as well as women civil society representatives spoke of the need to: bridge the divide between rhetoric and practice; for Member States and the UN to better address the root-causes of gender inequality; leadership accountability for the implementation of the WPS agenda including through targeted data collection, joined-up analysis and strategic planning; and to strengthen women's participation in peacebuilding processes and access to economic resources. Member States urged the PBC through its convening and advisory role to provide a platform for discussion of the WPS agenda with a range of different stakeholders, including regional and sub-regional organizations, international financial institutions and civil society and called for the WPS agenda to be heard of at the PBC discussions and during field visits. The stark contrast in thematic meetings a month apart highlights the importance of ensuring gender perspectives are integrated into other thematic meetings which are not dedicated to gender.

As part of the February 2020 meeting on youth, peace and security, PBC members heard from a civil society leader from Sierra Leone who spoke of his work leading a feminist organization which designs and implements grassroots programmes with and for girls. PBC members recognized the positive contribution of young women and men in promoting peace; encouraged more countries to adopt national action plans on youth, peace and security; and emphasized allowing young peacebuilders especially young women peacebuilders in rural areas, to be part of decision-making processes. This is one of the few meetings referring to youth peacebuilders which distinguishes between young women, girls, men and boys. Similar to how women should not be viewed as one homogenous group, PBC considerations on youth, peace and security will be strengthened if they identify and address the differentiated needs and participatory challenges faced by diverse young women and men. Nearly all PBC documents reviewed refer to youth as one general demographic.

Engagements with the World Bank in 2018, including on the Central African Republic and Sierra Leone, did not include any gender references. However, in the report on the virtual visit to the World Bank and International Monetary Fund on Liberia in May 2020, the PBC chair stressed the importance of adopting a gender sensitive approach to the COVID 19 response. The July 2018 interactive dialogue with the African Union also promoted gender-responsive building efforts, the meaningful of women and youth in peacebuilding and sustaining peace, as well as the need for increased financing of empowerment mechanisms for women and youth.

Since April 2020, the PBC has met repeatedly to consider the implications COVID-19 is having on peacebuilding efforts generally as well as across West Africa and the Sahel; the Central African Region; the Great Lakes region; the Pacific and specifically in The Gambia; Liberia; and Papua New Guinea. These meetings have all acknowledged the disproportionate impact the pandemic will have on women and youth and that this health crisis is not gender neutral and is in fact amplifying existing inequalities including those relating to gender. These meetings are being guided in part by the April 2020 UN Framework for the immediate socio-economic response to COVID-19, which outlines that across all contexts gender equality and the inclusion of women in the response will be critical to avoid any backsliding. The framework also stresses the importance of applying a gender lens during the design of socio-economic responses, given the role that women are playing as frontline

healthcare workers, including healthcare providers and caregivers, as community leaders and in the informal economy.

As part of a PBC meeting on the socio-economic response to COVID-19 in July 2020, the PBC was briefed on the role of women in sustaining livelihoods especially as small business owners and that investing in women entrepreneurs would be critical for economic recovery. During the July 2020 ECOSOC Management Segment meeting, the PBC Chair raised the importance of ensuring that the pandemic does not reverse progress on gender equality, women's empowerment and the implementation of the women, peace and security agenda. In addition, he outlined consultations undertaken by the PBC including with women civil society representatives and the need to further strengthen the engagement of women and youth in COVID-19 responses. The PBC Chair then reiterated these calls during the 12 August Security Council Open Debate on peacebuilding and sustaining peace challenges caused by pandemics.

Overall PBC meetings which have considered the impact of COVID-19 either in country or region-specific discussions or during broader thematic meeting have included noticeably more detailed gender references and analysis drawn in part from consultations with local women's organizations. This approach paves the way for even more nuanced promotions of gender responsive peacebuilding efforts in which specific gendered priorities are identified and addressed.

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2023 FACTSHEET MEDIATION SUPPORT

The Mediation Support Unit (MSU) in the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA) serves as the UN system-wide focal point on mediation expertise and support. The Unit, inter-alia, provides tailored operational support to peace and dialogue processes through expert staff from the Unit and the Standby Team of Senior Mediation Advisors (SBT).

DPPA's mediation support capacity relies predominantly on funding from the Multi-Year Appeal (MYA) – including to allow for on-the-ground support to peace discussions. Sustained funding will allow MSU to continue to deploy operational expert support where needed and to develop innovative approaches and mediation guidance in emerging fields such as digital technologies, climate, local and sub-national mediation, and the youth, peace and security agenda.

What we do

MSU's core competencies include **operational assistance with mediation and peace processes, capacity building, and developing mediation guidance, lessons learned, and best practices.**

MSU staff, including in-house experts on ceasefires, constitution-making, and process design, are able to provide **tailored support** throughout the planning, implementation and evaluation phases of a mediation process. The Unit also manages the Standby Team of Senior Mediation Advisers (SBT), which can be mobilized as a complementary mediation support capacity.

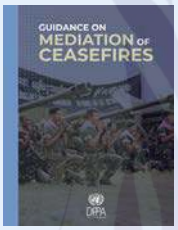
The Unit organizes a series of flagship **trainings**, including the High Level Mediation Course and the Ceasefire Mediation Course. MSU furthermore develops and maintains **guidance and resources** for mediators, available through the dedicated Peacemaker website. This includes a searchable directory of peace agreements – allowing mediators to compare language across some 75,000 provisions of 1,300 agreements. When requested, MSU also provides tailored guidance, often involving comparative case analysis, to field missions. The Digital Risk Management E-Learning Platform for Mediators, launched in 2022, represents MSU's emerging work in supporting mediators in cybersecurity awareness.

MSU **partners** frequently with various regional organizations. It is also a member of several mediation networks, including the Group of Friends on Mediation and the Mediation Support Network, and engages regularly with the Global Alliance of Regional Women Mediator Networks.

For more information on UN mediation assistance, please visit the dedicated website.

Expanding our knowledge, and helping others to learn

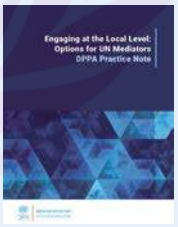
Key 2022 publications include:



Guidance on Mediation of Ceasefires



Advice on Applying Mediation Fundamentals in UN Constitutional Assistance



Engaging at the Local Level: Options for UN Mediators



The Implications of Climate Change for Mediation and Peace Processes (EN | FR)

2022 Highlights

160 deployments of staff/advisors, upon request, for assistance in mediation

132 SBT mediation support assignments, in approximately 29 different contexts

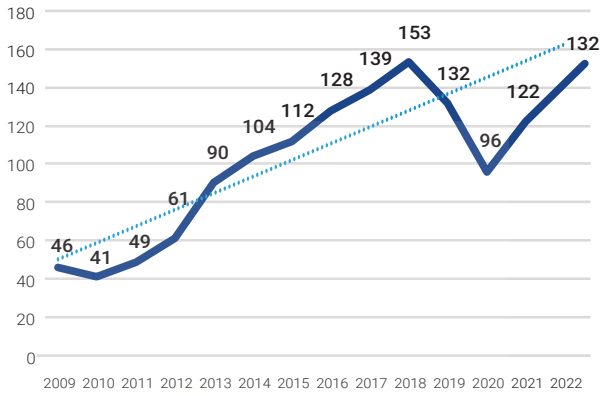
100 per cent of all UN led and co-led peace processes received technical advice and support on gender

Standby Team of Senior Mediation Advisers (SBT)

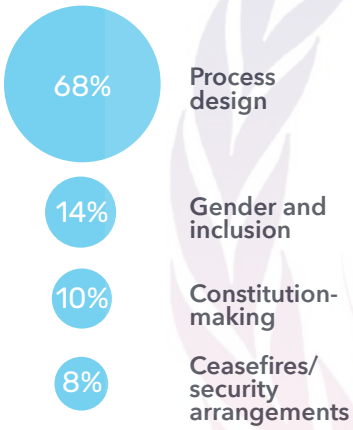
Members of DPPA's SBT are available to deploy within 72 hours to support United Nations envoys and mediators, special political missions, and as well as regional and sub-regional organisations and other non-UN partners at key junctures in peace processes. The SBT offers targeted support across a range of issues, through different modalities from direct mediation assistance, to training and coaching (including of parties to a conflict). They are able to provide both in-person and remote assistance.

Funded entirely by the MYA, demand for SBT support has increased significantly in recent years. Following a drop in engagements in 2020 – mainly due to the COVID-19 pandemic – both 2021 and 2022 saw a steady increase in assignments.

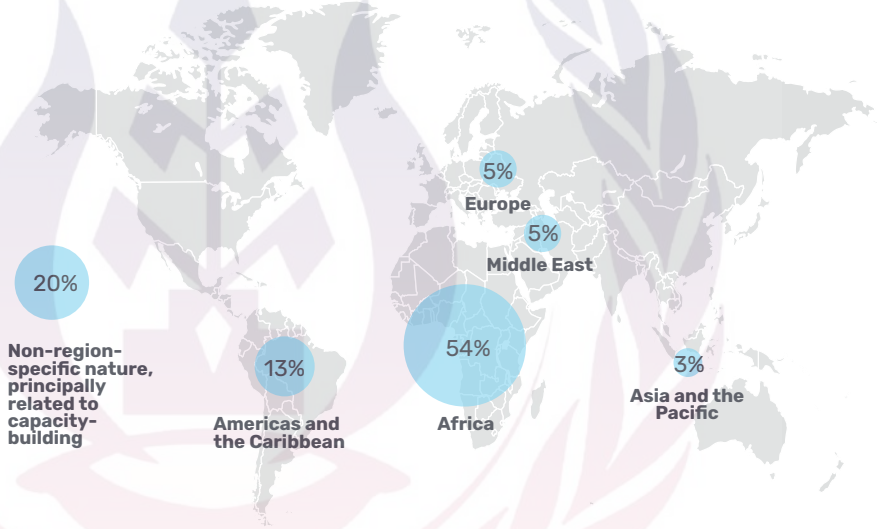
Number of SBT engagements



2022 SUPPORT BY THEME



2022 SUPPORT BY REGION



How we track results

- Senior Leadership Compacts
- 2023-2026 Results Framework
- Mid-Year and Annual MYA reports

Global

We fund political work across the world

Flexible

70% of our funding is unearmarked

Fast

We can allocate funding within 72 hours of a crisis

Innovative and Inclusive

We use innovative approaches to peace and security with emerging technologies

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Our Common Agenda
Policy Brief 9

A New Agenda for Peace

JULY 2023

THE BHAWANIPUR EDUCATION SOCIETY COLLEGE
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United Nations

Introduction

CHAPEAU

The challenges that we face can be addressed only through stronger international cooperation. The Summit of the Future, in 2024, is an opportunity to agree on multilateral solutions for a better tomorrow, strengthening global governance for both present and future generations (General Assembly resolution 76/307). In my capacity as Secretary-General, I have been invited to provide inputs to the preparations for the Summit in the form of action-oriented recommendations, building on the proposals contained in my report entitled "Our Common Agenda" (A/75/982), which was itself a response to the declaration on the commemoration of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations (Assembly resolution 75/1). The present policy brief is one such input.

PURPOSE OF THIS POLICY BRIEF

In the declaration on the commemoration of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations, heads of State and Government undertook to promote peace and prevent conflicts. Honouring this pledge will require major changes by Member States, in their own actions and in their commitment to uphold and strengthen the multilateral system as the only viable means to address an interlocking set of global threats and deliver on the promises of the Charter of the United Nations around the world.

Member States must provide a response to the deep sense of unease which has grown among nations and people that Governments and international organizations are failing to deliver for them. For millions of people, the sources of that disappointment are to be found in the horrors of hunger, displacement and violence. Inequalities and injustices, within and among nations, are giving rise to new grievances. They have sown distrust in the potential of multilateral solutions to improve lives and have amplified calls for new forms of isolationism. As the planet warms, marginalization grows and conflicts rage, young people everywhere have grown disillusioned at the prospects for their future.

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The choice before us is clear. Unless the benefits of international cooperation become more tangible and equitable, and unless States can manage their competition and move beyond their current divisions to find pragmatic solutions to global problems, human suffering will worsen. The urgency of all countries to come together, to fulfil the promise of the nations united, has rarely been greater.[1]

My report on Our Common Agenda offered a vision to deliver on this promise. It outlined a multilateral system that could be more just, networked and effective. Building this new multilateralism must start with action for peace, not only because war undermines progress across all our other agendas, but because it was the pursuit of peace that in 1945 unified States around the need for global governance and international organization.

This new multilateralism must recognize that the world order is shifting. It must adjust to a more fragmented geopolitical landscape. It must respond to the emergence of new potential conflict domains. It must also rise to address myriad global threats that have locked States into interdependence, whether they desire so or not. This new multilateralism demands that we look beyond our narrow security interests. The peace that we envisage can be pursued only alongside sustainable development and human rights.

The collective security system that the United Nations embodies has recorded remarkable accomplishments. It has succeeded in preventing a new global conflagration. International cooperation – spanning from sustainable development, disarmament, human rights and women's empowerment to counter-terrorism and the protection of the environment – has made humanity safer and more prosperous. Peacemaking and peacekeeping have helped to end wars and prevent numerous crises from escalating into full-blown violence. Where wars broke out, collective action by the United Nations often helped shorten their duration and alleviate their worst effects.

Nonetheless, peace remains an elusive promise for many around the world. Conflicts continue to wreak destruction, while their causes have become more complex and difficult to resolve. This may make the pursuit of peace appear a hopeless undertaking. However, in reality, it is the political decisions and actions of human beings that can either sustain or crush hopes for peace. War is always a choice: to resort to arms instead of dialogue, coercion instead of negotiation, imposition instead of persuasion. Therein lies our greatest prospect, for if war is a choice, peace can be too. It is time for a recommitment to peace. In the present document, I offer my vision of how we can make that choice.

A WORLD AT A CROSSROADS

A GEOPOLITICAL TRANSITION

The United Nations is shaped fundamentally by the willingness of its Member States to cooperate. It was the "improvement in relations between States" (A/47/277-S/24111, para. 8) at the end of the cold war that helped forge consensus in the Security Council and empowered the Organization to address threats to collective security. It was against this backdrop that An Agenda for Peace was presented in 1992.

We are now at an inflection point. The post-cold war period is over. A transition is under way to a new global order. While its contours remain to be defined, leaders around the world have referred to multipolarity as one of its defining traits. In this moment of transition, power dynamics have become increasingly fragmented as new poles of influence emerge, new economic blocs form and axes of contestation are redefined. There is

greater competition among major powers and a loss of trust between the global North and South. A number of States increasingly seek to enhance their strategic independence, while trying to manoeuvre across existing dividing lines. The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and the war in Ukraine have hastened this process. The unity of purpose expressed by Member States in the early 1990s has waned.

Today, the national security doctrines of many States speak of intensifying geostrategic competition in the decades to come. Military expenditures globally set a new record in 2022, reaching $2.24 trillion.[2] Arms control frameworks and crisis management arrangements that helped stabilize great power rivalries and prevent another world war have eroded. Their deterioration, at the global as well as the regional level, has increased the possibility of dangerous standoffs, miscalculations and spirals of escalation. Nuclear conflict is once again part of the public discourse. Meanwhile, some States have embraced the uncertainties of the moment as an opportunity to reassert their influence, or to address long-standing disputes through coercive means.

Geostrategic competition has triggered geoeconomic fragmentation,[3] with fractures widening in trade, finance and communications and increasing concerns regarding transfers of technologies such as semiconductors. Efforts to secure access to both basic and strategic commodities, such as rare earth minerals, are transforming global supply chains. In some regions, polarized global politics are mirrored in the unravelling of several regional integration efforts that had contributed to regional stability for decades.

Nonetheless, the imperative of cooperation is evident. Unconstrained competition among nuclear powers could result in human annihilation. Failure to address other global threats poses existential risks for States and societies around the world. Even at the height of the cold war, two ideologically and politically antagonistic blocs, and an active Non-Aligned Movement, found avenues to advance common goals through international cooperation, arms control and disarmament, including through the United Nations. There are reasons to believe that Member States will continue to see the value of international cooperation even in a more fragmented and fractious global environment. They have been able to transcend their disagreements to mount collective action against critical threats, as the long-standing consensus behind the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy demonstrates. Furthermore, a majority of States remain deeply invested in the multilateral system as essential to secure their sovereignty and independence, as well as to moderate the behaviour of major powers.

A SERIES OF INTERLOCKING THREATS

More than in any previous era, States are unable to insulate themselves from cross-boundary sources of instability and insecurity. Even the most securitized of borders cannot contain the effects posed by the warming of the planet, the activities of criminal groups or terrorists or the spread of deadly viruses. Transnational threats are converging. Their mutually reinforcing effects go well beyond the ability of any single State to manage.

The changing nature of armed conflict. The surge in the number of armed conflicts in the past decade reversed a 20-year decline.[4] In 2022, the number of conflict-related deaths reached a 28-year high.[5] This has had catastrophic consequences for people and societies, including mass atrocities and crimes against humanity. Inter-State conflict may be resurging. Civil wars, which still represent the vast majority of conflicts today, are increasingly enmeshed in global and regional dynamics: close to half of all conflicts in 2021 were internationalized.[6] This has

increased the risk of direct confrontation among external actors, who, in certain situations, have become conflict parties in their own right. Non-State armed groups, including terrorist groups, have proliferated, and many of them retain close linkages with criminal interests. These groups often engage in illicit trafficking and diversion of small arms and light weapons and have access to the latest technology, as well as military-grade weapons acquired from poorly secured stockpiles and transfers from the illicit market, or from States themselves. The growing complexity of the conflict environment has made conflict resolution more difficult, as local and regional dynamics intersect in complex ways with the interests of external parties, and the presence of United Nations-designated terrorist groups operating across regions presents a host of challenges. Conflicts also exacerbate pre-existing patterns of discrimination. Misogyny, offline and online, fuels gender-based and sexual violence in all parts of the world, but in conflict settings the added challenges of institutional weakness, impunity and the spread of arms predominantly borne by men massively aggravate the risks.

Armed conflict has a dramatic negative effect on the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals. One quarter of humanity lives in conflict-affected areas. Conflict is a key driver for the more than 108 million people forcibly displaced worldwide – more than double the number a decade ago.[7] Without a dramatic reduction in conflict, violence and the spread of weapons, the 2030 Agenda will remain out of reach for a large percentage of humanity.

Persistent violence outside of armed conflicts. The scourge of violence has shaped the lives and livelihoods not just of those in armed conflicts. Terrorism remains a global threat, even if countries in armed conflict are disproportionately affected. Misogyny is often part of the narratives used to justify such attacks, drawing attention to the intersection of extremism and gender-based violence. Other forms of violence have become existential challenges across many parts of the world. From 2015 to 2021, an estimated 3.1 million people lost their lives as a result of intentional homicides, a shocking figure which dwarfs that of the estimated 700,000 people who died in armed conflicts during the period.[8] Organized crime was responsible for as many deaths in this period as all armed conflicts combined. While roughly four out of five homicide victims are men, this violence has terrifying implications for women. Their killings are predominantly gender-based.[9] Globally, an estimated one out of two children aged 2–17 years suffer some form of violence each year.[10]

The perils of weaponizing new and emerging technologies. Technology and warfare have been intrinsically linked throughout human history. From sharpened stones to atom splitting, technologies to advance human existence have also been repurposed for destruction. Our era is no exception. Rapidly advancing and converging technologies have the potential to revolutionize conflict dynamics in the not-too-distant future. Incidents involving the malicious uses of digital technologies, by State and non-State actors, have increased in scope, scale, severity and sophistication (A/76/135, para. 6). The proliferation of armed uncrewed aerial systems (also referred to as drones) in armed conflict is another notable trend, with increased use of varying degrees of sophistication by both States and non-State actors, including terrorists. They have often been deployed against civilian targets, including critical infrastructure, and have presented a threat to peace operations. Developments in artificial intelligence and quantum technologies, including those related to weapons systems, are exposing the insufficiency of existing governance frameworks. The magnitude of the artificial intelligence revolution is now apparent, but its potential for harm – for societies, economies and warfare itself

– is unpredictable. Advances in the life sciences have the potential to give individuals the power to cause death and disruption on a global scale.

The emergence of powerful software tools that can spread and distort content instantly and massively heralds a qualitatively different, new reality. As my policy brief on the integrity of public information[11] illustrates, misinformation, disinformation and hate speech are rampant on social media platforms and are deadly in volatile societal and political contexts. The ease of access to these technologies for non-State actors, in particular terrorist groups, poses a significant threat. Terrorist groups and affiliated supporters have misused these technologies to coordinate and plan attacks, including cyberattacks, to recruit new members and to incite hatred and violence. Meanwhile, social media platforms, operating largely without human rights-compliant regulations against online harm, have developed irresponsible business models that prioritize profit at the expense of the well-being and safety of their users and societies.

Rising inequalities within and among nations. Halfway to 2030, the rallying cry of the Sustainable Development Agenda to leave no one behind remains aspirational, with only 12 per cent of the Sustainable Development Goals on track and the rest in jeopardy. Targets under Goal 17 are a litany of unmet commitments. Inequalities in finance, trade, technology and food distribution and security are being entrenched rather than dismantled through a global partnership for development. Income inequality between the richest and poorest nations has increased as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic[12] and is still higher than inequality within most countries.[13] The relationship between inequality and conflict is non-linear and indirect, but we know that inequality can lead to conflict when it overlaps with differences in access and opportunities across groups defined around specific identities.[14] Vertical inequalities – those between the rich and poor within a society – also remain a key challenge and are closely associated with other forms of violence.[15]

Shrinking space for civic participation. Growing grievances and demands for the meaningful engagement of different groups in the political, economic, social and cultural lives of their societies are increasingly met by States through the imposition of undue restrictions on the human rights of their citizens and by limiting avenues for participation and protest. Demands for more civic engagement have also been met with physical attacks and the use of force. Of note is the rise in threats, persecution and acts of violence against women, including those in politics, and human rights defenders. Digital tools have created previously inconceivable avenues for civic participation, in particular for young people. The same tools have been used to restrict civic space, however, by disabling the channels available for people to organize themselves or by tracking or surveilling those who protest.

The climate emergency. The uneven suffering created by the effects of climate change ranks among the greatest injustices of this world. The most vulnerable communities, including in small island developing States, the least developed countries and those affected by conflict, bear the brunt of a crisis that they did not create. Where record temperatures, erratic precipitation and rising sea levels reduce harvests, destroy critical infrastructure and displace communities, they exacerbate the risks of instability, in particular in situations already affected by conflict. Rising sea levels and shrinking land masses are an existential threat to some island States. They may also create new, unanticipated areas of contestation, leading to new or resurgent disputes related to territorial and maritime claims. Climate policies and green energy transitions can offer avenues for effective peacebuilding and the inclusion of women, Indigenous communities, the

economically disadvantaged and youth. However, they can also be destabilizing if not managed properly. Failure to tackle head-on the challenges posed by climate change, and the inequalities it creates, through ambitious mitigation, adaptation and implementation of the loss and damage agenda, bolstered by adequate climate finance, will have devastating effects, for the planet as well as development, human rights and our shared peacebuilding objectives.

A NORMATIVE CHALLENGE

One of the greatest achievements of the United Nations is the development of a body of international law that governs relations among sovereign States. International law fosters predictability of behaviour, which increases trust. Even as Member States recognize and emphasize the importance of international law, it is sometimes challenged. The full-scale invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation represents one of the latest such challenges. Each violation of international law is dangerous, as it undermines one of the purposes of the United Nations contained in Article 1 of its Charter.

As we mark the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, human rights are facing a pushback in all regions. We see a significant global retrenchment of human rights[16] and an erosion of the rule of law, including in contexts of armed conflict. Despite the recognition that the rule of law is the foundation for fair, just and peaceful societies, we are at grave risk of a rule of lawlessness, which would exacerbate global instability and turmoil. Growing polarization among States has also begotten competing interpretations of human rights norms. There are increasing challenges to advancing certain human rights, an underlying criticism that implementation has been subject to double standards and calls for national prioritization of international norms. For example, some States have voiced concerns that civil and political rights have been prioritized at the international level, at the expense of social, economic and cultural rights. However, these arguments have also been raised at times as a way to shift the focus away from a State's own shortcomings in meeting its international obligations. The position of the United Nations is emphatic and principled: all rights, be they civil, political, social, economic or cultural, are indivisible. All matter and ought to be realized fully, including the right to development.

Closely connected to this is the growing backlash against women's rights, including on sexual and reproductive health. We must dismantle the patriarchy and oppressive power structures which stand in the way of progress on gender equality or women's full, equal and meaningful participation in political and public life. We – Governments, the United Nations and all segments of society – must fight back and take concrete action to challenge and transform gender norms, value systems and institutional structures that perpetuate exclusion or the status quo.

The United Nations is, at its core, a norms-based organization. It owes its birth to an international treaty, the Charter, signed and ratified by States. It faces a potentially existential dilemma when the different interpretations by Member States of these universal normative frameworks become so entrenched as to prevent adequate implementation. Rebuilding consensus on the meaning of and adherence to these frameworks is an essential task for the international system.

Principles for an effective collective security system

The collective security system envisioned in the Charter offers the promise of an ever more peaceful and just world. Although it has struggled to live up to its potential and has fallen disastrously short at times, its achievements are manifold, from advancing decolonization and promoting nuclear disarmament and nonproliferation to forestalling and mediating armed conflict, mounting large-scale humanitarian responses and promoting international norms and justice. Today, however, the chasm is widening between the potential of collective security and its reality.

Collective security is gravely undermined by the failure of Member States to effectively address the global and interlocking threats before them, to manage their rivalries and to respect and reinforce the normative frameworks that both govern their relations with each other and set international parameters for the well-being of their societies. These phenomena are rooted in the neglect of a set of principles that are the basis for friendly relations and cooperation among nations and within societies: trust, solidarity and universality. If we are to rise to the challenge, it is in these principles, taken together and carried forward by all States, and within countries, that action for peace must be grounded.

TRUST

In a world of sovereign States, international cooperation is predicated upon trust. Cooperation cannot work without the expectation that States will respect the commitments which they have undertaken. The Charter provides a set of norms against which the trustworthiness of each State should be assessed. In *An Agenda for Peace* in 1992, the Secretary-General warned of the need for consistent, rather than selective, application of the principles of the Charter, "for if the perception should be of the latter, trust will wane and with it the moral authority which is the greatest and most unique quality of that instrument" (A/47/277-S/24111, para. 82).

Trust is the cornerstone of the collective security system. In its absence, States fall back to their basic instinct to ensure their own security, which, when reciprocated, creates more insecurity for all. To help reinforce trust, confidence-building mechanisms have been of great value. These can range from crisis management hotlines to the monitoring of ceasefires or bilateral arms control agreements with verification provisions.[17] Regional organizations and frameworks can play a crucial role in this regard.

The impartiality of the Secretariat is vital in helping to build trust among Member States. The good offices of the Secretary-General, and her or his envoys and mediators, are an impartial vehicle to help forge common ground between States or conflict parties in even the most complex of circumstances. Peacekeeping operations

have proven effective in helping parties overcome mutual mistrust[18] and can help build trust in national institutions. Various initiatives led by the United Nations to promote military transparency, such as the United Nations Report on Military Expenditures[19] or the Register of Conventional Arms,[20] are designed to increase inter-State trust and confidence-building through enhanced transparency.

If trust among States is vital for international cooperation, trust between Governments and their people is integral to the functioning of societies. Over the past several decades, a consistent finding is that trust in public institutions has been on the decline globally.[21] Low levels of trust indicate low social cohesion, which in turn is often closely linked to high levels of economic, political and gender inequalities.[22] The waves of protests that have occurred globally throughout the past decade are an example of the growing alienation of citizens, in particular young people, who do not trust public institutions and other institutional mechanisms to peacefully address grievances, in particular in a context where civic space has become narrower.

SOLIDARITY

A community of nations must be underpinned by a sense of fellowship that recognizes a collective duty to redress injustices and support those in need. My report on Our Common Agenda was, at its core, a call for more solidarity. The asymmetries and inequities that exist among and within States, and the structural obstacles that sustain these, are as much a barrier to peace as they are for development and human rights.[23] If the purposes of the Charter are to be achieved, redressing the pervasive historical imbalances that characterize the international system – from the legacies of colonialism and slavery to the deeply unjust global financial architecture and anachronistic peace and security structures of today – must be a priority.

The concept of solidarity is embedded in the work of the United Nations. In the Millennium Declaration,[24] the General Assembly recognized solidarity as one of the essential values for the twenty-first century, noting that global challenges must be managed in a way that distributes the costs and burdens fairly in accordance with basic principles of equity and social justice. The concept of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capacities, in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, for example, is grounded in this idea. Sustainable Development Goal 17[25] – revitalizing the global partnership for development – remains a yardstick: from fair trade and technology transfers to debt relief and higher levels of development assistance, it outlines measurable actions to redress imbalances at the global level. Together with the wider 2030 Agenda, its reach goes beyond sustainable development and provides us with a blueprint for addressing underlying causes of conflict comprehensively.

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Comprehensive commitments to equity and burden-sharing have been made explicit in the climate action,[26] humanitarian[27] and sustainable development[28] agendas. They are equally integral to international peace and security. The global partnership for peacekeeping is an example of such solidarity, with States deploying their troops and police, often in situations of great harm and removed from their national interests, to support those in need and in the service of global peace. We must also ensure that the steps that we take to address the perils of weaponizing new and emerging technologies do not restrict access for countries of the global South to the huge benefits promised by such technologies for the advancement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

At the national level, solidarity has steadily eroded over the past decades. Economic policies advocating deregulation and limited government have concentrated wealth, dismantled social protections and disempowered the State to address mounting social challenges. The international financial crisis in 2008 as well as the COVID-19 pandemic have compounded the effects of these policies. Increasing discontent is compounded by rising inequalities in access to the more empowering opportunities of the twenty-first century – such as housing, higher education and technology – and by the lack of social mobility.

UNIVERSALITY

Two of the foundational principles of the United Nations are the sovereign equality of all its Members and the fulfilment by all Member States of their obligations under the Charter in good faith. Article 2 calls on all Member States to settle their international disputes by peaceful means and to refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any State, or in any other manner inconsistent with the purposes of the United Nations. The universality of the Charter is well recognized across the peace and security, sustainable development and human rights pillars of the United Nations. The 2030 Agenda was articulated around the universal promise of "leaving no one behind", which requires a commitment by all States, rich or poor, to fulfil development targets. Similarly, the principle of universality is a cornerstone of international human rights law, embodied in Article 55 of the Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and reflected more recently in the creation of the universal periodic review.[29]

Despite the universality of the norms underpinning them, peace and security engagements have not always been understood on a universal basis. They have at times been perceived as selective, or marred by double standards. A more deliberate and explicitly universal approach to the prevention of conflict and violence would align with the approach guiding action across the human rights and sustainable development pillars. It would help address two challenges: first, many of today's threats to peace and security require universal action and mitigation by all States; second, instability, violence and the potential for conflict are not restricted to only a few States, as growing risks, while differentiated, exist in developed, middle income and developing States alike. The challenges of our times require universality in the implementation of commitments, not selectivity.

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A vision for multilateralism in a world in transition

Achieving peace and prosperity in a world of interlocking threats demands that Member States find new ways to act collectively and cooperatively. My vision for a robust collective security system rests on Member States moving away from a logic of competition. Cooperation does not require States to forgo their national interest, but to recognize that they have shared goals. To achieve this vision, we must adapt to the geopolitical realities of today and the threats of tomorrow. I propose a series of foundational steps which, if implemented by Member States, would create opportunities and momentum currently lacking in collective action for peace. These building blocks, as well as the actions proposed in the next section, take into consideration the recommendations put forward by the High-level Advisory Board on Effective Multilateralism.

The Charter and international law. Without the basic norms enshrined in the Charter – such as the principles of sovereignty, non-intervention in domestic affairs and the pacific settlement of disputes – international relations could degenerate into chaos. The obligation for Member States to refrain from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any State, as contained in Article 2 (4) of the Charter, remains as vital as ever. The legitimacy of collective enforcement actions authorized by the Security Council must be carefully safeguarded.

Diplomacy for peace. The driving force for a new multilateralism must be diplomacy. Diplomacy should be a tool not only for reducing the risks of conflict but for managing the heightened fractures that mark the geopolitical order today and carving out spaces for cooperation for shared interests. This demands, above all else, a commitment to the pacific settlement of disputes. The underutilization of the different tools referred to in Article 33 of the Charter remains one of our greatest collective shortcomings. The pacific settlement of disputes does not demand new tools, for those that exist remain relevant, potent and based on consent. However, they often fall short of their promise when the will of Member States to deploy them is lacking. It is incumbent on all actors to rely on peaceful means as their first line of defence to prevent armed conflict.

Prevention as a political priority. From my first day in office, I have called on Member States to prioritize prevention. The evidence is staggering: prevention saves lives and safeguards development gains. It is cost effective.[30] However, it remains chronically underprioritized. For A New Agenda for Peace to succeed, Member States must go beyond lip service and invest, politically and financially, in prevention. Effective prevention requires comprehensive approaches, political courage, effective partnerships, sustainable resources and national ownership. Above all, it needs greater trust – among Member States, among people and in the United Nations.

Mechanisms to manage disputes and improve trust. Throughout the cold war, confidence-building and crisis management mechanisms helped forestall direct confrontations among major powers, a third world war and nuclear cataclysm.

However, these structures have deteriorated in the past decade and have not kept pace with the shifting geopolitical environment. We need durable and enforceable mechanisms, in particular among nuclear powers, that are resilient to shocks which could trigger escalation. Efforts to enhance the transparency of military posture and doctrines, including those related to new technologies, are critical. Avoiding direct confrontations is the primary goal of these crisis management systems, but they should be underpinned by more sustained dialogue and shared data, at the bilateral and multilateral level, to address the underlying sources of tensions and foster a common understanding of existing threats.

The Security Council can serve as one of these mechanisms. Its ability to manage disputes among its permanent members may be limited owing to the veto, but the engagement of the P5 in the day-to-day business of the Council – in close cooperation with the elected members – can be a powerful incentive for dialogue and compromise, which in turn can help rebuild trust. The permanent members have not only a special responsibility, but a shared interest, in maintaining the credibility of the Council. I call upon them to work together despite their differences to meet their responsibilities under Chapters V to VIII of the Charter.

Robust regional frameworks and organizations. In the face of growing competition at the global level and threats that are increasingly transnational, we need regional frameworks and organizations, in accordance with Chapter VIII of the Charter, that promote trust-building, transparency and détente. We also need strong partnerships between the United Nations and regional organizations. Regional frameworks and organizations are critical building blocks for the networked multilateralism that I envisage. They are particularly urgent in regions where long-standing security architectures are collapsing or where they have never been built.

National action at the centre. Member States have the primary responsibility, as well as an ability unmatched by others, to prevent conflict and build peace. Decades of practice have demonstrated that successful engagements in this area are led and owned by national actors. That does not mean that State actors can implement these initiatives alone – the involvement of all society is necessary for their success. Too many opportunities to address the drivers of conflict within a State are lost because of lack of trust and a concern that such action would internationalize issues that are domestic in nature. The fear of external interference has at times been a significant inhibitor of early national action. A clear signal of a shift in focus to the national level – to national ownership and nationally defined priorities – would help assuage such concerns and build trust. This does not preclude, however, that situations deemed by the Security Council to be a threat to international peace and security might require international leadership and attention.

People-centred approaches. For national action to sustain peace to be effective, it must be people-centred, with the full spectrum of human rights at its core. Governments must restore trust with their constituents by engaging with, protecting and helping realize the aspirations of the people that they represent. The United Nations must follow suit. Civil society actors, including women human rights defenders and women peacebuilders, play a crucial role in building trust in societies, by representing the most vulnerable or marginalized and those often unrepresented in political structures. Displaced people often face compounded levels of vulnerability, and addressing their needs requires political solutions and political will.

Eradication of violence in all its forms. In the 2030 Agenda, Member States committed to significantly reducing all forms of violence and

related death rates. My vision for A New Agenda for Peace is designed to boost progress towards this goal. Violence perpetrated by organized criminal groups, gangs, terrorists or violent extremists, even outside of armed conflicts, threatens lives and livelihoods around the world. Gender-based violence can be a precursor of political violence and even armed conflict. Not all forms of violence are linked to peace and security dynamics, and eradicating violence in all its forms should not be misunderstood for a call to internationalize domestic issues. There is, however, much to learn from how conflict and violence have been addressed through prevention and peacebuilding approaches at the national level. Every violent death is preventable, and it is our collective moral responsibility to achieve this goal. Building on Sustainable Development Goal 16.1,[31] I invite each Member State to consider the ambitious target of halving violent death rates in their societies by 2030.

Prioritizing comprehensive approaches over securitized responses. Responses to violence, including addressing the threat posed by non-State armed groups such as terrorists and violent extremists, cannot be effective if not part of a comprehensive approach with a political strategy at its core. Failure to tackle the root causes of violence can lead to oversecuritized responses, including in counter-terrorism and counter-insurgency operations. These can be counterproductive and reinforce the very dynamics they seek to overcome, as their far-reaching consequences – blowback from local populations, human rights violations and abuses, exacerbation of gender inequalities and distortion of local economies – can be powerful drivers for recruitment into terrorist or armed groups. Military engagement, within the limits of international law, including international humanitarian law and international human rights law, may be necessary. However, it should be underpinned by development and political strategies to intelligently tackle the structural drivers of conflict. United Nations and regional peace operations can play important roles in this respect: mobilizing collective action, promoting comprehensive approaches with strong civilian, police and development dimensions and – most importantly – pursuing political solutions and sustainable peace. Similarly, effective disarmament actions could be a powerful preventive tool in support of comprehensive responses.

Dismantling patriarchal power structures. For as long as gendered power inequalities, patriarchal social structures, biases, violence and discrimination hold back half our societies, peace will remain elusive. We must listen to, respect, uphold and secure the perspectives of women impacted by compounding forms of discrimination, marginalization and violence. This includes Indigenous women, older persons, persons with disabilities, women from racial, religious or ethnic minorities and LGBTQI+ persons and youth. Gendered power dynamics also impact and severely constrain men and boys – with devastating consequence for us all. Transformative progress on the women and peace and security agenda requires consideration of the role of men, who have traditionally dominated decision-making, and addressing intergenerational power dynamics.

Ensuring that young people have a say in their future. Young people, in particular, have a key role to play and must be enabled to participate effectively and meaningfully. As I noted in my policy brief on youth engagement,[32] our youth are essential to identifying new solutions that will secure the breakthroughs that our world urgently needs. Their active participation in decision-making processes enhances the legitimacy of peace and security initiatives. Governments must encourage greater representation of youth in decision-making and elected positions and enact special measures to ensure their participation. The youth, peace and security agenda must be institutionalized and funded.

Financing for peace. Action for peace, not solely to address crises and their immediate consequences, but to prevent them and tackle their underlying drivers, requires resources commensurate to the complexity of this endeavour. This starts with bolstering the implementation of all the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular Goal 17, which would drastically improve the ability of developing countries to close their current financing gaps. It is not charity, but eminently fair, to redress past and current injustices, in particular those in international trade and the global financial system. It must also involve a significant increase – in quantity as well as sustainability and predictability – in resources that are channelled to support national action for peace.

Not a single conflict-affected country is on track to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals related to hunger, good health or gender equality.[33] In the declaration on the commemoration of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations, Member States committed to promoting peace and preventing conflicts. They must make the case to their legislatures and treasuries that these Goals, which are the enablers of so many others, require stepped-up investment now, despite pressures pulling in the opposite direction. Investing in prevention is manifestly an investment in the 2030 Agenda. International financial institutions have an important responsibility in this regard. They must help redress the current inequalities in the global financial system.[34] But their responsibility goes farther. They should be agents not only for global financial stability, but for peace. This requires that international financial institutions more systematically align their mechanisms with the needs of the collective security system and ensure that Member States affected by conflict and violence have a greater say in their decision-making.

Strengthening the toolbox for networked multilateralism. A universal and more effective approach to peace and security and the interlocking threats that Member States face requires a more comprehensive and flexible use of the tools at our disposal. The United Nations, regional partners and other actors have developed a rich and diverse toolbox: good offices and mediation to support political processes; action to promote disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control; counter-terrorism and the prevention of violent extremism; the promotion of human rights and the undertaking of long-term work to bolster the rule of law and access to justice; and the engagement of peace operations. These tools can be deployed to help societies tackle the drivers of conflict, as well as its manifestations. They have often been approached as discrete; more deliberate, coherent and integrated action to draw on this diverse toolkit in support of Member States, at the national, regional and global levels, is required. This has to go beyond traditional peace and security tools and encompass the full range of capacities needed to respond to the magnitude of global threats that we face.

An effective and impartial United Nations Secretariat. My vision for an effective collective security system relies on an international civil service that is strong, efficient and impartial. Member States must respect the exclusively international character of the United Nations Secretariat and not seek to influence it. The impartiality of the Secretariat is and will remain its strongest asset, and needs to be fiercely guarded, as required by the Charter, particularly as fractures at the global level widen. Trust on the part of Member States in the international civil service, in turn, demands that the latter be truly representative of the diversity of the membership. The scale of challenges facing us today and tomorrow, and the unforeseen nature and impact of technological change, will also demand a great deal of humility, creativity and perseverance from the international civil service.

Recommendations for action

To achieve more effective multilateral action for peace, the following recommendations are presented for the consideration of Member States.



PREVENTION AT THE GLOBAL LEVEL: ADDRESSING STRATEGIC RISKS AND GEOPOLITICAL DIVISIONS

In an era of global fragmentation, where the risk of bifurcating politics, economies and digital spheres is acute, and where nuclear annihilation and a third world war are no longer completely unthinkable, we must step up our global prevention efforts. The United Nations should be at the centre of these efforts; to eliminate nuclear weapons, to prevent conflict between major powers; and to manage the negative impacts of strategic competition, which could have implications for the poorest and most vulnerable countries. By helping Member States manage disputes peacefully and preventing competition from escalating into confrontation, the United Nations is the pre-eminent hub of global prevention efforts.

ACTION 1: ELIMINATE NUCLEAR WEAPONS

Fifty-five years since the adoption of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the nuclear disarmament and arms control regime is eroding, nonproliferation is being challenged, and a qualitative race in nuclear armaments is under way. Member States must urgently reinforce the barrier against the use of nuclear weapons. The statement by the permanent members of the Security Council in January 2022, reaffirming that a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought, was a welcome step. However, risk reduction does not suffice when the survival of humanity is at stake. The non-proliferation regime needs to be buttressed against a growing array of threats. Non-proliferation and disarmament are two sides of the same coin – progress in one requires progress in the other. As stated in my agenda for disarmament, the existential threat that nuclear weapons pose to humanity must motivate us to work towards their total elimination.

Recommendations

- Recommit urgently to the pursuit of a world free of nuclear weapons and reverse the erosion of international norms against the spread and use of nuclear weapons.
- Pending the total elimination of nuclear weapons, for States possessing nuclear weapons, commit to never use them. Take steps to avoid mistakes or miscalculations; develop transparency and confidence-building measures; accelerate the implementation of existing nuclear disarmament commitments; and reduce the role of nuclear weapons in national security strategies. Engage in dialogue on strategic stability and to elaborate next steps for further reductions of nuclear arsenals.
- States with the largest nuclear arsenals have a responsibility to negotiate further limits and reductions on strategic nuclear weapons.
- For the Security Council, commit to the imposition of punitive measures to restore international peace and security for any use of or threat of use of nuclear weapons, consistent with its mandate.
- Reinforce the non-proliferation regime through adherence to the highest nuclear safeguards standards, ensuring that they keep pace with technological developments and ensure accountability for non compliance with non-proliferation obligations. Strengthen measures to prevent the acquisition of weapons of mass destruction by non-State actors.

ACTION 2: BOOST PREVENTIVE DIPLOMACY IN AN ERA OF DIVISIONS

One of the greatest risks facing humanity today is the deterioration in major power relations. It raises anew the spectre of inter-State war and may hasten the emergence of blocs with parallel sets of trade rules, supply chains, currencies, Internets or approaches to new technologies. Diplomacy must be prioritized by all sides to bridge these growing divides and ensure that unmitigated competition does not trample humanity. Diplomatic engagement is important among countries that think alike. However, it is crucial between those which disagree. During moments of high geopolitical tension in recent history, from Suez to the Cuban missile crisis, diplomacy saved the world from war or helped find ways to end it. It requires risk-taking, persistence and creativity. The Black Sea Initiative shows that, even in the most complex of situations, diplomatic engagement and innovative use of multilateral instruments can help find common ground.

Diplomacy at the global level must both reinforce and be bolstered by regional frameworks that build cooperation among Member States. Such frameworks help States address differences through concrete steps and protocols and inspire confidence. They can encompass a range of confidence-building measures and norms to reduce tensions and give rise to greater regional cooperation, as was the case during the Helsinki process in Europe.

I commit to deploying my good offices to help Member States manage deepening divisions in global politics and prevent the outbreak of conflict. My good offices are available also to assist Member States in building or rebuilding regional frameworks. They are equally applicable to reinforce disarmament and in new potential domains such as outer space or cyberspace. I stand ready to work with all Member States to help overcome the current divides in politics, economics and technology and will make my envoys and senior officials available to pursue this goal. Ultimately, the good offices of the Secretary-General are a tool not just to address the immediate threat of armed conflict but to protect humanity's shared future.

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Recommendations

- Make greater use of the United Nations as the most inclusive arena for diplomacy to manage global politics and its growing fractures, as a platform for Member States to engage even when they lack formal diplomatic relations, are at war or do not recognize each other or one side.
- Seek the good offices of the Secretary-General to support action to reverse the deterioration of geopolitical relations and keep diplomatic channels open. This could include the establishment of United Nations-facilitated or sponsored frameworks to encourage crisis communications mechanisms and agree on responsible behaviours and manage incidents in the naval, aerial, cyberspace and space domains to guard against escalation between major powers.
- Reinforce and strengthen United Nations capacities to undertake diplomatic initiatives for peace and support United Nations envoys deployed to that effect. Bringing together global and regional actors, design new models for diplomatic engagement that can address the interests of all involved actors and deliver mutually beneficial outcomes.
- Building on the experience of the United Nations in the Black Sea Initiative, seek the good offices of the Secretary-General and his convening powers to protect global supply and energy chains and prevent economic links from fraying and bifurcating as a result of strategic competition. This could include finding bespoke solutions to future supply chain disruptions of key commodities and services, as well as major digital disruptions.
- Deploy the Secretary-General's good offices to maintain a free, open and secure Internet and prevent a rupturing in digital systems between States.
- Repair regional security architectures where they are in danger of collapsing; build them where they do not exist; and enhance them where they can be further developed. The United Nations can work to further such regional efforts in a convening and supporting role.
- For the United Nations, regional organizations and their respective Member States, operationalize rapid responses to emerging crises through active diplomatic efforts.

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PREVENTING CONFLICT AND VIOLENCE AND SUSTAINING PEACE

ACTION 3: SHIFT THE PREVENTION AND SUSTAINING PEACE PARADIGM WITHIN COUNTRIES

In order to complement diplomatic action at the international and regional level, a focus on prevention at the national level is essential. In today's interlocking global risk environment, prevention cannot apply only to conflict-affected or "fragile" States. To be successful, prevention first requires an urgent shift in approach, by which all States agree to recognize prevention and sustaining peace as goals that all commit to achieve. In line with Sustainable Development Goal 16.1, a universal approach to prevention means tackling all forms of violence, not only in conflict settings. Prevention has been undercut by a lack of trust, as it is often perceived as a cloak for intervention. A renewed commitment to prevention must start by addressing that lack of trust, along with investment in national prevention capacities and infrastructures for peace. Whole-of-government and whole-of-society approaches grounded in sustainable development that leaves no one behind would make national prevention strategies more effective. They should be multidimensional, people-centred and inclusive of all the different components of society. The United Nations, when so requested, will offer its extensive support for the development and implementation of these strategies.

Recommendations

- Develop national prevention strategies to address the different drivers and enablers of violence and conflict in societies and strengthen national infrastructures for peace. These strategies can help reinforce State institutions, promote the rule of law and strengthen civil society and social cohesion, so as to ensure greater tolerance and solidarity.
- In line with my call to action for human rights,[35] ensure that human rights in their entirety – economic, social and cultural rights as well as civil and political rights – are at the heart of national prevention strategies, as human rights are critical to guarantee conditions of inclusion and protect against marginalization and discrimination, thus preventing grievances before they arise.
- Recognize the fundamental importance of the rule of law as the basis for multilateral cooperation and political dialogue, in accordance with the Charter, and as a central tenet of sustaining peace.
- Member States seeking to establish or strengthen national infrastructures for peace should be able to access a tailor-made package of support and expertise.
- Provide more sustainable and predictable financing, including through assessed contributions[36] to peacebuilding efforts, in particular the Peacebuilding Fund, to support these strategies, as a matter of urgency.
- For groups of Member States and regional organizations, develop prevention strategies with cross-regional dimensions to address transboundary threats, collectively harvesting and building on the wealth of knowledge and expertise existing at the national level on effective conflict prevention measures.

ACTION 4: ACCELERATE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE 2030 AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT TO ADDRESS THE UNDERLYING DRIVERS OF VIOLENCE AND INSECURITY

Prevention and sustainable development are interdependent and mutually reinforcing. Full achievement of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals is critical, both in their own right and because sustainable development is ultimately the only way to comprehensively address the interlinked, multidimensional drivers of violence and insecurity. However, the speed of implementation of the 2030 Agenda is falling short of the pace required to meet its ambition, in particular in countries affected by conflict. People must be at the centre of our efforts to attain development, overcome poverty and reduce the risks of conflict and violence arising from inequality, marginalization and exclusion. International financial institutions have a responsibility to lend their support and, more broadly, to better address the needs of developing countries, as highlighted in my policy brief on reforms to the international financial architecture.[37]

Recommendations

- Accelerate implementation of proven development pathways that enhance the social contract and human security, such as education and health care.
- Consider new and emerging ways to protect livelihoods and provide social protection in communities emerging from conflict and in post-conflict countries, such as through temporary universal basic incomes, which can promote resilience and social cohesion and break the cycle of violence.
- For international financial institutions, align funding mechanisms to help address the underlying causes of instability through inclusive sustainable development.

ACTION 5: TRANSFORM GENDERED POWER DYNAMICS IN PEACE AND SECURITY

As generational gains in women's rights hang in the balance around the world, so does the transformative potential of the women and peace and security agenda. Incrementalism has not worked and the realization of the agenda in its entirety is urgent. More political will is required. Precipitating women's meaningful participation in all decision-making, eradicating all forms of violence against women, both online and offline, and upholding women's rights would not just help shift power, but also result in giant steps forward in sustaining peace.

Recommendations

- Introduce concrete measures to secure women's full, equal and meaningful participation at all levels of decision-making on peace and security, including via gender parity in national government cabinets and parliaments, and in local institutions of governance. Support quotas, targets and incentives by robust accountability frameworks with clear milestones towards achieving women's equal participation.
- Commit to the eradication of all forms of gender-based violence and enact robust and comprehensive legislation, including on gender-based hate speech, tackle impunity for perpetrators and provide services and protection to survivors.
- Provide sustained, predictable and flexible financing for gender equality. Allocate 15 per cent of official development assistance (ODA) to gender equality, and provide a minimum of 1 per cent of ODA in direct assistance to women's organizations, especially grass-roots groups mobilizing for peace.

ACTION 6: ADDRESS THE INTERLINKAGES BETWEEN CLIMATE, PEACE AND SECURITY

It is critical to find concrete and mutually beneficial ways to address the effects of the climate crisis and respond to the urgent call for action from countries on the front lines. Increasing climate-related investment in conflict contexts is critical: only a very small share of climate finance flows to these countries, where compounding risk factors increase vulnerability to climate shocks. Climate policies must be designed in such a way that they do not lead to adverse effects on societies and economies and do not lead to the emergence of new grievances that can be instrumentalized politically. A business-as-usual approach will fail in a warming world. Innovative solutions to address the climate crisis, protect the most vulnerable, tackle the differentiated impacts on women and men and promote climate justice will send a resounding signal of solidarity.

Recommendations

- Recognize climate, peace and security as a political priority and strengthen connections between multilateral bodies to ensure that climate action and peacebuilding reinforce each other.
- For the Security Council, systematically address the peace and security implications of climate change in the mandates of peace operations and other country or regional situations on its agenda.
- Establish, under the aegis of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, a dedicated expert group on climate action, resilience and peacebuilding to develop recommendations on integrated approaches to climate, peace and security.
- Establish a new funding window within the Peacebuilding Fund for more risk-tolerant climate finance investments.
- For the United Nations system, regional and subregional organizations, establish joint regional hubs on climate, peace and security to connect national and regional experiences, provide technical advice to Member States and help accelerate progress on this agenda.

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ACTION 7: REDUCE THE HUMAN COST OF WEAPONS

At the heart of our peace and security engagements is a commitment to save human beings from violence. Armed conflicts are increasingly fought in populated centres, with devastating and indiscriminate impacts on civilians. Pursuant to Article 26 of the Charter, we must reverse the negative impact of unconstrained military spending and focus on the profound negative societal effects of public resources diverted to military activity rather than sustainable development and gender equality – an issue long emphasized as a concern, including in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action[38] – and adopt approaches underpinned by the imperative to address the humanitarian, gendered, disability and age-related impacts of certain weapons, methods and means of warfare. Member States should commit to reducing the human cost of weapons by moving away from overly securitized and militarized approaches to peace, reducing military spending and enacting measures to foster human-centred disarmament.

Recommendations

- Building on *Securing Our Common Future: An Agenda for Disarmament*:
  - » Strengthen protection of civilians in populated areas in conflict zones, take combat out of urban areas altogether, including through the implementation of the Political Declaration on Strengthening the Protection of Civilians from the Humanitarian Consequences Arising from the Use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas, adopted on 18 November 2022, and establish mechanisms to mitigate and investigate harm to civilians and ensure accountability of perpetrators;
  - » Achieve universality of treaties banning inhumane and indiscriminate weapons, such as the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons and its Protocols; the Convention on Cluster Munitions and the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines;
  - » Reduce military expenditures, renew efforts to limit conventional arms and increase investment in prevention and social infrastructure and services, with a strong focus on redressing gender inequalities and structural marginalization, to buttress sustainable peace and steer societies back towards implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals;
  - » Request the Secretary-General to prepare an updated study on the social and economic impact of military spending;
  - » Stop the use by terrorist and other non-State armed groups of improvised explosive devices.

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Small arms and light weapons and their ammunition are the leading cause of violent deaths globally, in conflict and non-conflict settings alike. As recognized in my Agenda for Disarmament, their proliferation, diversion and misuse undermine the rule of law, hinder conflict prevention and peacebuilding, enable criminal acts, including terrorist acts, human rights abuses and gender-based violence, drive displacement and migration and stunt development. Regulatory frameworks and policy measures are essential, but insufficiently implemented. Addressing factors that can affect their demand will also be important.

Recommendations

- Strengthen, develop and implement regional, subregional and national instruments and road maps to address challenges related to the diversion, proliferation and misuse of small arms and light weapons and ammunition.
- Set national and regional targets and measure progress toward the implementation of regulatory frameworks, including via data collection and monitoring.
- Pursue whole-of-government approaches that integrate small arms and light weapons control into development and violence reduction initiatives at the national and community levels, as well as in the national prevention strategies proposed under action 3.

STRENGTHENING PEACE OPERATIONS AND ADDRESSING PEACE ENFORCEMENT

ACTION 8: STRENGTHEN PEACE OPERATIONS AND PARTNERSHIPS

Peace operations – peacekeeping operations and special political missions – are an essential part of the diplomatic toolbox of the Charter of the United Nations. From special envoys working to broker peace agreements and regional offices that serve as forward platforms for preventive diplomacy to multidimensional peacekeeping operations, these missions will remain a central component of the continuum of United Nations responses to some of the most volatile peace and security contexts of today. Peace operations help operationalize diplomacy for peace by allowing the Organization to mount tailored operational responses, including by mobilizing and funding Member State capacities and capabilities that no single actor possesses.

Peacekeeping represents effective multilateralism in action, built on a partnership of all countries coming together to support the most vulnerable who are under threat. It brings Member States closer to the United Nations and gives those who deploy their troops and police a direct stake in our collective security. Since its conception 75 years ago, peacekeeping has continuously adapted to an ever-growing set of mandated tasks, ranging from the preservation of ceasefires to the protection of countless civilians from violence and abuse – achieving positive results despite challenges and limitations.

That said, in a number of current conflict environments, the gap between United Nations peacekeeping mandates and what such missions can actually deliver in practice has become apparent. The challenges posed by long-standing and unresolved conflicts, without a peace to keep, driven

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by complex domestic, geopolitical and transnational factors, serve as a stark illustration of the limitations of ambitious mandates without adequate political support. To keep peacekeeping fit for purpose, a serious and broad-based reflection on its future is required, with a view to moving towards nimble adaptable models with appropriate, forward-looking transition and exit strategies.

Recommendations

- For the Security Council, ensure that the primacy of politics remains a central tenet of peace operations: they must be deployed based on and in support of a clearly identified political process. The Security Council should provide its full support throughout, with active, continuous and coherent engagement with all parties.
- For the Security Council, not to burden peace operations with unrealistic mandates. Mandates must be clear, prioritized, achievable, sufficiently resourced and adapted to changing circumstances and political developments.
- For the Security Council and the General Assembly, undertake a reflection on the limits and future of peacekeeping in the light of the evolving nature of conflict with a view to enabling more nimble, adaptable and effective mission models while devising transition and exit strategies, where appropriate. This should clearly reflect the comparative strengths and successes of peacekeeping, as well as its doctrinal and operational limitations, as a tool that relies on strategic consent and the support of critical parties.
- Peace operations must be significantly more integrated and should leverage the full range of civilian capacities and expertise across the United Nations system and its partners, as part of a system of networked multilateralism and strengthened partnerships.
- In peace operations, fully leverage the use of data and digital technologies to effectively track conflict trends, understand local sentiment, enable inclusive dialogue, monitor impact and help guide evidence-based decisions. To this end, build on the strategy for the digital transformation of peacekeeping and critical innovations in mediation, good offices and peacemaking, in line with the Quintet of Change [39] towards a United Nations 2.0 and the recommendations contained in action 2.
- Exit strategies and transitions from peace operations need to be planned early and in an integrated and iterative manner to achieve successful mission drawdowns and ensure that gains are consolidated and the risk of relapse into conflict or escalation is minimized.
- Renew their support and recommit to further peacekeeping reform that builds on the progress achieved through the Action for Peacekeeping initiative and the reform of the United Nations peace and security pillar. These efforts must make peacekeeping operations more versatile, nimble and adaptable.

ACTION 9: ADDRESS PEACE ENFORCEMENT

The increasing fragmentation of many conflicts, and the proliferation of non- State armed groups that operate across borders and use violence against civilians, has increased the need for multi-national peace enforcement and counter-terrorism and counter-insurgency operations. Member States should urgently consider how to improve such operations and related aspects of the national and international response to evolving threats.

Recommendations

- For the Security Council, where peace enforcement is required, authorize a multinational force, or enforcement action by regional and subregional organizations.
- Accompany any peace enforcement action by inclusive political efforts to advance peace and other non-military approaches such as disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, addressing main conflict drivers and related grievances. Avoid actions that cause harm to civilian life, violate human rights, reinforce conflict drivers or the ability of violent extremist groups to increase recruitment.
- When countries or regional organizations willing to conduct peace enforcement lack the required capabilities, provide support to those operations directly. Peace enforcement action authorized by the Security Council must be fully in line with the Charter of the United Nations and international humanitarian and human rights law and involve effective and transparent accountability measures, including to the Security Council.
- In counter-terrorism contexts, ensure accountability and justice, including by advancing prosecution, rehabilitation and reintegration strategies. Make available appropriate expertise to support counter-terrorism operations through the creation of strategic action groups with support from the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact, backed as needed by Member State contributions.

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ACTION 10: SUPPORT TO AFRICAN UNION AND SUBREGIONAL PEACE SUPPORT OPERATIONS

The proliferation of non-State armed groups that operate across borders has presented a major and growing threat in several regions of Africa, as have other conflict drivers and crises related to the interlocking threats described above. This calls for a new generation of peace enforcement missions and counter-terrorism operations, led by African partners with a Security Council mandate under Chapters VII and VIII of the Charter of the United Nations, with guaranteed funding through assessed contributions. Decisions on this are long overdue, and progress must be made. The importance of these operations as part of the toolkit for responding to crises in Africa, alongside the full range of available United Nations mechanisms, is evident and the case for ensuring that they have the resources required to succeed is clear. This is the case for operations across the full spectrum from preventive deployments to peace enforcement.

Recommendations

- For the Security Council and General Assembly, ensure that operations authorized under Chapters VII and VIII of the Charter of the United Nations have the required resources to succeed, including assessed contributions where required. Requests related to African Union and subregional organizations' peace support operations should be considered in a more systematic manner and no longer be considered exceptional.

NOVEL APPROACHES TO PEACE AND POTENTIAL DOMAINS OF CONFLICT

ACTION 11: PREVENT THE WEAPONIZATION OF EMERGING DOMAINS AND PROMOTE RESPONSIBLE INNOVATION

New technologies have the potential to transform the nature of conflict and warfare, putting human beings at increasing risk. The ease with which they can be accessed by non-State actors, including terrorist groups, poses a major threat. They raise serious human rights and privacy concerns, owing to issues such as accuracy, reliability, human control and data and algorithmic bias. The benefits of new and emerging technologies cannot come at the expense of global security. Governance frameworks, at the international and national level must be deployed to minimize harms and address the cross-cutting risks posed by converging technologies, including their intersection with other threats, such as nuclear weapons.

Tackling the extension of conflict and hostilities to cyberspace

The urgency of efforts to protect the safety and security of cyberspace has grown exponentially over the past decade, with a proliferation of malicious cyberincidents impacting infrastructure providing services to the public and critical to the functioning of society. Non-State actors, including terrorists, are also active in cyberspace. Cyberspace is not a lawless domain: States have affirmed that the Charter of the United Nations and international law apply to cyberspace (see A/77/275). Concrete progress at the multilateral level, as a result of work undertaken under the auspices of the General Assembly over the past two decades, has led all States to agree to be guided in their use of information and communications technologies by specific norms of responsible

State behaviour. However, additional action is needed, and States should take concrete measures to prevent the extension and further escalation of conflict to the cyberdomain, including to protect human life from malicious cyberactivity.

Recommendations

- Declare that infrastructure essential for public services and to the functioning of society is off-limits to malicious cyberactivity, from both State and non-State actors.
- Establish an independent multilateral accountability mechanism for malicious use of cyberspace by States to reduce incentives for such conduct. This mechanism could enhance compliance with agreed norms and principles of responsible State behaviour. Strengthen criminal justice capacity to investigate, prosecute and adjudicate cyberactivity by terrorist actors against such infrastructure.

Preventing conflict in outer space

A major risk to outer space security is its emergence as a possible domain of military confrontation. As indicated in my policy brief on outer space,[40] the combination of new space actors, the proliferation of space objects, the fact that many space-based services have both civil and military users, and the increasing reliance of armed forces on space systems, exacerbates this danger.

Recommendations

- Develop, through the relevant United Nations disarmament bodies and with the widest possible acceptance, international norms, rules and principles to address threats to space systems and, on that basis, launch negotiations on a treaty to ensure peace, security and the prevention of an arms race in outer space.

Prohibiting lethal autonomous weapons systems

Fully autonomous weapons systems have the potential to significantly change warfare and may strain or even erode existing legal frameworks. In the absence of specific multilateral regulations, the design, development and use of these systems raise humanitarian, legal, security and ethical concerns and pose a direct threat to human rights and fundamental freedoms. Machines with the power and discretion to take lives without human involvement are morally repugnant and politically unacceptable and should be prohibited by international law.

Recommendations

- Building on the progress made in multilateral negotiations, conclude, by 2026, a legally binding instrument to prohibit lethal autonomous weapon systems that function without human control or oversight, and which cannot be used in compliance with international humanitarian law, and to regulate all other types of autonomous weapons systems.

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Peace and security implications of artificial intelligence

Artificial intelligence is both an enabling and a disruptive technology increasingly integrated into a broad array of civilian, military and dual-use applications, often with unforeseen implications. The increasing ubiquity of artificial intelligence, combined with its rapid scalability, lack of transparency and pace of innovation, poses potential risks to international peace and security and presents governance challenges. Member States should take steps to mitigate risks relating to artificial intelligence-enabled systems in the peace and security domain and develop the necessary frameworks to achieve this goal. Member States should take into account the experiences in developing the International Atomic Energy Agency, the International Civil Aviation Organization and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, among other governance approaches, along with the proposals in my policy brief on the Global Digital Compact[41] and develop a tailored approach. This should include the possible creation of a new global body to mitigate the peace and security risks of artificial intelligence while harnessing its benefits to accelerate sustainable development.

Recommendations

- Urgently develop national strategies on responsible design, development and use of artificial intelligence, consistent with Member States obligations under international humanitarian law and human rights law.
- Develop norms, rules and principles around the design, development and use of military applications of artificial intelligence through a multilateral process, while also ensuring engagement with stakeholders from industry, academia, civil society and other sectors.
- Agree on a global framework regulating and strengthening oversight mechanisms for the use of data-driven technology, including artificial intelligence, for counter-terrorism purposes.

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Improve global anticipation, coordination and preparedness to address biorisks

Risks to global biological and health security are diverse and interconnected. They go beyond the overt hostile use of biology in the form of development and use of biological weapons[42] and include a range of actions that can undermine biological and health security.[43] Technological advances and the complex synergies and interactions between them continue to erode the barriers to the development of biological weapons. The number of people around the world who can manipulate dangerous pathogens is increasing, among them those with potential malign intent, including terrorists. However, these same advances can also accelerate sustainable development and human progress. We must therefore take action to ensure that they are not used to create new ways to inflict harm, death and disruption.

Conflict and disease can intersect in multiple ways, and risks posed are currently not addressed holistically and in a coordinated manner. There is an urgent need to collectively identify these emerging and evolving risks, increase transparency, harmonize standards and improve scientific literacy, working closely with the international scientific community and the private sector to explore oversight of biological research and promote responsible conduct.

Recommendations

- Identify emerging and evolving biological risks; reinforce anticipation, coordination and preparedness for such risks, whether caused by natural, accidental or deliberate release of biological agents, and work with the United Nations system to provide options for strengthened prevention and response.
- Develop measures to address the risks involved in biotechnology and human enhancement technologies applied in the military domain. To do so, (i) set norms, rules, and principles of responsible behaviour on military uses of human enhancement and degradation technologies, including to increase transparency around defence planning and practices, and work with other stakeholders to set out guidelines and policies for responsible research; (ii) for States Parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction (Biological Weapons Convention) and the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction (Chemical Weapons Convention), explore the potential implications of advances in neurobiology and related converging technologies for the respective governance regimes.

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STRENGTHENING INTERNATIONAL GOVERNANCE

ACTION 12: BUILD A STRONGER COLLECTIVE SECURITY MACHINERY

The organs of the United Nations are vital for harmonizing the actions of Member States to attain common goals. However, some of their structures have become anachronistic and should be urgently updated for a more effective collective security system.

Reform of the Security Council

A Security Council that is more representative of the geopolitical realities of today, and of the contributions that different parts of the world make to global peace, is urgently needed. Most Member States acknowledge this, even if concrete progress remains elusive. But reform of Security Council membership must be accompanied by a genuine democratization of its working methods as outlined below.

Recommendations

- Make urgent progress in the intergovernmental negotiations on the reform of the Security Council to make this body more just and representative.
- For the Security Council, democratize its procedures as a way to enhance its ability to reach consensus and make the results of its decisions more durable, including by (i) more burden-sharing among Council members on resolutions, in particular on situations in their region to which they are not a party; (ii) systematic consultations with host States ahead of the adoption or renewal of mandates that affect them, as well as with regional organizations and troop- and police-contributing countries as appropriate; and (iii) promoting greater accountability of permanent members for the use of the veto.

Sanctions regimes established by the Security Council remain an important Charter instrument to address threats to international peace and security. However, they cannot be an end in themselves: they have a durable positive impact only as part of an overarching political process. Improving the effectiveness of United Nations sanctions must include efforts to enhance their legitimacy and a better understanding of their sometimes deleterious impact on political dialogue and peace processes when applied too early, reactively or broadly.

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Recommendations

- Ensure that sanctions measures are targeted and regularly adjusted to ongoing political dynamics; ensure that sanctions regimes contain from the outset benchmarks for assessing progress, which are regularly reviewed; take prompt action on proposals for listing and delisting individuals and entities and ensure that they have an opportunity to request an independent review of their listing; and consider whether future United Nations sanctions regimes specifically relating to terrorism should include terrorism motivated by xenophobia, racism and other forms of intolerance, or in the name of religion or belief.

Revitalization of the General Assembly

The General Assembly has a critical role to play, based on its strong legitimacy and universal membership, to address a range of peace and security challenges and exercise its powers under Articles 10 to 14 of the Charter. This role can be particularly important when the Security Council is unable to fulfil its primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security.

Recommendations

- Hold annual meetings of the General Assembly to put forward measures for the peaceful settlement of any situation which it deems likely to impair the general welfare or friendly relations among nations.
- Hold more regular interdisciplinary discussions across its Committees on cross-cutting issues.

Some disarmament institutions have been deadlocked for more than two decades, hindering the ability of Member States to manage threats in traditional as well as new domains. Therefore, urgent action to revitalize these institutions is needed.

Recommendations

- The General Assembly should exercise its primary role for substantive deliberations in the field of disarmament, in accordance with its rules of procedure and practice. The General Assembly should also agree on standards for the participation of other stakeholders in the work of its subsidiary organs in the field of disarmament.
- Reform the disarmament machinery, including the Conference on Disarmament and the Disarmament Commission, in order to optimize their respective roles, including to build consensus progressively on evolving disarmament priorities and review and make recommendations on developments in science and technology and their potential impact on disarmament and international security.
- Establish an intergovernmental process to discuss how to achieve the above goals and consider the role, timing and preparations of a special session of the General Assembly on disarmament.

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Elevating the work of the Peacebuilding Commission

With its strong focus on national ownership, the Peacebuilding Commission can serve as a space for Member States to address issues that lie between peace and development, such as the links between inequalities, violence and conflict; the importance of the 2030 Agenda for prevention and peacebuilding; or the linkages between development, climate change and peace. It can create opportunities for South-South and triangular cooperation and help accompany countries that are exiting the Security Council's agenda. The 2025 review of the United Nations peacebuilding architecture should operationalize the recommendations below and consider what adjustments need to be made in the Peacebuilding Commission's methods of work, composition and support capacities so that it can effectively perform these functions.

Recommendations

- Enhance the role of the Peacebuilding Commission as a convener of thematic discussions on cross-pillar issues, with a focus on the interdependent and mutually reinforcing nature of peace and development.
- Create a mechanism within the Commission to mobilize political and financial support for the implementation of the national and regional strategies suggested in action 3; and formalize the Commission's relationship with international financial institutions and regional development banks in order to align financing instruments with national priorities and enable the Commission to fulfil its mandate in marshalling resources for peacebuilding.
- Formalize the participation of regional and other organizations in the Commission to enable holistic engagement, coordination and inclusiveness in the deliberations of the Commission.
- The Security Council, the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Human Rights Council should ensure that the Commission is consulted in their proceedings. The Security Council in particular should more systematically seek the advice of the Commission on the peacebuilding dimensions of the mandates of peace operations.

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Conclusions

My vision as outlined in the present document is one of hope and optimism. Despite the profound difficulty of the current moment, I expect that Member States will rise to the challenge. During its 78 years of existence, the United Nations has heard, time and again, announcements of its imminent demise or increasing irrelevance. However, overcoming failures and shortcomings, the Organization has not only endured, but remained the nerve centre of the multilateral system.

We must, however, be clear-eyed about the magnitude of the problems before us. What is at stake is not the future of the United Nations, but of our nations and humanity. The possibility of global devastation, whether from nuclear weapons, climate change, diseases or war, or even technology run amok, is tangible and increasing. Member States will need to find new ways of working together despite the increasing mistrust that has permeated international relations.

Member States are central to these solutions. They have the primary responsibility and more capacities than any other actor to enact the changes needed to transform peace and security. But they must not work alone. The scale of threats that we face require all-of-society approaches at the national level, and all-of-humanity approaches at the international level. This is what underpins my vision for networked multilateralism: a pragmatic reckoning that no State, not even the most powerful, can face our current threats without help from others.

The United Nations is and must remain central to this new multilateralism. In a fractured world with competing narratives, it is incumbent upon all States to preserve at least one institution in which they all can trust. The role of the Secretariat is to serve all Member States in strict observance of the Charter of the United Nations. It must strive to win and retain trust in the facts it presents and the analysis it offers. That is the most solid ground for consensus to be reached.

The declaration on the commemoration of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations and my report on "Our Common Agenda" created a much-needed opportunity for Member States to engage transparently in a conversation about what they see as their common future. The Summit of the Future must provide concrete answers about the central question facing the membership – how to reinforce the cooperative frameworks that are necessary to move us from the path to destruction to the path to prosperity. My vision in this regard is clear: these frameworks must be based on a reforged commitment to multilateral solutions, grounded on trust, solidarity and universality. The time to act is not when the divisions and fractures have engulfed us, but now.

Annex I

CONSULTATIONS WITH MEMBER STATES AND OTHER RELEVANT STAKEHOLDERS

The Secretariat undertook consultations through three main channels: Member States and regional organizations; civil society; and the United Nations system.

Upon the adoption of the resolution on the modalities for the Summit of the Future, the Secretariat reached out to all Member States and over 50 regional organizations to seek their views and recommendations. Thirty-three individual Member States from all regional groups, as well as three groups of Member States and 10 regional and other organizations, submitted written inputs. The inputs are shared on a website[44] (on an opt-out basis). Thirty Member States agreed for their submissions to be posted on the website.

The Secretariat also held in-person consultations with Member States at the level of Permanent Representatives through each of the five regional groupings. Furthermore, the co-leads held three expert-level thematic consultations with Member States on key elements of A New Agenda for Peace: reducing strategic risks and transnational threats; the challenge of violence and conflict; and inclusion and participation. This was complemented by a series of informal bilateral and group engagements with Member States, as well as informal meetings convened by Member States or non-governmental organizations on specific topics of relevance to A New Agenda for Peace.

The Secretariat issued an open call to civil society to contribute to A New Agenda for Peace. Nearly 100 submissions were received, including from more than 80 organizations, as well as prominent academics and individuals. The United Nations held several focused consultations with diverse global civil society actors who continued to provide written reports and follow-up inputs, and reached out to scholars and thinkers in the Global South. It also held large-scale meetings with grass-roots actors as part of the Global Coalition on Youth, Peace and Security and several networks working on women and peace and security. The Secretariat also consulted with religious and traditional networks representing numerous faith and indigenous leaders.

In addition to consulting extensively within each of the co-lead departments and with field presences, the interdepartmental team for A New Agenda for Peace held over a dozen thematic consultations with United Nations entities involving over 200 individual participants from across the United Nations system on topics such as women's participation, youth engagement, humanitarian issues, disarmament, human rights, hate speech, terrorism and organized crime, strategic foresight, and new technologies. The interdepartmental team also invited United Nations entities to formally submit inputs to be shared on the New Agenda for Peace website, in addition to other avenues provided for written contributions for internal United Nations use.

Annex II

IMPACT OF A NEW AGENDA FOR PEACE ON THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



Decisive action to prevent conflict and pursue peaceful resolutions is crucial to end extreme poverty. National action to reduce all forms of violence will also be essential to make progress on this Goal.



Hunger and food insecurity can be severely exacerbated in contexts affected by conflict or other forms of organized violence, especially in interaction with displacement, but they can also be major drivers of violence and conflict in and of themselves. Given the nature of global supply chains, conflict in one country can have systemic implications for food security elsewhere. Effective prevention of conflict and action to reduce violence will contribute to accelerated progress towards zero hunger.



Risks to health and well-being, especially maternal and child health, are significantly aggravated in settings affected by conflict and other forms of organized violence. Conflict and violence also have significant negative effects on mental health. Technological developments have created new threats related to biotechnology, which can have significant implications for health security. Robust action to prevent and resolve conflicts, reduce violence and improve global preparedness to address bio-risks will have tangible health effects.



Access to quality education is hampered by conflict and other forms of organized violence, from gender-based discrimination to the proliferation of small arms and light weapons. It is especially impeded in conflict contexts, where structural vulnerabilities to violence are further aggravated. Addressing all forms of violence, within and outside conflict contexts, is crucial to ensure quality education is available to all.



The decisive actions proposed in the present policy brief, especially those on women, peace and security and reducing the human cost of weapons, help advance the gender equality targets of Goal 5 at a time when there is significant pushback against this agenda. However, a global push to accelerate gender equality commitments in all areas remains a prerequisite for maintaining momentum on the women, peace and security agenda, and ultimately sustainable peace.



Challenges of gaining access to clean water and sanitation are exacerbated in conflict contexts and situations of displacement, as well as in contexts affected by some forms of organized violence. When the impacts of the climate crisis are added to the mix, water scarcity can exacerbate the risk of conflict and violence. It is often women and girls who bear the brunt, having to travel longer distances to fetch water, which exposes them to compounded risk factors.



Just energy transitions are critical for countries to meet their climate change commitments. They also have important implications for social cohesion and the social contract. Addressing underlying sources of division and drivers of conflict is an important foundation for just energy transitions that leave no one behind.



Unemployment, underemployment and lack of economic opportunities can be among the root causes of unrest, violence and even violent extremism. Addressing the lack of economic opportunities and inequalities related thereto is key to preventing violence and conflict. Furthermore, Article 26 of the Charter of the United Nations calls for the least diversion of the world's economic and human resources to arms, yet the rise of military expenditures continues. United Nations studies have shown that excessive military spending can have a negative impact on inclusive and sustainable economic growth and capital investment.



New technologies have the potential to transform the nature of conflict and warfare. Their ease of access by non-State actors, including terrorist groups, poses a major threat. In a number of areas, governance frameworks are needed to minimize the harms posed by such technologies, while enabling the benefits for inclusive sustainable development.



Conflicts exacerbate pre-existing patterns of violence, discrimination and gender-based inequalities. When inequality overlaps with differences in access and opportunities across groups it is often correlated with conflict, while other inequalities, for example, between the rich and poor within a society, are closely associated with other forms of violence. The asymmetries and inequities that exist among and within States, and the structural obstacles that sustain these inequalities, are a barrier to peace as well as barriers to development and human rights.



Stopping the proliferation of small arms, light weapons and ammunition would make many cities safer for their communities, which would, in turn, help make progress in ensuring access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing, basic services and transport systems. Preventing conflicts and other forms of organized violence would open greater space for participatory, integrated and sustainable human settlement planning and management in all countries and protect and safeguard the world's cultural and natural heritage. In conflict settings, civilians in urban areas are particularly affected by the effects of explosive weapons, which must be addressed to ensure their security.



Unsustainable patterns of consumption exacerbate inequalities and environmental degradation. Conflict and other forms of organized violence can be significant obstacles to the implementation of measures to achieve the sustainable management and efficient use of natural resources, and prevent post-harvest food losses. A reduction in military spending is consistent with responsible consumption and preservation of our limited resources.



Climate action can offer avenues for inclusive and effective peacebuilding. Failure to tackle head-on the challenges posed by climate change and its effects on the world's most vulnerable, powered by adequate climate finance, would have devastating knock-on effects, including for prevention and peacebuilding efforts.



Armed conflicts can hinder efforts to sustainably manage and protect marine and coastal ecosystems, regulate harvesting and end overfishing, illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and destructive fishing practices. Disputes over exclusive economic zones and fishing stock could exacerbate existing divisions or conflicts if poorly managed.



Biodiversity loss and desertification can have dangerous knock-on effects on access to natural resources, livelihoods, and social cohesion, the interactions of which can trigger violence. Land contamination – whether from landmines, cluster munitions or other unexploded ordnances – degrades human security. Conflict and other forms of organized violence can create a significant obstacles for countries and regions affected to prioritize conservation, restoration and sustainable use of ecosystems.



Fostering peaceful, just and inclusive societies must start with the eradication of violence and reduction of illicit arms and ammunition. Under Goal 16, Member States committed to reduce significantly all forms of violence and related death rates. Violence perpetrated by organized criminal groups, gangs, terrorists, or violent extremists, even outside of conflict environments, threatens lives and livelihoods across the world. The widespread availability of small arms and ammunition enables this violence, contributes to insecurity and hampers sustainable development.



Goal 17 – revitalizing the global partnership for development – remains a yardstick: from fair trade and technology transfers to debt relief and higher level of development assistance, it outlines measurable actions to redress imbalances at the global level. Together with the wider 2030 Agenda, its reach goes beyond sustainable development, and provides us with a blueprint to address the root causes of conflict comprehensively.

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UN Sustainable Development Group



GOOD PRACTICE NOTE

CONFLICT SENSITIVITY, PEACEBUILDING AND SUSTAINING PEACE

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Executive Summary

This Good Practice Note provides practical guidance and concrete tools for UN entities to integrate conflict sensitivity into their programming – with a view to contribute to building and sustaining peace, and with the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals as the ultimate objective.

Conflict sensitivity is about bringing awareness of conflict dynamics to UN entities that deliver development and humanitarian assistance, and support to political processes, with the goal to minimize the risk that those activities worsen conflict dynamics and bring countries further off track on their path to achieve the SDGs. It is a minimum requirement for the UN, aligned with the principle of "Do No harm", and that lays the foundations for activities that sustain peace and further sustainable development, with the promotion, protection and fulfillment of human rights at their core.

The Note is articulated around three main areas:

1. A conflict-sensitive approach to sustainable development along 4 key steps:
   i. Understand the peace and conflict context, through a conflict sensitivity and peacebuilding analysis that helps shape, prioritize and adjust activities to address or mitigate drivers of conflict, notably as part of the development of the Common Country Analysis (CCA), as necessary supplemented by additional local level conflict analysis of specific sub-regions.
   ii. Analyse how activities interact with peace and conflict: as peace and conflict evolves, UN entities need to regularly consider whether some activities may exacerbate conflict dynamics and cause tensions or whether some have the potential to create opportunities for building and sustaining peace.
   iii. Adapt activities and manage interactions: UN entities need to adapt accordingly – minimizing new risks identified, adjusting responses and scale up activities as and when conditions allow.
   iv. Leverage opportunities for building and sustaining peace: United Nations activities can be designed to have a direct impact on conflict and peace dynamics by positively contributing to ease tensions, increase trust between the state and the population and among population groups and lower the risk of outbreak, escalation or recurrence of conflict – including by organizing inclusive participatory approaches and engaging various groups that might be at odds with each other (e.g., farmer-herders, host-displaced). To assess if, and how, United Nations activities can contribute to building and sustaining peace, entities should formulate a theory of change and develop a monitoring framework with specific indicators to measure the effects of UN activities on conflict dynamics.
2. Guidance and tools to embed conflict sensitivity and, where possible and appropriate, peacebuilding into organizational values and processes, building capacity of staff around conflict analysis and conflict-sensitive approaches and ensure UN activities are conflict sensitive.
3. Monitoring and evaluation tools to measure and inform conflict sensitivity and peacebuilding:
   - *Ongoing context and conflict analysis* to provide a detailed understanding of the peace and conflict context, a primary tool for understanding impact and interactions between UN activities and the context and for identifying relevant indicators;
   - *Peacebuilding and Conflict sensitivity* markers to measure the extent to which peacebuilding and conflict sensitivity have been incorporated into UN activities; and
   - *Conflict sensitivity and peacebuilding* indicators that help measure interactions between UN activities and the peace and conflict context, including the potential positive or negative impact that activities have had.

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List of Acronyms and Terms

CCA	Common Country Analysis
CDA	Conflict and Development Analysis
EIM	Ethical Implied Messages
HRBA	Human Rights Based Approach
HRP	Humanitarian Response Plan
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
UN	United Nations
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UN entities	The Departments, Offices, Agencies, Funds and Programmes of the UN family of organizations
UNSDCF	United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework
UNSDG	United Nations Sustainable Development Group

Introduction

This guidance note is about how the agencies, funds, programmes, offices and departments that make up the United Nations (UN) system can contribute to sustaining peace, by leveraging a conflict-sensitive approach in their work.

To save "succeeding generations from the scourge of war" was the very reason for the establishment of the United Nations, as the opening lines of the Charter state. It continues to be at the heart of the system's mandate. Peace and conflict affect what work the UN does and how it does it.

In turn, the work of the UN also affects peace and conflict and can do so both positively and negatively. This happens directly through political good offices and peacebuilding interventions, which are specifically designed to address the causes of conflict and promote sustaining peace. Yet even when UN activities are not primarily designed to promote peace, such as in humanitarian assistance and much development work, these activities are still carried out in the peace and conflict environment. They may strengthen or mitigate drivers of conflict and strengthen capacities for peace and may transform relationships among stakeholders.

Conflict sensitivity aims at promoting awareness of the interactions between UN activities and the peace and conflict context in which they are delivered. It aims, at a minimum, to "do no harm" and minimize the risk that activities could contribute to furthering tensions. It also helps leverage opportunities for activities to contribute to sustaining peace. But this guidance note goes beyond doing no harm. It also discusses entry points for peacebuilding, i.e. going beyond the avoidance the "do no harm" towards aspiring to "explicitly do good" in terms of generating peacebuilding outcomes.

Guidance note purpose

This guidance note has three primary objectives:

1. Highlight the importance of conflict sensitivity within policies, programmes and activities in the UN system;
2. Present a common framework through which the United Nations system can understand the interactions of its work on peace and conflict within a broader context of the Humanitarian-Development-Peace nexus, and can approach conflict sensitivity, peacebuilding and sustaining peace; and
3. Provide practical advice on how UN entities can integrate conflict sensitivity into the range of UN activities that contribute to building and sustaining peace.

On the strategic level, this guidance note is complementary to the instructions for the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) process, with its guidance and the Companion pieces, including on Common Country Analysis (CCA). It should also inform the implementation of the integrated assessment and planning policy and Integrated Strategic Frameworks. For implementation of UN activities this guidance serves as a direct support and/or can be complementary to UN agencies, funds and programme's own guidance for conflict sensitivity and peacebuilding.

Who will use this guidance note?

This guidance note is intended to support and assist:

- *Senior management of UN entities* to analyse how conflict sensitivity and peacebuilding is relevant for their organizations' mandates, and how it can be incorporated into their activities;
- *UN staff working on developing policy related to conflict sensitivity, peacebuilding and sustaining peace* to identify guiding principles, priorities and good practices that can inform organizational policy;
- *Programme and project officers designing and implementing activities* of UN entities across the UN system to identify guiding principles, good practices and practical considerations that can inform how to adopt conflict sensitive, peacebuilding and sustaining peace approaches within their activities in accordance with their mandates; and

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- *Non-UN partners* to draw on the UN approach to conflict sensitivity and peacebuilding to inform their own work, policies and processes.

Structure of the guidance note

The guidance note is divided into two parts. The first part provides an overview of the concepts and practices of conflict sensitivity, peacebuilding and sustaining peace. It is intended as a primer on why and how conflict sensitivity and peacebuilding should be incorporated into UN activities to contribute to sustaining peace. It is relevant for all readers of the guidance note.

- Chapter one provides a definition for conflict sensitivity. It places it within the context of the concepts of peacebuilding and highlights how it contributes to sustaining peace.
- Chapter two outlines a summary overview of the practical steps to adopting conflict sensitive and peacebuilding approaches aimed at contributing to sustaining peace, including analysing the context; understanding interactions between peace and conflict and UN activities; and adapting programming.

  The second part of the guidance note provides practical details about each of the steps identified in the first half. It is relevant for readers who are looking to incorporate a conflict sensitive and sustaining peace approach into their activities or into the policies and processes of UN entities.
- Chapter three outlines the importance of understanding the peace and conflict context to conflict sensitivity and peacebuilding, including identifying what information is required for activities to be conflict sensitive and how they can contribute to peace.
- Chapter four describes the ways in which peace and conflict may affect UN activities and ways in which UN activities may affect peace and conflict.
- Chapter five details how to identify and managing conflict risks — the potential harms that may be caused by UN activities.
- Chapter six outlines how UN entities can leverage opportunities for UN activities to contribute to building and sustaining peace through conflict sensitivity.
- Chapter seven outlines approaches to monitoring and evaluating conflict sensitivity, peacebuilding and sustaining peace.

The Secretary-General's vision on preventing violent conflict and the Sustainable Development Goals

Secretary-General António Guterres has made preventing conflict, crisis and human suffering the most important priority of the UN that permeates everything it does together.[2] Prevention works, saves lives and resources and is cost-effective. The Secretary-General has sought to forge a **coherent vision of prevention and building and sustaining peace**, offering new tools and approaches to help the UN better support Member States in building more inclusive, just and peaceful societies. In this vision, prevention is a shared responsibility that cuts across all pillars of the UN system and a collective effort to act early to address conflict risks before they escalate. Notably, the new job description of the Resident Coordinator includes among the duties and responsibilities coordinating "UN system-wide support to Government, taking a preventive approach and identifying and mitigating risks to the achievement of the [Sustainable Development Goals] and their benefit to all." In his Call to Action on Human Rights, the Secretary-General emphasized that human rights provide a critical foundation for prevention of violent conflict.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are the framework through which the UN system provides support to national authorities in their efforts to achieve the vision embodied in the 2030 Agenda. The SDGs are also important entry points to address drivers of conflict, from inequalities to natural resource management and from corruption to access to justice. As the Secretary-General states: "Inclusive and sustainable development not only is an end in itself but also happens to be the best defence against the risks of violent conflict."[3]

The Member States have also expressed their support for a focus on prevention. In 2016, the **General Assembly and Security Council** simultaneously adopted resolutions on the 2015 Review of UN Peacebuilding Architecture (General Assembly resolution 70/262 and Security Council resolution 2282 (2016). The twin resolutions introduced the concept of "sustaining peace," emphasizing the imperative to prevent the outbreak, escalation, continuation and recurrence of conflict in response to worrying global trends and the **increasingly complex and protracted nature of contemporary violent conflicts**. The twin resolutions also recognized that development was a central goal in itself, and the important contributions of the UN development system to peacebuilding, in particular through economic development and poverty eradication, were acknowledged.

[2] See, e.g. Secretary-General's remarks to the Security Council on 10 January 2017; and the Vision of the Secretary-General on Prevention, 3 May 2017.

[3] Report of the Secretary-General on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace (A/72/707-S/2018/43, para. 5). The UN defines peacebuilding as: "A range of measures targeted to reduce the risk of lapsing or relapsing into conflict by strengthening national capacities at all levels for conflict management, and to lay the foundation for sustainable peace and development ... [These] comprise a carefully prioritized, sequenced, and relatively narrow set of activities aimed at achieving the above objectives." See Decision 2007/28 of the Secretary-General, 22 May 2007.

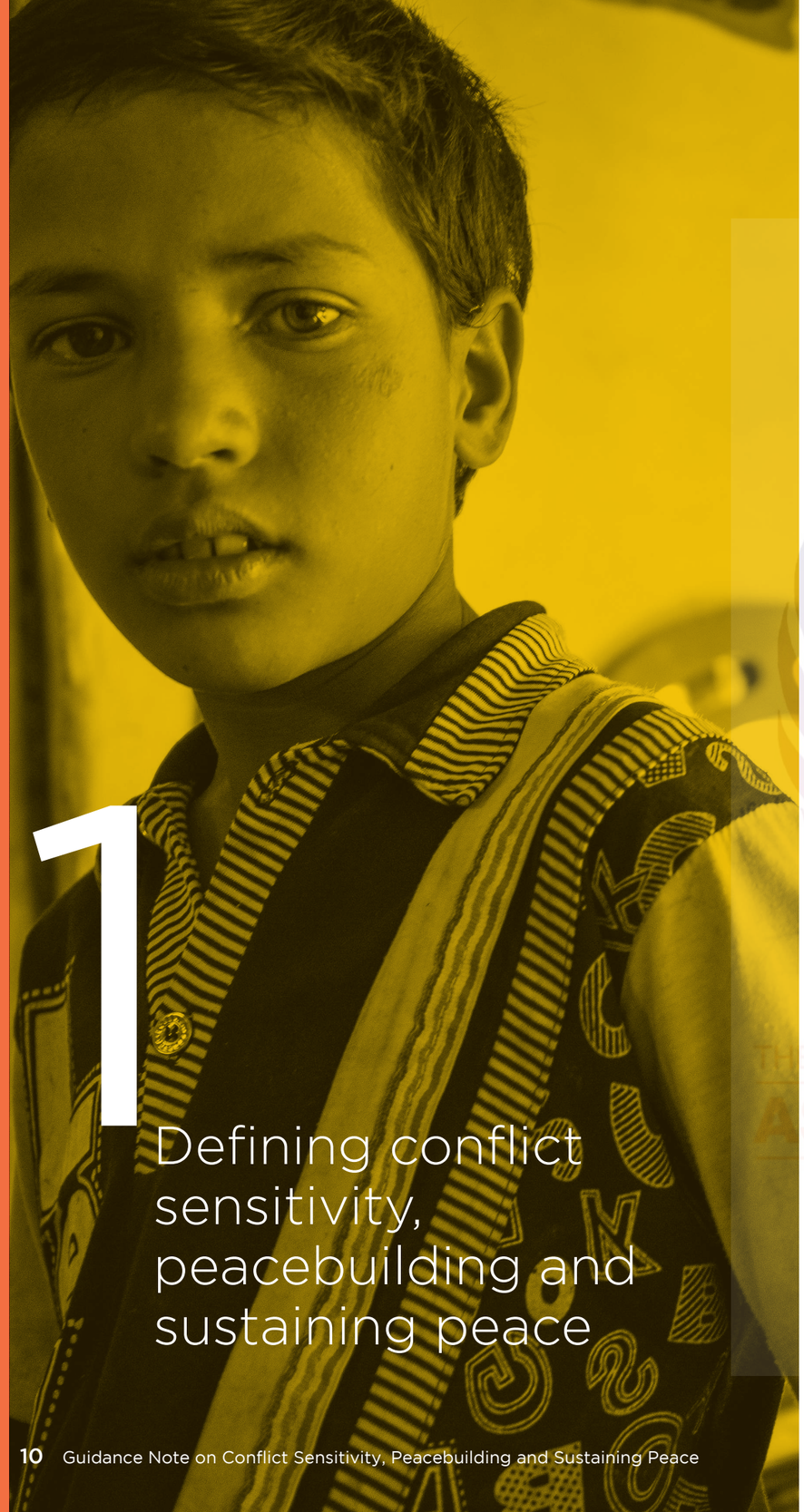


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PART 1

Concepts and Practice





1

Defining conflict sensitivity, peacebuilding and sustaining peace

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What is conflict sensitivity?

The concept of ”conflict sensitivity” starts from the recognition that humanitarian, development and peacebuilding activities cannot be separated from the peace and conflict context in which they are implemented.

In addition to their stated objectives, UN activities may impact stakeholders, conflict drivers and capacities for peace in ways that are unintended or indirect. Such impacts can be positive or negative.

Conflict sensitivity involves developing understanding of the context in which UN activities are delivered; analysing the relationship between those activities and the context; and adapting the way UN activities are delivered accordingly.

In essence, adopting a conflict sensitivity approach is to deliver development, humanitarian and political assistance activities in a way that aims to minimize the risk that those activities could cause more harm than good and increase the risk of violence. As such, it is laying the foundation for maximizing the positive impact of activities on sustaining peace and is therefore a minimum responsibility for the whole of the UN system.

What is conflict?

Conflict occurs when two or more groups (or people) struggle over competing values or claims to resources, power or status. Conflict represents a need for change by one or all parties. Conflict is inherent to all human interaction and societies and can be an important factor in progress.

Conflict is most visible when it leads to violence. However, not all conflict manifests as physical violence.

Political and judicial institutions provide space for political, economic and social conflict to occur in a non-violent manner in accordance with established laws and rules and in adherence of human rights treaties, norms and value, contributing to the conditions for sustaining peace.

When such institutions, laws and rules are weak, divisive socio-political dynamics, non-inclusive governance structures, lack of access to justice, and horizontal and vertical inequalities – all facets of conflict in their own right – may undermine social cohesion and could lead to grievances. These may not necessarily appear as violence at a particular point in time, but left unchecked, such dynamics could be used by some actors to mobilize groups, e.g. around a particular identity, to use violence.

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Why is conflict sensitivity important?

Conflict sensitivity increases the likelihood of sustaining peace – By limiting harm that may be inadvertently caused by UN activities and identifying areas where activities can contribute to peace, conflict sensitivity contributes to conflict prevention and conflict mitigation and may contribute to the reduction and resolution of ongoing violent conflict, and reduces the risk that contexts that have experienced violent conflict will relapse.

- *Conflict sensitivity helps to manage the challenges of working in conflict* – By better understanding the context and analysing how United Nations activities may interact with it, UN entities are better equipped to enhance the impact of their activities as well as manage reputational, security, compliance and other operational risks.
- *Conflict sensitivity enhances the sustainability of UN activities* – By reducing the possibility that conflict undermines activities, creates new challenges/tensions/conflicts or reverses outcomes, and by ensuring that UN activities are adapted to the context, the long-term impacts of activities are better protected.
- *Conflict sensitivity strengthens work on gender, children and young people, inclusivity and resilience* – Conflict-sensitivity promotes inclusive and responsive approaches to delivering UN activities that can in turn serve to strengthen communities' resilience to conflict and promote gender and youth-positive outcomes.

What is peacebuilding and how is it different from conflict sensitivity?

Peacebuilding comprises a range of activities or approaches expressly designed and intended to strengthen national capacities at different levels for conflict management, address the causes of conflict and to promote peace.[4] Peacebuilding and conflict sensitivity are not mutually exclusive; they are complementary, build on each other and are closely linked approaches that respond in different ways to peace and conflict dynamics in a given context.

Peacebuilding aims to address the underlying drivers of conflict, strengthen capacities to promote peace and reduce the risks of violent conflicts in a given context. While it may encompass a wide range of activities and approaches, from political to development activities, tackling for example, specific inequalities that may be at the root of conflicts, the success of peacebuilding is explicitly connected to these overarching aims.

Conflict sensitivity is fundamentally about how *all interventions* operate in a context – based on a sound analysis, an awareness of peace and conflict dynamics and with attention to unintended consequences. It asks: *"what is needed to ensure that activities being implemented are responsive and well-adapted to the conflict context, and at minimum do not worsen conflict dynamics?"* All UN activities must be conflict-sensitive to ensure that potential indirect or unintended consequences are systematically considered and addressed. A thorough integration of conflict sensitivity in a programme may result in explicit peacebuilding objectives being identified and included either as primary or secondary goals of planned interventions. A peacebuilding approach would asks: *"what is needed to ensure that activities being implemented, given the conflict context, generate peace-related outcomes and reduce the risk of violent conflicts."*

Helpful Tip: Peacebuilding and Conflict Sensitivity

Peacebuilding and conflict sensitivity are related but different concepts.

Peacebuilding activities are primarily motivated by the intention to reduce conflict and promote peace. Their focus is working on conflict, which can either focus on what or how activities are implemented.

Conflict sensitivity focuses on working in conflict and how activities are implemented, with the aim of managing potential harm and maximizing opportunities to contribute to peace.

Peacebuilding activities must be conflict sensitive, but so must other UN activities. Nevertheless, the mechanisms by which both peacebuilding and conflict sensitivity can promote sustaining peace are very similar.

What is the connection between sustaining peace, peacebuilding and conflict sensitivity?

Sustaining Peace is a concept articulated by the twin resolutions (General Assembly resolution 70/262 and Security Council resolution 2282 (2016)) that augments the notion of peacebuilding.[5] Sustaining peace emphasizes that peace must be built, strengthened and sustained across all contexts before, during and after conflict. It prompts actors to take a long-term, inclusive, comprehensive and collaborative orientation to working across the conflict cycle toward "preventing the outbreak, escalation, continuation, and recurrence of conflict."[6] Sustaining peace refers therefore to both a goal and a process.

The sustaining peace concept recognizes two types of activities:[7]

- Activities that are designed and directly aimed at building and sustaining peace; and
- Activities that, while not explicitly designed to build and sustain peace as a primary objective, can contribute to peace-related outcomes, including as secondary outcomes.

Language and terminology related to conflict and peace

The meaning of "sensitivity" in "conflict sensitivity" is the sense of "being sensitive/alert/aware to" or "quick to respond to slight changes in" the dynamics of a conflict context.

However, sometimes the idea of conflict sensitivity or peacebuilding can also be politically "sensitive," such as when partners, counterparts or interlocutors disagree with the idea that conflict is a risk, refuse to discuss out of fear of exacerbating tensions, or view international attention on conflict as political meddling.

In contexts where the UN faces dilemmas regarding framing, language and terminology related to "conflict" and "peace," conflict sensitivity and sustaining peace still provide essential frameworks for thinking through the interactions between UN activities and the context.

In contexts where framing is politically charged, contested and therefore counterproductive for UN goals, being thoughtful about how to frame conflict analysis or a peacebuilding programme, based on realities of a specific context, is essential to managing a successful initiative. Some UN teams have used different language, such as "context or risk analysis," "context sensitivity," "risk-informed approach" or "context appropriate activities." Rather than referencing potentially politically sensitive peacebuilding objectives, it can be useful to frame conflict sensitivity and peacebuilding within the context of resilience, risk mitigation, trust building, social cohesion or SDG 16.

[4] The UN defines peacebuilding as: "A range of measures targeted to reduce the risk of lapsing or relapsing into conflict by strengthening national capacities at all levels for conflict management, and to lay the foundation for sustainable peace and development ... [These] comprise a carefully prioritized, sequenced, and relatively narrow set of activities aimed at achieving the above objectives." See Decision 2007/28 of the Secretary-General, 22 May 2007.

[5] See: General Assembly resolution 70/262, Security Council resolution 2282 (2016), A/72/707-S/2018/43.

[6] Ibid.

[7] UN Peacebuilding, 2017, "What does 'Sustaining Peace' mean?", United Nations, available online at: https://www.un.org/peacebuilding/sites/www.un.org.peacebuilding/files/documents/guidance-on-sustaining-peace.170117.final_.pdf.

This orientation, one that includes long-term prevention, links sustaining peace to the broader vision of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16 and other SDG targets related to peace, justice and inclusion. It does so by calling on actors to promote the necessary political, security, justice, social and economic conditions that are at the heart of "peaceful, just and inclusive societies." While sustaining peace is the primary responsibility of national governments and actors, the agenda calls on the UN system to work inclusively and in a coherent, coordinated and complementary manner to advance this goal.[8]

Conflict sensitivity, which allows actors to integrate an enhanced awareness of context into their interventions and programmes, and peacebuilding, which deliberately aims to strengthen capacities for peace, can therefore be understood as building blocks for how actors can contribute to the process and goal of sustaining peace.

How does conflict sensitivity relate to humanitarian action and the humanitarian principles?

Humanitarians are required to adhere to the humanitarian principles enshrined in relevant General Assembly resolutions most notably General Assembly Resolution 46/182. The goal of humanitarian action is to save lives and alleviate human suffering. Humanitarian action may contribute to peace, but it is not the primary goal. While humanitarian action can support peace efforts, its main purpose remains to address life-saving needs and alleviate suffering. Accordingly, most humanitarian interventions are likely to remain outside the scope of integration. However, depending on the context, certain activities may be included in the UN's integrated strategic approach. The guidance on sustaining peace[9] reflects this idea.

The humanitarian principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence represent the foundation for humanitarian action. In practice, the principles help distinguish humanitarian action from other international aid activities and aims to protect humanitarian access while guarding against the risk that humanitarian actors will be accused of taking sides.

Humanitarian actors face many of the same challenges as other types of activities in terms of their interaction with conflict. Humanitarian actors regularly grapple with situations where assistance is instrumentalized by conflict actors or feeds into conflict drivers, even when agencies strictly adhere to humanitarian principles.

Humanitarian assistance can also play a role in reducing conflict drivers, such as by improving relations between groups through participatory assessment, design, planning, distribution and monitoring processes, access to services, or building trust through access negotiations. By changing the "how", rather than the "what," i.e. by striving for conflict sensitivity in their analysis and interventions, humanitarian actors can have a positive impact on conflict dynamics even if they are not directly or primarily contributing to peacebuilding or sustaining peace outcomes.

Conflict sensitivity is an approach that helps humanitarian actors navigate the challenges of providing assistance in conflict-affected settings. It does not call for humanitarian actors to weaken the humanitarian principles, to adopt political objectives or to become peacebuilding actors. Rather, it encourages humanitarian actors to work in ways that take into account the context in order to minimise how activities might drive conflict and identify benefits for peace.

Human rights, conflict sensitivity and sustaining peace are mutually reinforcing

Conflict sensitivity aims to ensure that UN activities do not aggravate conflict dynamics, do no harm and contribute towards sustaining peace. Similarly, the UN human rights system was created to prevent future wars by setting standards to address many of the root causes of conflict and violence. Just as human rights violations drive conflict and violence, protecting

Myanmar Case study: Indirect support to sustaining peace

In Myanmar, a UN agency supported the improvement in quality of education, in line with Government's Basic Education Development Plan (2001–2031). In the multilingual and multiethnic context of Myanmar, language status and language education are often a cause, sometimes a consequence, of tension.

The UN agency leveraged its role in education sector programming to strengthen social cohesion. It implemented a series of dialogue forums on the role of language in education, bringing together civil society and education stakeholders in Mon, Kayin and Kachin States and in the capital Nay Pyi Taw. During these conversations, issues of multilingual education was openly and freely discussed.

These dialogues eventually led to a new language policy in Mon State, opened dialogue and initiated cooperation between the government and ethnic-language providers. It resulted in an agreement on a set of principles for creating a broader language policy for Myanmar, for fostering peace.

Hence, in addition to the primary objective of improving quality of education, there was a secondary result to sustain peace.

"Do No Harm" and Conflict Sensitivity

"Do No Harm" refers to an approach developed by the Collaborative for Development Action (CDA) in the 1990s as a methodology to help those working in conflict-affected settings to understand and manage the impacts of international assistance on the peace and conflict context where they work. Conflict sensitivity emerged in the early 2000s as a concept that incorporated the Do-No-Harm approach (and other methodologies) and has been developed further. The Do-No-Harm approach, however, continues to be used to refer to conflict sensitivity by some practitioners.

Separately, Do No Harm (DNH) is also a concept within the humanitarian sector which aims to address the harms that assistance may cause. Most often, it starts from the perspective of what harm may be caused to individual beneficiaries (as with the Human Rights Based Approach to programming).

These two separate uses of Do No Harm can be confusing. They start from different perspectives and so ask different, though overlapping questions. Ultimately, they are complimentary, consistent with each other and both important.

[8] UN Peacebuilding, 2017, "What does 'Sustaining Peace' mean?", United Nations, available online at: https://www.un.org/peacebuilding/sites/www.un.org.peacebuilding/files/documents/guidance-on-sustaining-peace.170117.final_.pdf accessed September 2019. Sustaining peace could be understood to also include peacekeeping, mediation and good offices, which in UN parlance, are not usually included in peacebuilding. The positive connotation of sustaining peace, compared to peacebuilding, also has contributed to its quick acceptance. In practical purpose, peacebuilding and sustaining peace are interchangeable.

[9] UN Peacebuilding, 2017, "What does 'Sustaining Peace' mean?", United Nations, available online at: https://www.un.org/peacebuilding/sites/www.un.org.peacebuilding/files/documents/guidance-on-sustaining-peace.170117.final_.pdf, accessed September 2019.

human rights reduces the risk of violence and conflict and creates pathways for peace.[10] The human rights-based approach (HRBA) aims to anchor UN activities in the rights and corresponding obligations of international human rights law. A HRBA requires human rights principles – universality, indivisibility, equality and non-discrimination, participation and accountability – to guide UN development cooperation and focus on developing the capacities of both "duty-bearers" to meet their obligations and "rights-holders" to claim their rights.

From a conflict-sensitivity perspective, the notion of rights-holders and duty-bearers is important because it creates a dynamic of managed conflict within which individuals are empowered to demand state action to protect their rights and that state resources are directed away from doing harm and applied for the benefit of all. Where capacities and political will exist to respect, protect and fulfil human rights, the rights-holders and the duty-bearer are brought into a positive relationship designed to meet needs and address grievances through peaceful processes of dialogue, participation and accountability. Where this relationship breaks down, for whatever reason, the risk of conflict and violence increases. Unaddressed human rights violations indicate that the relationship is not functioning well; widespread and systematic violations of human rights indicate that the relationship is broken, and the chances of violent conflict rise exponentially. UN assistance that aims to strengthen the capacity of both duty-bearers and rights-holders is therefore an important conflict sensitive tool for reducing risk of conflict and sustaining peace.

Similarly, United Nations assistance formulated on the basis of the human rights principles further reinforces conflict sensitivity and the building of sustainable peace. The joint UN-World Bank report Pathways for Peace suggests that violent conflict is driven by unaddressed grievances, inequalities and lack of participation and "exclusion from access to power, opportunity, and security creates fertile ground for mobilization to violence, particularly in areas of weak state capacity or legitimacy or in the context of human rights abuses."[11] HRBA principles ensure that resources are devoted to addressing grievances (accountability) and reducing inequality (non-discrimination and equality) while empowering people to participate in seeking solutions to the problems that affect their lives (participation).

The understanding of the link between human rights violations and conflict, and the preventive effect of human rights, suggests that the HRBA complements and reinforces the conflict-sensitive and peacebuilding approach set out in this guidance, for example, because both address inequalities and increase participation. It suggests that human rights-based risk and opportunity analysis can strengthen conflict and context analysis, highlighting the impact of conflict on people, especially those most vulnerable or at risk of being left behind. Human rights-based analysis help unearth underlying causes of conflict, rooted in laws, policies, attitudes and institutions. It also helps identify social exclusion, vulnerable groups and sources of their vulnerability and helps to shift power imbalance in social, economic and political spheres towards advancing equality and human dignity.

Human rights norms apply in both times of violent conflict and of peace and provide a constant against which the impact of conflict can be measured over time to indicate whether UN assistance needs to be reprioritized. Solutions, including mitigation measures, can also be based on human rights, which are less likely to feed conflict and more likely to forge consensus by aiming to protect and promote universally accepted norms. HRBA promotes conflict sensitivity and national ownership by ensuring norm-based engagement with stakeholders, and at times can insulate the UN from its focus on conflict being viewed as political interference and/or undermining sovereignty.

Rights-based approaches, as with peacebuilding, focus on process as much as outcomes. They advance inclusive, participatory and empowering approaches to programming. By placing people at the centre and advancing inclusive participatory decision-making, HRBA ensures programme design and implementation meets the interests of communities, builds trust and advances ownership and sustainability. Genuine inclusive and participatory decision-making also helps to take the local context into account and does not favour one group over another. It advances social cohesion among communities by advancing principles that are in the interest of people, including justice, equality, transparency and accountability.

Additional Resources

- General Assembly resolution 70/262 on the 2015 Peacebuilding Architecture Review (Sustaining Peace), available online at: https://undocs.org/A/RES/70/262
- Security Council resolution 2282 (2016) on the 2015 Peacebuilding Architecture Review (Sustaining Peace), available online at: https://undocs.org/S/RES/2282(2016)
- Secretary General's Report on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace. A/72/707-S/2018/43, available online at: https://undocs.org/S/RES/2282(2016)
- Sustaining peace online training UNSSC.
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- The Peace Promise, available online at: https://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/Democratic%20Governance/Conflict%20Prevention/THE%20PEACE%20PROMISE%20v%203%201.pdf

[10] See World Bank Group, "Conflict, Security and Development", World Development Report 2011 p. 82, box 2.8, noting that "Countries with recent human rights abuses are far more likely to experience conflict than countries with a strong history of respect for human rights".

[11] UN-World Bank, *Pathways for Peace: Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict*, Executive Summary, 2018, p. IV.respect for human rights".



2 Steps for conflict sensitivity

This chapter provides an overview of the practical steps needed to incorporate conflict sensitivity into the policy and practice of UN entities with the objective of contributing to sustaining peace. Each step is elaborated further in subsequent chapters.

Overview: key steps of a conflict sensitive approach

A conflict-sensitive approach has five key steps:

1. **Understand the peace and conflict context;**
2. **Analyse how UN activities interact with peace and conflict;**
3. **Adapt UN activities and manage risk interactions;**
4. **Leverage opportunities for building and sustaining peace; and**
5. **Monitoring and evaluation.**

Each of these steps should be explicitly undertaken when designing UN activities, both at a strategic or programme level, and at the level of individual interventions and projects. For instance, the steps can be taken as part of the CCA and UNSDCF process. They should also be revisited at regular periods during implementation and if there is a sudden, significant change in the peace and conflict context.

What is the difference between applying a conflict-sensitive approach and designing a peacebuilding intervention?

Applying a conflict-sensitive approach to an intervention may result in the identification of new primary or secondary peacebuilding goals in a programme that was not originally designed to achieve peacebuilding outcomes. However, when the main objective of an intervention is peacebuilding, an analysis of the peace and conflict context – and peacebuilding needs in that context – constitutes the very point of departure in the programme design. At this first stage the approach needs to be exploratory and open-ended with a view to identify how drivers of conflict and peace are best addressed. It is however important to emphasize that peacebuilding interventions are not automatically conflict sensitive by design and that they also need to go through conflict-sensitivity assessments. A peacebuilding intervention that has been very well designed to address a conflict dynamic/peacebuilding need/driver might unintentionally do harm to other drivers of peace. Figure 1 presents a flow-chart outlining the steps, key questions for each stage.

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Gender and conflict sensitivity

Awareness of gender and gender sensitivity is a requirement when being conflict sensitive.

Conflict has different impacts on men and women and can play a transformative role regarding men and women's roles, identities and orientations. It may create conditions where men, women, boys, girls and those who identify as non-binary experience changing relationships, or even threats, as a result of their gender.

Gender roles, identities, orientations, relationships and power structures can also impact peace and conflict dynamics, representing conflict risks. For example, cultures of toxic masculinity may foster violent behaviour while sexual violence may be used as a weapon of war in order to undermine the social "honour" of a community.

Assistance activities that fail to link an understanding of gender dynamics to conflict risk may do harm by inadvertently feeding into, or failing to address, the relationship between gender and conflict.

On the other hand, when activities are both gender and conflict sensitive, assistance can positively influence gender dynamics in a way that contributes to peace, such as by addressing violent masculinities, supporting women's participation in peacebuilding and addressing aspects of social exclusion.

Step 1: Understand the peace and conflict context

To be conflict sensitive, UN activities must be informed by a nuanced understanding of the context in which they are implemented. This requires having access to a regularly updated conflict or context analysis, which is the basis for conflict sensitivity.

Analysis should be designed to answer questions relevant for decision makers involved in implementing activities. The types of analysis needed for conflict-sensitivity purposes aim to provide information on the following:

- What is the background/history of conflict in the area in which activities are implemented?
- What are the key peace and conflict factors, or issues, which influence peace and conflict?
- Who are the stakeholders involved, what are the relationships among them and how do these relate to the peace and conflict factors? Who are the most vulnerable groups? What factors make them vulnerable?
- What are the key dynamics in the context – the main elements that could worsen or improve the peace and conflict context in the short to medium term?

Step 2: Analyse how UN activities interact with peace and conflict

Once an up-to-date and relevant understanding of the peace and conflict context is established, UN activities must be reviewed in terms of the potential ways in which they could interact within that context.

Two guiding questions are relevant:

- How does the peace and conflict context affect UN activities; and
- How do UN activities affect the peace and conflict context?

How does the peace and conflict context affect UN activities?

Conflict affects the relevance and appropriateness of UN activities, for example by increasing the need for humanitarian assistance or peacebuilding activities or by reducing the feasibility of some activities - being development or otherwise - because of security concerns. As peace and conflict evolves, it is essential to repeatedly question whether activities continue to be relevant, appropriate and timely and if new priorities have emerged which are not being addressed.

Conflict also affects activities by increasing uncertainty and risks. Increasingly, United Nations entities are accustomed to working in conflict-affected settings and have in place frameworks for understanding the risks caused by conflict within their risk management processes. Drawing on such understanding, it is important to consider how realistic it would be that planned activities can be delivered and have a meaningful impact given the operating challenges posed by the context.

How do United Nations activities affect the peace and conflict context?

United Nations entities need to consider two ways in which their activities may affect a peace and conflict context: risks that activities may contribute to conflict; and opportunities for activities to contribute to sustaining peace. Conflict risks are ways in which activities could exacerbate tensions, strengthen conflict drivers or undermine capacities for peace. Risks can take a number of forms, such as when activities worsen relationships between different stakeholders by being seen to favour one group over another; strengthen conflict actors by directly or indirectly giving those actors recognition or resources; or strengthen structural exclusion of some groups by engaging with non-representative authorities. There may also be conflict risks associated with not delivering an activity, such as by leaving an important conflict driver unaddressed.

If activities can exacerbate conflict, they can also present opportunities to contribute to sustaining peace. Activities may be able to promote inclusive or participatory decision-making processes across social and political divisions and rebuild trust among stakeholders. Activities may also be able to address key factors affecting conflict and strengthen capacities for peace.

Step 3: Adapt activities and manage risk interactions

The third conflict sensitivity step is to adapt activities in order to:

- Ensure activities continue to be relevant, appropriate, timely and realistic;
- Manage conflict risks; and
- Leverage opportunities to contribute to building and sustaining peace.

Ongoing changes in the peace and conflict context may mean that activities become less relevant, appropriate or timely, or create barriers to implementation. In such circumstances, it is necessary to adapt the focus or approach of activities or, in extreme circumstances, to stop an activity altogether.

UN entities should also ensure that activities are adapted to manage identified risks of conflict. Plans should include both mitigations aimed at reducing the likelihood and the impact of the risks and the responses to be taken if the risk occurs.

Some element of risk is unavoidable and there are also risks associated with not undertaking activities or of stopping them if they are already being implemented. Situations where *any* course of action could do harm – including implementing activities and not implementing them – present conflict sensitivity dilemmas. Conflict sensitivity dilemmas have no easy solutions and require careful management to balance the benefits of implementing activities with the potential to instigate harm.

Activities should also aim to leverage opportunities to contribute to building and sustaining peace by identifying peacebuilding as a primary or secondary goal. This includes considering how to adapt approaches during implementation, which stakeholders are engaged and how, and where activities are delivered.

Identifying how to manage the identified risks of feeding conflict and leverage opportunities to contribute to building and sustaining peace should happen at the stage of activity design, through the formulation of a theory of change. Monitoring of implementation might reveal that assumptions made in the theory of change were wrong or that the context has shifted. Activities must be flexible and adaptable enough to allow UN entities to respond quickly and effectively as new, or previously unidentified, risks and opportunities emerge.

Providing an enabling environment for conflict sensitivity

Adopting a conflict sensitive approach within UN activities requires a suitable enabling environment within UN entities, in terms of policies, processes and organizational approach. In this regard, important processes are the development of the UNSDCF and, in mission settings, the integrated strategic framework, which need to be conflict sensitive.

The following considerations can help UN entities foster conflict sensitivity within their organizations:

Embed conflict sensitivity into organizational values and processes

To ensure that conflict sensitivity is consistently adopted, it is necessary to ensure that it is a core part of the organizational way-of-working. Senior management need to prioritize and push for conflict sensitivity to be built into policies and processes; staff must be given a sense of, and accountability for, their own role and responsibility for being conflict sensitive and conflict sensitivity must be built into standard procedures within the organization.

Encourage a culture of critical reflection

Reviewing the conflict sensitivity of programming requires asking difficult questions about impact and potential harm that could be caused by UN activities. To do this effectively, UN entities need to encourage a culture of critical thinking in a way that allows people to discuss challenges and problems freely and openly and identify constructive solutions.

Build capacity of staff around conflict sensitivity

In order to build a culture of conflict sensitive thinking, UN entities should provide training and guidance on conflict sensitivity for all staff at all levels. Training should cover areas such as conflict analysis, monitoring the context, identifying and managing risks and opportunities and relevant policies and processes regarding the implementation of activities.

Ensure adequate resources are available for analysis

Sufficient resources should be made available, including time, staff and financial resources, to develop a nuanced understanding of the context in which the organization works – either within projects or as part of a wider programme. This requires that analysis processes be embedded into workplans and activity management plans, including the need for continually updating the analysis as is required for the CCA.

Provide space for joint analysis of conflict sensitivity

Time and space for discussion of conflict sensitivity should be incorporated into joint mechanisms within the UN system and between the UN and its partners. Opportunities to discuss conflict sensitivity should occur within the UNCT framework, as part of coordination structures and during specific processes such as the development or review of CCAs and UNSDCFs or humanitarian response planning.

Ensure UN activities are adaptable

To respond to a changing context, it is necessary for UN entities to be able to adapt their activities. Mitigating or responding to conflict risks or rapidly leveraging opportunities, as they emerge, will require adjusting activities, slowing them down or even stopping them. UN entities must be prepared to do this.

Internal policies and processes need to be flexible enough to allow for changes in workplans and budgets or other processes during implementation. Where donors support UN activities, it is important to have open discussions about how to build mechanisms for adaptive programming into projects from the beginning. Where UN activities are delivered through implementing partners, partnership agreements should allow for joint analysis of changing situations and allow for adaptation as needed.

Ensure leadership is supported

Strong leadership is required to conflict analysis is conducted and to translate such analysis into coherent strategies, programmes and activities that are conflict sensitive and contribute to peace where possible. This could require assistance, including in terms of guidance, training, surge capacities, peer-to-peer support and the delegated authority to take calculated risks in support of national priorities. Senior leaders must have a diverse skillset, with strong leadership, team-building and communications skills, including in analysis and planning, risk management, gender issues and human rights, in order to be able to promote coherence in a collaborative manner.

Case study: conflict sensitive redesign of a project

In the process of establishing a Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) programme in Somalia, UN's efforts had to radically adapt its activities to incorporate a component for negotiations to resolve conflicts concerning water access. These extensive negotiations led to an agreement among local leaders on the construction of water systems and monitoring mechanisms. These negotiations, the subsequent agreement and the mechanism to address conflicts over water in a non-violent manner yielded peacebuilding outcomes.

(https://www.un.org/peacebuilding/sites/www.un.org.peacebuilding/files/documents/peace_dividends.pdf).

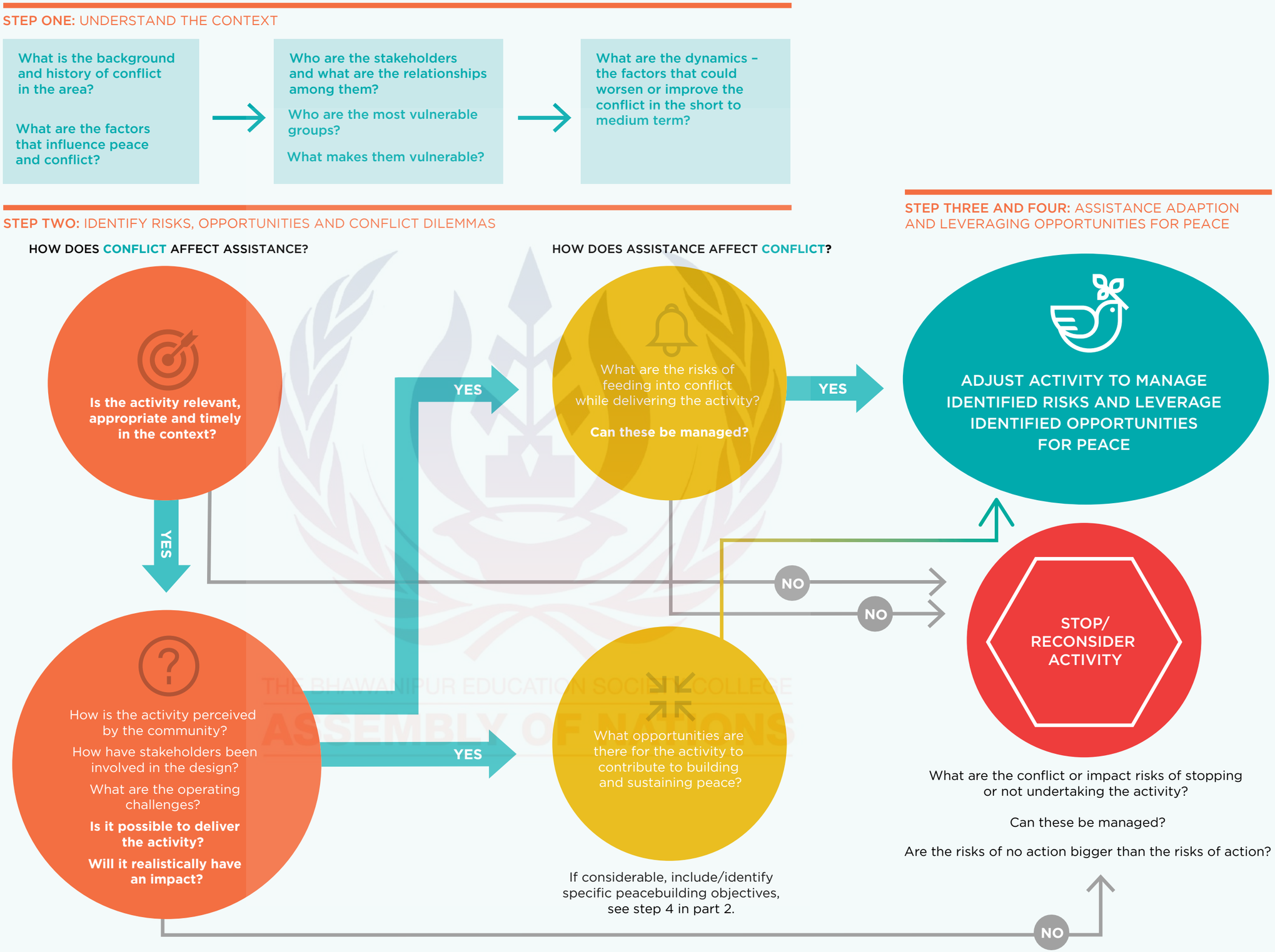
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Figure 1
CONFLICT SENSITIVITY: A ROADMAP FOR ASSISTANCE PLANNING

The following chart outlines the conflict sensitivity steps and the key questions that need to be asked within each step.



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PART 2

Operationalizing Conflict Sensitivity, Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace



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3

Step 1, Understanding the peace and conflict context

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Being conflict sensitive depends on a nuanced and detailed understanding of the context in which UN activities are delivered. The first conflict sensitivity step calls for developing such an understanding by conducting a context or conflict analysis, when possible through an inclusive and participatory process. This understanding must then be kept up to date by refreshing the analysis periodically and incorporating peace and conflict indicators into monitoring frameworks for activities.

Developing understanding of peace and conflict through a context or conflict analysis

The type of context or conflict analysis needed to inform conflict sensitivity aims to provide understanding of the structural peace and conflict environment in which activities are being implemented. This analysis can be part of a multi-dimensional risk analysis, which for example, also looks at natural disasters and epidemic risks as part of the CCA (see UNSDCF guidance). While joint analysis is possible in all contexts, planning and programming, including through the Humanitarian Response Plan, may need to be kept separate in some conflict situations.

Considerations for context analysis

Several considerations should be kept in mind when developing an analysis aimed at informing conflict sensitivity and peacebuilding.

Various methodologies for context analysis have been developed and are used within the UN system.[12] UN entities can be flexible with the specific framework or methodology that is used, so long as the analysis answers the questions identified above.

- Context analyses must focus on a level appropriate for the activities they are intended to inform. Analysis such as the joint analysis for an integrated strategic framework, the Common Country Analysis (CCA) for an UNSDCF or a context assessment for a country programme will require a higher-level analysis of the country, for example. Local humanitarian, development and peacebuilding activities will require more detailed analyses of the local communities in which they are being implemented. Quick conflict scans help understand a rapidly evolving contexts and informs immediate response.
- The context analysis must be relevant to decision makers responsible for implementing activities. Analysis needs to address

[12] Such as the Conflict and Development Analysis (CDA) adopted by the UN Sustainable Development Group, which is directly compatible with the analysis questions identified in this guidance note. See: United Nations Development Group, 2016, *Conducting a Conflict and Development Analysis Tool*, available online at https://undg.org/document/conflict-and-development-analysis-tool/, accessed September 2019.

Relevant questions for the analysis include:

Questions	What the analysis may include	Relevance for conflict sensitivity
What is the background/history of peace and conflict in the area?	A brief overview providing basic information about the area and its experience of conflict.	Provides an easily referenced outline of the key features of the area and its history.
What are the key factors affecting peace and conflict	A list of the issues that contribute to peace or drive conflict. Factors that drive peace are not always the opposite of factors that drive conflict. The list of factors should identify and detail each factor as well as the mechanism by which it affects peace and conflict. A distinction can be made between structural and intermediate factors and triggers of violent conflict or peace (see box).	Factors represent the list of issues that need to be addressed to promote sustaining peace. Activities should be cross-referenced against the list of factors to understand which factors could be affected by UN activities, either positively or negatively.
Who are the key stakeholders in the area? **Who are the most vulnerable stakeholders and what mitigation measures are required to respond to their vulnerability?**	A list of the different types of actors in the context, including those that drive peace and those that drive conflict. Stakeholders may include governmental actors at different levels (national, regional, subnational, local), security or armed groups, economic actors, social or communal groups, identity groups and beneficiaries. These actors may have a role directly affecting the peace and conflict factors or may be affected by them. UN entities may also be considered a stakeholder, depending on their prior/current roles. The assessment of stakeholders also highlights their interests, needs and their capacities for achieving those. Analysis of vulnerability helps to highlight underlying deprivations and designing mitigation strategies.	Stakeholders are important in minimizing negative and maximizing positive outcomes. Stakeholders represent the groups that may have an interest in how activities are delivered. These are the actors who must be engaged, or managed, in order to implement activities in a conflict sensitive manner.
What are the relationships among stakeholders and which factors affect these?	A map of how different stakeholders interact with one another and which factors define those relationships.	Activities should be considered in terms of which relationships they may affect, either positively or negatively, and adjusted accordingly.
What are the key dynamics in the context?	Key threats or opportunities that could worsen or improve the peace and conflict context in the short to medium term.	Dynamics represent the major changes that could affect UN activities and present new risks or opportunities. Targeting dynamics is where activities could have the most immediate impact in terms of addressing conflict and promoting sustaining peace.
What are other actors doing in the area?	A map of other activities being implemented by UN entities and other members of the international community, cross-referenced against factors and stakeholders.	Assessing other interventions helps identify how peace and conflict factors and stakeholders are already being affected. This helps identify where UN activities may potentially contradict or complement those of other actors.

Helpful Tip:
Understanding peace and conflict factors

Peace and conflict factors are the key issues that drive conflict or promote peace in a context. Peace and conflict factors can be characterized as "proximate" and "structural" factors.

Proximate factors are visible manifestations of violent conflict or explicit attempts to promote peace. They often directly relate to the issues around which tensions occur.

Structural factors are deeply embedded, root causes of conflict or drivers of peace. They may not be directly visible as motivators for violence or peace, but they serve to create the enabling environment that allows for proximate factors to occur.

From a peacebuilding or conflict prevention perspective, managing proximate factors is important to contribute to a reduction in violence. Addressing structural factors is necessary to foster an environment of sustaining peace.

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the overall context, for example, as part of a multi-dimensional risk analysis, and not just the thematic area of the activities to be implemented. It should be prepared with the end user in mind and an understanding of the scope of activities to ensure it asks and answers the questions that decision makers need to know.

- The analysis should allow for a prioritized and sequenced approach to UN system activities for the short-, medium- and long-term, i.e. who does what where and when (4Ws).
- Analysis must be updated regularly. As required for the CCA analysis, it should be revisited once a year and more often in highly dynamic contexts or in response to major events. Updating should be written into activity plans in a timely manner to inform important decisions made by the project.
- Analysis should be adequately resourced with suitable time allocated for it within workplans and activity management plans. Good analysis takes time and money, though updating is much simpler and more cost effective than preparing new analyses.
- Wherever possible, analysis should build on existing information, such as publicly available data, staff knowledge or knowledge held by partners. Sharing analysis within the UN system can increase efficiency, reduce the risk that (particularly local) communities will face analysis "fatigue," and increase coordination and the complementarity of activities by providing a common perspective relating to the context.

Helpful Tip: Gender, Youth and Conflict Analysis

It is essential when undertaking conflict analysis to also consider the context from a gender and youth perspective. For conflict sensitivity, this allows decision makers to consider how different conflict risks and opportunities may have different implications based on gender or age.

For each analysis question identified above, it is important to also ask about gender and youth. For example, when identifying factors, it is necessary to ask what gender or age/generational related issues might also contribute to conflict. When looking at relationships, it is important to ask how different genders or generations may relate differently. And could women and youth, or the organizations they lead, be agents of change?

Additional Resources

- United Nations Development Group, 2016, *Conducting a Conflict and Development Analysis Tool*, available online at https://undg.org/document/conflict-and-development-analysis-tool/, accessed July 2019.
- United Nations, *2016, United Nations Conflict Analysis Practice Note*, available online at https://unsdg.un.org/resources/un-conflict-analysis-practice-note, accessed July 2019.
- Saferworld, 2016, *Gender analysis of conflict toolkit*, available online at https://www.saferworld.org.uk/resources/publications/1076-gender-analysis-of-conflict, accessed September 2019.
- Conciliation Resources, 2015, *Gender and conflict analysis toolkit for peacebuilders*, available online at https://www.c-r.org/resource/gender-and-conflict-analysis-toolkit-peacebuilders, accessed September 2019.
- FAO, 2019, *Guide to context analysis informing FAO decision-making - Approaches to working in fragile and conflict-affected contexts*, available online at: http://www.fao.org/3/ca5968en/CA5968EN.pdf
- UN, 2018, *The Missing Peace: Independent Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security*, available at: https://www.un.org/peacebuilding/news/missing-peace-independent-progress-study-youth-peace-and-security



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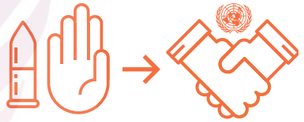
Step 2, How do UN activities interact with peace and conflict?

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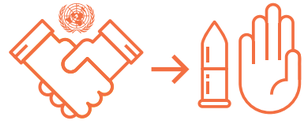
At the heart of conflict sensitivity is the recognition that UN activities cannot be separated from the peace and conflict context in which they are implemented. The second conflict sensitivity step seeks to identify the two-way interactions between the peace and conflict context and UN activities.

Two guiding questions are relevant:

1 **How does the peace and conflict context affect UN activities?; and**



2 **How do UN activities affect the peace and conflict context?**



Question 1: How does the peace and conflict context affect UN activities?

Being conflict sensitive requires a nuanced understanding of what is needed and achievable within the context to ensure that activities remain relevant, appropriate, timely and realistic. Conflict affects the ability to deliver UN activities by increasing uncertainty and risks. The table below describes some of the major types of risk to activities.

UN entities that already have established mechanisms for addressing the way conflict affects their programming embedded within their risk management processes, particularly within projects or interventions, can regularly initiate an informed review as part of a conflict-sensitive approach.

Conflict sensitivity necessitates repeatedly asking several difficult questions as the peace and conflict context evolves:

- Are activities (still) relevant, appropriate and timely?
- Have new priorities emerged that are not being addressed?
- Is it (still) possible to implement the activities and what realistic impact will they have?
- What is the differentiated impact the activity could have on women vs. men, young people vs. adults, young women vs. young men, etc.?

Interaction risks

Changing priorities

Conflict may affect the relevance, appropriateness and timeliness of existing UN activities, while new priorities may also emerge as a direct result of conflict, such as new humanitarian or peacebuilding needs.

Security risks

Staff, partners and assets may be exposed to violence and increased security threats, restricting travel and engagement with interlocutors and beneficiaries and increasing the cost of working.

Access challenges

Political, armed and other conflict actors may limit access to certain locations or insist on accompanying UN activities in order to control access.

Financial risks

In conflict settings, the cost of goods and services may experience greater volatility and loss due to corruption and theft may also increase, with the result of higher delivery costs and financial uncertainty.

Sustainability

The sustainability of UN activities may be affected by the violent destruction of assets, changing counterparts and partners or political or policy uncertainty.

Due diligence and compliance

The prevalence of conflict actors, the emergence of a conflict economy and difficulties in finding information increase the difficulties in undertaking due diligence of counterparts, partners and beneficiaries.

Reputational risks

The way UN entities manage these other risks may impact the reputation of the organization, affecting their ability to continue working with counterparts, partners and beneficiaries or to mobilize resources, and impacting future programmes.

These questions can be difficult to ask as they could potentially result in a conclusion that it is not appropriate to continue activities. Nevertheless, they are important to consider in order to ensure that UN activities are being delivered efficiently and sustainably and are maximizing their contribution to sustaining peace.

Question 2: How do UN activities affect peace and conflict?

The second guiding question considers how UN activities may affect peace and conflict. Analysing this requires building on the understanding of the peace and conflict context established in Step 1. Fundamentally, UN activities may impact peace and conflict in two ways:

- *By changing peace and conflict factors* – Activities may affect the factors that influence peace and conflict; and
- *By affecting stakeholders* – Activities may empower or disempower actors, providing recognition, status or legitimacy, increasing trust, changing relationships among groups, or endangering partners.

These impacts may be:

- *Positive or negative* – Activities could contribute to sustaining peace or they could worsen conflict drivers and exacerbate tensions;
- *Direct or indirect* – Factors and stakeholders may be affected directly through engagement, or indirectly, as a side effect of activities; or
- *Intentional or unintentional* – The impact of activities on peace and conflict could be foreseen and intended by decision makers or accidental and unforeseen.

Types of Interactions

Interactions between UN activities and peace and conflict fall into several types, presented in the table below.[13]

Types of interactions

	Example impacts on factors	Example impacts on stakeholders
Distribution effect Groups in conflict may perceive that the benefits of an activity are reinforcing existing inequalities or are distributed in accordance with existing social, political or economic divisions or tensions.	Distribution effects can change the way perceived and actual inequalities affect peace and conflict and can increase those inequalities or reduce them. Distribution effects may feed into pre-existing identities and inter-communal relations, strengthening social tensions and political divisions.	Unequal distribution of the benefits of activities among groups can contribute to tensions among them, especially when a group feels marginalized or excluded. Distribution effects can reduce tensions among groups when activities are delivered across existing tensions or divisions in a collaborative manner, or where stakeholders that may be in conflict are encouraged to collaborate on common objectives.
Inclusion effect Creating or strengthening dialogue mechanisms that are accessible to all, irrespective of sex, age, ethnicity, etc. can signal inclusion and could reinforce dignity, trust and social cohesion among (groups of) people.	Including people, communities and groups that might be at odds with each other in the analysis, design, implementation and monitoring and evaluation could enhance social cohesion.	Inclusive processes could reduce the sense of feeling excluded or marginalized.
Recognition effect Working with or alongside actors can give status, recognition and perceived legitimacy to those actors.	Working with or through authorities who are non-representative and non-inclusive can give the impression that UN entities support such approaches, exacerbating perceptions of marginalisation. Working with actors based on the degree to which they operate in accordance with defined political, administrative and legal processes can strengthen the idea of peaceful political processes and the rule of law.	Recognition effects can empower actors, increasing their influence and capacity and changing the power balance between them and others. This could strengthen conflict actors or could empower those who might not otherwise have a voice.

[13] Typology of interactions in the table has been adapted from M Anderson, 1999, *Do No Harm: How Aid Can Support peace – or War*, Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner.

Capacity effect The way activities are delivered may affect how state and non-state structures and institutions function.	Weak state institutions may be made weaker when basic services are delivered by the UN rather than by those institutions. Assistance or services delivered through state institutions can strengthen their capacity to deliver services in a responsive and inclusive manner.	Replacement of state institutions can weaken confidence in governance authorities and strengthen the role of alternative political or conflict actors, and/or reliance on UN activities.
Economic market effect UN activities may affect economic markets by changing economic fundamentals, affecting supply streams, creating new markets or undermining existing ones.	Activities may overwhelm local markets with goods such as food aid, undermining the viability of licit economic activity and encouraging actors to engage in illicit activities, which may be linked to conflict. UN activities may strengthen the economic independence, or development, of certain groups or areas, contributing to inequalities. Alternatively, activities may build economic supply chains across conflict lines, encouraging positive economic inter-dependency.	Negative market effects may strengthen those conflict actors who are able control illicit economic activities or the benefits of corruption. Economic actors are more likely to support peace when there are economic incentives to do so.
Theft/diversion Actors on the ground may steal or redirect assistance or the benefits of activities for distribution to their own constituencies or to pursue their own interests. Alternatively, they may use their influence or control to deny that assistance or benefit to others.	Theft and diversion of resources may provide significant economic incentives for maintaining a state of conflict.	Actors with the ability to steal or divert assistance or benefits of activities will be empowered and have greater resources to pursue their interests. Diversion and/or denial of assistance or assets may be used as leverage by one conflict actor over others.
Modelling behaviour Stakeholders may see the way UN entities and other assistance providers behave as a model for how to conduct themselves.	UN activities delivered in a way that is unaccountable, non-inclusive, or focuses on delivery over process, legitimizes such approaches to partners, beneficiaries and other stakeholders. Activities delivered in a way that encourages inclusive and participatory processes, following defined processes, may strengthen the place of such approaches as conflict management mechanisms.	Stakeholders may mirror lack of trust or lack of transparency demonstrated by UN entities in their own interactions. Stakeholders may mirror behaviour that promotes trust and accountability by UN entities.

Reviewing the impact of UN activities

In designing new activities, when context analyses are updated and when significant changes occur in the context, it is important to analyse how UN activities may affect the peace and conflict context.

These impacts could be positive or negative. Negative interactions constitute conflict risks that activities may contribute to conflict and do harm, while positive interactions represent opportunities through which UN activities may contribute to sustaining peace. Managing these risks and opportunities is described in the next chapters.

Case study: Risk of heightened tensions through agricultural support

In a conflict setting, a UN agency supported improved knowledge and agricultural inputs for local farmers to strengthen resilience. This resulted in increased vegetable crop production. Restrictions in access to local markets, however, meant that the crops were sold at lower than expected prices to opportunistic intermediaries linked with local elites. With negligible improvement in household resilience, due to the lower than expected income, the increased local production significantly increased profits for intermediaries linked to conflict actors.

Furthermore, the project focused on a specific geographical area, but the increased vegetable crop volume was sold into the main governorate-level market, which over time, due to newly constructed cold storage capacities, undermined the economic interests of producers from other districts in the governorate. This resulted in increased tensions, disputes and ultimately armed clashes.

These two adverse effects of an otherwise successful project exemplify the need to understand risks more broadly, and how UN activities might inadvertently affect peace and conflict at the local and sub-national level. Both negative effects were addressed, by providing additional training to farmers, supporting collective negotiating capacity, crop diversification and through better understanding of local market dynamics, thus reducing the risk of further tensions and violence.

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Additional Resources

- M. Wallace, 2015, From Principle to Practice: A User's Guide to Do No Harm, CDA Collaborative Learning Projects.
- M. Anderson, 1999, *Do No Harm: How Aid Can Support Peace – or War*, Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner.
- UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations, 2011, *Human Rights Due Diligence Policy on UN support to non-UN security forces (HRDDP)*, available online at http://dag.un.org/handle/11176/387416, accessed September 2019

Case study: Need to redefine international assistance in Libya in 2014

As a result of the sudden escalation in violence after the 2014 Libyan elections, most existing international projects focusing on service delivery, institutional support and capacity building of government and civil society were paused, initially due to security and access and later also due to political and institutional uncertainty.

It took international actors including donors and the UN, six to nine months to determine that many of those projects were no longer relevant to the changed political and conflict context in the country and would either need to be redesigned or stopped.

If donors and the UN had more critically focused on reviewing the relevance of programming in response to their changing awareness of the situation, they might have been able to respond more quickly and efficiently.



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Step 3, Managing the dilemmas and risks of feeding conflict

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The third conflict sensitivity step looks to adapt UN activities to manage risks and leverage opportunities to build and sustain peace. This chapter focuses on managing the risks of feeding conflict highlighted in the conflict sensitivity analysis/assessment by identifying strategies to mitigate and respond to them. The next chapter will outline how to leverage opportunities to build and sustain peace.

Identifying and managing risks of feeding into conflict

A risk that feeds into conflict is a potential interaction between activities and the peace and conflict context, which could worsen conflict dynamics.

Managing risks requires identifying *mitigations* to reduce the likelihood and impact of risks and developing *responses* to minimize the consequences of risks when they occur.

Activities should be designed to incorporate these mitigations and responses. The table on pages 50-51 highlights some example risks, mitigations and responses in a matrix tool, which can be useful to catalogue risks faced by UN activities.[14]

Several considerations are worth bearing in mind when identifying risks, mitigations and responses:

- Some risks may seem obvious, particularly to those who have been involved in context analysis. Nevertheless, it is important to explicitly name and identify those risks and to think through mitigations and responses, even if they appear to be already built into activities. Explicitly dealing with risks ensures that what may be obvious to some should be described to everyone. It also provides a reference point for reviewing risks in the event where the context may shift.
- Managing a risk feeding conflict by adopting mitigations and responses may in turn create new risks. When adapting UN activities in response to identified risks, it is important to further assess the potential impact of those adaptations.
- Addressing risks feeding conflict is not about risk avoidance. Often, harm may also be caused by not delivering UN activities, particularly when those activities may respond to urgent humanitarian needs or address long-term structural drivers of conflict. In such circumstances, the responsibility of implementers is to carefully weigh the potential benefits and harm of those activities and to minimize harm wherever possible.
- Mitigating risks that feed conflict may not require significant changes to activities. Rather, they may include subtle adaptations in terms of process, dialogue, consultations, communications and the stakeholders engagement during activities or locations where activities may be undertaken. These small changes can make a big difference in terms of preventing conflict and are much easier than responding when tensions escalate.

[14] The risks identified in the table are examples only and, therefore, quite generic. Risks are activity and context specific and should be identified for each activity.

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Helpful Tip:
When to review risks

Risks, mitigations and responses are most easily considered during the planning and design of UN activities.

However, because peace and context change and new risks may be identified, a regular review of risks should also be included within activity monitoring. Time should also be allocated for reviewing updates to risks during governance processes like project board meetings, coordination mechanisms or in the UNCT.

- Where risks do require significant adaptions to activities, either during design or implementation, it is best to deal with these openly and proactively. This is easier when conflict sensitivity is embedded into the project design and when management and donors are on board and informed about the potential conflict sensitivity challenges the activities may face.
- On occasion, it may not be possible to deal with risks within one project or intervention, or even within the mandate or capacity of one organization. In such circumstances, it is worth considering whether other projects within the country programme, other UN entities or other partners could be engaged to help address the risks, such as through coordinated action or adding complementary dialogue, mediation or access negotiation activities.
- Particularly at the project level, it may appear impossible to deal with risks that are influenced by higher strategic level issues or by other actors. It is still necessary to identify such risks, to understand potential harm that could be caused and identify ways to minimize those. Identifying and detailing such risks can also be used to advocate for change with strategic decision makers or policy makers.
- Mitigations and responses to risks can be easily undermined if different assistance providers adopt different approaches. It is especially valuable to identify risks, mitigations and responses with other assistance providers working in the same context to develop common approaches and strategies. Providing a space for discussion of conflict sensitivity through coordination mechanisms or at the UNCT level provides an opportunity to jointly analyse risks, both at the operational and strategic levels.

Conflict sensitivity dilemmas

A conflict sensitivity dilemma is a situation where any course of action, including not delivering an activity, could cause harm to the peace and conflict context. Navigating conflict sensitivity dilemmas requires careful consideration of the risks and potential benefits of different courses of action and explicit recognition of the potential harms that could result from activities. After potential mitigations and responses are identified and different options weighed, it may be necessary to adopt a "least bad" option. When doing so, it is important to outline why a particular approach is adopted.

There is a temptation when dealing with a conflict sensitivity dilemma to try to ignore it, refuse to recognize it, or to downplay it. This is understandable. It is difficult for anyone to accept that harm may be caused by their work, while organizations also often fear reputational consequences if harm caused by their work is identified to partners, stakeholders or the media. It is invariably better in such circumstances to explicitly acknowledge conflict sensitivity dilemmas during planning and review. Doing so can help staff and organizations justify the reasons for adopting particular approaches and allow for more effective programming.

If necessary, the thinking behind decisions for navigating the conflict sensitivity dilemmas can also be used to manage reputational risk, by allowing decision makers to demonstrate how they have engaged in thorough efforts to navigate the challenges of working in such a challenging context.

South Sudan Case Study

A UN agency and local partners worked with semi-nomadic livestock-owning Dinka Ngok and the Missiriya communities in the Abyei Administrative Area (a contested zone on the border between South Sudan and the Sudan) to reduce the risk of resource-based conflicts and strengthen resilience. Though historically both communities had peacefully shared grazing land and water in the area, conflicts between the two communities over natural resources had become more frequent in recent years.

One concern both groups share is livestock health – a crucial source of livelihoods and the main asset of many families. Given the movement of animals in search of pasture and risk of disease transmission, provision of community-based veterinary services to both communities was identified as an entry point to allow wider natural resource access and use issues to be addressed.

This presented, however, a dilemma. Not exploiting this window of opportunity to build inter-community bridges could mean continued tensions and conflict between the groups, but engaging both groups separately through vaccination campaigns could have the unintended consequence of reinforcing their "separateness" on either side of the delimitation zone.

After careful analysis, lengthy discussions and negotiations with local authorities and traditional leaders, it was agreed that veterinarians working with the Dinka Ngok led Secretariat of Agriculture, Animal Resources and Fishery (SAARF) would be supported with technical training and inputs, and vaccinate Missiriya cattle. These actions, as well as improved resilience and livestock health, led over time to a positive impact on levels of trust and confidence between the two ethnic groups. Missiriya cattle herders were allowed to cross into Dinka Ngok controlled territory in search of water points and grazing, eventually resulting in a local level peace agreement on movement of livestock and access to natural resources.

Additional Resources

- CDA, 2004, *The Do No Harm Handbook (The Framework for Analyzing the Impact of Assistance on Conflict)*, Local Capacities for Peace Project, Collaborative Development Action and CDA Collaborative Learning Projects.

This table presents some examples of conflict risks at a generic level, including potential mitigations and responses.

Conflict risk	Description	Examples mitigation	Examples response
(Perceptions of) inequitable delivery of the benefits of activities exacerbates real or perceived inequalities among different community groups and worsens inter-communal relations. **(Distribution effect)**	The need for assistance overlaps with communal groups, political affiliation, identity or other differences, such as displaced persons in a host community. When activities are delivered in such a context, groups that do not receive benefits feel marginalized or excluded, worsening relations among them. The resulting increase in tension may trigger violence among communities and against partners and implementers.	Establish delivery consultation mechanisms that are inclusive of different groups within the area and which meaningfully inform implementation of activities (may require slowing down of activities). Establish and communicate clear criteria for deciding beneficiaries of activities to leaders and members of different groups. Identify ways to include other groups within activities. Establish dialogue or grievance mechanisms.	Engage with groups to understand concerns and clearly communicate the basis for selection of beneficiaries.
Delivery of assistance undermines ordinary economy and incentivizes conflict-related economic activity **(Economic market effect)**	Humanitarian assistance may reduce the price of food and other products on the local market, reducing the sustainability of local businesses. Cash assistance, on the other hand, could drive up prices. Lower prices may drive local businesses and labour towards conflict-related economic activities, such as providing services and supplies to conflict actors, illicit activities or participation in armed and criminal groups. Higher prices could benefit a limited number of traders or local businesses.	Ensure humanitarian assistance is informed by an understanding of local markets. Humanitarian assistance should include purchases from local markets in a way that minimizes the inflationary impact of the price of goods and does not incentivize conflict actors to consolidate control of local markets.	Undertake a cost/benefit analysis of negative impact vs. urgent humanitarian needs. Reassess how goods and supplies are sourced.
Engagement with competing authorities reinforces political polarization and perceptions of marginalization. **(Recognition effect)**	Working with or through authorities who are non-representative and non-inclusive can give the impression that UN entities support such approaches, exacerbating perceptions of marginalisation. Working with actors based on the degree to which they operate in accordance with defined political, administrative and legal processes can strengthen the idea of peaceful political processes and the rule of law.	UN entities and other international actors should work towards defining a commonly agreed set of principles towards dealing with different authorities in the context.	Engage in clear and coherent messaging towards national and local counterparts, as well as the wider population, regarding the principles and basis for UN engagement with different political actors.
Humanitarian assistance is stolen by armed groups **(Theft/diversion effect)**	A portion of humanitarian assistance may be stolen by armed groups in command of checkpoints or areas of distribution. This assistance may be redirected to members of the armed group or its constituency or may be sold for profit, strengthening the capacity of the armed group to pursue its objectives.	Monitoring of extent to which humanitarian assistance is diverted. Ensure access is negotiated with groups, including clear communication of the purposes of humanitarian assistance and terms of access are agreed.	Look to alternative modalities for delivery when theft/diversion is identified, for example, through digital cash transfers directly to beneficiaries. Engage with political or diplomatic actors to apply pressure on armed groups. Undertake cost/benefit assessment of degree to which armed groups benefit from diversion/theft and humanitarian objectives are compromised.

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Step 4, Leveraging opportunities for building and sustaining peace

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Conflict sensitivity is not just about managing potential harm. If UN activities can contribute to conflict through negative interactions, they can also contribute to sustaining peace through positive interactions. Step 4 requires UN entities to consider how their activities can leverage opportunities to contribute to building and sustaining peace.

How to identify and leverage opportunities to build and sustain peace

Opportunities for UN activities to contribute to building and sustaining peace can be identified by reviewing the interactions identified in steps 2 and 3 and thinking through how those interactions could be used positively.

As opportunities are identified, it is necessary to consider how activities should be adapted in order to take advantage of them.

As with risks, peacebuilding opportunities are context and activity specific. In general, UN activities may contribute to building and sustaining peace in three broad ways:

1. By positively addressing peace and conflict factors;
2. By improving the relationships among stakeholders, for example, among groups or between the state and the population; and
3. By inducing positive attitudes and behaviour.

Positively addressing peace and conflict factors

UN activities are likely to interact with peace and conflict factors affecting the context in which they are undertaken. When seeking to identify opportunities, it is important to list which factors the activities could affect and how, i.e. a theory of change should be developed. Then, based on an understanding of how those factors affect peace and conflict, identify if and how activities could be adjusted to reduce the negative impacts of factors and/or promote the positive ones.

Peacebuilding interventions are typically designed with the express intention of addressing peace and conflict factors. This can include a range of activities from security sector reform, fostering political agreements or building local community conflict management mechanisms. Peacebuilding approaches can also be integrated into larger programmes with primary objectives in the areas of, for example, education, health, food security or water and sanitation.

Other conflict entry points might exist for responding to peace and conflict factors. For example, where a peace and conflict factor has been identified relating to inequalities in service provision among different communal

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Helpful Tip:
Thinking about opportunities

Identifying opportunities through which UN activities can contribute to building and sustaining peace may appear more difficult than identifying potential risks. It is relatively easy to identify problems compared with solutions, and the costs of doing harm are often easier to grasp than the opportunity costs associated with missed positive contributions.

To aid identification of positive contributions, explicit brainstorming processes for identifying opportunities to contribute to sustaining peace should be undertaken during the planning and design of assistance activities. When context analyses are updated, it is also important to ask if new opportunities have emerged as a result of changes in the context.

groups, UN activities aimed at rehabilitating local services can be designed in a way that directly reduces those inequalities, by ensuring that the benefits of activities are distributed across communal lines.

Improving relationships among stakeholders

The way in which United Nations activities are delivered can often be leveraged to improve relationships among stakeholders. Some ways this could be achieved include:

- Participatory design, planning, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation processes;
- Incorporating processes into activities that foster trust across conflict divides, such as collaborative needs assessments or participatory decision-making processes;
- Establishing dialogue and grievance mechanisms;
- Delivering assistance in a way that fosters interdependency across conflict divides;
- Enhancing trust among groups and between the population and the government; and
- Applying approaches that ensure that communities or social groups which may not otherwise have a voice, including women and youth, can be heard by other stakeholders and incorporated into needs assessments and decision making.

Again, peacebuilding activities may be designed with the intention of addressing these relationships directly, such as through dialogue or reconciliation mechanisms.

Other conflict-sensitive activities may also improve relationships among stakeholders. For example, activities aimed at building local governance capacity may include efforts to ensure that local authorities develop processes for public consultation that includes all communities and constituencies within the area.

Inducing positive attitudes and behaviour

The way UN entities act can have a significant influence on partners, beneficiaries and other stakeholders. It is important to ensure that UN activities are implemented in a way that bolsters principles of trust, inclusivity, due process and rule of law, strengthening good governance and building accountability.

Activities should be implemented:

- In consultation with all relevant stakeholders, beneficiaries and legitimate authorities, including women, youth, traditionally marginalized groups, etc.;
- In some cases, certain groups are better consulted separately, for example, if there are discussions related to conflict-related sexual violence as part of the conflict analysis;
- In a way that is relevant to the needs of beneficiaries and all segments of the population, inclusive of the various stakeholders involved and responsive to feedback;
- Transparently and openly, with clear communication of their purpose and the basis for certain decisions;
- Based on clear and open criteria informing participation and/or beneficiary selection;

Theory of Change

A theory of change describes the assumed or hoped causal relationship between an intervention and its (intended) peacebuilding outcome, result or impact. It explains *why* a certain result is expected.

In its simplest form it can be stated as:

> "If we do X (action), then it will achieve Y (progress towards peace)"

A theory of change should include the results chain, pathway or sequence of change that lead to the long-term outcome that the interventions aim to achieve and the context and assumptions the pathway depends on.

The need to check assumptions (and prejudices, etc.) against evidence is critical. The process of defining a theory of change is an important tool for critical thinking and dialogue that makes assumptions explicit and contributes to better designed interventions and results.

Theories of change need to be flexible, precise, nuanced and contextually specific. It needs to be reviewed regularly in order to adapt activities if the context changes or assumptions turn out to be false based on, for example, monitoring and evaluation.

A theory of change for peacebuilding needs to be based on a conflict analysis, which would identify drivers of conflict that specific activities try to address. A few examples[1] of theories of change are:

- *If* communities work together to identify common needs, and collectively respond to these needs, *then* relationships will be fostered across ethnic/sectarian/tribal/other divides.
- *If* communities strengthen conflict mediation mechanisms, and local livelihoods are improved through income generation strategies, *then* communities will be more resilient to violent conflict related to natural resource management, and intra- and inter-community trust will be strengthened.
- *If* natural resources are enhanced and equitable agreements are reached on their use, *then* conflict / tensions over natural resource access between competing user groups will reduce.
- *If* livelihoods are strengthened through an inclusive participatory process, *then* the community will work together, which signals a positive change in circumstances, reducing a sense of marginalization and strengthening resilience, and will provide purpose and meaningful employment to youth at risk of recruitment into armed groups.
- *If* the government develops responsive, inclusive and accountable institutions at the national and subnational levels and enhances service delivery accessible to all segments of the population, thereby addressing grievances around inequalities, *then* citizens will increasingly trust the state and reduce tensions among groups.
- *If* dialogue or grievance mechanisms to connect citizens to local authorities are strengthened and referrals are made to enhance access and the quality of service delivery, then this contributes to fostering state-citizen trust and legitimacy.
- *If* legal barriers for young people to political participation are removed through reforms of voting laws that address age, caste, religious and gender-based discrimination and exclusion then youth participation, and ultimately, their confidence in governing institutions will increase.
- *If* assistance is provided to both host and IDP communities, then this can prevent tensions over access to resources.
- *If* government enhances and maintains its performance in the provision of basic social services, including education and nutrition, then this signals the state's willingness and ability to respond to its population's needs and citizens will trust the state.

[1] See Caroline Delgado, Suyoun Jang, Gary Milante and Dan Smith, *The World Food Programmeme's contribution to improving the prospects for peace*, Preliminary Report, June 2019, available at: https://www.sipri.org/publications/2019/other-publications/world-food-programmes-contribution-improving-prospects-peace.

- With due sensitivity to historical, cultural and communal considerations; and
- Based on clear processes communicated to stakeholders and followed consistently.

It is essential that communication strategies and key messages are aligned with conflict sensitivity aims.

Leveraging opportunities for building and sustaining peace by integrating peacebuilding as a primary or secondary objective

When leveraging opportunities for building and sustaining peace, another important consideration is whether and how specific peacebuilding goals are incorporated into UN interventions and programmes – where peacebuilding goals might be the primary or secondary objective/intent of the action. This is especially true for UN development and humanitarian actors. This can be reflected in the theory of change.

When peacebuilding is a **primary objective**, the logic of the intervention is first and foremost deliberately focused on building and sustaining peace through the type of actions outlined above – with other humanitarian or development outcomes as secondary goals. For example, for a development programme, this could lead to formulating a specific result area (at the outcome or output level) around the peacebuilding objective, while other important development objectives (health, nutrition, education, etc.) become secondary in nature. Humanitarian action may contribute to peace, but it will not be a primary objective as its main purpose remains to address lifesaving needs and alleviate suffering.

When peacebuilding is a **secondary objective** of an intervention, programme seeks to primarily fulfil development or humanitarian goal, such as strengthening social service delivery, while secondarily fulfilling peacebuilding objectives. In these cases, the commitment to peacebuilding objectives might be reflected in secondary result areas, such as the integration of specific peacebuilding activities into the programme design, the type of indicators chosen and/or decisions over "how" programmes are to be designed and carried out, for example, in relation to the choice over programming strategies, sequencing or partnerships.

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Building capacities for conflict prevention in Bolivia

The project "Building and Consolidating National Capacities for Conflict Prevention" is part of the second phase of an EU and UN collaboration to support national and local actors in internal conflict management processes and the development of skills for dialogue and constructive negotiation in nine conflict settings. In Bolivia, the project focused on capacity building on dialogue, mediation and constructive conflict management during a politically dynamic time, with a particular emphasis on the mining sector and on women. Activities aimed to increase insider mediation capacities of civil society stakeholders and the public sector as well as the country's peace architecture. The project has enabled the building of networks between the civil society stakeholders in the mining sector and mining and metallurgy ministry officials. The civil society organizations participants have continued to apply the skills obtained through the project in all spaces of life: at personal, family, community and professional levels.

Source: "Strengthening capacities for dialogue and the constructive management of conflicts of the joint EU and UN on Bolivia," mission report, final 2018

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Step 5, Monitoring and evaluating conflict sensitivity and peacebuilding

Monitoring peace and conflict dynamics

in the context of UN activities is key to ensure a programme remains conflict sensitive, does "no harm" and positively impacts peacebuilding outcomes throughout its lifecycle. Evaluating against conflict sensitivity and peacebuilding outcomes is essential to ensure accountability and document positive – and negative – impacts on peace from the programme intervention.

Monitoring peace and conflict issues

The objective of monitoring peace and conflict dynamics in the context of the activities is to ensure that activities are sensitive to the conflict; create awareness of the potential risks to peace as conflict risks evolve and as the programme unfolds; and adapt programme activities according to emerging or changing conflict risks. In this regard, a monitoring framework should seek to:

- Understand how peace and conflict affects delivery of activities;
- Identify how conflict risks are impacted by programmatic activities; and
- Identify when new opportunities for peace emerge and how ongoing activities can be leveraged.

Conflict-sensitive programmes should adequately resource such activities – or at least ensure that activities are informed by an ongoing evolving understanding of conflict dynamics, beyond the design phase of the programme. This requires monitoring peace and conflict dynamics and that their relations to a programme is explicitly included as part of the design and planning of activities.

For programmes that seek an explicit positive impact on peacebuilding outcomes, involve-ment of local stakeholder is key and can be secured through either perception surveys, dialogue mechanisms or community-based monitoring. These approaches can:

- Improve understanding of project progress and impact during implementation, which is especially important and relevant with activities as sensitive, subjective and qualitative as peacebuilding;
- Provide access to project feedback in real time and directly from stakeholders so that adjustments can be made before the project has ended;
- Tailor current and future projects and policies to local needs, including ensuring respect of the Do-No-Harm principle; and
- Empower beneficiaries through greater involvement and participation in project implementation, monitoring and evaluation as well as design and analysis.

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OECD DAC Criteria[15]

Criteria	Application for Conflict Sensitivity	Application for Peacebuilding
Relevance	Is the intervention responsive and adjusting to the conflict context?	Do objectives and activities address key drivers of conflict and are responsive to conflict?
Effectiveness	Are conflict mitigation measures effective in managing conflict and generating peacebuilding outcomes?	Have intended objectives been met with respect to addressing key drivers of conflict?
Impact	What are the effects, intended or unintended, on the peace and conflict context?	What are the effects on the key drivers of peace and conflict in the context?
Sustainability	Will the programme be culturally accepted, and how does it link to local capacities, power structures? Or is it at odds with local dynamics?	Are the peacebuilding outcomes sustainable beyond the lifetime of the project?

Evaluating peacebuilding and conflict sensitivity outcomes

Programmes that seek to do no harm and have a positive impact on peace should include evaluation of peacebuilding and conflict sensitivity outcomes and impacts – with a view to reporting results of the activities and to identifying lessons that can inform relevance, effectiveness and impact on peacebuilding outcomes. The OECD DAC criteria for evaluating development assistance is a widely used and understood evaluation framework which measures relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability.

Evaluation of programmes that seek to make a positive contribution to peacebuilding and sustaining peace should be considered already at the design stage of programming. Indicators related to the peacebuilding outcomes should be selected, informed by the theory of change, and programme design should be structured accordingly. Specific peacebuilding related indicators depend on the conflict analysis and the intended (and unintended) impact of the intervention. Typical peace outcomes could relate to popular perceptions; levels of trust and confidence in governments; trust among groups; level of participation and buy-in from key stakeholders; non-recidivism of project beneficiaries; and social cohesion.

UN tools for ensuring conflict-sensitive programmes

While conflict-sensitive programmes require context and conflict analysis, monitoring peace and conflict dynamics and evaluating peacebuilding outcomes, there are a range of system-wide tools available to support the implementation of conflict sensitivity. These include:

- The Common Country Analysis (CCA) - which should offer an analytical foundation for context analysis and should include a multidimensional risk and conflict analysis relevant to most programmes;
- UN INFO, which has implemented a peacebuilding marker to help track the extent to which key activities under the SDCF are conflict sensitive and designed with the aim to achieve peacebuilding outcomes;
- Agency-specific conflict-sensitivity markers to track the extent to which individual programmes are indeed conflict sensitive; and
- Human Rights based approach, which is normatively based on international human rights standards and operationally directed to promoting and protecting human rights, seeks to analyse inequalities which lie at the heart of conflicts and redress discriminatory practices and unjust distributions of power that impede peacebuilding.

The table on pages 61-63 describes a list of activities that help incorporate conflict sensitivity in the UN activities related to monitoring and evaluation across programming, planning, policy, coordination and procurement.

Conflict sensitivity and peacebuilding indicators

Several considerations should be taken into account when deciding on peacebuilding indicators to inform monitoring and evaluation of peacebuilding programmes and conflict-sensitive programmes:

Type/level of engagement

Step 1: Understand context	Step 2: Analyse interaction with UN programmes	Step 3: Adapt UN monitoring and evaluation efforts
Developing and implementing an intervention or project		
Project staff have access to regularly updated conflict analysis, detailing factors, actors and dynamics relevant to the areas in which project activities are being delivered, including analyses of local areas where activities are implemented. RCOs and UNCTs can draw on expertise throughout UN system, including from non-resident entities.	Project activities are reviewed in terms of which conflict factors they may impact, which stakeholders are involved and which relationships they may affect. Conflict risks are identified within project risk matrices, outlining how project activities could harm conflict dynamics. Potential opportunities for contributing to building and sustaining peace are identified and listed.	Mitigations are identified and incorporated into project activities to reduce likelihood and impact of conflict risks. Response plan developed to respond to conflict risks when they occur. Project activities adjusted to take advantage of opportunities that contribute to building and sustaining peace – and peacebuilding indicators are adopted and implemented at the outcome level. Key conflict dynamics are effectively monitored and programmes are continually adapted. Project governance meetings reflect on the continued conflict sensitivity of activities, informed by updated analysis, and are open to making changes as necessary.

[15] Table adapted from R Goldwyn, D Chigas, 2013, 'Monitoring and evaluating conflict sensitivity: Methodological challenges and practical solutions', Conflict, Crime and Violent Results Initiative (CCVRI), DFID.

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Developing a country strategy or programme – such as the UNSDCF

Overall and up-to-date country conflict analysis is part of CCA.

Conflict drivers and risk factors are indicators and peacebuilding outcomes are considered part of the programme design and strategy.

In the case of the UNSDCF, UNCT members are consulted and take part in the conflict analysis. The government can be consulted, but should not sign-off on analysis in preparing UNSDCF.

Relevance, appropriateness and timeliness of programme are reviewed in relation to peace and conflict context.

Peace and conflict factors are reviewed in terms of how they could be affected by proposed programming –positively or negatively – and the effect of proposed programming on peace and conflict dynamics is assessed.

Conflict risks are identified, including risks of not delivering assistance along certain lines.

Peacebuilding outcomes and the do-no harm principle are made explicit topics for strategic reviews/mid-term evaluations, informed by updated analysis and M&E data.

Programmatic priorities are linked to addressing conflict factors where relevant and possible, in order to reduce the risk of violent conflict.

Mitigation plans are developed to manage conflict risks – at the senior strategic level.

Coordination

Context and conflict analysis are conducted jointly, for example, as part of CCA.

Coordination processes are informed by a shared, mutually understood conflict analysis.

Joint identification of conflict risks is undertaken.

Shared assessment of how coordinated activities may affect the peace and conflict context is conducted.

Joint assessment of opportunities to contribute to peace is undertaken.

Coordination mechanisms are used to create coherence and synergies among UN system activities, including between peacekeeping or political mission and UNCT.

Coordination mechanisms are used to mutually agree on compatible conflict risk mitigations and responses.

Procurement and grant management

Due diligence checks are undertaken for implementers, including their relation to conflict actors.

Assessment is undertaken regarding how the engagement of the contractor may affect the peace and conflict context, including affecting factors and relationships between stakeholders.

Implementers demonstrate understanding of conflict sensitivity and peacebuilding, and the procurement process does not inadvertently exacerbate grievances.

Conflict sensitivity and peacebuilding indicators are written into procurement documents.

Human resources

Staff have access to up-to-date conflict analysis and contextual understanding relevant to their work. All staff working in conflict settings should aim to take conflict analysis and peacebuilding training, for example, online at UNSSC.

Staff receive training on incorporating conflict and peacebuilding into their work.

Conflict sensitivity and peacebuilding are incorporated into staff performance appraisals.

Communications

Developed understanding is established of media usage, predominant narratives and political sensitivities within the peace and conflict context.

Periodic review is undertaken of how communication messages have been received, including if/how they have fed into political narratives.

Communication materials are reviewed from a conflict sensitivity perspective before release.

Communications plan is developed for responding to conflict risks when/if they occur.

- Indicators must be realistic given resources available and access to data – there is no use identifying indicators that cannot realistically be measured;
- Wherever possible, peacebuilding indicators should be disaggregated according to relevant considerations within the context, such as by sex, age, geographic area or identity group and all other prohibited grounds of discrimination;
- Ensure that monitoring enables interaction with local stakeholders and allows unforeseen complaints and feedback mechanisms to surface – beyond the set of indicators selected.

The table below provides a non-exhaustive list of some example, generic conflict-sensitivity indicators to aid the design. Specific indicators need to be developed in relation to the context.

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Conflict sensitivity and peacebuilding indicators

Type of indicator	Example indicator	Means of verification
Overall level of conflict	# of casualties per month, disaggregated by geographic area, sex and age # violent deaths # of security incidents per month, disaggregated by geographic area, sex and age Homicides rates, disaggregated by geographic area, sex and age	UN Security data SDG 16.1 indicators Publicly available datasets ACLED UNODC
Intercommunal tension	% of community members reporting favourable views of other communities (disaggregated by community, sex and age)	Surveys
Community conflict management mechanisms	# of conflict incidents de-escalated by community conflict management mechanisms (disaggregated by geographic area)	Incident tracking
Competition over national economic resources	# of security incidents around key economic infrastructure	Incident tracking
Distribution effects	% of public with favourable perception of national, sub-national or local authorities or international assistance (disaggregated by sex, age, geographic area and by conflict-related group, such as communal identity, political affiliation etc.)	Surveys
Recognition effects	% of public which perceives that national or international support favours a particular conflict actor, disaggregated by conflict-related group	Surveys
Modelling behaviour	% of public showing trust in international assistance activities vs national processes disaggregated by conflict-related group.	Surveys
Indicators related programmatic risks		
Capacity effects	Proportion of basic services delivered through international assistance compared with national actors (over time)	Activity reporting
Theft/diversion effects	% and value of assistance stolen or redirected by armed groups	Activity reporting



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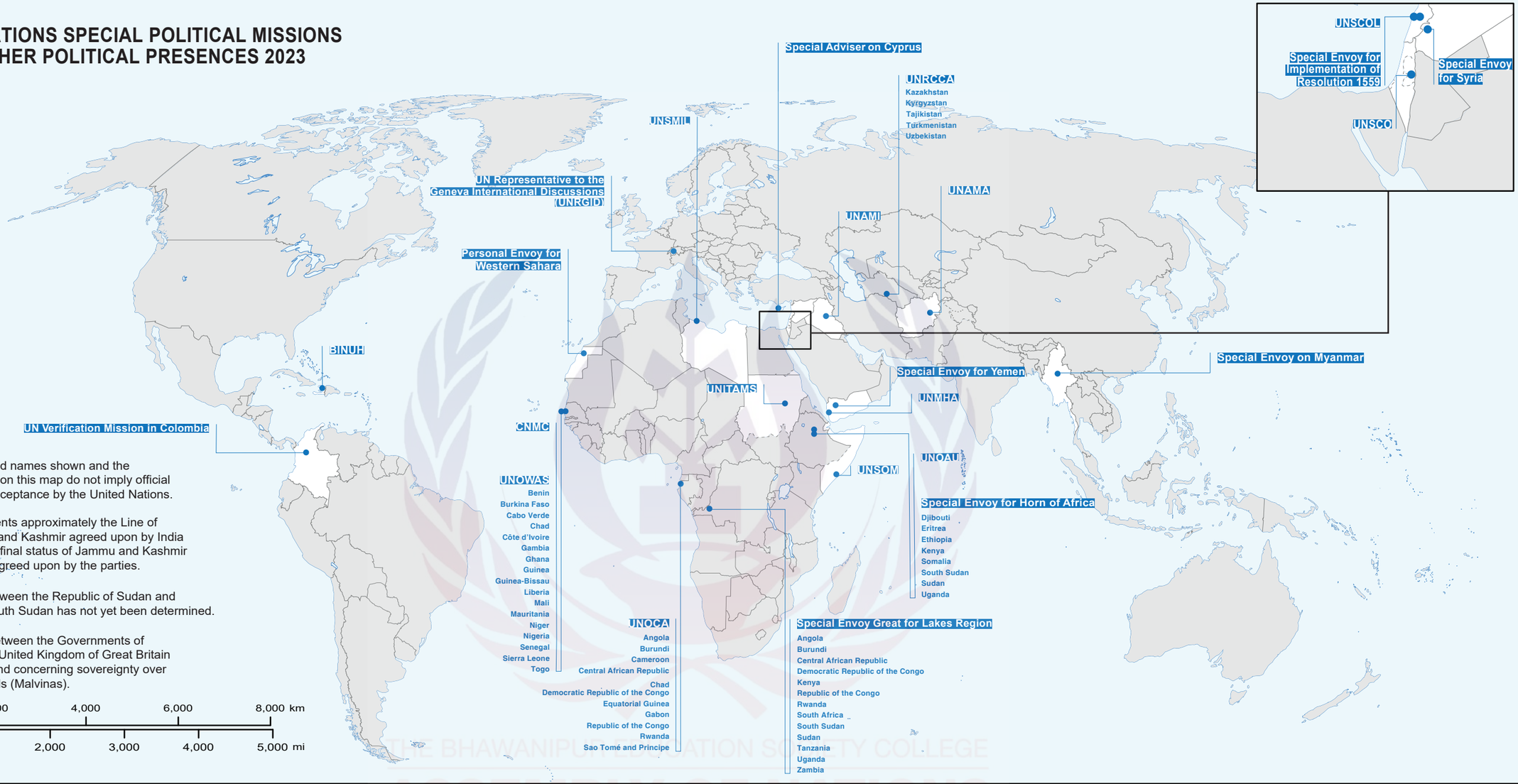
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UN Sustainable Development Group

UNITED NATIONS SPECIAL POLITICAL MISSIONS AND OTHER POLITICAL PRESENCES 2023



The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

Dotted line represents approximately the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir agreed upon by India and Pakistan. The final status of Jammu and Kashmir has not yet been agreed upon by the parties.

Final boundary between the Republic of Sudan and the Republic of South Sudan has not yet been determined.

A dispute exists between the Governments of Argentina and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland concerning sovereignty over the Falkland Islands (Malvinas).

0 2,000 4,000 6,000 8,000 km

0 1,000 2,000 3,000 4,000 5,000 mi

Special and personal envoys, advisers, and representatives of the Secretary-General

Office of the Special Adviser of Secretary-General on Cyprus
Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General for Western Sahara
Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Implementation of Security Council resolution 1559 (2004)
United Nations Representative to the Geneva International Discussions
Office of Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria
Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Horn of Africa
Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region
Office of Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen
Office of Special Envoy of the Secretary-General on Myanmar

*Funded by the regular budget but not categorized under the special political missions in budgetary reports.

This map includes special political missions that are under the purview of the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs. For a full list of additional details, please refer to A/77/283 and A/77/6(Sect. 3).
For more information, visit https://dppa.un.org/en/dppa-around-world

Sanctions monitoring teams, groups and panels, and other entities and mechanisms

Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo
Panel of Experts on Sudan
Panel of Experts on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea
Panel of Experts on Libya
Panel of Experts on the Central African Republic
Panel of Experts on Yemen
Panel of Experts on South Sudan
Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team pursuant to resolutions 1526 (2004) and 2253 (2015) concerning Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) (Da'esh), (Al-Qaida) and the Taliban and associated individuals and entities
Implementation of Security Council resolution 2231 (2015)
Panel of Experts on Mali
Panel of Experts on Somalia
Panel of Experts on Haiti

Regional offices, offices in support of political processes and other missions

United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS)
United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM)
United Nations Regional Center for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia (UNRCCA)
United Nations Support for the Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission (CNMC)
Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon (UNSCOL)
United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA)
United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL)
United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia
United Nations Mission to Support the Hudaydah Agreement (UNMHA)
United Nations Integrated Office in Haiti (BINUH)
United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan (UNITAMS)
United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI)
United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA)
Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process (UNSCO)*
United Nations Office to the African Union (UNOAU)*

Map No. 4561 Rev. 15
July 2023

THE BHAWANIPUR EDUCATION SOCIETY COLLEGE
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United Nations A/78/765-S/2024/153

General Assembly
Security Council

Distr.: General
9 February 2024

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General Assembly
Seventy-eighth session
Agenda item 27
Report of the Peacebuilding Commission

Security Council
Seventy-ninth year

Report of the Peacebuilding Commission on its seventeenth session

I. Introduction

1. The present report has been prepared pursuant to General Assembly resolution 60/180 and Security Council resolution 1645 (2005), in which the Peacebuilding Commission was requested to submit an annual report to the Assembly for debate and review. The report will also be submitted to the Council, pursuant to its resolution 1646 (2005). The report covers the seventeenth session of the Commission, held from 1 January to 31 December 2023.

2. The report has also been prepared pursuant to identical resolutions on the review of the United Nations peacebuilding architecture (General Assembly resolutions 70/262 and 75/201 and Security Council resolutions 2282 (2016) and 2558 (2020)), in which the Commission was encouraged to consider diversifying its working methods to enhance its efficiency and flexibility in support of peacebuilding and sustaining peace and to continue to strengthen its advisory, bridging and convening roles in support of nationally owned priorities and efforts. It also builds on the commitment[1] of Member States to strengthening the Commission as a dedicated intergovernmental advisory body to bring a strategic approach and coherence to international peacebuilding efforts. In that regard, the structure and content of the present report reflect the work carried out by the Commission in implementing relevant recommendations contained in the resolutions on peacebuilding and sustaining peace, as well as priorities identified in the report of the Commission on its sixteenth session.

II. Activities of the Peacebuilding Commission

3. The Commission held a total of 20 meetings (see figure I), and its work was guided by the provisional programme of work for 2023, which it approved on 4 April. The Commission undertook four field visits: one to the African Union Commission, in Addis Ababa, by the Chair, the Vice-Chairs and three Chairs of the country

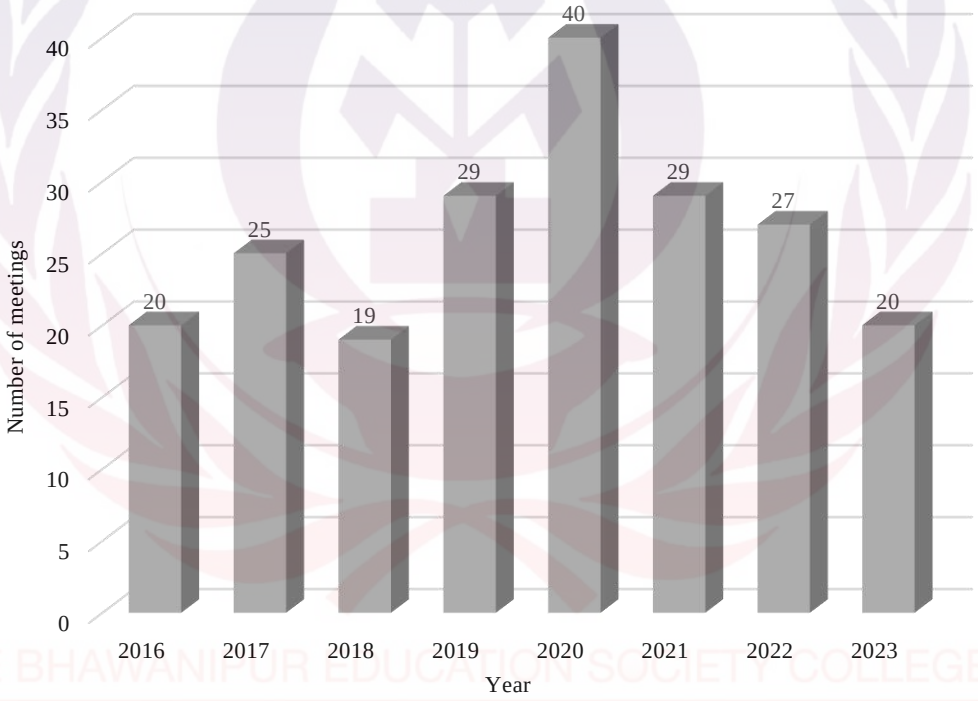
[1] Statement of the Peacebuilding Commission, 22 September 2023.

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configurations, one to Mozambique by the Chair and the Vice-Chairs, and one field visit each to the Central African Republic and Guinea-Bissau by the respective Chairs of the configurations.

4. The programme of work, building on the forward-looking agenda contained in the report of the Commission on its sixteenth session and on relevant recommendations of the report of the Secretary-General entitled "Our Common Agenda", included seven priority areas intended to ensure impactful Commission engagements: (a) a focus on broadening the geographical scope of work; (b) a focus on national ownership and inclusivity; (c) attention to United Nations coherence and follow-up; (d) effective partnerships; (e) advocacy for peacebuilding financing; (f) an enhanced advisory, bridging and convening role; and (g) an emphasis on accountability. Following a demand-driven and consultative process, the programme of work included a number of countries and regions, which the Commission stood ready to consider during the session.

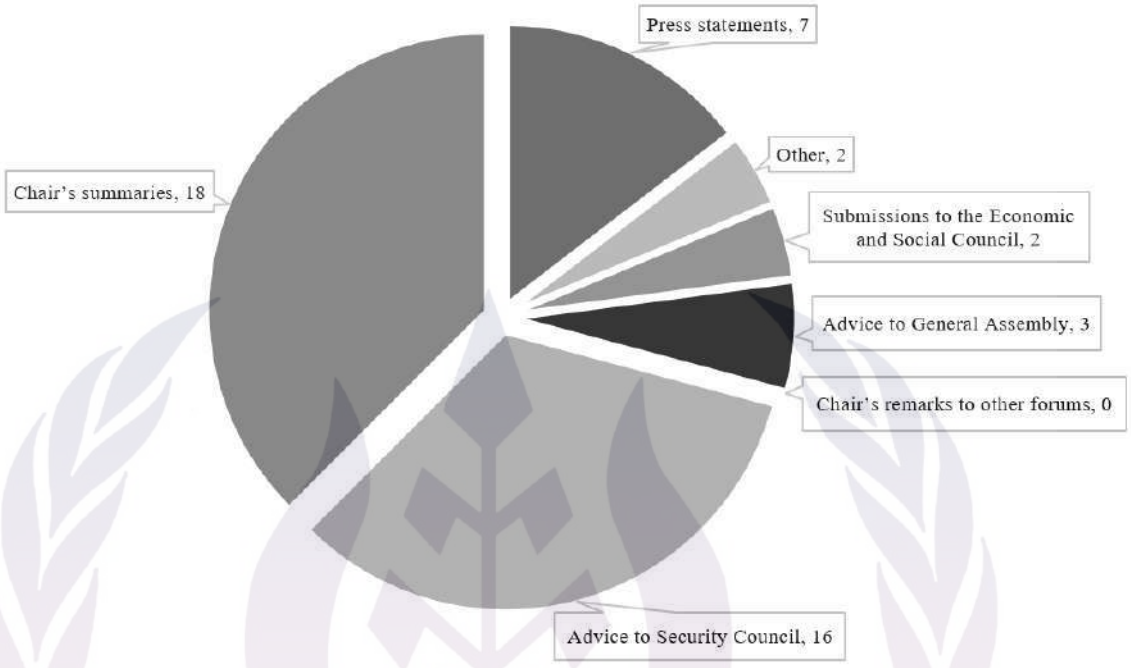
Figure I
Number of Peacebuilding Commission meetings since 2016



5. The Commission produced a total of 49 outcome documents (see figure II). The current session confirmed the positive trend in the quantity of advice that the Commission submitted to the Security Council (16 submissions), further testifying to the interest of the Council in benefiting from the advisory role of the Commission. In this connection, and with a view to improving the quality and utility of its advice, the Commission changed the format of its written submission to the Council, focusing on specific recommendations and making these documents more succinct. The Chair's briefing and statements to non-United Nations forums continued on the same trajectory without an increase, in line with the trend of the previous session.

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Figure II
Number of Peacebuilding Commission outcome documents in 2023

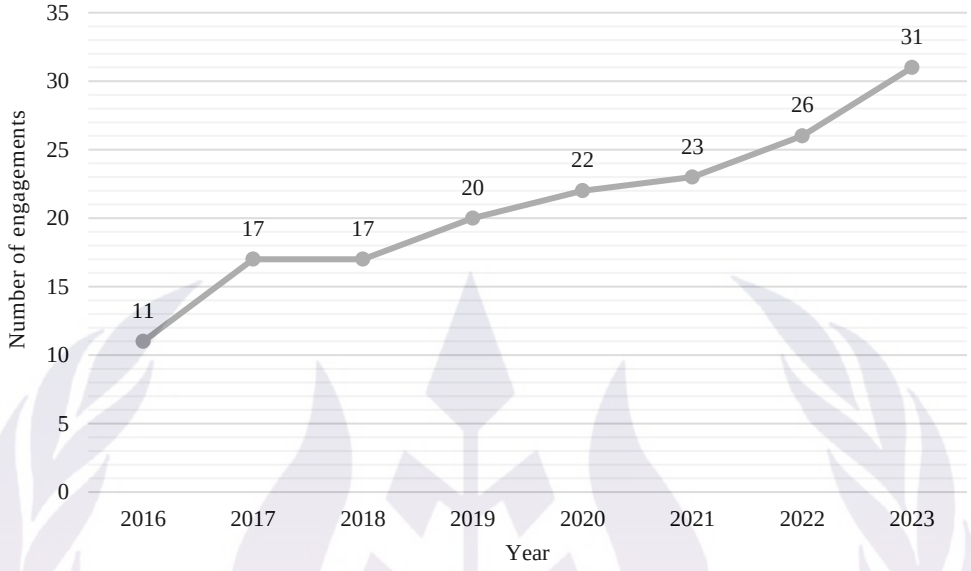


A. Country-specific engagements

6. In 2023, the Commission engaged in support of 10 separate country- and region-specific settings, broadening its geographical scope, including by holding meetings for the first time on Canada, Honduras, Mozambique, Nepal and Norway. With these additions, the Commission has engaged with a total of 31 countries and regions since its inception (see figure III).

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Figure III
Peacebuilding Commission country and regional engagements since 2016



7. From 7 to 11 November, the Chair of the Central African Republic configuration visited that country to better assess the challenges and opportunities facing the Central African Republic since the most recent visit, in 2020. During the visit, interlinkages between the political, security, economic and humanitarian challenges were examined, and efforts of the Central African Republic to combat impunity and strengthen the rule of law, as well as its reform of the justice sector, were assessed. The visit was also aimed at exploring opportunities for how the Commission's mobilization and advocacy efforts could best be utilized in support of Central African Republic peacebuilding efforts, including continued support for the decentralization policy and the organization of the local elections, restoring State authority in all areas of the country, instituting the paradigm shift of lifting the country from a permanent humanitarian assistance posture to incremental economic recovery, and an investment in stability and development. During his visit, the Chair met with the Prime Minister, the Minister of Disarmament, Demobilization, Reintegration and Repatriation, the President of the National Assembly, the President of the National Electoral Authority, the Forum of Women Parliamentarians, European Union representative, African Development Bank and International Monetary Fund representatives and several members of the diplomatic corps and civil society, as well as the senior leadership of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) and the United Nations country team. The Chair of the configuration also undertook two field visits – one in PK5, Bangui, to visit a Peacebuilding Fund project and one in Bangassou, Mbomou Prefecture – to visit a community violence reduction project. Following the visit, the Commission provided advice to the Security Council, calling for continued support for the implementation of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic and the disarmament and demobilization process as essential means of fostering greater security and stability in that country. The Commission noted that the upcoming local elections offered a unique opportunity to make further progress in the political and peace processes. It also noted the valuable role of the Fund in supporting projects that promoted the reintegration of ex-combatants, as well as community resilience, through the engagement of young people and women. Lastly, the

Commission underscored the enduring relevance of the deployment and mandate of MINUSCA.

8. Building on the Commission's prior meetings on Colombia, the Commission issued three advisories on that country to the Security Council in 2023. On 13 January, the Commission commended the Government and the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (National Liberation Army) for the resumption of negotiations towards lasting peace in Colombia and the strong representation of women on both sides. In its advice to the Council, on 11 October, the Commission welcomed advances in the Government's efforts to seek broader peace through dialogue in the framework of the total peace policy, in particular the peace negotiations with the Ejército de Liberación Nacional, and in that regard expressed appreciation for the Council's decision to mandate the Mission to verify the ceasefire between the Government and the Ejército de Liberación Nacional. On 13 April, the Chair of the Commission gave a briefing to the Council on Colombia and encouraged full and timely implementation of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace, including its ethnic provisions relating to Indigenous and Afro-Colombian populations, and reiterated the importance of the role of Colombian women in peacebuilding and sustaining peace. The Chair commended the Government of Colombia for the progress made towards the National Development Plan and expressed support for the Government's efforts to implement the development programmes with a territorial focus and the comprehensive rural reform of the Final Agreement, welcoming efforts to strengthen the process of reintegration of former combatants, including the approval of a strategy to promote former combatants' access to employment. The Chair expressed the need to follow up on the protection of young people to ensure their full and effective participation in political processes and to continue to support their peacebuilding efforts. On 11 October, the Chair again gave a briefing to the Council on Colombia, calling upon the Council to support the Government of Colombia in ensuring that peace dividends reached all Colombians and welcoming the support provided by the United Nations in Colombia and the Peacebuilding Fund. Expressing concern over the continued violence that persisted against former combatants and social leaders, and underscoring the need for security guarantees for the maintenance of the reintegration processes in Colombia, the Chair called upon the Government to undertake concerted efforts to provide greater security and protection. The Chair encouraged further progress in reintegration to ensure the security and livelihoods of former combatants. The Chair appreciated the commitment by Colombia to the inclusion of Indigenous Peoples in peace efforts and encouraged further international support. The Chair concluded by commending the progress in the pioneering work of the transitional justice system in Colombia and added that the Commission looked forward to the issuance of its first restorative sentences.

9. From 14 to 16 February, the Chair of the Guinea-Bissau configuration visited that country to explore ways to sustain progress towards the consolidation of democracy, including political dialogue and preparations for the 2023 legislative elections, and to exchange views on further advancing the peacebuilding priorities of Guinea-Bissau. The Chair was accompanied by the Assistant Secretary-General for Peacebuilding Support, the Officer-in-Charge and Head of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel and the Permanent Representative of Guinea-Bissau to the United Nations. Following the visit, the Chair of the configuration gave a briefing to the Commission on 13 March, reporting on the outcome of the meetings held with the President of Guinea-Bissau, ministers and senior government officials, as well as representatives of civil society, political parties and international financial institutions. Drawing on the outcome of the visit, the Commission reiterated the importance of bolstering its support for the stability of Guinea-Bissau, especially considering the current instability in the region. The Commission welcomed the

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Government's efforts to finance the electoral budget for the June 2023 legislative elections and the willingness among stakeholders to participate in the elections, while stressing the need for inclusive political dialogue, including with civil society. The Commission acknowledged socioeconomic challenges in Guinea-Bissau, including difficulties regarding the provision of and access to basic services, as well as the lack of sufficient capacity to effectively combat drug trafficking, and called for strengthened international support.

10. On 26 June, the Commission convened for the first time a meeting on peacebuilding in Honduras. The Chair welcomed the engagement of the Government of Honduras with the Commission on efforts to secure a peaceful environment free from violence for all citizens and to strengthen the rule of law and human rights and the building of social cohesion for all stakeholders, especially women and young people, in Honduras. The Government highlighted the multiple actions and priorities that it was implementing to establish a "humanist" government based on solidarity and participatory democracy to build peace and fulfil the Sustainable Development Goals, as well as the challenges faced in combating corruption and impunity. The Inter-American Development Bank gave a briefing on its efforts to support the Government in reducing social vulnerabilities and improving service delivery. The United Nations Resident Coordinator underscored the work of the United Nations system in Honduras in supporting the Government of Honduras through the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework and through eligibility for funding from the Peacebuilding Fund since 2020, with a portfolio of seven Fund projects, which represented an investment of nearly $13 million. Civil society emphasized the need to protect women and ensure their education and political participation at all levels. The Commission welcomed the engagement of the Government of Honduras and its dedication to establishing an impartial, independent and autonomous international mechanism against impunity and corruption, and it encouraged the United Nations to support the Government in these efforts.

11. The Commission continued its support for peacebuilding and sustaining peace efforts in Liberia, cognizant of the country's October 2023 legislative and presidential elections. On 25 April, the Chair of the Liberia configuration convened a meeting with the participation of the Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs of Liberia, the Executive Director of the Peacebuilding Office of Liberia, the Chair of the National Elections Commission, the Assistant Secretary-General for Peacebuilding Support, the United Nations Resident Coordinator and Liberian civil society representatives. The Commission discussed measures for ensuring peaceful, free, fair, transparent, credible and inclusive elections to promote the inclusion of women and young people in the electoral process, as well as the prevention of electoral violence. The Commission noted the 30 per cent gender quota for political party leadership and party candidate lists. In March, the Chair of the Liberia configuration undertook a visit to Washington, D.C., to consult the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank Group on their support for peacebuilding priorities in Liberia and discuss the upcoming elections, reconciliation and the empowerment of women and young people, as well as opportunities for joint United Nations-international financial institution engagement in support of peacebuilding, in line with the Commission's ambition to strengthen partnerships with such institutions. Shortly before the October elections, the Commission met on 29 September and heard briefings by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Deputy Minister of Administration of Internal Affairs, representatives of the Liberia National Police, the National Elections Commission and civil society, as well as the United Nations Resident Coordinator. The Commission highlighted the upcoming elections as being a crucial milestone towards consolidating peace, democracy, reconciliation and sustainable and inclusive development in Liberia and within the region. The Commission called for stakeholders to fully adhere to the rule of law and the Farmington River Declaration,

in which all stakeholders are committed to peaceful elections. The Commission underlined the important role of Liberian young people and women in electoral processes and encouraged their meaningful participation. The Commission issued two press statements in connection with the elections. In the second press statement, the Commission congratulated the people of Liberia on having successfully conducted elections in a generally peaceful manner, noting that the historic elections were the first ones organized and implemented by Liberian authorities since the withdrawal of the United Nations Mission in Liberia.

12. During the reporting period, the Commission welcomed new engagement with Mozambique. On 29 March, the Commission convened its first meeting on Mozambique with the participation of the President of the Republic to hear from stakeholders about good practices and lessons learned in implementing the Maputo Peace and Reconciliation Accord and to have an exchange on the remaining peacebuilding challenges in the country. The President underlined national ownership, mutual trust and dialogue among the key success factors in the Maputo peace process and called for international support for current efforts to counter violent extremism conducive to terrorism in the northern provinces. Additional briefers outlined the human-centred and gender-sensitive disarmament, demobilization and reintegration approach, as well as the decentralization process. The Commission commended the progress in implementing the Maputo Accord, including disarmament, demobilization and reintegration efforts, and emphasized the importance of national ownership, trust and the inclusion of grass-roots organizations in all processes. Subsequent to the meeting, and at the invitation of the President, from 16 to 20 November, the Chair and the Vice-Chairs of the Commission visited Mozambique to explore opportunities to further advance the country's peacebuilding priorities and mobilize international political, financial and technical support. The delegation met with the President, the Prime Minister, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, senior government officials, the Permanent Commission of the Assembly of the Republic, representatives of regional and international financial institutions, United Nations entities, bilateral donors, the main opposition party, internally displaced persons and returnees in Maputo and Cabo Delgado Province. The delegation took note of the peacebuilding, recovery, reconstruction and development needs and challenges to better advocate support for Mozambique.

13. The Commission convened a meeting on peacebuilding in South Sudan on 31 January, following the visit of the Commission Chair and Vice-Chairs to South Sudan. The Commission heard a briefing by the Minister of Peacebuilding, a representative of the Special Envoy for South Sudan of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development and two civil society representatives, as well as the Assistant Secretary-General for Peacebuilding Support and the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General at the United Nations Mission in South Sudan and the Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator in South Sudan. During the meeting, Member States recalled and agreed with the recommendations made by the Chair, following the visit to South Sudan in December 2022, to promote inclusive and timely implementation of the transitional road map, including by fully complying with the 35 per cent quota for women at the national and local levels, as provided under the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan and as a measure of promoting the women and peace and security agenda, as well as the holding of elections in 2024. They encouraged the South Sudanese authorities to accelerate the implementation of the Revitalized Peace Agreement. Member States recognized that the 2024 elections would pave the way for the consolidation of democracy in South Sudan and underlined the importance of ensuring inclusivity, calling upon the Government to promote the full, equal and meaningful participation of women and the full, effective and meaningful participation of young people in the political and institutional framework of the peace

process. They called for a cross-pillar approach to peacebuilding and underlined the need for strategic follow-up to the implementation of the recommendations made by the Chair. In March, the Commission issued written advice to the Security Council on South Sudan, echoing the ideas put forth at this meeting.

B. Regional engagements

14. On 19 May, the Commission convened a meeting on the subject of strengthening peacebuilding and the implementation of the regional maritime security framework in the Gulf of Guinea. The briefers at the meeting included the Director of Administration and Regional Coordination of the Gulf of Guinea Commission, the Head of Information Sharing and Communications of the Interregional Coordination Centre for the Implementation of the Regional Strategy for Maritime Safety and Security in Central and West Africa, the Officer-in-Charge of the Western Africa Division of the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs-the Department of Peace Operations, the New York representative of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the Executive Director of the Centre for Maritime Law and Security Africa and Lecturer in Sustainable Development of the University of Saint Andrews. Attendees of the meeting discussed the key achievements and remaining challenges of regional action to implement the framework and exchanged lessons learned on the national, regional and multilateral efforts. They underscored the importance of effectively implementing international instruments and leveraging mechanisms of the United Nations conventions on corruption and transnational organized crime. They also explored ways for the international community to strengthen its support for interregional efforts towards the full operationalization of the Yaoundé Architecture and tackling the root causes of maritime insecurity. In addition, they stated the need to address limited socioeconomic opportunities and cross-border transnational organized crime and to strengthen climate action in the region. The meeting drew attention to the importance of inclusive, gender-responsive approaches and community-based prevention efforts. In that regard, while acknowledging the progress achieved since the adoption of the Code of Conduct concerning the Repression of Piracy, Armed Robbery against Ships and Illicit Maritime Activity in West and Central Africa, the Commission called for the adoption of comprehensive legal frameworks and greater enforcement of the rule of law, and it reiterated the importance of national, regional and international partnerships and collaboration to strengthen maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea.

15. Building on its continuing engagement in the Great Lakes region, the Commission provided advice to the Security Council in April and October 2023. In its April advice, the Commission reiterated its support for regional peace initiatives, including the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region-led Luanda process and the East African Community-led Nairobi process, as well as its Inter-Congolese Dialogue. Mindful of the fast-evolving situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, including on the humanitarian front, the Commission reiterated its demand for all armed groups to lay down their weapons and cease hostilities. It also called for the implementation of commitments within the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region and the strengthening of confidence-building measures. The Commission emphasized inclusivity as key to advancing peacebuilding objectives in the region and called for increased efforts to promote reconciliation, accountability, transitional justice, efforts to combat impunity, and the sustainable and transparent management of natural resources. It encouraged the continuation of efforts under way to strengthen the role of women in political and peace processes, and highlighted the importance of including young people. The Commission reiterated its support for efforts aimed at addressing the root causes of conflict. With regard to conflict, and while reiterating

its previous recommendations, in its advice in October, the Commission placed particular emphasis on the issue of the illegal exploitation and smuggling of natural resources and noted that, unless curtailed, and unless those responsible, including the armed groups, were held accountable, the region would continue to suffer from a recurring cycle of violence, impinging on any prospect of lasting regional peace and development. The advice also reiterated the Commission's concerns regarding the unfolding humanitarian situation in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the increased incidents of sexual and gender-based violence. It called for international and regional support to improve the capacity for elections and governance in the countries of the region and emphasized the importance of continuous inclusive dialogue and strengthened civic education. In the context of the MONUSCO transition, the Commission reiterated the importance of a strategic, integrated and coherent approach by the United Nations and stakeholders in the region, including the Office of the Special Envoy and United Nations country teams, to sustain peacebuilding gains. In both pieces of advice, the Commission reiterated its call for adequate funding for peacebuilding activities in the region.

16. On 23 June, the Commission convened a meeting on peacebuilding and addressing transnational organized crime, terrorism and violent extremism conducive to terrorism in the Sahel. The briefers included the Regional Representative for West and Central Africa of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the Chief of the Policy, Knowledge Management and Coordination Branch of the Office of Counter-Terrorism and the Vice-President of the Association of Women Heads of Households, a civil society organization in Mauritania. The members of the Commission noted with concern the contributions of transnational organized crime, terrorism and violent extremism conducive to terrorism to the deteriorating security situation in the Sahel and its spillover effects. Some Member States underscored the importance of addressing the root causes of these drivers of instability and insecurity in the region, including poverty, food insecurity, forced displacement and a lack of inclusive socioeconomic development. They also noted the need to address the adverse effects of climate change, natural disasters, drought, desertification and land degradation and to tackle challenges in the field of access to energy in the region. Beyond purely security responses, members of the Commission stressed the need to strengthen the social contract, governance, institution-building, reconciliation, socioeconomic opportunities and resilience to climate-related challenges. Furthermore, Commission members highlighted the importance of national and regional strategies and recognized implementation challenges as key obstacles to peace and sustainable development. They underscored the importance of context- and community-based approaches and inclusive and local solutions to preventing terrorism and violent extremism conducive to terrorism, as well as organized crime. The Commission reiterated these sentiments and recommendations in its advice to the Security Council in July.

C. Cross-cutting and thematic engagements

17. During the current session, the Commission's cross-cutting and thematic engagements continued to be carried out within the framework of country-specific and regional discussions, which provided an opportunity for countries to share their experiences and good practices in peacebuilding.

18. On 30 January, the Commission convened a meeting on A New Agenda for Peace. The Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs gave a briefing to the Commission, recognizing A New Agenda for Peace as an opportunity to articulate a unifying vision to help to reaffirm the commitment of Member States to the collective security system and the values of the Charter of the United Nations. The Under-Secretary-General underscored the need for new approaches to

prevention, violence reduction and peacebuilding and called for a deeper focus on women's full, equal and meaningful participation, as well as the full, effective and meaningful participation of young people. She welcomed the expansion of the Commission's geographical and thematic engagements, as well as continued emphasis on inclusive approaches in support of national peacebuilding initiatives. Member States acknowledged the policy brief of the Secretary-General entitled "A New Agenda for Peace" as an opportunity to advance a coherent, comprehensive and holistic approach to peacebuilding. They also took note of the Secretary-General's proposal for expanded roles for the Commission and called for the full utilization of existing United Nations tools for mediation, prevention and peacebuilding, as well as improving the effectiveness of peacebuilding and peacekeeping activities.

19. On 22 September, the Commission convened a ministerial-level meeting to provide political guidance and build momentum for strengthened multilateral cooperation to address challenges to peacebuilding and sustaining peace. The meeting provided an opportunity for members of the Commission to consider the recommendations in the policy brief "A New Agenda for Peace" that pertained to the work of the Commission. In a ministerial statement adopted by the Commission, Member States committed to strengthening the Commission as a dedicated intergovernmental peacebuilding advisory body, ensuring a strategic approach to and coherence in peacebuilding and sustaining peace efforts. They expressed a willingness to continue to engage on A New Agenda for Peace and agreed to do so constructively to achieve consensus on peacebuilding-related issues in the lead-up to the Summit of the Future in 2024 and the review of the United Nations peacebuilding architecture in 2025.

20. The Commission convened a meeting on transitional justice in Colombia, the Gambia and Timor-Leste on 28 April. The engagement facilitated exchanges of experiences, good practices and lessons learned regarding transitional justice, with a specific focus on guarantees of non-recurrence, in the spirit of South-South and triangular cooperation. The Commission heard a briefing by the Attorney General and Minister of Justice of the Gambia, the President of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace in Colombia, the Chief Executive Officer of the Nacional Centro Chega! in Timor-Leste, the Deputy Executive Director of the International Center for Transitional Justice, the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights and the Assistant Secretary-General for Peacebuilding Support. Briefers highlighted the importance of inclusivity in transitional justice, guarantees of non-recurrence and the need to understand and provide support to civil society organizations involved in transitional justice. Member States welcomed this unique opportunity to learn from a variety of transitional justice experiences and commended the efforts of Colombia, the Gambia and Timor-Leste in advancing their transitional justice processes. They acknowledged the importance of establishing truth, ensuring accountability and combating impunity from a victim-centred approach, involving all sectors of society. Member States encouraged the three countries to continue to advance their transitional justice processes and called upon the Commission to continue to advocate inclusive and participatory approaches to transitional justice.

21. The Commission convened a meeting on Indigenous Peoples, peace and reconciliation in Canada, Colombia and Norway on 19 June. This multi-country engagement allowed the Commission to facilitate discussions among Member States and representatives of Indigenous communities in Canada, Colombia and Norway, who shared their own experiences in addressing Indigenous issues, reconciliation and amplification of Indigenous voices. The meeting heard a briefing by the Chair of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, the Director of the Cree Nation Government Department of Justice and Correctional Services, the Deputy Director for Collective Reparation at the Victims' Unit, a Sami social anthropologist

and member of the Norwegian Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the Assistant Secretary-General for Peacebuilding Support. The briefers from the three countries noted in particular the discrimination and marginalization faced by Indigenous communities, including Indigenous women and young people, and discussed ways to reduce violence and ensure inclusive peacebuilding efforts that took Indigenous rights into consideration. Member States underscored the importance of establishing truth and remembering the past through transitional justice processes and preserving and guaranteeing the rights of Indigenous Peoples. They emphasized the diversity of Indigenous Peoples and the importance of ensuring their participation in peacebuilding and decision-making processes, as well as acknowledgement and respect of their rights and traditional knowledge, languages and practices, and noted that the three countries underscored the universality of peacebuilding. Many Member States speaking at the meeting shared their experiences. They also expressed their support for continuing to engage on the subject of Indigenous issues on the Commission's platform, upon countries' request.

22. Pursuant to its gender strategy (2016) and its action plan (2021), in 2023, the Commission continued to place women and peace and security at the centre of its work, including in ensuring the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in peacebuilding and sustaining peace efforts. Gender dimensions of peacebuilding were systematically integrated into the Commission's country, regional and thematic discussions and engagements, including during country visits. In 2023, with a participation rate of 42 per cent, women peacebuilders[2] at meetings of the Commission shared perspectives and priorities regarding a wide range of issues relevant to peacebuilding, including progress and remaining challenges in fostering women's full, equal and meaningful participation in peacebuilding and in sustaining peace processes at the local, national and regional levels (see figure IV). Furthermore, in country and regional meetings, the Commission's discussions helped to shed light on the varied experiences of women, inter alia, in peace and transitional justice processes, highlighted the role of Indigenous women and underscored the critical importance of women's economic empowerment and political participation. On the basis of its continuous engagement with women peacebuilders, the Commission was able to provide substantive advice through a gender lens to the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Security Council. The Commission included gender considerations in 19 out of 20 of its submissions to the Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council, reaching 95 per cent, compared with 92 per cent in 2022. In its advice, the Commission called for the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in decision-making and political processes, and also stressed their critical role in addressing the root causes of conflict in local communities, advancing inclusive security sector reforms, delivering transitional justice and implementing recovery efforts as part of peacebuilding and sustaining peace processes. The Commission also placed an emphasis on the strengthening of regional frameworks and ensuring the effective implementation of existing instruments on women's empowerment and gender equality, as well as promoting women's full, equal and meaningful participation in regional dialogues.

23. In line with its Strategic Action Plan on Youth and Peacebuilding (2021), the Commission has continued to support the critical role played by young people and youth-led organizations in peacebuilding and sustaining peace. The rate of participation of youth representatives in meetings was 10 per cent in 2023. On 7 June, the Commission convened an Ambassadorial-level meeting to discuss regional efforts in advancing youth, peace and security and the linkages between regional, national

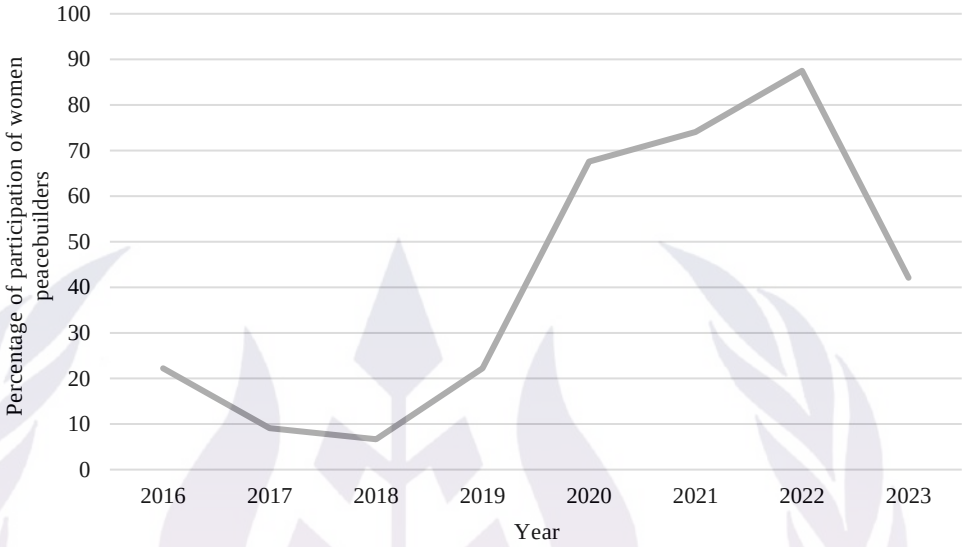
[2] For the purposes of the present report, the term "women peacebuilders" refers to women representatives from civil society organizations, the private sector, academia or think tanks and women independent experts who lead and contribute to peacebuilding and sustaining peace.

and local efforts. The briefers included the Envoy of the Secretary-General on Youth, the African Union Youth Envoy, the Assistant Secretary-General and Head of the International Political Affairs Sector of the League of Arab States and a representative of ASEAN Youth Organization, a youth-led civil society organization. The meeting presented an opportunity for exchanges on the importance of regional efforts in advancing the institutionalization of the youth, peace and security agenda and supporting national and local efforts to align with their policies on peacebuilding and sustaining peace. Member States emphasized the role of the Commission in supporting young people and their organizations in peacebuilding and in mainstreaming the youth, peace and security agenda in all processes related to peacebuilding and sustaining peace. They encouraged all relevant actors to continue efforts and strengthen partnerships to advance the youth, peace and security agenda at the regional, national and local levels. Member States called for the protection of young people working on peacebuilding, the provision of adequate, predictable and sustainable funding for youth-led peacebuilding efforts, and support for education, capacity-building and employment. They also emphasized the importance of implementation of and follow-up to the youth, peace and security agenda and advised the Security Council, the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council to take action in this regard, as appropriate.

24. On 14 September, the Commission convened a meeting on the role of education in building peace in Nepal and Sierra Leone, in the context of the International Day to Protect Education from Attack (9 September). The Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Nepal, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Sierra Leone and the Chief Executive Officer of the Education Above All Foundation from Qatar gave a briefing to the Commission. Member States commended the efforts of Nepal and Sierra Leone in achieving peace and social cohesion through promoting education and recognized the leading role of host countries in such efforts. They highlighted the role of education as a prevention and resilience-building mechanism and key component for building and sustaining peace and called for ensuring the provision of education to all children and young people, especially girls and women, as an essential tool for protection and empowerment. They called upon the Commission to continue to focus on the link between education and peacebuilding and to work with relevant actors in support of the role of education in building peace. Some Member States called for support for the adoption and follow-up implementation of the revised 1974 recommendation concerning education for international understanding, cooperation and peace and education relating to human rights and fundamental freedoms. Member States urged the international community to scale up its support for national efforts to build peace through the provision of transformative, inclusive and equitable quality education.

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Figure IV
Participation of women peacebuilders in Peacebuilding Commission meetings



25. Following the unanimous adoption of the General Assembly resolution on financing for peacebuilding in September 2022, in 2023, the Commission continued its consideration of financing for peacebuilding, which emerged as an important theme in several country-specific and regional discussions, as well as through dedicated sessions with the World Bank (14 March) and with the Peacebuilding Fund Advisory Group (17 November).[3] On 22 December, the Assembly formally adopted the resolution on investing in prevention and peacebuilding (resolution 78/257).

III. Towards a more flexible and effective Peacebuilding Commission

A. Advisory and bridging role of the Commission

26. During its seventeenth session, the Commission continued to enhance its advisory and bridging role with respect to the General Assembly and the Security Council, and its bridging role between the Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council.

27. In 2023, the Commission provided advice to the Security Council 16 times and to the General Assembly 3 times, including through letters and formal briefings. The Commission also provided two submissions and briefings to the Economic and Social Council-focused on thematic and regional issues.[4] The President of the Economic and Social Council gave a briefing to the Commission during one meeting. On 20 June, the Chair delivered a statement to an Economic and Social Council meeting on the transition from relief to development in the context of South Sudan.

28. The Economic and Social Council and the Commission convened a joint event on 29 June. The event was focused on ways to identify and address linkages between

[3] See paragraphs 30 and 33, respectively.
[4] All documents are available on the Commission website.

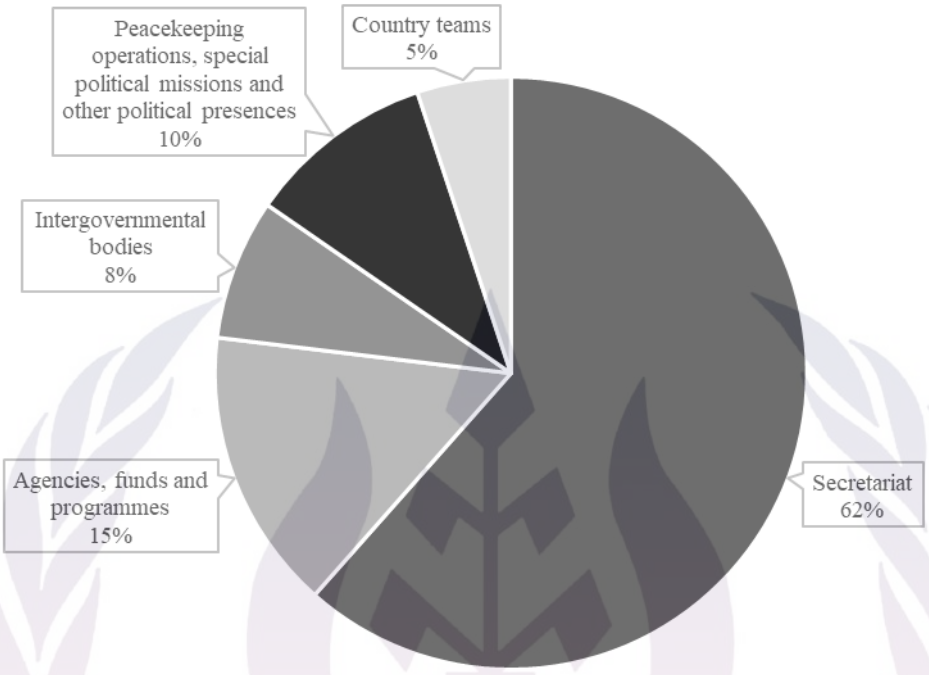
peace and development on the ground, with a view to promoting coherence and impact for peacebuilding, sustaining peace and sustainable development efforts. The Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme, the Assistant Secretary-General for Peacebuilding Support, the Regional Director for Africa of the Development Coordination Office, the Acting Special Representative of the World Bank Group to the United Nations and the Acting President and Chief Operating Officer of Interpeace gave a briefing to the Economic and Social Council and Commission members. Member States stressed that addressing the root causes of conflict and strengthening prevention efforts could be supported by achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. They called for the United Nations to find new ways to overcome obstacles to sustainable development and peace. The role of the resident coordinators in facilitating collaboration between actors on the ground was emphasized. They noted the value of collaboration between the Economic and Social Council and its segments and the Commission, including through the opportunity for additional joint meetings. They called for flexible, adequate and predictable financing for peacebuilding and development and highlighted the need for increasing contributions to the Peacebuilding Fund. Furthermore, Member States called for enhanced synergies with the international financial institutions, in accordance with their mandates, and regional organizations to operationalize the linkages between peace and development, especially in support of localized approaches. While noting the disproportionately gendered impact of conflicts on women and girls, they stressed inclusion as a prerequisite for positive change and sustainable impact to achieve peaceful and resilient societies. In 2023, the Commission also had attention to informal engagements in context of the Commission-Economic and Social Council relationship in support of planning, coordination and the promotion of coherence.

B. Promoting United Nations system-wide coherence

29. In 2023, the Commission continued to promote system-wide coherence of the United Nations, bringing together a broad range of United Nations entities at the field and Headquarters levels. In addition to holding a dedicated joint meeting with the Economic and Social Council as detailed above, the Commission engaged with a wide range of humanitarian, development and peace actors. The Commission continued to hear from representatives in the field, especially of peacekeeping operations, special political missions and other United Nations political presences, who accounted for 10 per cent of all United Nations briefers at its meetings. The Commission called for greater coherence and integration in the context of United Nations transitions, in particular in its advice to the Security Council on the Great Lakes. Meanwhile, representatives of United Nations country teams accounted for 5 per cent of all United Nations briefers at the Commission’s meetings in 2023 (see figure IV).

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Figure V
United Nations briefers at Peacebuilding Commission meetings in 2023



C. Fostering partnerships

30. In an effort to continue to strengthen partnerships with partners outside the Organization, the Commission convened a meeting on 14 March to hear a briefing from the Managing Director of Operations of the World Bank Group on the activities of the Group, in particular its Strategy for Fragility, Conflict and Violence. Along with the Assistant Secretary-General for Peacebuilding Support and Member States, the Managing Director highlighted work under the Strategy and related instruments while noting the widening gap between needs and resources. Member States called for further collaboration between the World Bank and the United Nations, with more concerted and complementary efforts, beginning with joint analysis. They called for more regular country-specific exchanges with the World Bank and other international financial institutions in the future with respect to the existing mandates, through Commission meetings (see figures VI and VII).

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Figure VI
United Nations and non-United Nations briefers at Peacebuilding Commission meetings since 2016

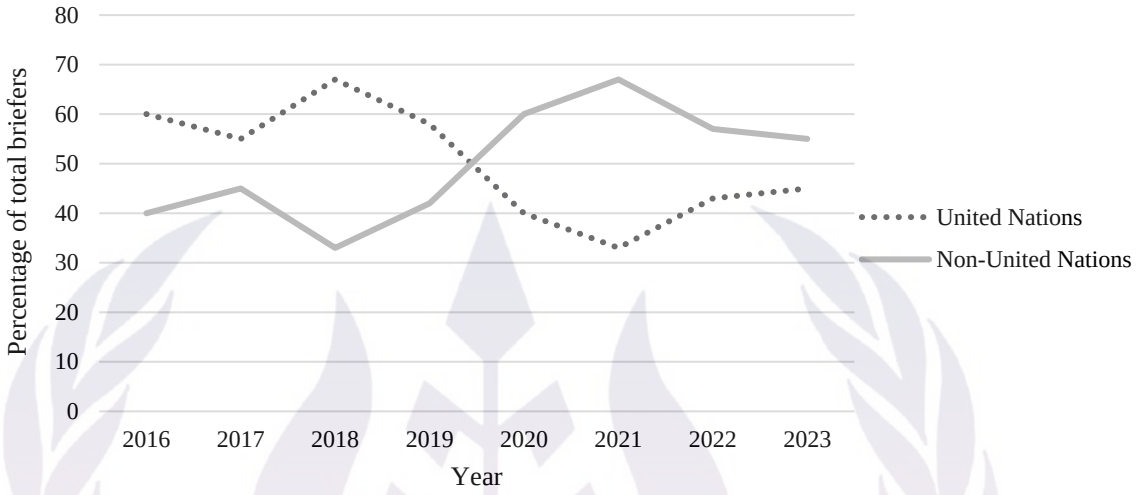
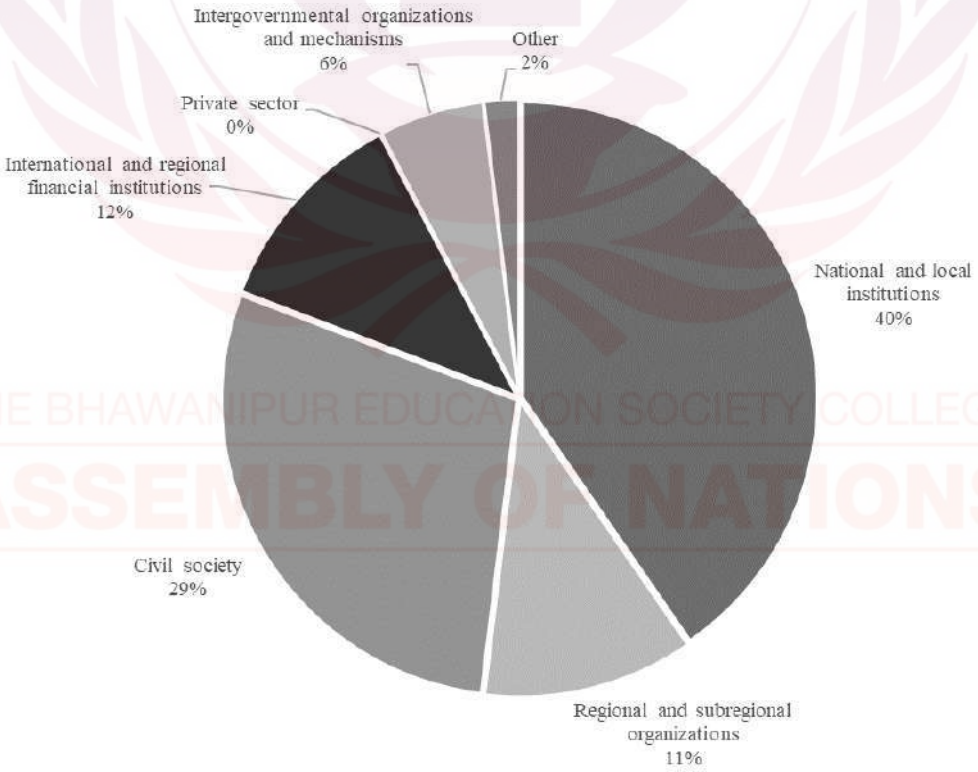


Figure VII
Types of non-United Nations briefers at Peacebuilding Commission meetings as a percentage of total non-United Nations briefers in 2023

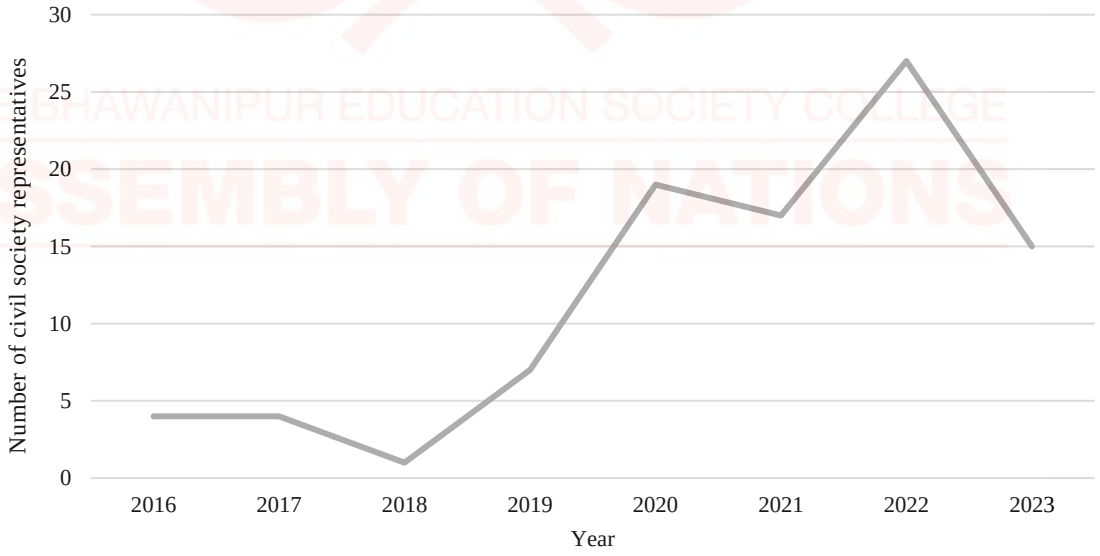


31. The Chair of the Commission visited the African Union Commission, in Addis Ababa, together with the Vice-Chairs, the Chairs of the country configurations and

the Assistant Secretary-General for Peacebuilding Support, to explore opportunities for strengthened cooperation between the Commission and the Peace and Security Council of the African Union. The Chair of the Commission and the Chair of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union convened the sixth annual informal consultative meeting of the two bodies. The meeting provided an opportunity to further strengthen the partnership between the Commission and the Peace and Security Council of the African Union in support of peacebuilding efforts in Africa, building on the review of the African Union Policy on Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development and the policy brief "A New Agenda for Peace", and in anticipation of the Summit of the Future in 2024 and the review of the United Nations peacebuilding architecture in 2025. The meeting heard a briefing by the African Union Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General to the African Union and Head of the United Nations Office to the African Union and the Assistant Secretary-General for Peacebuilding Support. Participants welcomed the progress made in the collaboration between the two bodies and called for further strengthening of the partnership through strategic and concrete actions, such as joint support for national prevention strategies, joint country visits and joint engagement with key stakeholders in the region. They shared ideas for strengthening support for regional and national peacebuilding efforts in Africa, emphasizing a comprehensive, coherent and multidimensional approach in line with the principle of national ownership and leadership; enhancing inclusivity with meaningful participation of civil society actors, especially women and young people; ensuring adequate, predictable and sustained financing for peacebuilding activities and enhancing collaboration among key peacebuilding actors. After the meeting, the Commission and the Peace and Security Council of the African Union issued a joint statement in which they recalled their agreement from the meeting to institutionalize the holding of the annual joint consultative meeting between the Peace and Security Council of the African Union and the Commission.

32. In 2023, the Commission continued to encourage the contribution and participation of civil society in all stages of peacebuilding and sustaining peace, noting that, in 2023, there were 15 briefers from civil society (see figure VIII).

Figure VIII
Number of civil society representatives participating in Peacebuilding Commission meetings since 2016



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D. Strengthening synergies between the Peacebuilding Commission and the Peacebuilding Fund

33. In 2023, the Peacebuilding Support Office continued to update the Commission regularly on the work of the Peacebuilding Fund, in particular on programmatic activities as they pertained to the Commission's country, regional and thematic engagements. On 17 November, the Commission held its first meeting with the full Peacebuilding Fund Advisory Group. Meeting attendees explored opportunities for further synergies between the Commission and the Fund in the context of A New Agenda for Peace, the Summit of the Future and the review of the United Nations peacebuilding architecture in 2025. Proposals by Member States and Advisory Group members in that regard included to have more regular interaction, Commission strategic advice to the Fund, joint visits to countries, to encourage more Fund recipient countries to share experiences with the Commission and adequate, predictable and sustainable financing for the Fund, including through voluntary, assessed and innovative sources of funding. In the course of the discussion and, more broadly, participants recognized the increased urgency to invest in peacebuilding and sustaining peace in the current global context and to support populations affected by conflict, especially women and girls.

E. Rules of procedure and working methods of the Peacebuilding Commission

34. The Commission continued its review of its provisional rules of procedure and working methods initiated during its tenth session in order to make its work more flexible and effective. In that regard, the Commission, building on the recommendations contained in the annex to its report on its fifteenth session (A/76/678-S/2022/89), convened a number of expert-level consultations that culminated in the annex of the present report. The annex also reflects suggestions made by Member States in the annual retreat of the Commission, which was held on 29 and 30 June. In 2023, and as mentioned above, the Commission restructured the format of its advice to the Security Council with a view to making more targeted recommendations to the Council. The Commission also began to consider options to expand the composition of its leadership in order to make it more inclusive of all regional groups.

F. Visibility and communication

35. In line with the recommendation contained in its report of the last session, the Commission continued to explore opportunities to further strengthen its visibility and showcase its work to a wider audience within and beyond the United Nations. The Peacebuilding Support Office continued to support those efforts, improving its website and regularly sharing information on the Commission's activities through its social media platforms and through Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and Peacebuilding Support Office newsletters. The Commission also continued to issue press releases.

G. New initiatives

36. In line with its programme of work, the Commission has undertaken a number of new initiatives to strengthen its role in accordance with its mandate, including:

(a) Engaging with five new countries from all regions (Canada, Honduras, Mozambique, Nepal and Norway), thus underlining the universality of peacebuilding and sustaining peace, and emphasizing that all countries can both benefit from and contribute to the work of the Commission;

(b) Focusing on context-specific root causes of conflict, including through country experiences;

(c) Considering support for the preparation of national strategies for conflict prevention and their implementation both in line with national ownership;

(d) Forging closer ties with regional and subregional organizations, which culminated in the visit to the African Union Commission and institutionalizing regular meetings between the Commission and Peace and Security Council of the African Union. Member States could consider expanding this initiative to other regions;

(e) Establishing more structured cooperation with international financial institutions by including them in all relevant meetings of the Commission and in the Commission's field visits, as well as a visit of the Chair to relevant parts of international financial institutions;

(f) Improving working methods by giving more succinct, targeted and better-informed advice to the General Assembly and the Security Council, as well as proposing better regional representation and follow-up by expanding the number of vice-chairs.

H. Forward-looking agenda

37. Pending follow-up requests by concerned Member States and the availability of the resources required within the Peacebuilding Support Office to meet increasing demand, during its eighteenth session, the Commission is expected:

(a) To continue to work on the basis of national ownership and leadership in peacebuilding and sustaining peace;

(b) To continue to work on the basis of the principle that development, peace and security, and human rights are interlinked and mutually reinforcing;

(c) To continue to expand geographical scope to countries and regions to support peacebuilding and sustaining peace efforts, and to underline the universality of peacebuilding and sustaining peace;

(d) To reflect, to the extent possible, those countries and regions in the Commission's 2024 programme of work, which, once approved, will be shared with the General Assembly and the Security Council to enhance the predictability of the Commission's calendar;

(e) To continue to improve its advisory role in relation to the General Assembly and the Security Council, and its bridging role in relation to the Economic and Social Council. In relation to its advisory role, the Commission will build on the new, more succinct and strategic format of its advice and will work towards further improving the timing and utility of its submissions. It will continue to strengthen its cooperation both with the Assembly and the Security Council to utilize its comparative advantage as a convener and a bridge to the Economic and Social Council to inform impactful discussions and decisions of the two main bodies. This could include informal meetings and joint briefings on relevant peacebuilding issues with the Security Council, as well as the Assembly, to increase impact;

(f) To continue to foster greater coherence in the United Nations system, utilizing its role to convene United Nations bodies;

(g) To draw attention to following up and assessing impact on the ground;

(h) To continue to encourage greater United Nations coherence and coordination in transition contexts, including to support peacebuilding objectives and build sustainable peace;

(i) To continue to place the women and peace and security agenda at the centre of its work, including to ensure the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in all aspects of peacebuilding and sustaining peace;

(j) To continue to strengthen its partnerships with key stakeholders from all regions, including regional and subregional organizations, international financial institutions, civil society organizations and the private sector, and deepen its engagement with the Peacebuilding Fund Advisory Group;

(k) To continue to strengthen the delivery of its advisory, bridging and convening mandate in support of financing for peacebuilding and resource mobilization;

(l) To continue to be guided by and to report progress in the implementation of its gender strategy and action plan, as well as its strategic action plan for young people and peacebuilding. In this respect, the Commission will continue to use its convening and advisory role to provide a platform for women peacebuilders and young people to share their experiences and provide recommendations that add value to peacebuilding and sustaining peace;

(m) To ensure and strengthen participation by civil society representatives in its meetings, considering gender parity;

(n) To continue to advocate adequate, predictable and sustained financing for peacebuilding. It will also explore ways to encourage flexible funding for local peacebuilding organizations and innovative financing for peacebuilding;

(o) To further its work and its consistent advocacy of adequate, predictable and sustained financing for peacebuilding through voluntary, innovative and assessed contributions, as well as to continue to implement General Assembly resolutions 76/305 and 78/257;

(p) To engage in preparations and processes for the review of the United Nations peacebuilding architecture in 2025;

(q) To explore opportunities to continue to enhance its visibility and showcase its work;

(r) To contribute, as relevant and appropriate, to ongoing consultations on the Summit of the Future.

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Annex

Working methods of the Peacebuilding Commission

The present annex contains recommendations whose objectives and outcomes have been established as good practices, and that can be addressed through an informal process. It includes additional action areas whose implementation can contribute to the efficiency and flexibility of the Commission. The Commission can implement all these actions without the need to amend its provisional rules of procedure and within the mandate of the founding resolutions of the Commission, General Assembly resolution 60/180 and Security Council resolution 1645 (2005), as well as Assembly resolutions 70/262 and 75/201 and Council resolutions 2282 (2016) and 2558 (2020). The review of the Commission's working methods is an ongoing process, and this informal document will be reviewed periodically through the Commission's annual reports in order to assess the added value of the recommendations to the work of the Commission.

Recommendations

1. **Leadership**: the Commission should improve the continuity of its Chairs and Vice-Chairs.

Actions

I. As mandated in paragraph 5 of General Assembly resolution 70/262 and Security Council resolution 2282 (2016), in which the Assembly and the Council encourage the Commission to improve the continuity of its Chairs and Vice Chairs, and building upon the established practice of having the outgoing Chair serve as Vice-Chair, thus ensuring continuity and support for its leadership, the Commission will continue to explore ways to further strengthen the continuity of its Chairs and Vice-Chairs, including through a better representation from regional groups. Any informal arrangement will not prejudge the change in the membership of the Commission, which takes place every two years and will operate within regional rotation of Chairs, as detailed in annex I to the Commission's provisional rules of procedure. The decision to endorse a candidate for each post remains a prerogative of the respective regional groups for action by the Organizational Committee.

II. Make greater use of the Vice-Chairs, in consultation with the Chair, in the organization, and conduct of and follow-up to Commission meetings.

2. **Forms of engagement of the Commission**: while recognizing the value of the work done by the Commission in all its configurations and meetings, the Commission should continue to consider flexible options for other forms of engagement in accordance with its mandate, including a more engaged role of the Organizational Committee.

Actions

I. Make greater use of the Organizational Committee as a platform to convene country-specific, regional and thematic discussions, with the consent of all countries concerned, in accordance with its founding resolutions. When convening regional discussions, references to country-specific situations shall be made with the consent of those countries, which shall be shared with the members of the Committee.

II. Promote a Commission that can work in a form of "variable geometry", in which the character, focus and duration of its engagement are decided on an ad hoc basis, with the consent of all countries considered and with the consent of

its Member States, in order to strengthen its efficiency and flexibility, as well as its mandate to assist Governments partnering with the Commission in their peacebuilding priorities, as appropriate.

III. Strengthen the convening role of the Commission by inviting additional partners including development partners, as applicable, to participate in its meetings. Such partners, to be invited with the consent of the country considered and that of the Commission's member States, may include Member States that are not members of the Organizational Committee, representatives of relevant entities of the United Nations system, including from the country teams, international and regional financial institutions, regional and subregional organizations, civil society organizations, including youth and women's organizations, and, where relevant, the private sector.

3. **Role of the membership**: the Commission has a very diverse membership, bringing together seven members from the General Assembly, seven members from the Security Council, seven members from the Economic and Social Council, five members from the top 10 troop-contributing countries and five members from the top 10 financial contributors. Therefore, stronger and more coherent engagement of all members of the Commission will further enhance its efficiency.

Actions

I. Make greater use of the perspectives of the organs that elect or designate the members of the Commission: in addition to country-specific interests, Member States elected by the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council are encouraged to bring the perspectives of those bodies into the deliberations of the Commission. For example, members can offer advice on the working methods of their constituencies and can highlight relevant ongoing thematic issues in their respective organs that will add value to the work of the Commission and reinforce synergies between the Commission and the Assembly, the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council and the relevant subsidiary bodies, while respecting the mandate of each body. Members elected from the top 10 troop-contributing countries and the top 10 financial contributors are also encouraged to reinforce the synergies of those constituencies with the Commission.

II. Members are encouraged to report back to their constituencies on the work done by the Commission on priority areas that are relevant for the work of their respective organs or groups and to advocate peacebuilding and sustaining peace. This will add to the visibility of the Commission and enhance clarity on the work of the Commission. Similarly, establishing a predictable workplan (see recommendation 4 below) and summarizing results on a regular basis including through press releases can lead to a more regular flow of information between the Commission and the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council.

III. Members of the Commission are encouraged to actively engage and support the work of the Chair and the Vice-Chairs while avoiding duplication of work and enhancing the idea of one Commission.

IV. The Commission could continue its practice of appointing informal coordinators for its relations with the Security Council, the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council. The appointment of informal coordinators for relations with troop-contributing countries, financial contributors could also be considered.

4. **Workplan**: a more predictable and longer-term workplan that would allow broader participation of Member States in the meetings of the Commission.

Actions

I. The Commission is to adopt an annual workplan based on the forward agenda contained in the Commission's annual report, reflecting the Commission's country-specific, regional and thematic priorities, as well as on regular discussions with the President of the General Assembly and the President of the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council. As a continuation of good practice, the Chair is encouraged to hold informal consultations with the members of the Commission, as well as the countries and intergovernmental organizations that engage with the Commission ahead of drafting the annual workplan. The workplan should include a provisional annual calendar, specifying as many concrete dates as possible for the Commission's meetings during the year in question. By the middle of each month, the Chair will circulate the provisional calendar for the following month with a view to receiving inputs and suggestions from members of the Commission. Additional previously unscheduled meetings could be added, if required, with adequate lead time.

II. The workplan is to take into account the relevant calendar of work of the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council, in particular when it comes to activities where the advisory role of the Commission may be sought, such as when requested by the Security Council to assist with the longer-term perspective required for sustaining peace being reflected in the formation, review and drawdown of peacekeeping operations and special political missions mandates (see S/PRST/2017/27). In such cases, the Commission should organize its workplan in a way that strengthens its advisory role.

III. The workplan is to include more regular engagement of the Commission with regional and subregional organizations.

IV. The workplan is to include specific focused meetings at which diverse countries (including Peacebuilding Fund recipients and/or applicants) can share their national peacebuilding plans.

V. Once approved by the Commission, the annual workplan should be officially transmitted to the Presidents of the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council.

VI. The date and theme of the Commission's annual session are to be decided well in advance in order to encourage Member States to participate with capital-based representatives.

VII. Visits to the field undertaken by the Chair, the Vice-Chairs and other members of the Commission, as applicable, are to be reflected in the workplan; concept notes of visits should be circulated at least one week before the date of the visit.

5. **Bridging role**: in General Assembly resolution 70/262 and Security Council resolution 2282 (2016), the importance of the Commission in promoting an integrated, strategic and coherent approach to peacebuilding and sustaining peace and, inter alia, in serving a bridging role among the principal organs and relevant United Nations entities is stressed. In the resolutions, it is also recognized that development, peace and security, and human rights are interlinked and mutually reinforcing.

Actions

I. The Commission is to better utilize its membership to strengthen its links with the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social

Council (see also actions 2.I and 2.II) to efficiently address issues regarding peacebuilding and sustaining peace and to advocate peacebuilding and sustaining peace.

II. Dialogues between the Chair of the Commission and the Presidents of the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council should be sought, as necessary, as well as informal meetings of the Commission with those bodies.

III. In connection with the Commission's advisory role in relation to the Security Council, in addition to its engagement thus far, when invited to give a briefing to the Council, it should prepare its briefings by aligning its workplan with relevant Council meetings (see action 3.II). The activities of the Commission in preparation for these briefings may include internal thematic discussions in anticipation of issues to be discussed in the Council, visits to the field, including, when invited by the Council, joint visits with the Council to advance peacebuilding perspectives and the organization of meetings to engage with relevant stakeholders, including international financial institutions, United Nations entities and civil society organizations. In addition to such formal briefings, the Commission could provide its advice in writing and through informal interactive dialogues, as appropriate.

IV. Through this advanced preparation, and the uniqueness of the Commission's convening power, it can have sustained interactions and enhance its efforts to provide the Security Council with substantive advice, upon request, for example, in matters relating to the synergies between security and development. The advisory role of the Commission in relation to the Council is recognized, in particular in the context of the Council's consideration of peacekeeping operations and special political missions mandates, during which the Commission is uniquely positioned to provide clear, realistic, applicable and qualitative, peacebuilding perspectives to the Council, if requested. Similarly, regular exchanges between the Commission and other subsidiary organs of the Council should be further enhanced.

V. Prior consultation between the Security Council presidency, the Commission Chair and the informal coordinator is encouraged to improve the timeliness of requests and submissions. While preparing advice for the Council, at its request, the Commission is encouraged to hold the widest possible consultations, including with the penholders, countries and regions in question, and, if needed, with all members of the Commission to ensure the quality and complementarity of the advisories.

VI. The Commission is to advocate a coherent, predictable and traceable use of resources for peacebuilding activities with the use of the Secretary-General's peacebuilding funding dashboard,[1] including with international and regional financial institutions, and for innovative financial instruments.

VII. The Commission should also continue to serve as a bridge among the principal organs and relevant entities of the United Nations including the agencies, funds and programmes, with appropriate emphasis on activities undertaken on the ground.

6. **Synergies between the Commission and the Peacebuilding Fund**: while preserving the agility, flexibility, effectiveness and independence of the Peacebuilding Fund, examine ways to strengthen the synergies between the Commission and the Fund with a view to further enhancing the transparency of the

[1] See www.un.org/peacebuilding/content/secretary-generals-peacebuilding-funding-dashboard.

Fund and to ensure that Member States remain informed of the ongoing projects of the Fund.

Actions

I. The Commission is to hear presentations by countries receiving funds from the Peacebuilding Fund, in particular when countries have been declared eligible for the Peacebuilding and Recovery Facility.

II. The Commission is to invite the Chair and the members of the Peacebuilding Fund Advisory Group to meetings of the Commission, when relevant.

III. The Commission is to request regular briefings from the Peacebuilding Support Office on the activities of the Fund at the meetings of the Commission and more regular circulation of Fund documents to the Commission.

IV. The Commission is to convene an annual meeting to be informed of the work of the Peacebuilding Fund and increase the visibility of the Fund.

7. **Preparation, format, conduct and outcome of Commission meetings**: meetings of the Commission should be prepared well in advance with a view to ensuring substantive discussions and facilitate concrete outcomes. A balance between transparency/outreach and confidentiality of the Commission's deliberations must be ensured when deciding if a meeting should be open or closed. The Commission, in all its meetings and formats, and with the consent of Member States, should enhance inclusivity and ensure that participation reinforces an integrated organizational committee and the concept of a unified Commission. The Peacebuilding Support Office is to continue to ensure that mechanisms of reporting back to the Organizational Committee on all Commission activities are in place. The Office is also to ensure that there is a balance between time allocated to presentations by briefers and to interventions from the floor with a view to promoting interactive discussions.

Actions

I. The Commission should make greater use of expert-level meetings to discuss the purpose and expected outcomes of and follow-up to ambassadorial-level meetings.

II. In preparation for the meetings of the Commission, the Chair will circulate a concept note at least one week before the date of the meeting.

III. In preparation for the meetings of the Commission, the Chair, upon consultation with the countries concerned, should announce whether the meetings are to be open or closed and this may be reflected in the monthly programme of work where possible and updated as such.

IV. In preparation for the meetings of the Commission, the Peacebuilding Support Office will ask briefers to limit their interventions to no more than five minutes.

V. In the conduct of the meetings of the Commission, the Chair will remind briefers to limit their interventions to three to five minutes. The Chair will also encourage speakers from the floor to limit their interventions to three minutes.

VI. When inviting participants from the floor to speak, the Chair, upon advice from the Secretary, will prioritize countries from the region and give due consideration to protocol and order of registration.

VII. In addition to Chair's summaries, the Commission is to consider relevant documents to strengthen the outcome of its meetings. These should include, as appropriate, press statements and letters to be agreed upon by the Commission.

To strengthen national ownership, when considering outcome documents, particular importance shall be given to national or regional representatives of a geographical situation under consideration.

VIII. The Commission, with respect of national ownership, is to explore possibilities for follow-up to meetings with the membership and various briefers.

IX. Documents to be approved by the Commission are to be circulated early enough, and at least three working days before any deadlines, to allow Member States to provide substantive input and suggestions.

X. Periodic follow-up meetings are encouraged in the country- and region-specific contexts to inform the Commission of outcomes of its engagements.

8. **Visibility and communication**: there is a need to address the lack of awareness, both within and outside the United Nations, of the work of the Commission and on peacebuilding and sustaining peace.

Actions

I. The Commission is to explore ways to increase the visibility of its open meetings, in particular high-level events, such as the annual session, to attract more attention from the media and the United Nations system. For example, the Commission should issue press releases, as appropriate, after such events. The Commission could also consider developing a communications strategy, in consultation with the Department of Global Communications.

II. The Commission is to explore ways to increase ongoing activity on the Internet and on social media with regard to all its meetings and country visits.

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Reflecting on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace

A summary of a global online consultation with civil society

Organized by:

Dag Hammarskjold Foundation (DHF)
Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC)
Peace Direct (PD)
United Nations Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO)

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"The role of civil society in building sustainable peace is no longer debatable. The issue [of] knowing who, when, what and how to engage the wider spectrum of civil society organizations is very critical."

- Ambassador Liberata Mulamula, Tanzania, member of the group of Independent Eminent Persons selected to support the 2020 Review of the UN Peacebuilding Architecture

Background

The Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation, the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict, Peace Direct and the Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO) in the United Nations Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs conducted a three-day online consultation entitled "Reflecting on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace" on 2-4 June 2020. Representatives of civil society from across the world were invited to share their perspectives on peacebuilding and contribute their views and experiences.

The consultation was designed to focus in particular on what has changed since the adoption of the 2016 resolutions on the peacebuilding architecture (A/RES/70/262 and S/RES/2282), known informally as the 'sustaining peace' resolutions, with an emphasis on the impact of the support of the United Nations to peacebuilding at the field level. Participants were encouraged to reflect on how their peacebuilding work has been affected by COVID-19.

This discussion informed the 2020 Review of the United Nations Peacebuilding Architecture and the 2020 Report of the Secretary-General on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace (A/74/976–S/2020/773. The online consultation took place through Peace Direct's Platform4Dialogue online platform. Over 280 participants, from 97 countries logged in and engaged in a rich discussion and contributed more than 1,000 comments across three days. This report serves as a synthesis of this exchange and presents key messages and recommendations captured by the organizers.

1 The "key messages and recommendations" contained in this summary are drawn from the contributions of participants in the consultation but do not necessarily represent the views of the entire collective, nor the United Nations and other organizers.

Key messages and recommendations

Role of civil society in peacebuilding and sustaining peace:

The consultation highlighted that because of the close relationship to their communities and their sense of service, many civil society actors - including faith and community leaders, youth, academics, teachers, and volunteers - possess unique expertise that is critical to achieving peace. The role of civil society is essential to understand conflict dynamics, identify missing capacities, provide adequate peacebuilding support, and assess the impact of peacebuilding and sustaining peace. "*My country recently voted away a 22-year-old dictatorship. The country needed a transition and majority of the credit for that being possible belonged to [CSOs]. The CSOs in my country held peace building seminars and youth dialogues*" (Fatou Sarr).

For many, the strength of civil society organizations (CSOs) is in their role as "*front liners in peacebuilding, [who] have tremendous roles to play at the grass-roots where conflicts first sparks*" (Clement Iornongu). For a number of participants, a particularly important role for civil society is ensuring that all parts of communities are able to play a part in building peace - "*CSOs play a wide range of roles, some of which include facilitating dialogue on issues relevant to peacebuilding and peace, building capacity of local actors and communities in conflict prevention and conflict resolution, establishing and/or supporting community-based conflict resolution mechanisms, setting up and operating early warning systems, implementing advocacy initiatives with policy-makers and decision-makers, undertaking research and conflict analysis to inform the design of programs and interventions, ensuring the issues and priorities of marginalized and vulnerable segments of communities are addressed*" (Abdel-Rahman El Mahdi).

The message was conveyed that peace is more sustainable when peacebuilding is locally owned, led and implemented. "*I am convinced that the UN and local governments where these grassroots operate need not be privileged over local efforts. There is a danger in 'institutionalizing hierarchy', that is, when we think the UN and governments are the 'top' architects of peacebuilding*" (Eddah Mutua).

The participants also highlighted the need and the benefit brought by the establishment of inclusive platforms for dialogue to undertake joint analysis of root causes and structural drivers of conflict, while prioritising a people-centred response. "*We also have the Peace Architecture Dialogue platforms that bring all stakeholders from community leaders, local vigilante groups, youth and women leaders, community development associations, all security agencies and government representatives on the table to facilitate common understanding of the security challenges, conflict issues and collectively proffer solutions for the challenges*" (Chrisantus Lapang).

Recommendation: The United Nations should ensure that it consistently includes civil society experiences and expertise at all levels of work and activities. This would assist international actors to more accurately and effectively assess what risk and resilience factors need to be addressed, who are the actors best-positioned to do so at the local, national, regional, and international levels, and what complementary role the UN can play to support their efforts.

Impact of COVID-19 on peacebuilding and sustaining peace:

Participants expressed concern about the serious impact of the pandemic on peacebuilding, including restrictions to freedom of movement that are affecting peacebuilding efforts especially at the local level. *"The impact of COVID-19 on my peace building work has been enormous […] most of our activities are community-based involving community gatherings and meetings for sensitization, dialogues, mediations"* (Lokwiya Francis).

Some organizations are continuing their engagement with local communities and encouraging them to interact with one another through social media. *"COVID-19 has impacted peacebuilding work negatively. Constant interactions are some of ways to enhance and maintain peace among local communities, but the restrictions imposed to fight against the spread of COVID-19 reduced interactions between communities. However, CSOs are continuing their engagements with the local communities encouraging the communities to interact with one another through social media and some of these activities are supported by the UN local peacebuilding office in Liberia"* (D. Nyandeh Sieh).

The gendered impact of COVID-19 was also highlighted, including both gender-based violence, and the potential that peacebuilding gains led by women could be lost. The analysis of women's experiences (both qualitative and quantitative) and their integration across all work on peace and security, development and human rights could bring attention to the factors that drive conflict

"COVID-19 has come to escalate existing situation of conflict and deepen discrimination against women and girls. Domestic violence and other forms of sexual and gender-based violence including rape and assault are on the rise as a result of the restriction of movements and forced isolations" (Queeneth Tawo).

Many participants also emphasized new opportunities presented by the pandemic. *"COVID-19 presents an amazing opportunity for the UN and its partners to foster a new partnership and explore new areas of focus"* (Ruby Quantson Davis). These opportunities included listening, observing and mapping local response to the pandemic; broadening the group of actors engaged in peacebuilding; and rethinking assumptions in development and peacebuilding work, including recognizing the important role of women peacebuilders. *"COVID-19 has created opportunities both at the conceptual level, and at the level of intervention and action. Conceptually, we need to re-think the human rights paradigm. It has shown us that civil, cultural, economic, environmental, political and social rights are all important and inter-connected"* (Mario Gomez).

Recommendation: International partners should "shift gears" and allow organizations to adapt existing programmes to respond to new needs emerging from the pandemic. Responses should not only focus on health and humanitarian aid but also on creating self-sufficiency and resilience. They need to be designed in a way that is conflict sensitive and will contribute to peace.

Recommendation: Enhance collaboration with national, regional and international stakeholders leading a COVID-19 response and fully support them in addressing community concerns, including domestic violence and gender-based violence which are reportedly increasing as a result of COVID-19.

Mental health:

Mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) were highlighted as important aspects of peacebuilding that need to be prioritized: *"People who are not well, are unlikely to contribute effectively and sincerely to the wellbeing of their community. CSOs know this. They are at the heart of linking PB and [mental health and psycho-social services] MHPSS"* (Friderike Bubenzer). Mental health was identified as of even greater concern as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic: *"COVID-19 crisis has further highlighted the need for attention to -- and integration of -- mental health and psycho-social services into peacebuilding as a contributing factor to mitigating the displacement of aggression, contributing to collective (rather than just individual) transformative resilience, and to the sustaining peace agenda"* (Graeme Simpson).

Promoting mental health and psychosocial support services are crucial to the building and maintenance of peace. Communities and individuals are affected in different ways based on history, culture, gender, age, displacement, denial of rights, gender-based violence and more. Therefore, interventions need to be conceived in multi-disciplinary, conflict-sensitive, and culturally appropriate ways and implemented through capacity building and other technical support to local NGOs with expertise and experience at community and national levels.

Recommendation: Increase peacebuilding programming that includes mental health and psycho-social services and trauma healing outcomes. The United Nations could support funding for pilot projects to provide more substantive evidence in this key area.

Recommendation: Integrate mental health and psycho-social support into all peacebuilding efforts and ensure that they are contextually appropriate to the diverse needs of affected populations.

Recommendation: The United Nations could take leadership in signaling the importance of MHPSS as part of peacebuilding and integral to sustaining peace and could initiate new activities to build momentum for an international policy dialogue around the issue.

United Nations Support to Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace:

Participants reflected on the ability of the United Nations to bring actors together, push for comprehensive solutions that include cross-pillar coherence, and support peace agreements and peace processes. The United Nations' authority and convening power can create spaces where both government and civil society actors are involved. Many participants saw value in the support of the UN to "high-level" activities, such as peace negotiations, humanitarian aid, or government-support, while also valuing UN approaches that benefited local actors, for example, supporting peaceful transition in The Gambia. *"[The] UN as an international actor has played role ensuring the sustainability of peace in countries. However, there is need for direct approach to the grassroots levels"* (Mable Chawinga). The consultation, however, highlighted that while the commitment to involve civil society in consultations and the steps undertaken by the United Nations to reform its approach are greatly appreciated, the engagement with local actors, in some contexts, remains limited and steps should be taken to ensure a more diverse range of voices are heard.

Recommendation: More consideration should be given to sustainability of local civil society organizations, including longer-term and more flexible funding.

Recommendation: Additional support is needed to advance education for peace, especially in insecure and conflict-affected countries.

Global policy frameworks:

In discussing the use of global policy frameworks, participants highlighted the United Nations Security Council Resolutions on Women Peace and Security (UNSCR 1325 and 1820), Youth Peace and Security (UNSCR 2250), and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (SDGs 1, 4, 5, 10, and especially 16) as particularly useful in their work, including in programme design and in advocacy/sensitization activities. However, some said that the global policy frameworks found little resonance in their communities due to lack of knowledge or awareness. This could be addressed by more coordination between United Nations entities in the field and at intergovernmental levels to disseminate information more coherently and collectively.

United Nations strengthened engagement with civil society:

The recommendations of the 2018 Report of the Secretary-General on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace were viewed by participants as successful in bringing attention to local peacebuilders and supporting establishment of good practices. Participants called for more meaningful approaches to be adopted with the involvement of civil society at the goal setting stage (and not merely at the implementation stage as implementing partners). Some participants expressed concerns at a seeming lack of progress or follow-through in achieving civil society inclusion and pointed to the need for a more robust system to monitor and incentivize implementation to address this. Beyond the United Nations, peacebuilding partnerships are important at all levels, from civil society coalitions at the local level to international partnerships and are an essential part of successful peacebuilding - "*Civil society tends to work in silos. Exploring greater collaboration and partnerships across different thematic areas […] would add momentum to change*" (Mario Gomez).

Among the challenges was the complexity of the United Nations and wider global governance system, with many participants describing the difficulty they face in understanding how to meaningfully engage with the United Nations. This complexity is exacerbated by what many participants saw as excessive bureaucracy and red tape that "makes relations with civil society very difficult even at the national levels" (Luis Alvarado Bruzual). Many participants shared examples of the United Nation's successes in supporting peacebuilding in their contexts and highlighted specific areas where the United Nations played a positive role.

Recommendation: Partnerships should be built around the work that local peacebuilders are already doing in the community in order to complement local efforts.

Recommendation: The United Nations should further expand its outreach to include civil society actors based outside of capitals and those less organized.

Recommendation: The United Nations should enhance its focus on conflict prevention and social cohesion at grass-roots level.

Recommendation: The United Nations should see itself as an "equal partner" with local groups, "*systematically engaging them as experts and leaders in all peacebuilding initiatives at all stages of the process. […] A good example is the development and publication of the UN's System-wide Community Engagement Guidelines for Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace (CEG) […]. The joint Civil Society-UN Working Group to develop these guidelines has been a truly innovative and groundbreaking undertaking that allowed for unprecedented avenues for civil society inclusion in the development of internal UN documents*" (Fatemah Maraghi).

Funding for local peacebuilding work:

The issue of funding was a common topic throughout the discussion. Participants highlighted the need for more equitable access to funding that seeks to address the difficulties local CSOs have in accessing funding and that creates a more level playing field between CSOs and INGOs. Participants also suggested the need for the United Nations to ensure that its engagement creates the conditions for CSOs to continue to be effective once United Nations support ends.

"*If you distribute mosquitoes treated nets to the refugees, after a week you can monitor and see that the nets are being used and in the long run you find out that malaria infections have gone down, then you say good work because you are achieving very quick results. But when you mediate or dialogue on a civil conflict like in the case of the Lord's Resistance Army, sustainable peace is likely to return in two or three years and some donors believe it is a waste of time and resources. So more financial support should be channeled for peace building. Capacities for fundraising for financial sustainability for peace building work is highly required for us the CSOs and our government in Uganda. The… skills are still lacking for the CSOs and our government to raise finances locally from within the country and with this trend peacebuilding interventions cannot be sustainable*" (Lokwiya Francis).

Recommendation: The United Nations engagement with civil society should be sustained over the longer term and not be based only on one-off events or consultations so as to develop ongoing, meaningful relationships that can enhance local peacebuilding work. When consultations occur, participants noted that follow up or information-sharing after workshops or campaigns should be improved.

Recommendation: Introduce more flexibility in funding and new opportunities that specifically target the needs of local civil society such as small grants for core funds, networking opportunities, training opportunities on accountability, reporting, communication, and a move away from a "one-size fits all" model of funding. The Peacebuilding Fund was mentioned by some participants as a good source of funding. Some participants noted progress toward more flexible and accessible funding that is more able to meet the needs of civil society. Some pointed to administrative barriers that make it difficult for small civil society organizations to apply. New funding models that reach smaller, local-level CSOs and peacebuilding organizations are needed.

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Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation

Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation is a non-governmental organisation established in 1962 in memory of the second UN Secretary-General, which aims to advance dialogue and policy for sustainable development and peace.

daghammarskjold.se
Twitter: @DagHammarskjold

Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC)

The Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict is a network of hundreds of civil society organisations from around the world and what unites them all is a dedication to conflict prevention and peacebuilding.

gppac.net
Twitter @GPPAC

Peace Direct

Peace Direct works with local people to stop violence and build sustainable peace. We believe that local people should lead all peacebuilding efforts.

peacedirect.org
Twitter: @peacedirect

UN Peacebuilding Support Office

The United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO) in the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs fosters international support for nationally-owned and led peacebuilding efforts. The Office assists the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), manages the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) on behalf of the Secretary-General, and works to enhance system-wide coherence and partnerships with UN and non-UN actors to support peacebuilding and sustaining peace in relevant countries. PBSO was established in 2005.

dppa.un.org
un.org/peacebuilding/supportoffice
Twitter: @UN @UNPeacebuilding

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The Secretary General's Peacebuilding Dashboard - Codebook and Methodology

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Introduction

Peacebuilding activities remain fragmented and the field of peacebuilding lacks transparency. There are no overarching definitions and standards for what counts as peacebuilding, let alone what should be included in peacebuilding expenditures. The comprehensive tracking and analysis of expenditures across time and sources of funding, however, is essential to coordinate action, inform management, program, and policy decisions, learn from previous engagement and improve programming for peacebuilding. Reducing fragmentation will help to increase resources and enhance coherence, transparency, accountability and effectiveness. Therefore, the Secretary-General has committed to establish a funding dashboard to track expenditures related to peacebuilding of UN HQ funds, as stated in his report on peacebuilding and sustaining peace (A/72/707-S/2018/43). This dashboard will catalogue existing instruments, including their capitalization, allocations, income, rules and procedures, governance structures and areas of intervention.

This document outlines the methodologies developed to this effect by the United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office, including on identifying and analyzing peacebuilding priorities, their relation to OECD Creditor Reporting System Purpose Codes, and the linkages between peacebuilding and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Codebook

The dashboard visualizes peacebuilding expenditures of UN headquarter-based funding instruments from 2015 until today. It is based on a relational dataset where information is captured at the level of funds, individual projects, and at the outcome level.

The following table details the information collected in the dataset at project, recipient organization and outcome level.

Project Level Data

Variable Name	Explanation
Fund Name	Abbreviated name of the Fund (e.g. PBF)
Country	Official Country Name
Project Number	The fund's own project number series
Project Number MPTF (stored as text)	If fund associated with MPTFO, project number as on MPTFO website
Project Name	Complete title of project
Project Name MPTF	As on MPTFO website (if applicable) Alternatively, combination of project number and name - this is the unique project identifier that serves to connect the different levels in the dataset
Approved Budget	Amount as approved by fund, in USD
Approved Budget MPTF	As on MPTFO website (if applicable), in USD
Year	Year of approval as recorded by fund
Approval Date MPTF	Date of approval as on MPTFO website
Year MPTF	As on MPTFO website (Year the project started (according to MPTFO if applicable)
Project Type	New/Cost extension (see explanation below)
Project Category	If fund has different categories of projects (e.g. PBF differentiates between IRF/PRF)
Project Status	Ongoing/Operationally Closed/Financially Closed or other
Project Document availability	Yes/No - ProDoc available online (MPTFO website or Fund's own website)

End of project report availability	Yes/No - End of project report available online (MPTFO website or Fund's own website)
Link	Link to project (on MPTFO website or Fund's own website)
Fund Specific Details	Funds may choose to provide fund specific information which can feature on their customized dashboard page, e.g. PBF tracks priority areas, gender marker, youth marker etc.
Comments	Any other information or project specific issue

Table 1: Project Level Data Collection (Unit of Analysis is Project)

Recipient Organization Level Data

At this level, information is captured on recipient organizations (UN and others) and the budget allocated to each entity for that specific project.

Variable Name	Explanation
Country	Official Country Name
Project Name MPTF	As on MPTFO website (if applicable) Alternatively, combination of project number and name - this is the unique project identifier that serves to connect the different levels in the dataset
Project Name	Complete title of project
Year	Year of approval as recorded by fund
Approved Budget	Amount for entire project as approved by fund, in USD
Recipient Organization	Name of recipient organization. If a civil society organization, put CSO
Name of CSO	If a civil society organization, enter their full name here
Recipient Organization Budget	Budget that this organization receives for this project, in USD

Table 2: Recipient Organization Level Data Collection (Unit of Analysis is Recipient Organization per Project)

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Outcome Level Data

At this level, information is captured on the project outcome(s).

Variable Name	Explanation
Country	Official Country Name
Project Name MPTF	As on MPTFO website (if applicable)

	Alternatively, combination of project number and name - this is the unique project identifier that serves to connect the different levels in the dataset
Project Name	Complete title of project
Year	Year of approval as recorded by fund
Approved Budget	Amount for entire project as approved by fund, in USD
Outcome	Project outcome (usually) in original language and wording
Budget per Outcome	Outcome budget, excluding indirect costs
SDG Coding	Percentages attributed to relevant SDG targets, see explanation below
Peacebuilding Priority Coding	Percentages attributed to relevant Peacebuilding Priorities, see explanation below
Outcome Budget per Recipient Organization	Budget allocated to each RUNO/CSO or other recipient organization for each outcome

Table 3: Outcome Level Data Collection (Unit of Analysis is Outcome)

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How to code Peacebuilding Priorities

Rules for coding Peacebuilding Priorities

To address the need for increased coherence, transparency, accountability in UN headquarters-based trust funds and global programmes related to peace, the Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO) of the United Nations Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs has developed a Peacebuilding Priorities Coding System, which is based on a UN understanding of peacebuilding and sustaining peace. PBSO has identified shortcomings in the OECD/DAC Creditor Reporting System (CRS),[1] which provides information on most ODA flows, but does not cover peacebuilding activities in the necessary breadth and depth.

Building on the OECD/DAC CRS and the 2009 Secretary-General's Report on peacebuilding[2], PBSO identified recurring peacebuilding activities under six peacebuilding priorities (PBP): Political Process, Safety and Security, Rule of Law and Human Rights, Core Government Functions, Basic Services, Economic Revitalization. Activities in the areas Political Process, Safety and Security, Rule of Law and Human Rights, and Core Government Functions usually are fully focused on and aimed at sustaining peace. In the Areas Basic Services and Economic Revitalization, not all activities are fully focused on and aimed at sustaining peace but could contribute to sustaining peace depending on the theory of change.

The table in Annex A includes a description of the 40 subcategories to assist in the coding. The descriptions are partly based on language from the OECD/DAC CRS Purpose Codes.

For each project outcome, one or several relevant Peacebuilding Priorities (PBP, see Appendix A) are identified and weighed in percentages reflecting their importance. In order to attain a close approximation of funding per PBP, the share of the outcome budget that can be attributed to an identified PBP is calculated on the basis of that percentage.

In order to identify the relevant PBP for an outcome, the coder needs to at least be familiar with the goals and planned activities of the project. It is encouraged to use the planned activities as a basis for coding decisions in case the actual outcomes oftentimes do not provide details. The coder then will identify one or several immediately relevant PBP for each of the outcomes. To allow for weighing the relevance of the different PBP and to indicate if the outcome speaks only peripherally to PBP, each of the PBP can be assigned a percentage value between 10% and 100%, so that the total percentages attributed to different PBP in one outcome are 100% as per below table.

[1] http://www.oecd.org/development/financing-sustainable-development/development-finance-standards/purposecodessectorclassification.htm

[2] A/63/881–S/2009/304 Report of the Secretary-General on peacebuilding in the immediate aftermath of conflict. Accessed at https://www.un.org/ruleoflaw/files/pbf_090611_sg.pdf

Example

As an example, we use a 2017 Peacebuilding Fund Project in Sri Lanka.

Project Title: Support to strengthen capacities to undertake reforms to advance peacebuilding and transitional justice processes in Sri Lanka.

Outcome 1	SCRM (Government's Secretariat for Coordinating the Reconciliation Mechanism) and PBF Secretariat effectively coordinate and support delivery of high-impact peacebuilding results.			
Peacebuilding Priority Coding	PBP	4.1		
	Weight	30%		

In outcome 1, some focus is on the national authorities which falls under PBP 4.1 'Center of government and executive coordination'. Based on a closer look at the outcome activities, we attribute 30% of the share to this PBP. The bigger focus lies on the Peacebuilding Fund Secretariat. We understand this as administrative costs of the PBF that are not directly contributing to any peacebuilding priority. Thus, the remaining 70% will automatically be attributed to PBP 0 'Administrative or not peacebuilding related'. **Note**: When only a part of the outcome budget (or indeed no part) can be attributed to a specific peacebuilding priority area, there is no need to distribute the entire 100%, as any un-coded part of the percentage is automatically attributed to PBP 0 within the data management system.

Outcome 2 and outcome 3 are analyzed in a similar manner by looking at project activities in detail and analyzing which PBP are being covered:

Outcome 2	Sri Lanka undertakes reforms and establishes credible and broadly supported transitional justice mechanisms and processes that adhere to international standards			
Peacebuilding Priority Coding	PBP	3.5 Transitional Justice	1.7 Civil society	
	Weight	70%	30%	

Outcome 3	Key independent commissions contribute to accountable and transparent democratic governance			
Peacebuilding Priority Coding	PBP	2.6 Police	3.7 Human Rights	
	Weight	70%	30%	

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How to code SDG Targets

Rules for coding SDG Targets

Noting the complementarity of the 2030 Agenda with the sustaining peace approach, it is important to map the peacebuilding projects' contribution to financing the SDGs.

For each project outcome, one or several relevant SDG targets (usually not more than 5) are identified and weighed in percentages reflecting their importance. In order to attain a close approximation of funding per SDG target, the share of the outcome budget that can be attributed to an identified SDG target is calculated on the basis of that percentage.

In order to identify the relevant SDG targets for an outcome, the coder needs to at least be familiar with the goals and planned activities of the project. It is encouraged to use the planned activities as a basis for coding decisions in case the actual outcomes oftentimes do not provide details.

The coder then will identify one or several immediately relevant SDG targets for each of the outcomes. To allow for weighing the relevance of the different SDG targets and to indicate if the outcome speaks only peripherally to a target, each of the targets can be assigned a percentage value between 10% and 100%, so that the total percentage attributed to different SDG targets in one outcome are 100%.

If an outcome does not appear to be directly related to any SDG target or just slightly, the remaining SDG credits (100% minus X) will be automatically allocated to 'Other Peacebuilding Activities'. This category encompasses all other peacebuilding objectives and activities that cannot be directly related to any of the SDG targets and mainly includes administrative activities such as a fund's in-country secretariats.

Decision Tool

In order to standardize the way qualitative information on SDG targets is extracted from the project documents and fed into quantitative analysis, it is key that this process takes place in a standardized and reliable manner. The decision tool (see graphic 1 below, and Appendix B) developed for this task is set up like a decision tree, leading the coder to the relevant SDG targets.

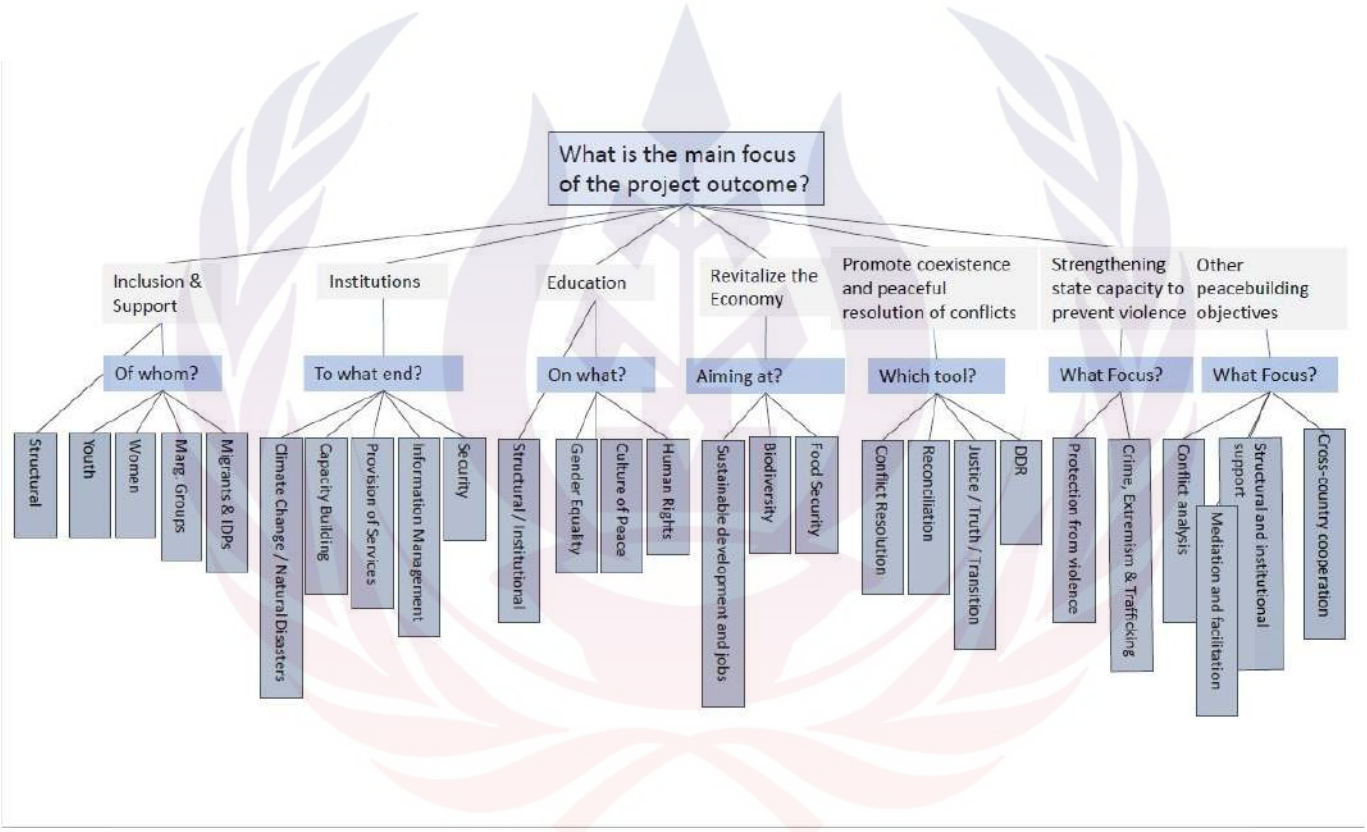
The decision tool at hand provides a structured and reliable manner of attributing peacebuilding themes and topics in the outcomes to most of the relevant SDG targets while saving time compared to a regular review of the SDGs. After the coder familiarizes him/herself with the project outcome, a quick look at the different themes and foci helps to identify the relevant branches. In some cases, it can still be helpful to look at the regular

overview of SDG targets, especially if the targets in the decision tree does not seem to represent a specific project outcome that might still be associated to other SDGs.

Some SDG targets are rather broad and seem to fit many outcomes. While this may be true, coders are encouraged to follow strict interpretations for these targets.

For example, targets under SDG 5 should not by default be attributed to an outcome that simply mentions women as one of their target audiences but rather reserve using these targets for outcomes that particularly focus on women in their activities.

In another example, Target 17.9 should strictly be used for describing outcomes that have capacity building at their core and/or constitute of south/south cooperation.



Graphic 1: First Level of Decision Tool

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Example

As an example, we use a 2017 Peacebuilding Fund Project in Sri Lanka.

Project Title: Support to strengthen capacities to undertake reforms to advance peacebuilding and transitional justice processes in Sri Lanka

Outcome 1	SCRM (Government's Secretariat for Coordinating the Reconciliation Mechanism) and PBF Secretariat effectively coordinate and support delivery of high-impact peacebuilding results

SDG Coding	SDG Target	17.9				
	Weight	20%				

In outcome 1, the focus is on institution building, so we follow the 'Institutions' category of the Decision Tool. Under institutions, its focus is on capacity building of national authorities. It thus contributes to SDG Target 17.9 'Enhance international support for implementing effective and targeted capacity-building in developing countries to support national plans to implement all the Sustainable Development Goals, including through North-South, South-South and triangular cooperation'. We attribute 20% to this target. The bigger focus is on the PBF Secretariat. We understand this as administrative costs of the Fund that do not directly contribute to any SDG target. Thus, the remaining 80% will automatically be allocated to 'Other Peacebuilding Activities'.

Note: When only a part of the outcome budget (or indeed no part) can be attributed to a specific SDG target, there is no need to distribute the entire 100%, as any un-coded part of the percentage is automatically attributed to 'Other Peacebuilding Activities' within the data management system.

Outcome 2 and outcome 3 are analyzed in the similar manner by looking at project activities in detail and analyzing which SDG Target are being covered.

Outcome 2	Sri Lanka undertakes reforms and establishes credible and broadly supported transitional justice mechanisms and processes that adhere to international standards					
SDG Coding	SDG Target	16.1	16.3	16.a		
	Weight	20%	60%	20%		

Outcome 3	Key independent commissions contribute to accountable and transparent democratic governance					
SDG Coding	SDG Target	16.6				
	Weight	100%				

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What to do with cost extensions

Some projects benefit from a cost extension one or several years after the launch of the project. These new investments should be included into the SDG analysis, and should factor in the for the year they have been approved in (not necessarily the year of the project launch).

Most of the time, the new project document and/or the detailed budget per outcome allows to calculate the new allocation of resources to the already existing outcomes. There is no new coding needed, unless an outcome has been significantly altered or an outcome has been added.

For each cost extension for an outcome, duplicate the row of that outcome, and in the new row:

- Update the "Approved budget" and "Date" (so that the budget is allocated to the correct year it has been approved)
- Update the budget per outcome as follows:
  - If the cost extension figures separately on the new budget, enter the amount of the cost extension for that outcome.
  - If the cost extension does not figure separately in the budget, calculate the extended budget by subtracting the old outcome budget from the new outcome budget (the difference being the amount of the cost extension).

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Example of Complete Coding Exercise

Project Level Data

Variable Name	Example
Fund Name	PBF
Country	Sri Lanka
Project Number	PBF/LKA/A-1
Project Number MPTF	00105729
Project Name	Support to strengthen capacities to undertake reforms to advance peacebuilding and transitional justice processes in Sri Lanka
Project Name MPTF	PBF/LKA/A-1: Support to streng
Approved Budget	$ 4,190,000
Approved Budget MPTF	$ 4,411,874
Year	2016
Project Approval Date MPTF	5/26/2017
Year MPTF	2017
Project Type	New
Project Category	PRF
Project Status	Ongoing
Project Document availability	Yes
End of project report availability	No
Link	http://mptf.undp.org/AB92/project/00105729
Fund Specific Details	Priority window: None Focus area: 2.2 Priority area: 2 Gender marker: 2 Youth marker: None
Comments	Any other information or project specific issue

Recipient Organization Level Data

Recipient Organization Budget	UNDP: $ 3,450,420 IOM: $ 739,580

Outcome Level Data

Outcome 1	The project aims to SCRM (Government's Secretariat for Coordinating the Reconciliation Mechanism) and PBF Secretariat effectively coordinate and support delivery of high-impact peacebuilding results					
Budget per Outcome	$ 1,180,000					
Outcome Budget per Recipient Organization	UNDP: $ 1,180,000					
SDG Coding	SDG Target	17.9				
	Weight	20%				
Peacebuilding Priority Coding	PBP	4.1				
	Weight	30%				

Outcome 2	Sri Lanka undertakes reforms and establishes credible and broadly supported transitional justice mechanisms and processes that adhere to international standards					
Budget per Outcome	$ 1,860,000					
Outcome Budget per Recipient Organization	UNDP: $ 1,420,420 IOM: $ 439,580					
SDG Coding	SDG Target	16.1	16.3	16.a		
	Weight	20%	60%	20%		
Peacebuilding Priority Coding	PBP	3.5		1.7		
	Weight	70%		30%		

Outcome 3	Key independent commissions contribute to accountable and transparent democratic governance
Budget per Outcome	$ 700,000

Outcome Budget per Recipient Organzation	UNDP: $ 400,0000 IOM: $ 300,000					
SDG Coding	SDG Target	16.6				
	Weight	100%				
Peacebuilding Priority Coding	PBP	2.6		3.7		
	Weight	70%		30%		

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Appendix A: Peacebuilding Priorities Coding System

PBP Code	Name	Description	OECD/ DAC CRS Code[3]
	What area(s) does the project intervene in?	How does the project achieve its goal?	
0	**Administrative or not peace-building related**	Activities indirectly related to peacebuilding, such as project management capacities, M&E, communications and other indirect costs.	
1	**Political Processes**		
1.1	Electoral processes	Support electoral management bodies and processes, election preparation and observation, voters' education.	15151
1.2	Facilitating and promoting inclusive dialogue	Promote inclusive dialogue, enable different groups in society (e.g. youth, women, marginalized) to make their voices heard through participation in dialogue processes.	15220
1.3	Reconciliation	Support reconciliation among groups in society, and between the state and the population by building or rebuilding relationships damaged by violence, which may include trauma healing, truth telling, truth and reconciliation commissions, defining a shared vision, addressing long-standing grievances and dialogue with the main goal to reconcile dialogue partners.	15220
1.4	Conflict management, mediation and dialogue capacities, and infrastructures for peace at national and subnational level	Capacity building, monitoring, information exchange. Support formal mediation and dialogue mechanisms. Support to the implementation of peace agreements generally. Support conflict management institutions, such as ombudsmen, alternative dispute resolution, arbitration and mediation, traditional authorities (*see also category "Access to justice"*). Deliver equipment and training of civilian and military conflict management personnel. Participation in international civilian peace missions such as those supported by the UN Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (UNDPPA) or the European Union (European Security and Defense Policy).	15220
1.5	Legislatures and political parties	Strengthen key functions of legislatures/parliaments, including subnational assemblies and councils (representation; oversight; legislation); capacity building to improve legislatures' committees and administrative procedures; research and information management systems; provide training programmes for legislators and support personnel. Strengthen party systems and assist political parties.	15152
1.6	Democratic participation	Support the exercise of democracy and diverse forms of participation of citizens beyond elections; direct democracy instruments, such as referenda and citizens' initiatives; curricula and teaching for democratic education at various levels.	15150

[3] OECD/DAC CRS Codes highlighted in green match with PBSO codes almost entirely, while the ones highlighted in yellow match partially. For red areas, there is no OECD/DAC CRS Code.

1.7	Civil society, communities and civic engagement	Support peacebuilding activities of civil society. Support organizations that support, represent and advocate for their members and/or social groups/communities (e.g. women, youth) and monitor, engage and hold governments accountable. Enable the population to participate and act in the public sphere, support the development and protection of a civic space beyond state-oriented democratic participation, mobilize communities for a specific cause.	15150
1.8	Women empowerment and gender equality	Support women and girls (as well as men and boys) and institutions and organizations (governmental and non-governmental) working for gender equality and women's empowerment. *For projects related to GBV (see 2.3) and/or economic empowerment of women, use both this and other relevant categories.*	15170
1.9	Youth empowerment and participation	Support children, adolescents and young adults as well as institutions and organizations (governmental and non-governmental) working for youth empowerment and participation. Activities focused on youth to prevent violent extremism (PVE). *For projects related to education and/or economic empowerment of youth, use both this and other relevant categories.*	
1.10	Media and free flow of information	Support free and uncensored flow of information on public issues; activities that increase the editorial and technical skills and the integrity of the print and broadcast media, e.g. training of journalists.	15153
2	**Safety and Security**		
2.1	Mine action	All activities, related to land mines, explosive remnants of war, and improvised explosive devices (IEDs), which have benefits to developing countries as their main objective, including removal of land mines and explosive remnants of war, training on IED threat mitigation, and stockpile destruction and management; risk education and awareness raising; rehabilitation, reintegration and assistance to victims (*if medical, see also category 5.2 "Health"*); and research and development on demining and clearance, as well as capacity development of national institutions in the area of mine action.	15250
2.2	Small arms and light weapons	Control, prevent and/or reduce the proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALW); support governmental and non-governmental initiatives in this area; conversion of production facilities from military to civilian outputs.	15240
2.3	Sexual and gender-based violence	Support programmes designed to prevent and eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls/gender-based violence, which encompasses a broad range of forms of physical, sexual and psychological violence, including but not limited to: intimate partner violence (domestic violence); sexual violence; female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C); child, early and forced marriage; acid throwing; honour killings; and trafficking of women and girls). Prevention activities may include efforts to empower women and girls (*see also category "Women empowerment and gender equality*); change attitudes, norms and behaviour (*see also category 1.7 "Civil society, communities and civic engagement"*); adopt and enact legal reforms and strengthen implementation of laws and policies on ending violence against women and girls (*see also*	15180

		category 3.1 "Rule of law"), including through strengthening institutional capacity (*see also category 3.4 "Capacity of justice institutions"*). Interventions to respond to violence against women and girls/gender-based violence may include expanding access to services, including legal assistance (*see also category 3.2 "Access to justice"*), psychosocial counselling and health care (*see also category 5.2 "Health"*); training personnel to respond more effectively to the needs of survivors; and ensuring investigation, prosecution and punishment of perpetrators of violence (*see also category "Performance and independence of justice institutions"*).	
2.4	Child soldiers	Support adoption and application of legislation designed to prevent the recruitment of child soldiers, and to demobilize, disarm, reintegrate, repatriate and resettle (DDR) child soldiers *(see also category 6.1 "Employment generation and livelihoods, particularly for youth and demobilized former combatants"*); support governmental and non-governmental initiatives in this area.	15261
2.5	Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR)	Support the implementation of integrated disarmament, demobilization and reintegration processes, targeting former combatants, including women and children, persons formerly associated with armed forces and groups, as well as receiving communities. Support the development of national and local capacities on DDR, including coordination mechanisms and national strategies. Advance gender-responsive initiatives to ensure women's meaningful participation across all stages of the DDR process. Promote the sustainable social, economic and political reintegration of former members of armed groups into society. Develop community-based initiatives aimed reducing violence, promoting community resilience, preventing recruitment into armed groups, and increasing communities' capacity to absorb ex-combatants. Promote effective weapons and ammunition management to reduce arms proliferation and increase security conditions. Support the rehabilitation and reintegration of combatants who voluntarily disengage from armed groups. Provide technical support to mediation processes, particularly on DDR provisions. Support the implementation of transitional security arrangements. (*Other than "child soldiers"; see also category 6.1 "Employment generation and livelihoods, particularly for youth and demobilized former combatants"*).	15240
2.6	Police	Support police affairs and services; improve police-community relations inland and at borders. Support the maintenance of law and order and public safety	15132
2.7	Security sector governance	Assist parliament and government entities in reviewing and reforming the security system to improve democratic governance and civilian control as well as its ability to sustain peace; assist the legislature in improving civilian oversight and democratic control of budgeting, management, accountability and auditing of security expenditure, including military budgets, as part of a public expenditure management programme; assist civil society in enhancing its competence and capacity to scrutinize the security system so that it is managed in	15210

		accordance with democratic norms and principles of accountability, transparency and good governance. Improving security sector-community relations (other than police), including of border security forces.	
3	**Rule of Law and Human Rights**		
3.1	Rule of law	Promote the equality of all persons before the law and prevent arbitrary use of power. Improve legal frameworks, constitutions, laws and regulations; legislative and constitutional drafting and review; legal reform; integration of formal and informal systems of law.	15130
3.2	Access to justice (including informal or traditional mechanisms)	Improve individuals' access to justice, especially of marginalized groups, including displaced persons. Includes legal aid and counsel; public legal education; dissemination of information on entitlements and remedies for injustice; awareness campaigns. Includes access to traditional, indigenous and paralegal practices that fall outside the formal legal system, Ombudsmen, alternative dispute resolution, arbitration and mediation mechanisms.	15130
3.3	Performance and independence of justice institutions	Support the performance and independence of institutions, systems and procedures of the justice sector, both formal and informal, including ministries of justice, the interior and home affairs. Strengthen the performance of judges and courts; legal drafting services; bar and lawyers associations. Including traditional, indigenous and paralegal practices that fall outside the formal legal system. Measures to enhance public trust in justice institutions.	15130
3.4	Capacity of justice institutions, including prisons	Improve capacity of institutions, systems and procedures of the justice sector, including (but not limited to) prisons, e.g. through professional legal education; equipment.	15137
3.5	Transitional justice, including mechanisms for truth seeking, accountability, reparation and guarantee of non-recurrence	Support transitional justice arrangements and institutions, including mechanisms for truth seeking, accountability, reparation and guarantee of non-recurrence.	15130/ 15220
3.6	Protection of civilians	Activities aimed at protecting civilians from physical harm, protecting their lives and dignity, preventing destruction of livelihoods through violence and conflict, creating an environment conducive to the prevention of violence against civilians (e.g. community alert networks, non-armed protection force, reporting systems); includes compliance with and accountability for applicable international humanitarian and refugee law. Actions aimed at preventing forced displacement, and at protecting internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees, as well as migrants (*see also category 5.5 "Safe and*	

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		sustainable return and (re-) integration of internally displaced persons, refugees and migrants).	
3.7	Human rights	Support specialized official human rights institutions and mechanisms at universal, regional, national and local levels in their statutory roles to promote and protect civil and political, economic, social and cultural rights as defined in international treaties, conventions and covenants; translation of international human rights commitments into national legislation; reporting and follow-up; human rights dialogue. Support human rights defenders and human rights NGOs; human rights advocacy, activism, mobilization; awareness raising and public human rights education. Human rights programming targeting specific groups, e.g. children, persons with disabilities, migrants, ethnic, religious, linguistic and sexual minorities, indigenous people and those suffering from caste discrimination, victims of trafficking, victims of torture.	15160
4	**Core Government Functions**		
4.1	Center of government and executive coordination	Support the administration and operation of executive office. Capacity building in executive branch and office of the chief executive at all levels of government (monarch, governor-general, president, prime minister, governor, mayor, etc.).	15154
4.2	Basic public administration at the national and subnational level	Institution-building assistance to strengthen core public sector management systems and capacities, including human resource management. This includes support to ministries and all levels of public administration for the delivery of basic public services, interaction between civil servants and the population, including e-government.	15110
4.3	Multi-dimensional risk management (violence, disasters, climate change, etc.)	Build the responsiveness, capability and capacity of international, regional, national and local actors to crises. Support institutional capacities of national and local government, specialized humanitarian bodies and civil society organizations to anticipate, respond and recover from the impact of potential, imminent and current risks, hazardous events and emergency situations that pose threats of humanitarian crisis or social/political destabilization. Including early-warning systems, risk analysis and assessment, mitigation, preparedness, such as stockpiling of emergency items and training and capacity building aimed to increase the speed and effectiveness of relevant action in the occurrence of crisis.	74020
4.4	Anti-corruption organizations, institutions, measures and transparency	Support specialized organizations, institutions and frameworks for the prevention of and combat against corruption, bribery, money-laundering and other aspects of organized crime, with or without law enforcement powers, e.g. anti-corruption commissions and monitoring bodies, special investigation services, institutions and initiatives of integrity and ethics oversight, specialized NGOs, other civil society and citizens' organizations directly concerned with corruption. Awareness-raising among the population, civil society, local and national, formal and informal authorities.	15113

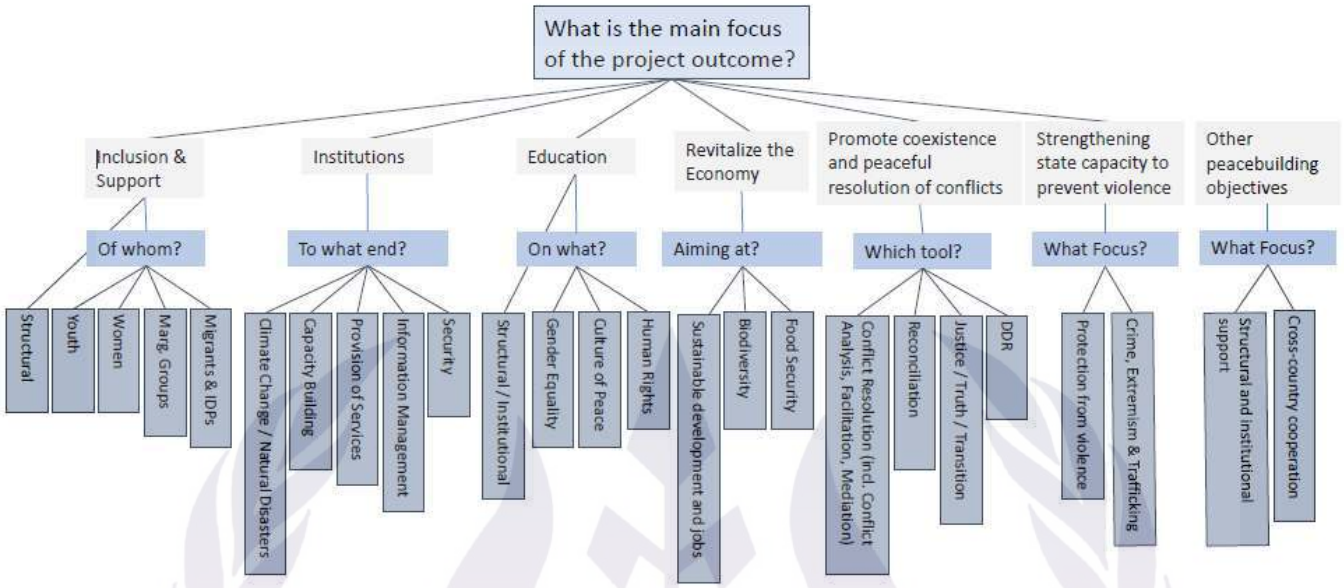
4.5	Public sector policy and administrative management	Support the development and implementation of government policies, including support to ministries and all levels of public administration. This includes general public policy management, coordination, planning and reform; organizational development; civil service reform; development planning, monitoring and evaluation.	15110
4.6	Public finance management at national and subnational level	Support fiscal policy and planning; support to ministries of finance; strengthen financial and managerial accountability; public expenditure management; improve financial management systems; budget planning; inter-governmental fiscal relations, public audit, public debt. Including local and subnational government financial management.	15111
4.7	Decentralizatio n and subnational governance	Decentralization processes (including political, administrative and fiscal dimensions); intergovernmental relations and federalism; strengthening departments of regional and local government, regional and local authorities and their national associations.	15112
5	**Basic Services**		
5.1	Water and sanitation	Water sector policy and administrative management; water resources conservation; water supply and sanitation; drinking water; waste management; education and training in water supply and sanitation.	140
5.2	Health	Health policy and administrative management; medical education, training, research; medical services; basic health care and infrastructure; disease control; control and treatment of substance abuse; mental health; population policy, reproductive health care; health education.	120+ 130
5.3	Education	Support basic education of youth and adults through various means: Education policy and administrative management; education facilities and training; primary education for youth and adults; school feeding; secondary education; vocational training; tertiary education.	110
5.4	Food security	Food security policy, programs and activities; institution capacity strengthening; policies, programmes for the reduction of food loss/waste; food security information systems, data collection, statistics, analysis tools, methods; coordination and governance mechanism. Short- or longer-term household food security programmes and activities that improve the access of households to nutritionally adequate diets, and increase household resilience. Emergency food assistance, including provision and distribution of food; cash and vouchers for the purchase of food; non-medical nutritional interventions for the benefit of crisis-affected people, including refugees and internally displaced people in developing countries in emergency situations. Includes logistical costs.	72040 / 43071 + 43072
5.5	Safe and sustainable return and (re-) integration of internally displaced persons, refugees and migrants	Assist IDPs and refugees with their integration in host communities; assist refugees with their safe, dignified, informed and voluntary return to their country of origin; assist refugees with their sustainable reintegration in their country of origin (*see also categories 3.2 "Access to justice" and 3.6 "Protection of civilians"*); capacity building of host communities for better (re-)integration of displaced persons; support governmental and non-governmental initiatives in this area. Supporting durable solutions for refugees and IDPs. Assist countries and	15190

		communities to orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including assistance to migrants for their sustainable integration, return and reintegration in their country of origin.	
6	**Economic Revitalization**		
6.1	Employment generation and livelihoods (e.g. in agriculture and public works), particularly for women, youth and demobilized former combatants	Support conflict-sensitive and peacebuilding-relevant employment policy and planning; institution capacity building and advice; employment creation and income-generation programmes (e.g. in agriculture and public works), contributing to increased resilience; skills programmes, vocational training and apprenticeships, including activities specifically designed for the needs of women and vulnerable groups, such as youth and demobilized former combatants. Includes programmes on micro finance and credit co-operatives, etc.	16020
6.2	Economic recovery through enterprise recovery, including value chain	Support economic recovery, enterprise recovery through conflict-sensitive and peacebuilding-relevant public sector policies and institutional support to the business environment and investment climate; public and private provision of business development services, including support to private organizations representing businesses. Direct support to improve the productive capacity and business management of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, including accounting, auditing, advisory services, technological transfer and skill upgrading.	250 / 320
6.3	Management of natural resources (including land and extractives) and climate change	Support sustainable management of natural resources with a view to managing conflicts and sustaining peace: Fair and sustainable agricultural development and use of land resources, including land reform and land (use) rights; land inventories, cadastre and information systems, institution capacity building and advice; soil degradation control; soil improvement; drainage of water logged areas; soil desalination; agricultural land surveys; land reclamation; erosion control, desertification control. Sustainable forestry development, including afforestation, erosion and desertification control. Sustainable water management, including fishery development, river basins development. Sustainable mineral resource management, including mineral and mining sector policy, planning and programmes; mining legislation, mining cadastre, mineral resources inventory, information systems, transparency (e.g. on concessions, contracts, tenders, revenues, royalties), institution capacity building and advice; mineral extraction and processing, infrastructure, technology, economics, safety and environment management. Support activities related to adaptation and mitigation to the impacts of climate change with a view to managing conflicts and sustaining peace.	31110/ 31130/ 32210/ 32220
6.4	Basic infrastructure rehabilitation	Infrastructure rehabilitation and development to facilitate recovery and resilience building and enable populations to restore their livelihoods in the wake of an emergency situation: restoring pre-existing and building essential infrastructure and	730

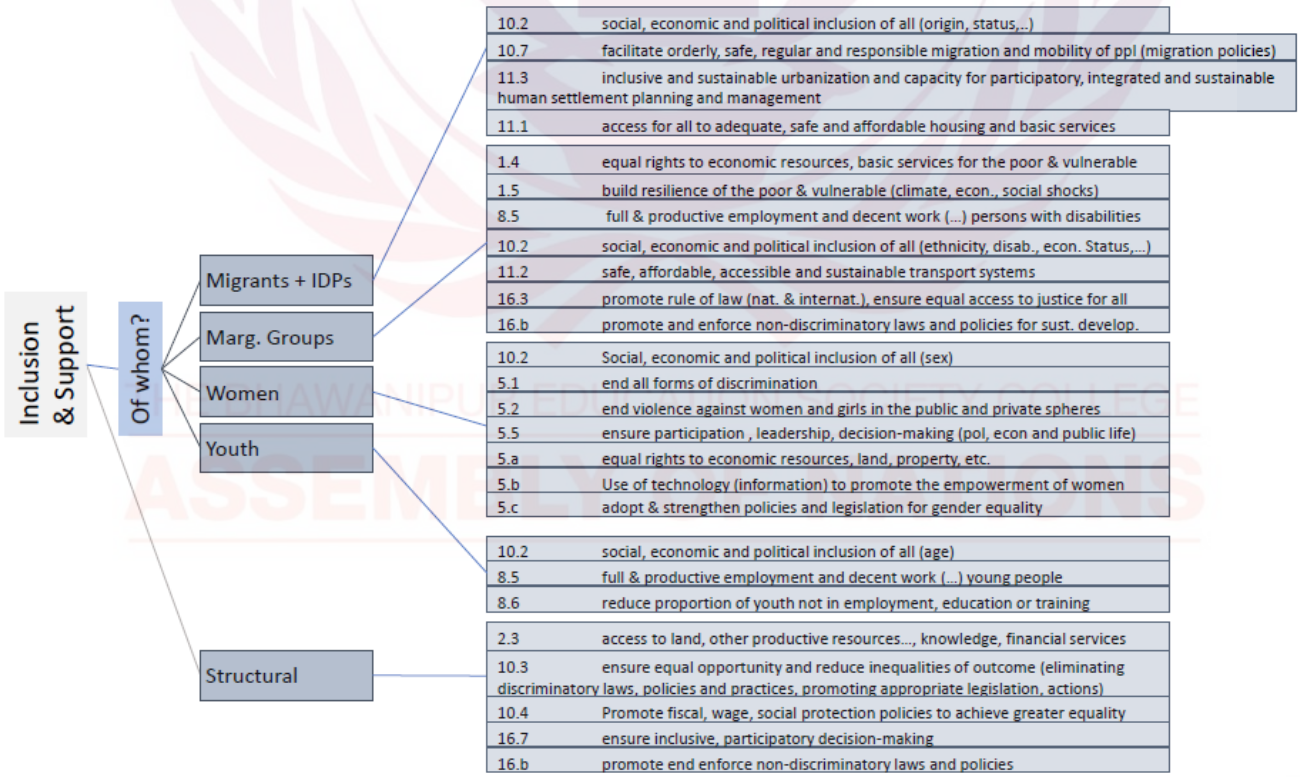
	and development	facilities (e.g. roads, bridges, irrigation, water and sanitation, shelter, health care services, education). Includes longer-term reconstruction ("build back better") or construction of new infrastructure (*see also categories 5.1 "Water and sanitation", 5.2 "Health", 5.3 "Education", and other categories for relevant sectors*).	

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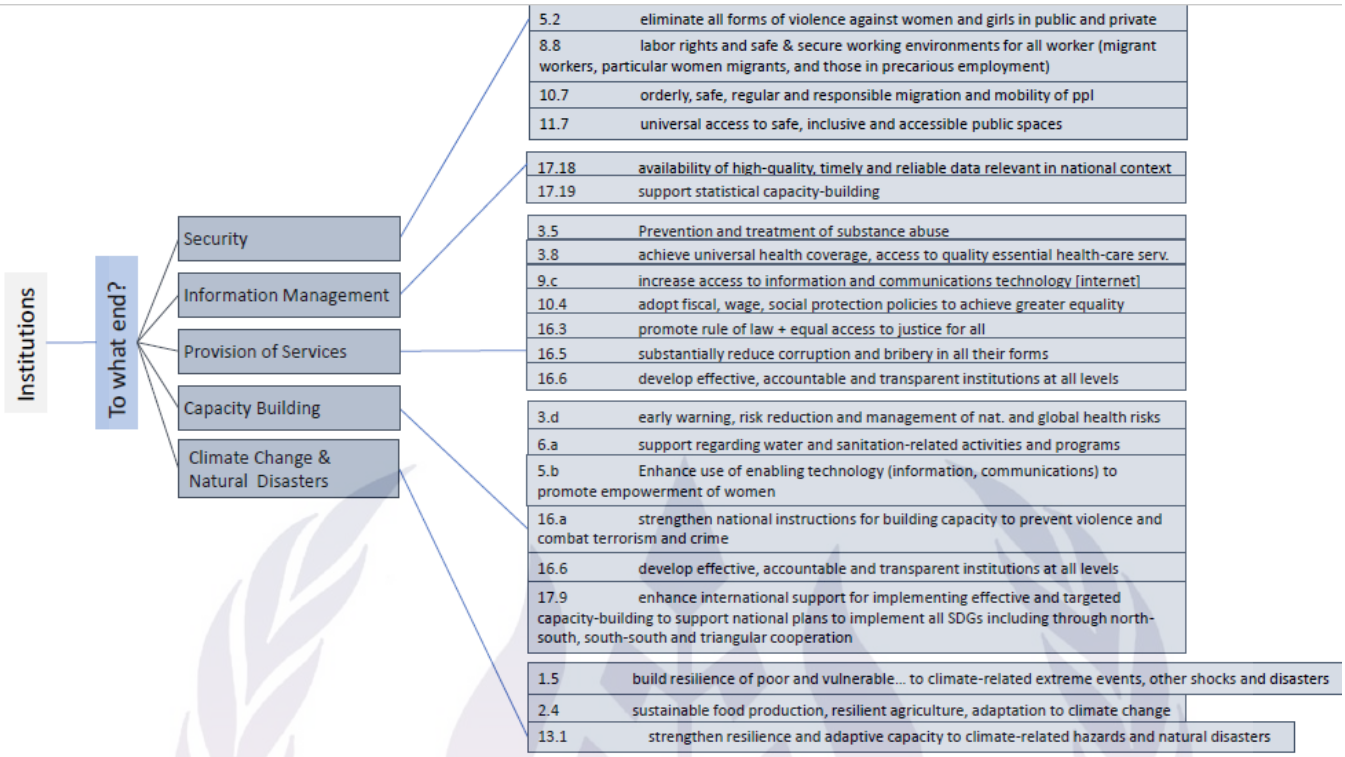
Appendix B: SDG Decision Tool



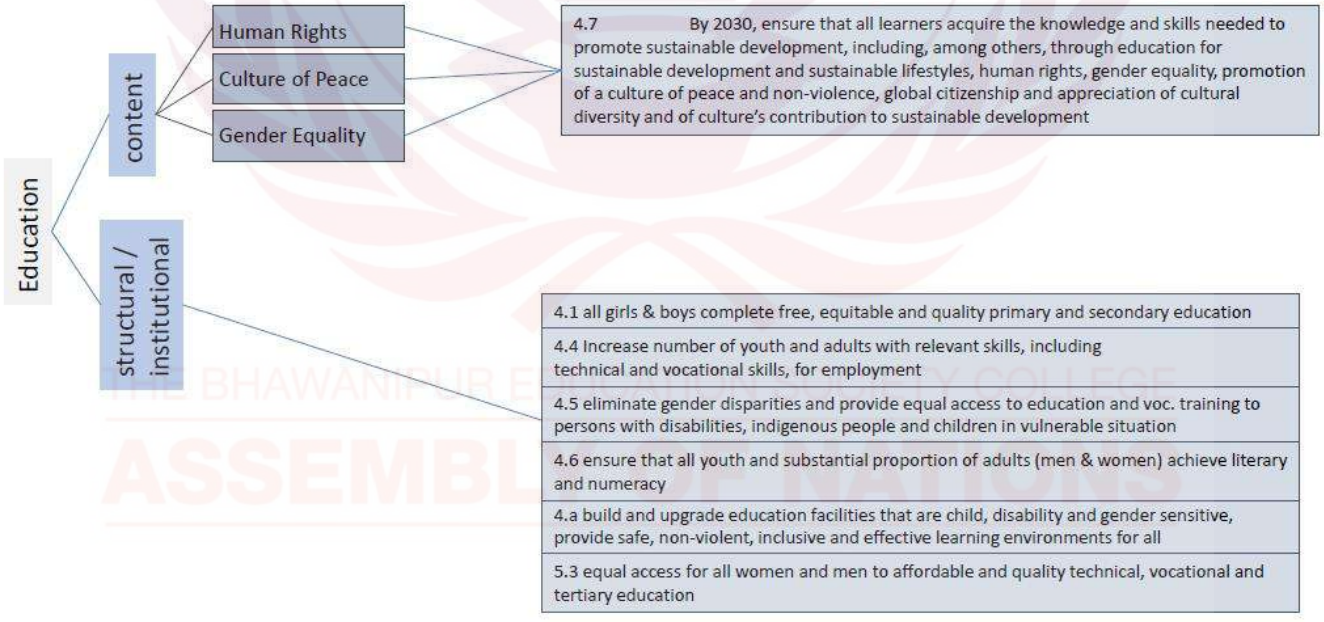
Graphic 1: First level of Decision Tool (General areas covered by peacebuilding projects)



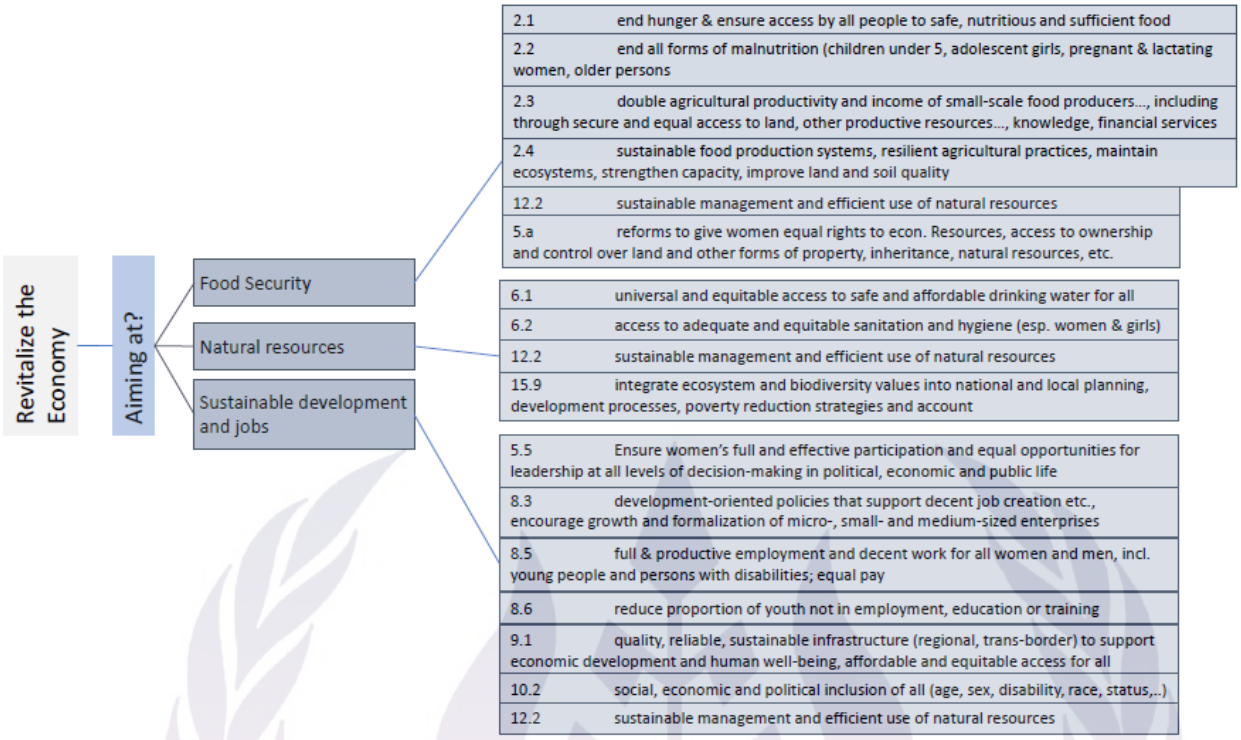
Graphic 2: SDG Targets related to Inclusion and Support



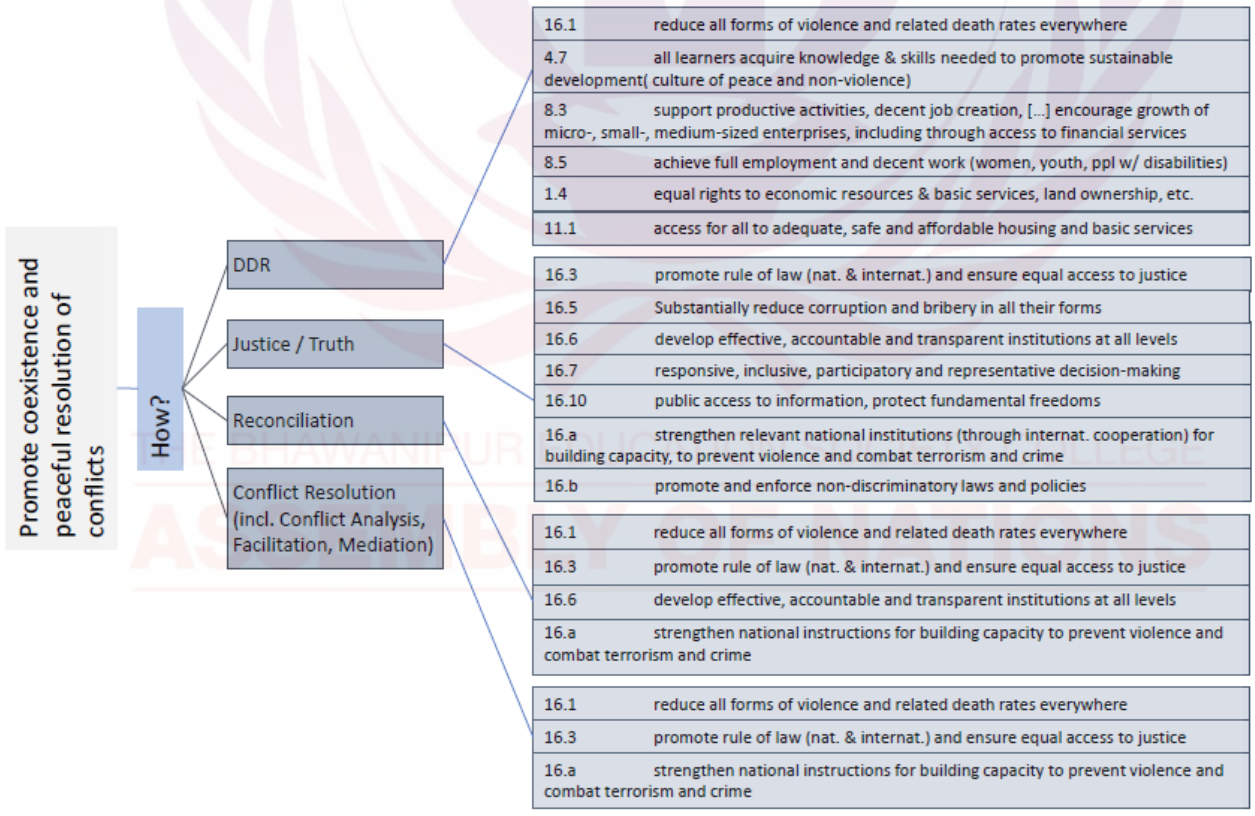
Graphic 3: SDG Targets related to Institutions



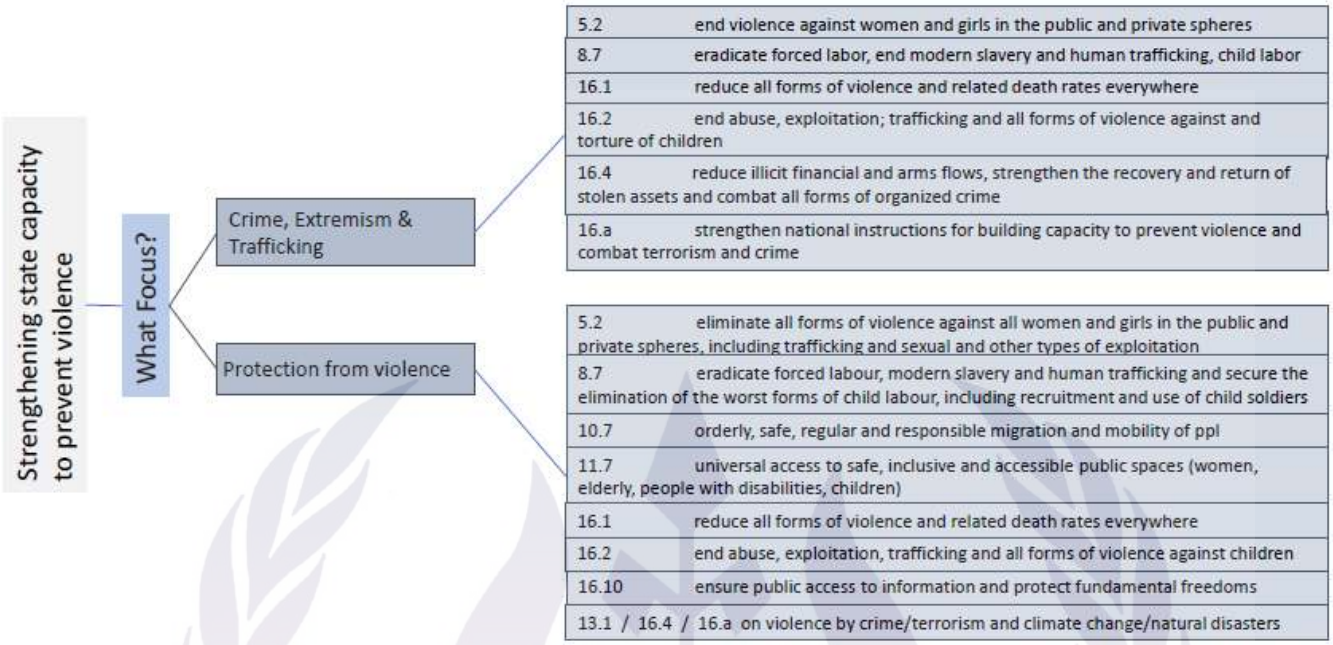
Graphic 4: SDG Targets related to Education



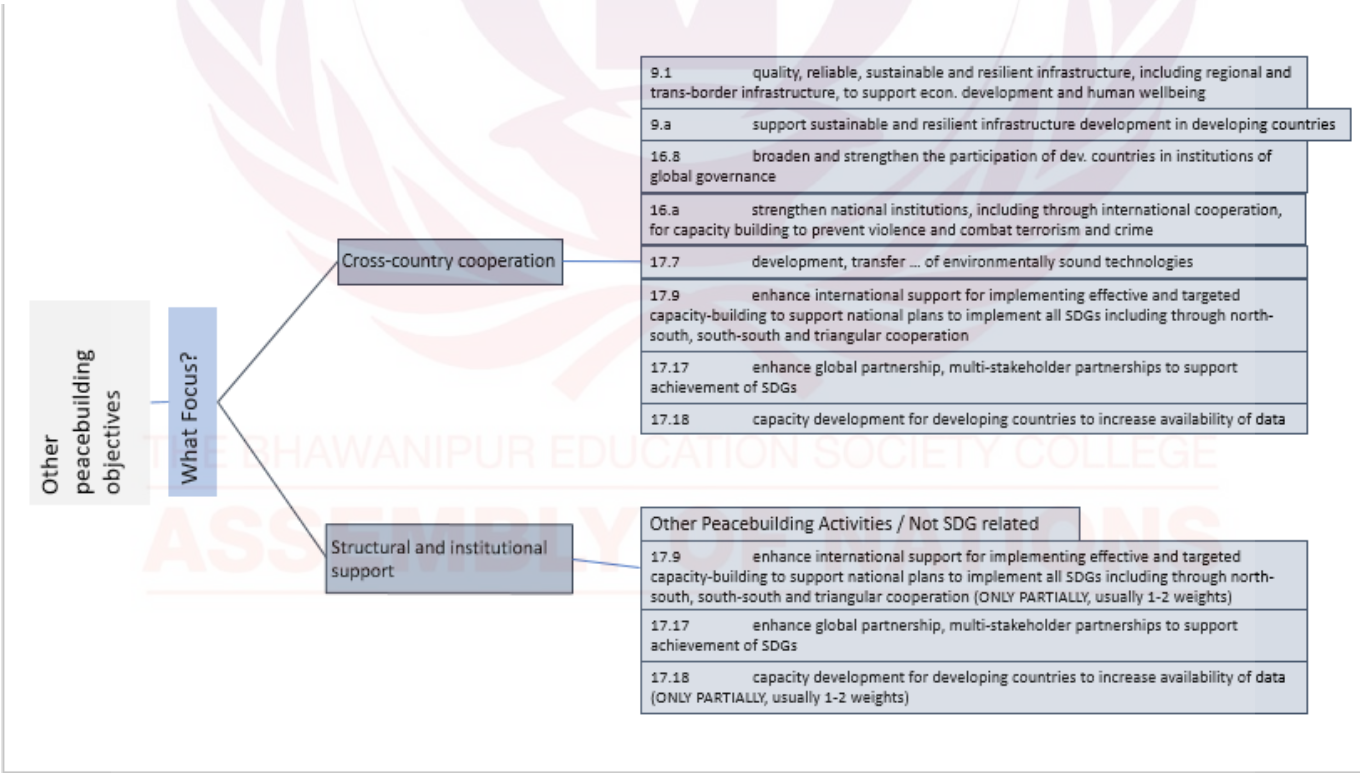
Graphic 5: SDG Targets related to revitalizing the economy



Graphic 6: SDG Targets related to Promotion of coexistence and peaceful resolution of conflicts



Graphic 7: SDG Targets related to Strengthening state capacity to prevent violence



Graphic 8: SDG Targets related to Other peacebuilding objectives

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ASSEMBLY OF PEACE

United Nations A/73/890–S/2019/448

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General Assembly
Seventy-third session
Agenda item 66
Peacebuilding and sustaining peace

Security Council
Seventy-fourth year

Peacebuilding and sustaining peace

Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. In April 2018, at a high-level meeting of the General Assembly and in a briefing to the Security Council, I renewed the commitment of the United Nations to building and sustaining peace. In the twin resolutions adopted in 2016 on the review of the peacebuilding architecture (Assembly resolution 70/262 and Council resolution 2282 (2016)), Member States stressed that, while Governments have primary responsibility for peacebuilding and sustaining peace, the international community, including the United Nations system, can do more to build peaceful and resilient societies. In my report of 2018 on peacebuilding and sustaining peace (A/72/707–S/2018/43), I provided an update on the progress made in the implementation of the resolutions and presented specific recommendations for addressing existing gaps. The present interim report, submitted pursuant to paragraph 3 of the twin resolutions on the follow-up to the report of the Secretary-General on peacebuilding and sustaining peace (Assembly resolution 72/276 and Council resolution 2413 (2018)), provides an update on the implementation of the recommendations and options of the previous report, including those on the financing of United Nations peacebuilding activities. Of the 42 recommendations outlined in my 2018 report, 38 are currently being implemented. There has been limited progress with respect to four recommendations relating to financing, which is the prerogative of Member States. While the present report indicates that progress is being made overall, it is too early to measure the substantial benefit of many of those recommendations. As requested by the Assembly in its resolution 72/276, I will submit a detailed report, during its seventy-fourth session, on the continued implementation of resolution 70/262 and on progress on the implementation of the recommendations and options contained in my 2018 report.

Please recycle

II. Operational and policy coherence to strengthen support for peacebuilding and sustaining peace

2. The central message of my 2018 report on peacebuilding and sustaining peace was that it is necessary to enhance the coherence of international efforts in support of national Governments and their peoples. The number of outcome documents of United Nations intergovernmental bodies, including the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council and the Human Rights Council, that integrate the notion of "sustaining peace" has continued to increase since 2016, reaching more than 80 documents annually in both 2017 and 2018. Most importantly, many Member States have embedded a sustaining peace approach in their national policies.

3. As a flexible and dedicated intergovernmental platform, the Peacebuilding Commission has continued to promote policy coherence in support of conflict-affected countries by convening partners from within and outside the United Nations, through country-specific, regional and thematic discussions. Meetings on the Central African Republic, Colombia, the Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Sri Lanka and the Sahel, among other countries and regions, provided regular venues for discussion of political, socioeconomic, development and security challenges and risks at the national and regional levels. The advisory role of the Commission to the Security Council has also continued to advance, especially as the Council is considering the review and drawdown of peacekeeping operations and special political missions, in accordance with its presidential statements, S/PRST/2017/27 and S/PRST/2018/20. By those statements, the Council reaffirmed its intention to regularly request, deliberate and draw upon the specific, strategic and targeted advice of the Peacebuilding Commission and articulated the Commission's role in ensuring a strong focus on national peacebuilding and development priorities, supporting integrated approaches, promoting accountability, sharing good practices and facilitating broader partnerships.

4. To inform the mandate renewal of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic, for example, the Peacebuilding Commission provided written advice to the Security Council on the peacebuilding components of the mandate. For the prospective reconfiguration of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau, to be implemented after the completion of the electoral cycle in 2019 (Council resolution 2458 (2019)), the Commission convened meetings ahead of Council deliberations to provide the Council with perspectives on Guinea-Bissau from different stakeholders. An informal interactive dialogue between the Council and the Commission was held prior to the Council's visit to Burkina Faso and Mali in March 2019, in order to update the Council on the engagement of the Commission and the Peacebuilding Fund in those two countries and in the broader Sahel region.

5. In implementing the Peacebuilding Commission's gender strategy, the Commission held dedicated discussions on the gender aspects of transitions and financing for gender in peacebuilding. It also convened a meeting on the margins of the sixty-third session of the Commission on the Status of Women, to discuss the interlinkages between gender, social protection, peace and development.

6. In terms of the Peacebuilding Commission's bridging role with regard to other intergovernmental bodies, the first informal interactive dialogue between the General Assembly and the Commission, held on 26 March 2019, provided an opportunity to enhance cooperation between the two bodies and discuss priorities on sustaining peace and peacebuilding, leading to a joint summary issued by the President of the Assembly and the Chair of the Commission. The joint dialogue between the

Commission and the Economic and Social Council, held in 2018, was focused on the linkages between climate change and challenges to peacebuilding and sustaining peace in the Sahel region. I encourage the Commission to build on those experiences and explore ways to further utilize its advisory and bridging roles, thereby contributing to stronger coherence among the principal organs of the United Nations.

7. My Action for Peacekeeping initiative led to the endorsement by 151 Member States of a Declaration of Shared Commitments on United Nations Peacekeeping Operations, to strengthen peacekeeping activities. Those commitments highlight the role of the Peacebuilding Commission, the importance of coherent and forward-looking support for United Nations mission transitions, the use of inclusive and participatory approaches by peacekeeping operations and the importance of partnerships to achieve sustainable outcomes.

8. Preventing crises has remained at the very heart of efforts to sustain peace. As I have previously emphasized, crisis prevention saves lives and money and preserves development gains. The effective prevention of conflict alone saves up to $70 billion per year for the affected country and the international community combined. The prevention of climate-related crises is also a cardinal challenge of the times. Those reasons explain why I have made prevention a priority across the work of the Organization, at the country, regional and global levels and as a common thread running through the three reform streams. I have described my prevention platform as an internal organizational, cultural and management tool to enable the United Nations system to make maximum use of existing resources and capacities in support of Member States. Using improved risk and resilience methodologies to inform regular regional prevention discussions that integrate the three pillars, namely development, human rights and peace and security, the United Nations system is coming together more effectively to ensure that its support to Member States is timely and focused on building national and regional resilience to a broad array of risks that could undermine efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

9. Coherence in United Nations operational engagement across the three pillars and with all relevant partners continues to be a priority. Central to greater coherence is my set of mutually reinforcing reforms to restructure the peace and security pillar, reposition the development system and reform management processes and practices. Cutting across those reforms is the prioritization on gender parity, as laid out in my strategy released in 2017. Similarly, efforts are underway to advance equitable geographical representation and ensure that the Secretariat better reflects the international character of the Organization. Since January 2019, new structures have taken hold. Coherence across the peace and security pillar has been enhanced by the creation of the single regional political-operational structure that has the responsibility to support a more holistic approach to peacebuilding and sustaining peace. It has been further enhanced by the integration of the Peacebuilding Support Office and the former Department of Political Affairs into the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and by the revitalization of the Support Office through the redeployment of a number of posts.

10. Those reforms have created opportunities to improve the Organization's integrated support in the field. For example, under the peace and security pillar, the alignment of regional strategies and peace operations in the Great Lakes and Horn of Africa regions is being assessed, strengthening integrated peacebuilding and peacekeeping efforts on the basis of comparative advantages in the Central African Republic and Mali and encouraging greater coordination of efforts and joined-up approaches in the Middle East, the Sahel and the Western Balkans.

11. The planning and management of United Nations mission transition processes are also a priority. Mission transitions may include the drawdown or withdrawal of a

multidimensional peace operation or a transition from a multidimensional peacekeeping operation to a smaller peacekeeping mission, special political mission or United Nations country team presence. The joint project of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Department of Peace Operations and the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs on United Nations transitions in mission settings continues to provide transition-related support to the following six priority countries: Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guinea-Bissau, Haiti, Liberia, Mali and Sudan. Such support includes the deployment of transition specialists, the organization of specialized trainings and the development of guidance materials and lessons-learned studies. In February 2019, I issued a planning directive on transition processes, building on and complementing the policies on United Nations transitions in the context of mission drawdown or withdrawal and on integrated assessment and planning, to support early joint planning based on human rights and gender-responsive analysis and to ensure financing, operational assistance and adequate staffing.

12. In Darfur, as the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) draws down and prepares to exit by June 2020, the mission and the United Nations country team are working with government counterparts in four Darfur states on four transition priorities: rule of law (police, justice and corrections); durable solutions for the displaced populations and host communities; human rights capacity-building; and immediate service delivery to the internally displaced. In support of the transition, the country team has access to $15 million in programmatic funding from the mission's assessed budget for 2018/19. Additional resources, including from the Peacebuilding Fund, will be critical to enable the county team to increase its activities and expand its presence in support of the Government across Darfur when UNAMID exits.

13. In Haiti, integrated transition planning has been ongoing since the preparation of the benchmarked exit strategy for the United Nations Mission for Justice Support in Haiti (MINUJUSTH) in early 2018. The transition strategy is anchored in the country's United Nations Development Assistance Framework for the period 2017–2021, which reflects the longer-term vision for Haiti in accordance with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including elements from the MINUJUSTH benchmarks. My proposal for the follow-on United Nations presence in the country, including a special political mission and a strengthened country team, stresses the strong nexus between peace and security, humanitarian assistance, human rights and development, with gender equality cutting across all four areas, and the relevance of an integrated longer-term vision that guarantees the most efficient and effective delivery of continued United Nations support.

14. Transitions and drawdowns should also be consistently gender-responsive, through the inclusion of relevant expertise and analysis and due attention to gender equality and the empowerment of women in transition contexts. In that respect, and in response to the recommendations set out in Security Council resolution 2242 (2015) and in my 2017 report on women and peace and security (S/2017/861), the Department of Peace Operations and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), together with UNDP, the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and the Peacebuilding Support Office, are piloting a joint initiative. In 2018, the initiative supported gender-responsive conflict analysis workshops in Liberia and Darfur that included the participation of representatives of women's civil society organizations; it also informed United Nations transition planning in Darfur and a review of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework in Liberia.

15. As part of the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, the Peacebuilding Support Office is increasingly aligning its work with the new single

regional political-operational structure, working closely with the regional divisions on country and regional priorities. The Peacebuilding Commission and Peacebuilding Fund are also both strengthened by and contributing to the entire peace and security pillar, as political engagement is better connected with analysis, planning, programming and resources. In February 2019, the Assistant Secretaries-General for Africa and for Peacebuilding Support, together with the Director of the UNDP Regional Bureau for Arab States, conducted a joint mission to the Sudan to review preparations for the drawdown of UNAMID and the transfer of responsibilities to the Government. Likewise, as a demonstration of closer coordination between peacebuilding and peacekeeping efforts in peace processes, the Chair of the Central African Republic configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission was joined by the same Assistant Secretaries-General in a visit to Bangui to explore joint Peacebuilding Commission and Peacebuilding Fund support to the country, following the signing, on 6 February 2019, of a peace agreement between armed groups and the Government. The two Assistant Secretaries-General also travelled to Mali to work closely with my Special Representative for Mali to ensure adequate support for the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali and discuss the development of an integrated strategic framework with the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali and the country team, with accompanying Peacebuilding Fund support.

16. The UNDP-Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs Joint Programme on Building National Capacities for Conflict Prevention began a new five-year phase in December 2018. The Programme builds on the strengths of the reformed peace and security pillar to ensure that joined-up support is provided to the new resident coordinator system. Currently, the Programme supports 49 peace and development adviser positions in resident coordinator offices, promoting national efforts to prevent conflict, advance sustainable development and sustain peace while assisting the United Nations system in identifying entry points for engagement. In Ethiopia, for example, the peace and development adviser set up a joint analysis cell that brings together the Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the Department of Safety and Security, UNDP and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) to conduct cross-disciplinary analysis and ensure the complementarity of programming among agencies. Peace and development advisers also help to empower national stakeholders to strengthen mechanisms and capacities for inclusive dialogue, social cohesion and reconciliation. In Sri Lanka, the peace and development adviser, working together with OHCHR and national institutions, is supporting the establishment and operationalization of the country's transitional justice mechanism.

17. The Global Focal Point for the Rule of Law continues to leverage comparative expertise and resources from across the United Nations system. In the Central African Republic, the Special Criminal Court, supported by the Global Focal Point as part of a larger joint justice initiative to bring perpetrators of gross human rights violations and international humanitarian law to justice, held its inaugural session in October 2018. In South Sudan, working together with the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict, the Global Focal Point is supporting the implementation of a Government-owned action plan to combat conflict-related sexual violence and promote accountability. Based on the recommendation of the independent review of the Global Focal Point in 2018, security sector reform will be included as one of its main areas of work.

18. The inter-agency working group on statelessness is another example of a United Nations system-wide approach to joined-up analysis and programming. Its work has resulted in updated guidance, the establishment of a mechanism to improve the collection and analysis of data and action to address gender-discriminatory nationality

laws. The inter-agency climate security mechanism of the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, UNDP and the United Nations Environment Programme, established in October 2018, is developing an integrated risk assessment framework to enhance understanding of the relationships between climate change, peace and security, governance and sustainable development.

19. The United Nations development system plays an important role in mitigating drivers of crises, in line with its mandate. Enhancing collaboration with humanitarian assistance, disaster risk reduction and peacebuilding efforts at the national level is fundamental to helping Governments and their peoples achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. An increasing number of United Nations entities have integrated peacebuilding and sustaining peace into their strategic plans, and 80 per cent of United Nations entities offer staff technical guidance and training on conflict analysis, conflict sensitivity, sustaining peace and/or peacebuilding. Some United Nations entities, such as the World Food Programme, are working with peace and security experts to define their contributions to peace. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has developed a multi-risk approach that is focused on prevention and links peacebuilding to disaster risk reduction and climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies.

20. One objective of the development system reform is a more cohesive, responsive and accountable country team, with a stronger focus on providing collective and integrated support and generating common results towards the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. As from 1 January 2019, all resident coordinators have a direct reporting line to me, through a system managed by the newly established Development Coordination Office. Each impartial and independent resident coordinator is responsible for the coordination of the United Nations country team and for providing strategic leadership on Sustainable Development Goal achievement, including by enabling better risk management and conflict prevention, as required by each specific country context. There is no one-size-fits-all solution and the United Nations system must ensure that it is more responsive, collectively, to the specific needs of each country. More broadly, my expectations with regard to improved integrated analysis, risk monitoring and prevention and regional strategies require close collaboration across the United Nations system, including to safeguard achievements with regard to human rights and ensure youth- and gender-responsive conflict analysis.

21. The United Nations Sustainable Development Group, under the leadership of the Deputy Secretary-General, has maintained a task team dedicated to transitions and recovery, co-chaired by UNDP, UN-Women and the Peacebuilding Support Office. The Joint Steering Committee to Advance Humanitarian and Development Collaboration is focusing on providing field support to seven priority countries, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Ethiopia, the Niger, Nigeria and Somalia, to foster synergies in humanitarian and development action and enhance links to peacebuilding work for more integrated approaches to crises and in support of the 2030 Agenda.

22. I reiterate my commitment to the creation of a United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework that is results-oriented and more responsive to specific national priorities. That will include ensuring that new Cooperation Frameworks are informed by multidimensional risk analysis and that documents are more agile and adaptive to evolving country contexts.

23. A new dedicated UNDP facility the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals in fragile settings has supported Goal achievement, national development planning and donor coordination in the Central African Republic, the Gambia, Liberia, Mali, Sierra Leone, Somalia and the Sudan. Pursuant to the recommendation set out in my 2018 report, 23 multidisciplinary missions relating to

the mainstreaming, acceleration and policy support strategy have been conducted and have provided support for strategic foresight, data tools and voluntary national reviews in conflict-affected settings, thereby ensuring that support for national planning to implement the 2030 Agenda was conflict-sensitive and integrated.

24. In order to increase policy and operational coherence among all three pillars in support of Member States, I continue to encourage better use of human rights mechanisms, such as the universal periodic review, special procedures and treaty bodies, and their recommendations, by the peace and security and development pillars. In that regard, I welcome the continued efforts of the Human Rights Council to work effectively and efficiently with all pillars of the United Nations system, in support of Member States. Such efforts strengthen United Nations system-wide support for the implementation of the recommendations of the universal periodic review and other mechanisms and their integration into collective efforts to advance both Sustainable Development Goal achievement and crisis prevention, thus contributing to the strengthening of the promotion, protection and prevention mandates of the Council.

III. Leadership, accountability and capacity in supporting peacebuilding and sustaining peace

25. My determination to improve leadership, accountability and capacity for sustaining peace across the United Nations system is first and foremost a commitment to supporting national actors in developing resilient national capacities. That commitment includes addressing inequalities, discrimination and exclusion, promoting human rights, making institutions more inclusive and addressing other conflict drivers that undermine social cohesion and that may lead to violent conflict. In the Philippines, with support from the Peacebuilding Fund, UNDP, UNICEF and UN-Women helped national actors work together to pass legislation that created the new Bangsamoro autonomous region, thereby resolving a four-decades-long conflict. That commitment also applies to all senior leadership in the field, including my special representatives and deputy special representatives. For example, in the planning directive on transitions I issued in February 2019, I clearly set out the strong expectations placed on my special representatives and deputy special representatives in leading transition planning, including the importance of requesting a focal point from the Government of the host State.

26. I am working to ensure that resident coordinator offices, drawing upon the full range of expertise of resident and non-resident United Nations entities, are equipped to serve as hubs for collective analysis and planning. The capacities of the peace and security and human rights pillars can also support analysis, planning and programming discussions at the country level in responding to specific national contexts. Peace and development advisers play a key role in ensuring that United Nations country team programmes are conflict-sensitive and informed by high-quality analysis. Human rights and gender advisers continue to be deployed, as available and as requested by host countries. The Development Coordination Office will work with partners to ensure support for, inter alia, mission transition planning, peacebuilding and enhancing collaboration among humanitarian, development and peacebuilding activities in specific countries, as well as for enhancing capacity in regional offices to provide analytical and programmatic support.

27. The toolbox of integrated support from development, humanitarian and peacebuilding entities to field leadership continues to expand. That support includes regional dialogues between resident coordinators, the Development Coordination Office and the peace and security pillar and leadership workshops for the peace and

security pillar addressing evolving functions and responsibilities, including for peacebuilding and sustaining peace. Entities are increasingly offering training courses that include conflict analysis and sustaining peace.

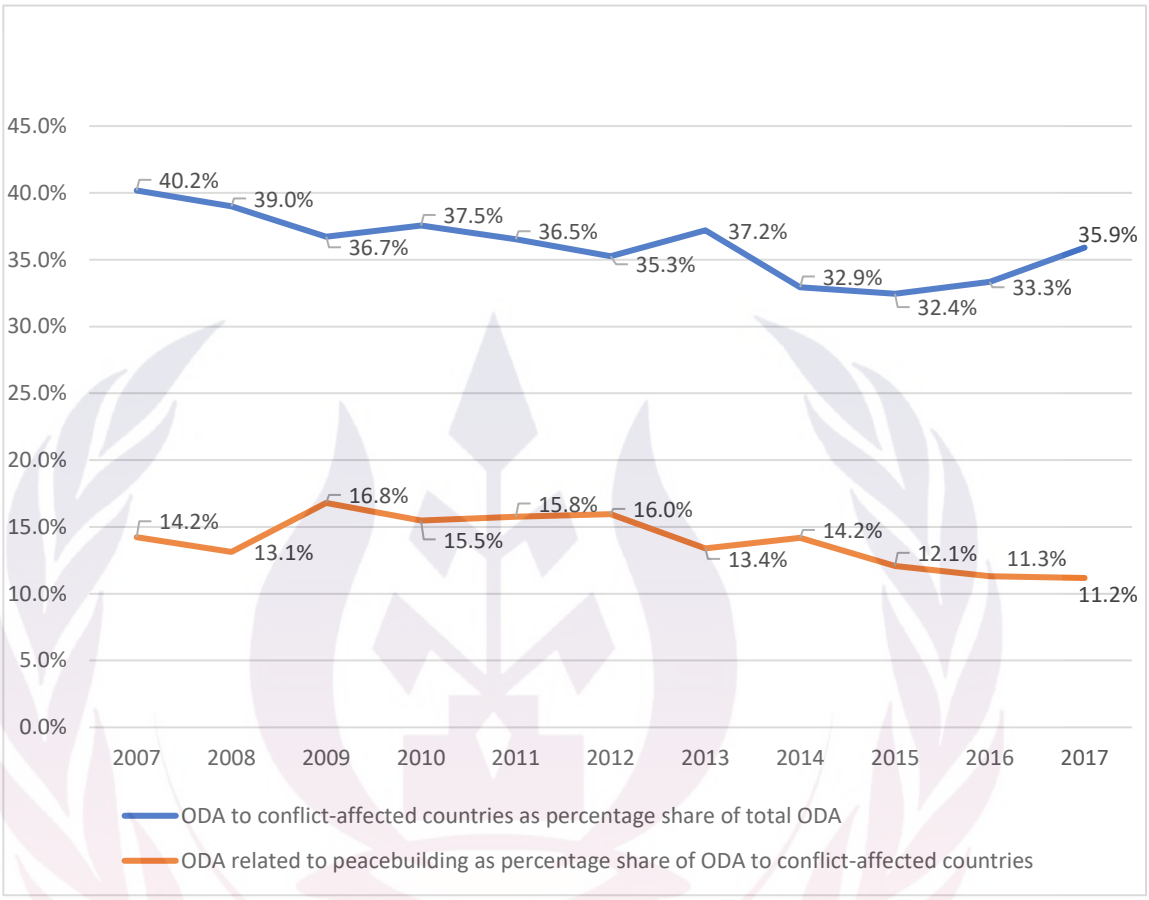
28. The system continues to strengthen surge capacity in the field. At Headquarters, secondments such as those provided by the International Labour Organization, OHCHR and UN-Women to the Peacebuilding Support Office enhance the system-wide knowledge of those individuals working on peacebuilding. A “people pipeline” initiative is currently in process, aimed at developing and nurturing a cadre of professionals across United Nations system entities and partner institutions with the necessary knowledge and experience across the humanitarian and development nexus and its links to peace.

IV. Financing for peacebuilding

29. In 2018, I alerted you to both the urgent need for investments in prevention and for ensuring that financial resources are available for countries that are already experiencing violent conflict. Although overall official development assistance (ODA) declined slightly in 2018, ODA to conflict-affected countries as a percentage share of total ODA had stopped decreasing in 2017, potentially reversing a decade-long trend of declining support. ODA related to peacebuilding, however, continued to decline as a percentage of total ODA. In absolute terms, more investment is allocated to peacebuilding-related ODA, driven by increased investments in inclusive political processes and core government functions, but investment in basic safety and security and the rule of law and human rights remains worryingly stagnant. Total bilateral aid allocated to programmes targeting gender equality and the empowerment of women as their primary objective in conflict-affected countries remains low, at 5 per cent, despite evidence that gender equality is directly correlated with greater stability. The central concern identified in the twin resolutions adopted in 2016 remains, namely that peacebuilding and sustaining peace require adequate, predictable and sustained financing. Financing committed for peacebuilding activities at present is unpredictable, ad hoc in nature and insufficient to ensure that the root causes of conflict are addressed. Moreover, the United Nations faces a troubling financial situation with deepening liquidity problems in its regular budget, a trend that must be urgently halted and reversed. Peacekeeping operations also face frequent cash constraints that force the Organization to postpone the settlement of its obligations to troop- and police-contributing countries. I have submitted a set of measures to the General Assembly to address both the liquidity and broader structural problems that constrain budget management.

THE BHAWANIPUR EDUCATION SOCIETY COLLEGE
ASSEMBLY OF NATIONS

Percentage shares of official development assistance for peacebuilding and in support of conflict-affected countries, 2007–2017



Source: Peacebuilding Support Office, based on the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Creditor Reporting System, OECD.Stat.

30. In my 2018 report, as requested by Member States, I provided options on increasing, restructuring and better prioritizing funding dedicated to United Nations peacebuilding activities, including through assessed and voluntary contributions. My options included the allocation of the remaining balance of any Headquarters-level trust fund inactive for two years or more to the Peacebuilding Fund; the voluntary commitment of the equivalent of 15 per cent of the final full-year budget of a closing peacekeeping mission each year for two years following the end of the mission's mandate to existing peacebuilding projects or to a country-level pooled fund; the voluntary commitment of unspent assessed contributions to the Peacebuilding Fund; and the provision of assessed funding representing $100 million or an approximate and symbolic 1 per cent of the value of the total United Nations budgets for peace operations to the Peacebuilding Fund. In the period 2018/19, my recommendation for the assessment of 15 per cent of the total variance in overall financial requirements for peacekeeping operations to finance the Peacebuilding Fund, based on a variance of $110 million, from $6.80 billion in 2017/18 to $6.69 billion in 2018/19, would have equated to a contribution of $16.5 million. Any of those options, if advanced by Member States, would narrow the gap in resources and capacities to fund United Nations peacebuilding activities and help to meet national peacebuilding needs.

31. Member States have discussed financing for peacebuilding in various forums, including in the Peacebuilding Commission. A small number of Member States have

responded to my calls for voluntary contributions of assessed funds, including the creative use of unspent committed peacekeeping budgets. I look forward to continuing to explore those options with all who are interested and I continue to encourage Member States to provide financial support to United Nations peacebuilding activities. There has been limited progress on four of the financing options I outlined in 2018.

32. I have moved ahead with those recommendations on financing that are my prerogative, to ensure that important financing needs are addressed. In the United Nations development system, I have taken steps to scale up capacities in the resident coordinator offices to support Member States in planning and financing their national implementation plans for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. That has included the assignment of economists and of development coordination officers for partnerships and development finance. Resident coordinators will have three principal funding mechanisms to draw upon in support of the humanitarian, development and peacebuilding work of the United Nations country teams: the Central Emergency Response Fund, the Sustainable Development Goals Fund and the Peacebuilding Fund, respectively. Under the terms of the funding compact, I have worked with Member States to ensure a greater focus on inter-agency pooled funds and single-agency thematic funds, which will, in turn, incentivize the use of quality non-core resources. The contribution of the Peacebuilding Fund to the Goals is also notable; analysis indicates that, during the 2015–2018 period, the Fund directed 83 per cent of its investments to achieving the Goals, including Goal 10 on reducing inequalities, Goal 5 on gender equality, Goal 4 on quality education and Goal 16 on peace, justice and inclusive institutions.

33. I remain committed to ensuring greater transparency and clarity on how the United Nations manages the resources with which it has been entrusted, and on what is achieved with those resources. In peacebuilding, the United Nations system continues to push for reduced fragmentation, greater coherence and improved coordination among funding instruments. I am in the process of establishing the funding dashboard for peacebuilding, for that very purpose.

34. The allocation of resources from assessed budgets of peacekeeping missions for mandated programmatic activities in support of peacebuilding continues to be a critical tool to undertaking activities in mandated peacebuilding areas, such as mine action; disarmament, demobilization and reintegration; support for rule of law and security institutions; and community stabilization. Proposed resource requirements for programmatic activities for the 2018/19 period amounted to $190 million, of which approximately $120 million is for mine action programmes. Programmatic funding is used for peacebuilding interventions conducted by missions alone or in partnership with United Nations agencies, funds and programmes or other partners, to enhance their capacities to address joint peacebuilding priorities. Programmatic funding has proven to be especially useful during United Nations mission transitions, to prevent gaps after the mission's withdrawal. The revised budget for UNAMID for the 2018/2019 period (A/73/488) broke new ground by including $15 million to be used for the transfer of activities to the United Nations country team. I encourage Member States to continue to support such innovative approaches, which contribute to the consolidation of the peace and security gains made by countries during the presence of a peacekeeping operation.

35. The Peacebuilding Fund is ensuring that it works as a complement to assessed programmatic funding. Examples include the strategic sequencing of Peacebuilding Fund support to complement programmatic funding for a cross-border peacebuilding project between Côte d'Ivoire, where the peacekeeping mission was drawn down in 2017, and Liberia, where the mission closed in 2018. In 2018, the Peacebuilding Fund established a transitions window, which contributes to the implementation of my new

planning directive on transition processes, alleviating the impact of the "financial cliff" by covering two years before and five years after mission drawdown. Given the exponential growth in demand, the aim of next strategic plan is for the Fund to invest at least 40 per cent of its funding in transition settings.

36. I reiterate the imperative of ensuring that mission transition funding reflects the peacebuilding needs identified through joined-up risk analysis. Country-level pooled funds have been successfully initiated, supported catalytically by the Peacebuilding Fund and capitalized in Colombia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Papua New Guinea and Somalia. In cases such as Liberia, where the Peacebuilding Fund remains the sole contributor to the Liberia multi-partner trust fund, I stress the necessity of donor support in order for those funds to have the intended impact. In Liberia, the voluntary commitment of unspent assessed contributions from the peacekeeping budget to the Peacebuilding Fund could have provided an additional $11.6 million of support for the transition. A voluntary commitment of the equivalent of 15 per cent of the final full-year budget of the United Nations Mission in Liberia ($116.95 million), each year, for two years following the end of the mission's mandate, directed to existing peacebuilding projects or a country-level pooled fund, in accordance with my recommendation from 2018, would mean $17.5 million a year for two years for Liberia. In support of the transition in Darfur especially, I encourage Member States to consider the option to voluntarily commit the equivalent of 15 per cent of the final full-year budget of the closing peacekeeping mission, for each of the first two years following the end of the mission's mandate, to existing peacebuilding projects or a country-level pooled fund.

37. In 2018, the Peacebuilding Fund approved over $183 million in projects for 40 countries. The Fund was engaged in countries where it had not previously been active but where political developments opened up new opportunities, including the Congo, Ethiopia, Lesotho, Nigeria, Togo, Tunisia and Zimbabwe, and the following three new countries were declared eligible for funding: Burkina Faso, El Salvador and the Gambia. The Sahel region has remained a priority for the Fund; its investments in support of the United Nations Support Plan for the Sahel have increased to $65.7 million, from $58 million in 2017. Since coming into office, I have called for a "quantum leap" in financial support – ideally unearmarked and multi-year – for the Peacebuilding Fund, which I consider central to prioritizing prevention through cross-pillar strategies. Member States have responded to my call, with 85 per cent growth in the capitalization of the Fund over the last two years and a number of multi-year contributions. Notwithstanding those encouraging trends, funding remains short of a quantum leap.

38. The Peacebuilding Fund will continue to surpass my target of 15 per cent of investments in gender equality and the empowerment of women as a principal objective in peacebuilding, reaching 40 per cent in 2018 – a first for any United Nations fund. An important portion of the growing Peacebuilding Fund portfolio supports innovative approaches to the empowerment of women and youth through its annual competitive special call, the Gender and Youth Promotion Initiative, in partnership with UN-Women and the United Nations Population Fund. The Peacebuilding Fund continues to be the pooled fund with the greatest diversity of recipient entities (now more than 40) and one of the few pooled funds to provide direct transfers to civil society organizations and Governments. New guidelines on gender-based budgeting, as well as on youth and peacebuilding programming, are being developed for fund applicants and recipients. The Fund will soon introduce a new reporting and knowledge management system, to continue to enhance transparency, accountability and effectiveness.

39. I continue to explore innovative financing solutions for peacebuilding by looking beyond traditional partnerships, including through contributions by

individuals, foundations and faith-based organizations, bonds, levies and tax-based revenue generation, corporate partnerships and blended finance. Promising initiatives include a blended-finance approach used in Colombia to support small to medium-sized business in conflict-affected areas. I continue to encourage Member States to explore innovative means of financing peacebuilding activities.

40. At the second High-level Conference on South-South Cooperation, held in March 2019, I noticed that South-South cooperation made a valuable contribution to peacebuilding and sustaining peace, as outlined in the publication entitled *South-South in Action: South-South and Triangular Cooperation on Peace and Development*, produced by the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation. Knowledge exchange among self-identified fragile countries has been supported by the International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and State-building and New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States.

V. Partnerships for peacebuilding and sustaining peace

41. Strategic partnerships with regional and subregional partners remain a priority for the Organization. In June 2018, I convened a high-level interactive dialogue with regional and other organizations active in international peace and security. Participants had a productive exchange of views on global challenges relating to peace and security, including peacebuilding and sustaining peace. As a result, concrete actions were identified to reinforce cooperation and coordination, in particular in the field.

42. In that regard, regional special political missions in Central Africa, West Africa and Central Asia continue to hold regular thematic intergovernmental dialogues with regional and subregional organizations and strengthen joint analysis, planning and activities in support of sustaining peace. The United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa and the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa have supported the Economic Community of Central African States in enhancing the operational capacity of the early warning mechanism for Central Africa, by mapping institutional capacities in conflict prevention mechanisms. The Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs has developed mechanisms for strengthened information-sharing, coordination and joint approaches with the Intergovernmental Authority on Development.

43. The United Nations' partnership with the African Union, building on the Joint United Nations-African Union Framework for Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security, continues to deepen, for example through a workshop, held in October 2018, on operationalizing the African Union Policy on Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development in the Sahel. The African Union initiative on "silencing the guns" to promote the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts in Africa is another critical effort. Regional approaches have also enabled the Peacebuilding Fund to partner with regional organizations such as the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States.

44. The Peacebuilding Commission is strengthening its partnerships with regional and subregional organizations, including by convening an annual dialogue with the Peace and Security Council of the African Union. I encourage the Commission to further explore ways to partner with international financial institutions, in particular the World Bank and the African Development Bank, as well as civil society organizations and the private sector.

45. As indicated in my 2018 report, my Seven-Point Action Plan on Gender-Responsive Peacebuilding to accelerate progress on the participation of women in

peacebuilding is being revised, in view of the reforms initiated and the Organization's commitment to sustaining peace. The revised action plan will be aligned with the new accountability framework on women and peace and security to improve reporting on gender-responsive peacebuilding.

46. In 2018, I welcomed the report on youth and peace and security, entitled "The missing peace: independent progress study on youth and peace and security" (A/72/761–S/2018/86), and the second Security Council resolution on youth and peace and security (resolution 2419 (2018)), in which the Council requested that I submit a report on the implementation of both that resolution and resolution 2250 (2015). In September 2018, I launched Youth 2030: The United Nations Youth Strategy, which includes, as one of its priority areas, a focus on peacebuilding and resilience-building. Youth 2030 has firmly embedded commitments to advance the youth and peace and security agenda, and I look forward to advancing recommendations from both resolutions, together with Member States. Four new projects in the Western Balkans, for example, facilitate opportunities for youth perspectives to be heard by decision makers on policies shaping the future of the region. I call on Member States to prioritize the set-up of national coalitions with youth-led peacebuilding organizations and adopt road maps to ensure the operational implementation of the resolutions and the meaningful engagement of young peacebuilders and their organizations in national-level peace and security processes and programmes.

47. I continue to pursue the operationalization of the 2017 United Nations-World Bank Partnership Framework for Crisis-Affected Situations. In September 2018, the United Nations and the World Bank established a joint United Nations-World Bank Steering Committee for Crisis-Affected Situations to set annual priorities and monitor implementation, co-chaired by the Assistant Secretary-General for Peacebuilding Support and the Senior Director for Fragility, Conflict and Violence of the World Bank. The Peacebuilding Support Office has revitalized its capacity to manage partnerships with the World Bank Group and, following a pilot initiative launched in 2017 in Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Guinea-Bissau, Pakistan, Somalia, the Sudan and Yemen, has established a Humanitarian, Development, Peacebuilding and Partnership Facility as a part of the Peacebuilding Fund, to support United Nations country teams.

48. As part of the operationalization of the United Nations-World Bank Group flagship study, *Pathways for Peace: Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict*, the United Nations and the World Bank have collaborated in Guinea, Nepal, the Niger and Tajikistan on the roll-out of the Risk Mitigation Facility sub-window of the International Development Association. Peacebuilding Fund projects based on the findings of the study have been launched in Tunisia and Zimbabwe. In February 2019, the World Bank Group and United Nations brought together country directors, managers and resident coordinators for the first-ever senior leadership dialogue on prevention and sustaining peace in Dakar.

49. A central component of that work has been a shift in focus led by the High-level Advisory Group for Recovery and Peacebuilding Assessments, established in 2016 by the United Nations, the European Union and the World Bank to support a standardized and internationally-recognized approach to identifying the underlying causes and impacts of conflict and crisis and to help Governments to develop a strategy for prioritizing recovery and peacebuilding activities. In 2018, joint recovery and peacebuilding assessments were completed in Cameroon, at the request of the Government; in Zimbabwe, the United Nations and World Bank conducted a joint assessment in support of the country's political transition. Reacting to growing challenges to a system-wide sustaining peace initiative, the United Nations dispatched an integrated mission, led by my Special Representative for West Africa and the

Sahel, to review options for optimizing United Nations support for the initiative in Burkina Faso.

50. The United Nations and the World Bank continue to work within their respective institutional mandates on the security sector. In 2018, two public expenditure reviews were undertaken for the Gambia and Guinea-Bissau, and joint support for public financial management reform in the security sector was provided in Somalia. The United Nations and the World Bank have scaled up coordination on support to core government functions in crisis-affected situations, under the auspices of the United Nations Inter-Agency Platform on Core Government Functions in Countries Impacted by Fragility and Conflict and, in 2018, finalized a joint diagnostic tool, providing guidance on the assessment of centre-of-government, civil service, local governance, public financial management, aid coordination and security sector institutions.

51. Other international financial institutions also have an important role to play in helping to reduce multidimensional risks. The African Development Bank strategy on addressing fragility and building resilience in Africa for the period 2014–2019 and its initiative to deliver on the Bank's five corporate priorities in 10,000 communities in fragile situations in 1,000 days, in partnership with actors such as UNDP, demonstrate important opportunities for the United Nations to scale up those partnerships. The Islamic Development Bank is also scaling up its work in that area, collaborating with UNDP on developing the Bank's policy on fragility and resilience and implementing it in a number of countries.

52. In my 2018 report, I called for guidelines for community-level engagement in peacebuilding and sustaining peace. A joint United Nations-civil society working group is developing system-wide community engagement guidelines for United Nations peace operations and United Nations country teams. The United Nations will be encouraged to use the guidelines to develop or enhance existing country-specific community engagement strategies, in consultation with national and local stakeholders, in particular youth and women's groups. Such strategies could be focused on building capacity, enhancing funding support and sharing good practices.

VI. Conclusion

53. In 2018, I presented a set of 42 recommendations, many of them bold and ambitious, to support the joint commitment of Member States and the United Nations system to build and sustain peace. The present interim report offers an early indication of progress: headway is being made on the vast majority of my recommendations, except for the important ones on securing adequate financing for peacebuilding. I urge the membership to ensure that progress is also made in those areas, in order to support collective efforts to advance the sustaining peace paradigm overall.

54. Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 72/276 and Security Council resolution 2413 (2018), I will submit a detailed report to the Assembly at its seventy-fourth session, in connection with the next comprehensive review of the United Nations peacebuilding architecture, focusing on the continued implementation of the twin resolutions adopted in 2016 (Assembly resolution 70/262 and Council resolution 2282 (2016)) and the implementation of subsequent recommendations and options. In my 2020 report, I will detail impacts and achievements, in particular at the field level, as a result of the joint efforts of the international community. I will also critically address areas of limited or no progress, both to identify any additional commitments necessary on my part and on the part of the Member States and to inform the review of the United Nations peacebuilding architecture.

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Strengthening the partnership between the United Nations and the African Union on issues of peace and security in Africa, including the work of the United Nations Office to the African Union

Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. The present report, submitted pursuant to the statement by the President of the Security Council dated 16 December 2014 (S/PRST/2014/27), provides an update on the partnership between the United Nations and the African Union on peace and security issues in Africa in accordance with the Joint United Nations-African Union Framework for Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security. The report provides an overview of the peace and security landscape across the continent, taking into account key contextual factors which put at risk the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals in Africa, including the post-coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic recovery; climate change; the impact of the military offensive of the Russian Federation against Ukraine on global food, energy and financial systems; and governance challenges. The report also includes an update on the main activities carried out by the United Nations Office to the African Union (UNOAU) and the United Nations system in relation to the partnership with the African Union since the issuance of my previous report (S/2022/643), including those pertaining to Security Council resolutions 2320 (2016), 2378 (2017) and 2457 (2019) and the statement by the President of the Security Council dated 31 August 2022 (S/PRST/2022/6). The annex to the present document contains an infographic that provides an overview of the highlights of the partnership with regard to peacemaking, peacekeeping and peacebuilding during the reporting period.

II. The United Nations and African Union strategic partnership

United Nations Security Council and African Union Peace and Security Council

2. The United Nations Security Council and the African Union Peace and Security Council continued to strengthen their strategic partnership to address peace and security challenges in Africa, with a focus on enhanced coordination and information-sharing with a view to advancing common objectives. In this regard, the three African non-permanent members of the Security Council continued to play a central role, in particular, by ensuring that common African positions on critical issues were given

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due consideration in the Security Council. Discussions between the two Councils focused mostly on securing predictable, sustainable and flexible financing for peace support operations led by the African Union, the transition of the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS), the growing threat of terrorism and violent extremism, the increase in global food and energy prices and the cost-of-living crisis, mitigating the effects of climate change, and several country-specific conflict situations.

3. On 13 and 14 October 2022, members of the Security Council hosted the seventh informal joint seminar and 16th annual joint consultative meeting with the Peace and Security Council at United Nations Headquarters in New York. At the joint informal seminar, discussions focused on strengthening cooperation by improving the relevant working methods of both Councils and developing shared goals. Participants welcomed the continued collaboration and renewed their commitment to increased formal and informal interaction. They encouraged further consideration of joint assessment missions and increased working-level consultations between the two Councils, as well as regular participation, when appropriate, of African Union and United Nations representatives in meetings of the Security Council and the Peace and Security Council, respectively, in order to share the perspectives of each body on relevant topics. Participants further underscored the importance of early peacebuilding interventions in conflict and post-conflict situations. The deliberations at the joint consultative meeting focused on strengthening African Union and United Nations peace operations in Africa; the situation in West Africa and the Sahel, including countering the threat of terrorism; the situation in the Great Lakes region; and the application of sanctions in conflict situations in Africa. Through a joint communiqué dated 14 October 2022, the members of the two Councils reaffirmed their commitment to continue enhancing close cooperation in the area of peace, security and stability in Africa, and underscored the importance of the implementation of the women and peace and security and the youth, peace and security agendas in Africa for the full, equal and meaningful participation of women and youth in the prevention and resolution of conflict and in peacebuilding. They also emphasized the need to ensure the protection of civilians, including children, and protection against sexual violence in situations of armed conflict.

4. The seminar and the meeting were preceded by preparatory informal consultations of the Peace and Security Council Committee of Experts and the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Security Council on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa, held from 10 to 12 October. The Committee of Experts also participated in a panel discussion on strengthening the partnership between the two Councils, organized by the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and the Permanent Observer Mission of the African Union, and was briefed by representatives of the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, the Department of Peace Operations, the Department of Operational Support and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

5. To further strengthen coordination between the two Councils, the President of the Security Council and the Chairperson of the Peace and Security Council held four monthly informal meetings, supported by UNOAU, the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and the Peace and Security Council secretariat, during which they exchanged views on the respective programmes of work of the Councils and related matters.

6. Special representatives and envoys of the Secretary-General, as well as their African Union counterparts, continued to brief both Councils on country and regional situations, as well as on thematic issues. In this regard, between September 2022 and August 2023, UNOAU and other United Nations entities provided thematic and country-specific briefings to the Peace and Security Council. The Under-Secretary-

General for Peace Operations and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General to the African Union and Head of the United Nations Office to the African Union participated in the ninth African Union High-level Seminar on Peace and Security in Africa, held in Oran, Algeria, from 7 to 9 December 2022, with the aim of enhancing the readiness of incoming African members of the Security Council to address peace and security issues on the continent.

United Nations Secretariat and African Union Commission

7. On 1 December 2022 in Addis Ababa, the Chairperson of the African Union Commission and the Secretary-General met for the sixth United Nations-African Union annual conference to review progress in the implementation of the Joint United Nations-African Union Framework for Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security and the African Union-United Nations Framework for the Implementation of Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The discussions covered the security and development challenges in the Sahel, the Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes regions, as well as the challenges associated with political transitions, in particular in Burkina Faso, Chad, Guinea, Libya, Mali and the Sudan. The Chairperson of the African Union Commission and the Secretary-General underscored the importance of strengthening coordination and alignment of the work of the United Nations and the African Union in implementing priority projects for the two agendas.

8. On 2 May 2023, the Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Deputy Chairperson of the African Union Commission convened a high-level dialogue in Addis Ababa to discuss and strategize on enhanced collaboration in the broad areas that underlie the peace and socioeconomic development nexus with the potential to ensure the agency of Africa in driving its transformation in the context of Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want and the 2030 Agenda. These areas included the following: macroeconomic stability and trade; climate action and energy access; education and innovation; health, humanitarian and social development issues; and governance, peace and security. Participants in the meeting underscored the need for horizontal and vertical integration in delivering on the development priorities of Africa, and ensuring that regional economic communities, African countries, resident coordinators and country teams were seamlessly integrated into the regional development ecosystem.

9. At the technical level, the three African Union-United Nations working groups – on elections, counter-terrorism and preventing violent extremism, and African Union-led peace support operations and ad hoc security initiatives – met periodically for coordination, joint analysis, policy development and planning, including with regard to the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolutions 2320 (2016) and 2378 (2017) and considerations related to the financing of African Union peace support operations mandated by the Security Council (S/2023/303) and the upcoming summit on counter-terrorism to be held in Abuja on the theme of “Strengthening regional cooperation and institution-building to address the evolving threat of terrorism in Africa”.

III. The United Nations and African Union operational partnership

Challenges to and opportunities for peace and security in Africa

10. The primary structural challenges to achieving lasting peace and security in Africa continued to be political and socioeconomic exclusion, including gender inequality; weak governance institutions, including with regard to human rights, the rule of law and electoral democracy; the inadequate delivery of basic services and the inequitable management of natural resources; terrorism, violent extremism and

organized crime; and the effects of climate change and food insecurity. During the reporting period, these challenges were exacerbated by the lingering effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and the impact of the military offensive of the Russian Federation against Ukraine. Overall, these factors had an adverse impact on sustainable development and economic growth, contributing to high inflation, which affected food and energy prices and increased food and energy insecurity, and shortages of agricultural fertilizers, while simultaneously heightening debt distress and increasing fragility across the continent.

11. In the Sudan, the transition process stalled following the outbreak of fighting between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces on 15 April 2023. The ensuing fighting has led to a catastrophic humanitarian situation across the country, which continues to worsen, resulting in thousands of civilians killed and injured, as well as millions more either being internally displaced or seeking refuge outside the country. Numerous short-term ceasefires were frequently violated.

12. In Chad, following the national dialogue organized in the second half of 2022 and the deadly protests of 20 October, the transition process is approaching critical milestones – including a constitutional referendum in November 2023 that will also decide the issue of the form of the State, and the holding of general elections by October 2024 – amidst political and social tensions. The transition in Chad is taking place amid a volatile regional context, in particular, as a result of the conflict in the Sudan, which has intensified intercommunal violence in Darfur, presenting significant risks for Chad.

13. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the security and humanitarian situation in the east of the country remains a major concern, with persistent attacks by armed groups against civilians. More than 3.3 million people have been displaced in the provinces of North Kivu, South Kivu and Ituri since March 2022, mostly due to conflict, bringing the total number of people internally displaced in the country to more than 6.3 million, the largest caseload on the continent. This insecurity has continued to fuel a long-standing humanitarian and security crisis and exacerbated regional tensions with neighbouring countries.

14. In West Africa, the challenges of advancing complex political transitions in Burkina Faso, Guinea and Mali persisted, amidst increasing incidents of violence, perpetrated mostly by terrorists and violent extremist groups, resulting in grave human rights violations and abuses and dire humanitarian situations. On 26 July, a military coup took place in the Niger. The National Council for the Safeguarding of the Homeland (Conseil national pour la sauvegarde de la patrie) seized power, suspended the Constitution, dissolved the government institutions, closed the border and airspace of the country and arbitrarily detained the President, Mohamed Bazoum, along with his family and several government officials, before appointing a new cabinet. On 29 July, the Peace and Security Council issued a statement in which it strongly condemned the military coup and demanded the restoration of constitutional authority within a maximum period of 15 days. On 30 July, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) enacted sanctions, demanding the reinstatement of constitutional order and the immediate release of President Bazoum and threatening the use of force, while actively pursuing diplomatic avenues for a peaceful resolution to the crisis. Meanwhile, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) is set to withdraw by 31 December 2023, pursuant to the decision of the Security Council in its resolution 2690 (2023), following the request of the host Government. Climate change and desertification continued to present critical challenges, affecting agriculture and the availability of water in particular, and exacerbating food insecurity and farmer-herder intercommunal conflict, as witnessed in central Mali.

15. The situation in the wider Sahel and West Africa is of particular concern, with Al-Qaida-affiliated Jama'a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin and the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara vying for control in the region, taking advantage of instability, conflict, inadequate State presence and the lack of basic social services. These groups have expanded across large areas of the Sahel and carried out large-scale attacks against civilians and the military, mostly in the Liptako-Gourma area. The southward expansion of terrorist activities towards coastal countries continued, with renewed incursions in Benin and Togo. Meanwhile, Boko Haram and other violent groups continued to represent a threat in the Lake Chad Basin region.

16. The conclusion of the African Union institutional reform process will enable the African Union to better address the many challenges facing the continent, including through an effective partnership with the United Nations. The thirty-sixth Ordinary Session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union decided to defer the completion of the process until July 2023. Meanwhile, the process has already yielded positive results, such as the ongoing operationalization of the Peace Fund.

Partnership in conflict prevention and peacemaking

17. Within the prevailing peace and security context, the collaboration between the United Nations, the African Union, regional economic communities and regional mechanisms, as well as other partners, in support of conflict prevention and mediation efforts on the continent registered both progress and setbacks.

18. In Ethiopia, the United Nations supported the mediation effort led by the African Union that led to the signing on 2 November 2022 of the Agreement for Lasting Peace through a Permanent Cessation of Hostilities between the Government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia and the Tigray People's Liberation Front. The United Nations also provided technical support to the implementation of that Agreement. In Somalia, the African Union, IGAD, the European Union and the country's bilateral partners continued to engage constructively with Somalia towards the implementation of peacebuilding and State-building priorities.

19. On the Sudan, the Secretary-General has repeatedly called for the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces to cease fighting and commit to an immediate cessation of hostilities, protect civilians and civilian infrastructure, allow safe passage for civilians fleeing areas of hostilities, facilitate humanitarian operations and respect medical personnel, transport and facilities. He has also called for wider negotiations to achieve a permanent cessation of hostilities and a return to an inclusive and civilian-led political transition. In this regard, the Secretary-General has welcomed high-level international, regional and subregional initiatives aimed at addressing the crisis and is engaging closely with the African Union and IGAD on their efforts to facilitate a long-term resolution of the conflict. The African Union has convened successive meetings under the auspices of its Expanded Mechanism on the Sudan Crisis, with the overarching strategy provided by a "core group" of key Member States and international and regional organizations supported by a secretariat comprising the African Union, IGAD, the League of Arab States and the United Nations. IGAD has also developed a high-level initiative at the level of Heads of State and Government, comprising Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya and South Sudan.

20. In Chad, the United Nations, working with the Office of the African Union High Representative for Chad and the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), continued to engage with the transitional authorities to advocate for continued inclusivity in the transition process. The United Nations also continued to work with partners to help the country address broader fragility factors, notably in the context of the spillover of the conflict in the Sudan.

21. In the Sahel, the United Nations and the African Union, together with ECOWAS and the Group of Five for the Sahel, launched a high-level panel to assess the situation in the region and make recommendations on ways to foster international engagement and map out responses to the region's complex challenges. The Independent High-level Panel on Security and Development in the Sahel, led by the former President of the Niger, Mahamadou Issoufou, started its activities in September 2022 and has since undertaken thorough consultations with a view to harmonizing existing approaches and synergizing security and development interventions for the subregion. The Panel is expected to share its assessment and related recommendations with the above-mentioned organizations later this year.

22. In the countries undergoing political transition, the United Nations, the African Union and ECOWAS continued to deepen their collaboration to ensure a swift and timely return to constitutional rule consistent with the deadlines agreed with ECOWAS. From 29 January to 1 February 2023, the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel participated in a joint ECOWAS-African Union technical assessment mission to Burkina Faso. In Guinea, the African Union, ECOWAS and the United Nations continued to engage the transitional authorities and other stakeholders to advance the transition process in the country. In Mali, the United Nations, alongside ECOWAS and the African Union, is part of the two-tier political and technical mechanism mandated to monitor the timetable for political transition and institutional reforms. The United Nations, through MINUSMA and in collaboration with the African Union and ECOWAS, provided technical and operational support to the constitutional referendum held on 18 June. The United Nations, the African Union and ECOWAS also strongly condemned the military coup in the Niger in July 2023.

23. In Libya, the United Nations-African Union collaboration continued to focus on achieving an inclusive reconciliation process on the basis of the principles of transitional justice and accountability, led by the African Union High-level Committee on Libya and the Presidential Council. In parallel, United Nations-African Union efforts also continued, with the aim of supporting the implementation of the October 2020 ceasefire agreement and advancing political dialogue to facilitate the organization of the presidential and legislative elections.

24. In the Great Lakes region, on 5 May 2023, the Chairperson of the African Union Commission and the Secretary-General attended the eleventh summit of the Regional Oversight Mechanism of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region, held in Bujumbura, Burundi. The summit was aimed at providing added impetus to the efforts of regional leaders in the search for durable solutions to regional peace and security challenges. It followed a decision adopted by the Peace and Security Council at its 1140th meeting, held at the level of Heads of State and Government on 17 February 2023, in which the Council requested the African Union Commission to coordinate efforts with the guarantors of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework, as well the East African Community and ECCAS, to revitalize the Framework so that it encompassed all peace initiatives for the Democratic Republic of the Congo, including the Nairobi and the Luanda peace processes.

25. On 27 June 2023, the African Union facilitated a quadripartite summit comprising the East African Community, ECCAS, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and the Southern African Development Community (SADC), hosted by Angola in Luanda. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General to the African Union, accompanied by the Special Representative for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region, attended the summit, which adopted a joint framework for the harmonization and coordination of all initiatives in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo aimed at promoting peace, security and stability.

26. The United Nations continued to work with the African Union Commission to advance the women and peace and security agenda, including through mainstreaming the agenda in all responses to conflict. In July 2022, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), in partnership with the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the African Union, supported a mission of a group of women from the Great Lakes region led by the former President of the Central African Republic, Catherine Samba-Panza, to Kinshasa to advocate for the participation of women in the Nairobi peace talks and their contribution to the promotion of peace in the country.

27. On 12 May 2023, UN-Women and the Office of the Special Envoy of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission on Women, Peace and Security, through the African Women Leaders Network and in collaboration with IGAD, convened a meeting of leaders in solidarity with women of the Sudan, bringing together more than 150 participants, who called for greater support to the peacebuilding and protection efforts of women in the Sudan. In addition, UNOAU, in collaboration with the African Union Commission and the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, held a hybrid workshop on 13 and 14 October 2022 on the equal participation of women in electoral processes, which was aimed at election management bodies in countries scheduled to organize elections in the final quarter of 2022 and in 2023.

28. Regarding youth engagement, the United Nations, through UNOAU, worked closely with the African Union Commission to advance the youth, peace and security agenda, including by providing support to the launch of the Mission 55 – Conflict in Anaka online application, developed by the German Agency for International Cooperation and the African Union and launched in Addis Ababa on 21 September 2022 to raise awareness among African youth of African Union conflict-resolution tools. Further, the United Nations made efforts to address the rise in hate speech and violent extremism among young people by supporting the African Union "No room for hate speech" campaign's workshop organized by the African Union Commission in Kampala in October 2022. The United Nations continued to support the Special Envoy on Youth of the African Union by facilitating various engagements. The African Union Commission, along with other partners, participated in the launch of the international steering group for the five-year strategic action plan for youth-inclusive peace processes, hosted on 28 February 2023 by the Office of the Envoy of the Secretary-General on Youth, the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, and Search for Common Ground.

29. The United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism and the African Centre for Studies and Research on Terrorism continued to deepen their cooperation through an initiative to support West African Member States in strengthening law enforcement capabilities to protect vulnerable targets through behavioural insights. The Office and the Centre also continued to collaborate in joint capacity-building efforts, including the implementation of youth engagement and empowerment programmes in Mozambique, Nigeria and Somalia and a joint initiative on the protection of vulnerable targets against terrorist attacks for African Member States.

Partnership in peacekeeping and peace support operations

30. The United Nations continued to provide support to the African Union, regional economic communities and regional mechanisms and ad hoc security initiatives in their ongoing peace support operations across Africa.

31. In the Lake Chad Basin region, various United Nations entities continued to collaborate with the African Union to support the Multinational Joint Task Force against Boko Haram, and on the implementation of the Regional Strategy for the

Stabilization, Recovery and Resilience of the Boko Haram-affected Areas of the Lake Chad Basin Region. At a meeting convened by the African Union Commission in December 2022 to discuss progress in the implementation of the Strategy, participants concluded that it had yielded positive results and could serve as a good practice for other conflict-affected areas, such as the Liptako-Gourma region shared by Burkina Faso, Mali and the Niger.

32. In the Central African Republic, the United Nations, through UNOAU working in close coordination with the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), continued to monitor and provide expert advice and technical support to the African Union Observer Mission in the Central African Republic until it ceased operations following the decision by the Peace and Security Council of 31 October 2022 after the European Union terminated its funding for the mission on 31 July 2022. The Observer Mission had not become fully operational beyond the deployment of 19 military observers owing to the delayed construction of camps for the joint special security units, the lack of required logistical support for the deployment of the military observers in the sectors, the COVID-19 pandemic and the resumption of hostilities between the Government and armed groups in December 2020.

33. In Mozambique, the counter-insurgency operations spearheaded by the Government, with the support of the SADC Mission in Mozambique and the Rwanda Defence Force, mitigated the further spread of terrorism in the country. The African Union supported the efforts of the SADC Mission in Mozambique. This followed the endorsement of the deployment of the Mission by the Peace and Security Council at its 1062nd meeting, held on 31 January 2022, to serve as a regional response to support Mozambique in combating terrorism and acts of violent extremism, restoring security and law and order in the affected areas of Cabo Delgado Province and providing humanitarian relief to those affected by terrorist activities. Subsequently, and pursuant to appeals from SADC, the African Union donated military and non-military equipment from the Continental Logistics Base in support of the Mission's operations.

34. In Somalia, the United Nations continued to support the ongoing activities of ATMIS and the transfer of security responsibilities to the Somali security forces. In accordance with Security Council resolution 2472 (2019) and the communiqué of the 1068th meeting of the Peace and Security Council, ATMIS was requested to optimize its equipment within available resources. To achieve this, a joint United Nations-African Union team conducted an equipment review exercise from 15 September to 5 October 2022, which resulted in the prioritization of equipment by the African Union, including key multipliers and enablers, to be either deployed or repatriated. On 22 March 2023, the United Nations and the African Union jointly held a high-level meeting to raise awareness of the need for financing for ATMIS and resourcing for the Somali security transition. The high-level meeting, co-chaired by the Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and the African Union Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security, highlighted the urgent need to ensure provision of the funding required to implement the security transition. The United Nations, jointly with the Federal Government of Somalia, the African Union, the European Union and other key security partners, issued a joint technical assessment report against the benchmarks for the security transition in Somalia on 30 April, in accordance with Security Council resolutions 2628 (2022) and 2670 (2022). The United Nations will continue supporting ATMIS in its ongoing reconfiguration efforts, including the deployment of mobile forces with enabling capabilities and troop drawdown, as well as through its planned exit from Somalia by 31 December 2024.

35. In South Sudan, amid continued delays in the implementation of the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan,

intercommunal violence across the country and heightened tensions between the parties, the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), IGAD, the African Union Mission in South Sudan and the Reconstituted Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission collaborated within the trilateral mechanism, which met periodically to discuss their assessment of electoral and constitution-making needs, and jointly undertook extensive good offices engagements with South Sudanese stakeholders. As a result, a joint task force on constitution-making and electoral processes was launched on 1 June with the revitalized transitional Government to support the implementation of those processes. UNMISS further provided support to the visit of the Peace and Security Council to Juba in February 2023.

36. With regard to the situation in Abyei, the conflict in the Sudan has halted the positive momentum created by encouraging signs of engagement, notably the meeting of the high-level committee of the Sudan and South Sudan on Abyei held on 9 and 10 April in the presence of the African Union, the United Nations and IGAD, at which the overall situation in the area was discussed, with the aim of advancing the process with regard to final status.

37. The African Union also made progress towards the reconceptualization of the African Standby Force by reviewing the existing concept and aligning it with the evolving peace and security landscape on the continent. The United Nations, through UNOAU, continued to support the strengthening of the Force by working closely with the African Union and regional economic communities and regional mechanisms to develop policies, guidelines and standard operating procedures, build the needed civilian, military and police capabilities, including standby rosters, and implement the decisions of the 14th meeting of the African Union Specialized Technical Committee on Defence, Safety and Security on strengthening the African Standby Force, including operationalizing the Continental Logistics Base and the Continental Movements Control Centre.

38. The Department of Operational Support, in collaboration with UNOAU, continued to work with the African Union to strengthen cooperation and deepen mutual understanding on operational support matters through the knowledge and expertise exchange programme. Following the endorsement of a joint African Union-United Nations road map in October 2022 that charts the future direction of the programme and learning activities, the collaboration has already resulted in the secondment of United Nations staff to support the operationalization of the Peace Fund secretariat. The cooperation further resulted in a joint business partnering course for public finance practitioners to enhance expertise in resource stewardship practices; the hosting of an African Union participant in the United Nations Enhanced Training for High-level Operational Support programme; the development of a writing manual for drafters within the Peace Support Operations Division of the African Union; and planning for an organizational governance programme tailored to the African Union. As part of exploratory efforts to assess whether the Department's triangular partnership programme training model could benefit the peace efforts of the African Union, the Department hosted two medical representatives from the African Union to observe the programme's course for Field Medical Assistants in July 2023. The United Nations, through UNOAU, also continued to support the African Union in the development of its security management system. In this context, UNOAU supported the African Union in developing a draft safety and security service policy for civilian personnel in African Union peace operations and field offices.

Partnership in peacebuilding and the rule of law

39. The United Nations continued to work closely with the African Union in the areas of peacebuilding and the rule of law.

40. On 28 November 2022, the Peacebuilding Commission and the Peace and Security Council held their 5th annual informal consultative meeting, focused on climate and peacebuilding. Member States called for proactive and effective measures to avert the effects of climate change on peace and security and stressed the importance of official and accurate data to guide responses to climate threats. They further called for strong regional, national and local leadership of climate-related initiatives to increase ownership, and emphasized the importance of strengthening institutions, building community capacity in climate change mitigation and adaptation, and increasing coordination with international partners for successful initiatives. They committed to regular dialogue between the Peacebuilding Commission and the Peace and Security Council to coordinate common approaches to peacebuilding efforts in Africa.

41. The United Nations, through UNOAU, provided technical support and advice to African Union initiatives related to security sector reform; disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration; and mine action.

42. With respect to security sector reform, the United Nations worked with the African Union to strengthen the implementation of its security sector reform policy framework by drawing lessons learned from the past 10 years of activities. In addition, UNOAU participated in consultations with national security sector reform commissions and coordination bodies and provided inputs to the draft training curriculum package on gender mainstreaming and security sector reform.

43. On disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, the United Nations participated in various consultations with the African Union and the World Bank to discuss the African Union disarmament, demobilization and reintegration capacity project. Initiated in 2013, the project is aimed at creating sustainable disarmament, demobilization and reintegration capacities within the African Union, regional economic communities and regional mechanisms, and African Member States to support national and regional disarmament, demobilization and reintegration initiatives. The fourth phase of the project has been developed, with a focus on operational disarmament, demobilization and reintegration support to the African Union. Furthermore, UNOAU participated in the fourth African Union Regions Standing Committee on Small Arms and Light Weapons and Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration, at which future efforts of the African Union and regional economic communities to support member States were discussed.

44. The United Nations continued to provide technical support towards the development of the African Union strategies on countering improvised explosive devices and on mine action, which are aimed at enhancing coordinated action on the continent. The United Nations also continued to support the African Union in the implementation of strategies intended to reduce the threats of explosives across Africa caused by conventional weapons, mines, explosive remnants of war, cluster munitions and improvised explosive devices, in accordance with international conventions on explosive hazards and the Silencing the Guns in Africa initiative of the African Union.

45. In support of the implementation of the Africa Amnesty Month for the surrender and collection of illegally owned weapons, within the context of the Silencing the Guns in Africa initiative, the Office for Disarmament Affairs supported national campaigns in Liberia, Togo and the United Republic of Tanzania. Between August and December 2022, the three countries organized awareness-raising campaigns on the dangers and risks of illegal gun ownership and illicit flows of small arms and light weapons, and collected and publicly destroyed weapons voluntarily surrendered by civilians. On 16 and 17 May 2023, the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs travelled to Addis Ababa to review and assess with the African Union how to advance arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament on the continent.

IV. Support to African Union peace support operations

46. There has been progress towards ensuring predictable, sustainable and flexible resourcing for peace support operations led by the African Union, including through the Peace Fund. Pursuant to the statement by the President of the Security Council of 31 August 2022 (S/PRST/2022/6), the Secretary-General submitted a report on 1 May 2023 (S/2023/303) which resulted from extensive consultations with a wide range of stakeholders, including the African Union Commission and members of the Security Council and the Peace and Security Council. In his report, the Secretary-General notes the changing nature of conflict in Africa and provides an update on progress made by the United Nations and the African Union in fulfilling the commitments made in Security Council resolutions 2320 (2016) and 2378 (2017), with recommendations on next steps. He recommends that the Security Council lay the foundation for a new generation of African Union-led, United Nations-supported peace operations on the African continent, consistent with the increasing focus on peace enforcement, with predictable and sustainable financing, including through United Nations assessed contributions on a case-by-case basis.

47. During the thirty-sixth Ordinary Session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union, a consensus paper on predictable, adequate and sustainable financing for African Union peace and security activities was adopted.

48. The Peace Fund continued to make significant progress, with the Fund expected to reach the $400 million target by the end of 2023, and a director of the secretariat to be appointed. In May 2023, the Peace and Security Council approved an increase in the crisis reserve facility for 2023 and 2024 from $5 million to $10 million, and the allocation of $2 million each to ATMIS and the East African Community regional force in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General to the African Union continued to participate in meetings of the Peace Fund Board of Trustees as an ex officio member.

49. The United Nations continued to support the African Union in enhancing its capacity to ensure that its peace support operations are continuously planned and conducted in compliance with international human rights law, international humanitarian law and applicable standards of conduct and discipline. Significant progress was made through the African Union compliance and accountability framework project, supported by the European Union and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, which led to the adoption of key policy documents, including the policy on the selection and screening of personnel, the policy on the protection of civilians, and the compliance strategic framework.

50. The Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, in close collaboration with UNOAU, continued to provide support for mainstreaming child protection issues within the African Union peace and security agenda. The United Nations, the African Union and other partners in the African Union coordination group on children in situations of conflict engaged to coordinate strategic planning and information-sharing, including for the purpose of early warning and prevention.

51. In November 2022, the African Union Commission conducted an inaugural lessons learned forum on peace support operations deployed over the past two decades, aimed at guiding the reconceptualization of the African Standby Force. Attendees of the forum assessed how the African Union had implemented past peace support operations and the various ways in which the Force had been utilized since its establishment, while identifying key lessons learned that could contribute towards its full operationalization and utilization. As part of the efforts to ensure closer collaboration with regional economic communities and regional mechanisms,

participants in the 15th meeting of the African Union Specialized Technical Committee on Defence, Safety and Security, held in May 2023, subsequently requested the Commission to conduct a strategic review of the Force with the participation of regional economic communities, regional mechanisms and States members of the African Union.

V. Partnership with other regional organizations and arrangements

Regional economic communities and regional mechanisms

52. Collaboration between the United Nations, the African Union and the regional economic communities and regional mechanisms, leveraging the relative advantages of each organization, remains critical to comprehensively respond to challenges to peace and security and make progress on the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063.

53. In the Great Lakes region, the engagements by the East African Community, ECCAS, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, SADC and the African Union, in coordination with the United Nations and with the support of partners, have been critical to renewing momentum for the strengthening of joint action towards addressing peace and security challenges, elaborating an action plan for the revitalization of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region, and ensuring greater attention to enhanced coordination in the implementation of the Nairobi and Luanda processes.

54. The trilateral mechanism on the Sudan, comprising the United Nations, the African Union and IGAD, in collaboration with international partners, continuously engaged with Sudanese stakeholders in an effort to ensure that the transition process remained on track. While prospects for an inclusive and civilian-led political transition were jeopardized by the outbreak of fighting between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces, the three organizations continued to collaborate on securing a cessation of hostilities, including through the Expanded Mechanism on the Sudan Crisis and its core group led by the African Union, as well as the IGAD road map.

Other regional organizations and arrangements

55. On 30 November and 1 December 2022 in Port Louis, the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and the Indian Ocean Commission held a regional workshop on conflict prevention and mediation in the Indian Ocean region. Participants were drawn from member States of the Commission and represented ministries of foreign affairs, security, gender and justice, academic institutions, offices of the ombudsperson, civil society and faith-based organizations. The African Union, the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa, the International Organization of la Francophonie and SADC were also represented, and shared their mediation experiences and lessons learned, which contributed to a set of actionable recommendations to strengthen conflict prevention in the Indian Ocean region.

VI. Other activities of the United Nations Office to the African Union

56. UNOAU continued to support the strengthening of the United Nations-African Union strategic partnership, under the leadership of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General to the African Union and Head of UNOAU. The Office maintained strong and enduring relationships with the African Union, underpinned by daily

interaction with key stakeholders, including the Peace and Security Council, the African Union Commission and partners, thereby facilitating a coherent, well-informed and strategic United Nations approach to advancing the partnership.

57. On 22 November 2022, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General to the African Union attended the summit of Heads of State and Government of the Accra Initiative, at which deliberations focused on preventing the spillover of terrorism from the Sahel and addressing transnational organized crime and violent extremism in the border areas of the Initiative's member countries. The Special Representative also attended the twenty-third Ordinary Session of the Conference of Heads of State and Government of the Economic Community of Central African States, held in Libreville on 1 July 2023, as well as meetings of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa. These events provided opportunities to enhance a common understanding of peace and security situations on the continent, and further strengthen the strategic partnership between the United Nations and the African Union.

58. The Special Representative attended the first African Union policy conference on promoting the peace, security and development nexus, held in Tangier, Morocco, from 25 to 27 October 2022. The Special Representative also participated in the thirteenth high-level retreat of African Union Special Representatives of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, held in Windhoek from 21 to 23 October under the theme "Transformative mediation for Africa's effective governance and peace dividends".

59. From 17 to 20 October 2022, UNOAU jointly organized with the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and the East African Community a lessons learned workshop in Dar es Salaam, United Republic of Tanzania, on the role of subregional organizations in mediation processes, during which over 80 participants from the East African Community, the African Union and other regional organizations shared best practices and experiences with a view to strengthening the mediation capacity of the East African Community.

60. The Special Representative also held numerous bilateral meetings and attended events with Permanent Representatives to the African Union, including members of the Peace and Security Council, as well as officials of the African Union Commission and other representatives. UNOAU held an interactive meeting with the African Union Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security and his staff on 15 May as part of its annual retreat, providing an opportunity for the Commissioner to share the Commission's perspectives and priority areas of focus for the United Nations-African Union partnership in peace and security, which enabled UNOAU to further align its priorities and workplans accordingly.

61. UNOAU undertook several initiatives to accelerate the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), working closely with the Special Envoy of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission on Women, Peace and Security. UNOAU provided support for the deployment from 3 to 16 August 2022 of members of the African Women Leaders Network, the Panel of the Wise and the Network of African Women in Conflict Prevention and Mediation to Kenya to monitor the elections in that country. The support enabled the establishment of a "women's situation room", which monitored the political participation of women and was ready to provide mediation services in the event of election-related tensions or violence. On 29 September, UNOAU, with support from the Government of Ireland, organized a workshop on advancing partnerships and the community of practice for the implementation of the women, peace and security agenda to enhance collaboration and information-sharing among various stakeholders, including the African Union, regional economic communities and regional mechanisms, and civil society

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organizations. On 14 and 15 December, UNOAU and partners provided support to the African Union in organizing the third annual Women, Peace and Security Forum under the theme of leveraging monitoring to enhance women's participation and leadership in peace processes in Africa. An expert from the United Nations Standby Team of Senior Mediation Advisers moderated key discussions attended by over 80 participants. The forum reviewed progress and discussed practical strategies in advancing the women and peace and security agenda in Africa.

62. Under the "She Stands for Peace" initiative, with support from the Government of Norway, the third season of the podcast series, featuring 15 episodes, highlighted the insights and experiences of various eminent personalities in advancing the women and peace and security agenda.

63. The Secretariat and the African Union Commission maintained technical-level contact throughout the reporting period on regional, country-specific and thematic files, including through the technical working groups on elections, counter-terrorism and the prevention of violent extremism, and peace support operations and ad hoc security initiatives. Technical teams of the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, the Department of Peace Operations, UNOAU, the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa, MINUSCA and the African Union Commission held a horizon-scanning and conflict-prevention meeting on 27 April, during which participants agreed on strengthening inter-agency coordination in addressing political, security, socioeconomic and humanitarian issues in the central African subregion.

64. With a view to coordinating United Nations efforts in support of regional and subregional organizations, the Special Representative participated in the 37th high-level meeting of heads of United Nations peace missions in West Africa, held in Bamako on 27 and 28 October 2022. During the meeting, participants agreed to continue to strengthen cooperation on governance within the United Nations, on the one hand, and with the African Union, regional and subregional organizations, on the other, to harness their respective comparative advantages, with a view to improving the ownership and implementation of existing African instruments on governance.

VII. Observations and recommendations

65. Strong partnerships between the United Nations and regional organizations are essential to effective multilateralism. In this context, the United Nations-African Union partnership has continued to grow in scope and depth.

66. However, the complex nature of contemporary conflicts in Africa, compounded by factors such as climate change, food and energy insecurity and a range of external threats and shocks, underscores the fact that traditional responses are ineffective. There is an alarming rise in political contestation turning violent or fuelling intra-State conflicts, as well as in acts of terrorism and violent extremism, which exposes systemic governance deficits associated with weak or absent State institutions. These challenges call for renewed efforts to make our collective security more effective, in line with my policy brief entitled "A New Agenda for Peace" of July 2023, with an increased emphasis on global and regional prevention efforts, boosting preventive diplomacy and supporting regional peace support operations. In doing so, women and youth must always be at the core of these efforts.

67. Continued global polarization has the potential to destabilize regions that are relatively peaceful. If Africa is to have a real opportunity to unleash its immense untapped potential, strengthened multilateralism and international solidarity and cooperation are crucial. Financial institutions must be reformed to promote greater equity and representation, as well as to ensure that they are fit for purpose in

addressing contemporary challenges, such as increasing poverty and inequality, widening digital divides, rising indebtedness, climate change and State fragility. Such reforms can contribute towards the attainment of Agenda 2063, its flagship initiative on Silencing the Guns in Africa, and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

68. The role of regional organizations in addressing contemporary threats across the conflict cycle, including through peace enforcement missions, will also be critical going forward, underpinned by the availability of the requisite human and financial resources. Our responses must be commensurate to the formidable challenges we face. I therefore look forward to the continued commitment of the Security Council to addressing the issue of predictable, sustainable and flexible financing of African Union-led peace support operations, including through assessed contributions, by adopting a framework resolution in the coming months.

69. Following the military coup in the Niger on 26 July, I remain deeply troubled by the continuing epidemic of coups d'état on the continent, which undermine peace and stability, the rule of law and democratic governance, as well as the principles outlined in the ECOWAS Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance, the Constitutive Act of the African Union and the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance, as well as the Sustainable Development Goals.

70. I am appalled by the devastating conflict in the Sudan and the resulting catastrophic humanitarian situation. I once again call on the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces to cease fighting and commit to a durable cessation of hostilities, to protect civilians and civilian infrastructure, and allow unfettered humanitarian access. The United Nations will continue to engage with the African Union and other international partners on the coordination of regional and subregional efforts towards finding a resolution to the conflict.

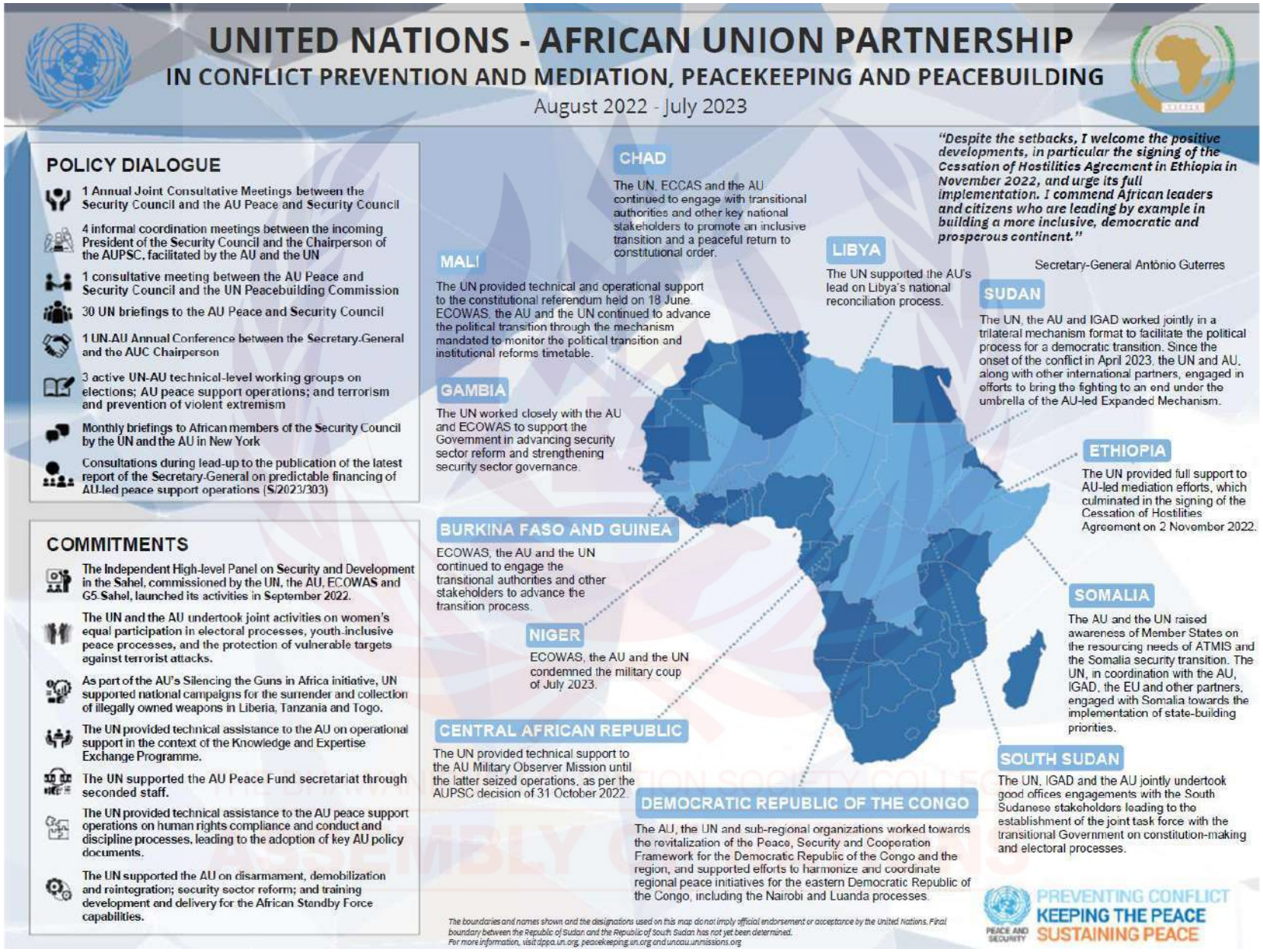
71. I am also deeply concerned about the security and humanitarian situation in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. I commend the ongoing initiatives aimed at de-escalation and the efforts aimed at the harmonization of initiatives, including through the quadripartite framework facilitated by the African Union. At a time when the country is also planning for elections in December 2023, it is important that the violence end, and that the Congolese people freely exercise their civic rights.

72. Despite the setbacks, I welcome the positive developments, in particular, the signing of the cessation of hostilities agreement in Ethiopia in November 2022, and urge its full implementation. I commend African leaders and citizens who are leading by example in building a more inclusive, democratic and prosperous continent.

73. I would like to thank the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Moussa Faki Mahamat, for his continued leadership and strong commitment to the enhanced partnership between our two organizations. I also express my appreciation to the organs of the African Union, African Member States and the regional economic communities and regional mechanisms for their indispensable efforts towards addressing challenges to peace, security and development in Africa. I also commend the African Union on progress made so far in its institutional reform process.

74. Finally, I wish to express my appreciation to my Special Representative to the African Union, Parfait Onanga-Anyanga, as well as the staff of UNOAU and all United Nations and African Union entities, for their important role in continuing to foster a strong partnership between the two organizations.

Annex


UNITED NATIONS - AFRICAN UNION PARTNERSHIP
IN CONFLICT PREVENTION AND MEDIATION, PEACEKEEPING AND PEACEBUILDING
August 2022 - July 2023
POLICY DIALOGUE
1 Annual Joint Consultative Meetings between the Security Council and the AU Peace and Security Council
4 informal coordination meetings between the incoming President of the Security Council and the Chairperson of the AUPSC, facilitated by the AU and the UN
1 consultative meeting between the AU Peace and Security Council and the UN Peacebuilding Commission
30 UN briefings to the AU Peace and Security Council
1 UN-AU Annual Conference between the Secretary-General and the AUC Chairperson
3 active UN-AU technical-level working groups on elections; AU peace support operations; and terrorism and prevention of violent extremism
Monthly briefings to African members of the Security Council by the UN and the AU in New York
Consultations during lead-up to the publication of the latest report of the Secretary-General on predictable financing of AU-led peace support operations (S/2023/303)
COMMITMENTS
The Independent High-level Panel on Security and Development in the Sahel, commissioned by the UN, the AU, ECOWAS and G5 Sahel, launched its activities in September 2022.
The UN and the AU undertook joint activities on women's equal participation in electoral processes, youth-inclusive peace processes, and the protection of vulnerable targets against terrorist attacks.
As part of the AU's Silencing the Guns in Africa initiative, UN supported national campaigns for the surrender and collection of illegally owned weapons in Liberia, Tanzania and Togo.
The UN provided technical assistance to the AU on operational support in the context of the Knowledge and Expertise Exchange Programme.
The UN supported the AU Peace Fund secretariat through seconded staff.
The UN provided technical assistance to the AU peace support operations on human rights compliance and conduct and discipline processes, leading to the adoption of key AU policy documents.
The UN supported the AU on disarmament, demobilization and reintegration; security sector reform; and training development and delivery for the African Standby Force capabilities.
CHAD
The UN, ECCAS and the AU continued to engage with transitional authorities and other key national stakeholders to promote an inclusive transition and a peaceful return to constitutional order.
MALI
The UN provided technical and operational support to the constitutional referendum held on 18 June. ECOWAS, the AU and the UN continued to advance the political transition through the mechanism mandated to monitor the political transition and institutional reforms timetable.
GAMBIA
The UN worked closely with the AU and ECOWAS to support the Government in advancing security sector reform and strengthening security sector governance.
BURKINA FASO AND GUINEA
ECOWAS, the AU and the UN continued to engage the transitional authorities and other stakeholders to advance the transition process.
NIGER
ECOWAS, the AU and the UN condemned the military coup of July 2023.
CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC
The UN provided technical support to the AU Military Observer Mission until the latter seized operations, as per the AUPSC decision of 31 October 2022.
LIBYA
The UN supported the AU's lead on Libya's national reconciliation process.
"Despite the setbacks, I welcome the positive developments, in particular the signing of the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement in Ethiopia in November 2022, and urge its full implementation. I commend African leaders and citizens who are leading by example in building a more inclusive, democratic and prosperous continent."
Secretary-General António Guterres
SUDAN
The UN, the AU and IGAD worked jointly in a trilateral mechanism format to facilitate the political process for a democratic transition. Since the onset of the conflict in April 2023, the UN and AU, along with other international partners, engaged in efforts to bring the fighting to an end under the umbrella of the AU-led Expanded Mechanism.
ETHIOPIA
The UN provided full support to AU-led mediation efforts, which culminated in the signing of the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement on 2 November 2022.
SOMALIA
The AU and the UN raised awareness of Member States on the resourcing needs of ATMIS and the Somalia security transition. The UN, in coordination with the AU, IGAD, the EU and other partners, engaged with Somalia towards the implementation of state-building priorities.
SOUTH SUDAN
The UN, IGAD and the AU jointly undertook good offices engagements with the South Sudanese stakeholders leading to the establishment of the joint task force with the transitional Government on constitution-making and electoral processes.
DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO
The AU, the UN and sub-regional organizations worked towards the revitalization of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the region, and supported efforts to harmonize and coordinate regional peace initiatives for the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, including the Nairobi and Luanda processes.
The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations. Final boundary between the Republic of Sudan and the Republic of South Sudan has not yet been determined.
For more information, visit dppa.un.org, peacekeeping.un.org and uncau.unmissions.org
PREVENTING CONFLICT
KEEPING THE PEACE
SUSTAINING PEACE

THE STATE OF GLOBAL PEACE and SECURITY

In Line with the Central Mandates Contained in the Charter of the United Nations

REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

THE BHAWANIPUR EDUCATION SOCIETY COLLEGE
ASSEMBLY OF NATIONS

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Pernaca Sudhakaran/UN Photo



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SUMMARY

The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 72/243, in which the Assembly called upon the Secretary-General to submit to it a report on the state of global peace and security in line with the central mandates contained in the Charter of the United Nations at its seventy-fourth session.

In the report, the evolving nature of armed conflict and violence is highlighted and seven major trends related to global peace and security today are examined. Areas of progress and areas in which solutions are still wanting are noted in the report, along with opportunities and persistent challenges faced by the international community. As such, it serves as a contribution to the reflections that will take place during the seventy-fifth anniversary year of the United Nations and throughout the Nelson Mandela Decade of Peace. In that regard, it also serves to honour the spirit and wisdom of one of the world's great humanists, a man who believed in, and fought for, a better future. Indeed, as Mr. Mandela himself declared, "peace is not just the absence of conflict; peace is the creation of an environment where all can flourish, regardless of race, colour, creed, religion, gender, class, caste or any other social markers of difference".

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Preamble to the Charter of the United Nations reads "We, the peoples of the United Nations determined to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, ... and to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small and to establish conditions under which justice and respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law can be maintained and to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom". These aspirations and the principles enshrined in the Charter – the non-use of force, the peaceful settlement of disputes, non-intervention, cooperation, self-determination and the sovereign equality of Member States – form the foundation of international relations. In the Organization's seventy-fifth anniversary year, they remain as relevant and urgent as they were in 1945.

2. In the intervening decades, there have been remarkable developments. A repetition of the kind of global conflagration that preoccupied the founders of the United Nations has been prevented. Treaties and conventions have been adopted to address subjects ranging from the laws of war to political, civil, cultural, economic and social rights, as well as disarmament and the protection of the environment. Peacemaking and peacekeeping by the United Nations have helped to end conflicts and support reconciliation in countries across the world. Within one generation, 1 billion people have been lifted out of poverty. Most societies are peaceful.

3. Nevertheless, as the present report shows, there are potential threats to global peace and security today, fuelled by interlocking challenges that imperil progress in the years ahead. A world in transition is witness to the highest level of geostrategic tensions in years, contributing to devastating and intractable armed conflicts, as well as persistently high levels of grave violence outside conflict settings. An existential climate crisis has profound implications for peace and security. Deep global distrust has manifestations that extend from the erosion of confidence in international treaties and norms to declining faith in political establishments, accelerated by concerns of exclusion from the benefits of globalization. This already complicated set of conditions is compounded by escalating concerns about the shadow side of digital technologies, since their enormous potential for progress is affected by fears of their negative effects on jobs, livelihoods, privacy and security and their ability to spread hate speech and fuel polarization.[1]

4. In early 2020, and in just 12 weeks, the emergence of a novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) has evolved from an

[1] António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations, "Remarks to the General Assembly on the Secretary-General's priorities for 2020", 22 January 2020.

initially confined outbreak to a pandemic, affecting over 199 countries and territories as at the end of March. The speed and scale of the spread, the severity of cases and the societal and economic disruption have already been dramatic, with even more serious consequences in countries with slender resources and weak health systems. COVID-19 is hitting societies at their core. It has plunged the world economy into a recession with enormous socioeconomic implications, staggering unemployment and dire deprivation. The crisis risks reversing decades of progress in the fight against poverty and exacerbating already high levels of inequality within and between countries. A global coming together and a global solution for all are urgently needed. At the geopolitical level, the crisis is seen as a cry for leadership, solidarity, transparency, trust and cooperation.

5. Maintaining peace and security in today's world requires coherence, engagement and coordination among the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council, as well as the Peacebuilding Commission, consistent with the mandates of each body as set out in the Charter and relevant resolutions. The Security Council, as the body with primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, has a record of successful management of many conflicts and today has a more extensive agenda than at any point in its history. It is engaging more consistently with regional organizations than in the past and remains a vital forum for international action, with the support of other United Nations bodies. However, in situations in which the Council has been divided and unable to act as a result, the effectiveness of international cooperation to advance collective security has been cast in doubt. Conflicts have escalated, leading to a deplorable level of civilian casualties and forced displacement.

6. The Charter highlights the critical relationship between peace and security, development, human rights, including gender equality, and international cooperation. In 2015, Member States reaffirmed those fundamental interlinkages when they adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as the framing document for collective efforts to build peaceful, prosperous and inclusive societies on a healthy planet. The Charter places prevention at the heart of the work of the United Nations. Moving towards a single, integrated peace and security pillar and its closer alignment with the development and human rights pillars as part of the Organization's reform agenda reflects a recognition that only a holistic approach to contemporary peace and security challenges will achieve the prevention and sustaining peace agenda, as well as preserve development gains and advance human rights for all, which are the central goals of the United Nations. Integral to those endeavours is ensuring the greater participation of women and gender equality, both within the United Nations and in its work globally.

7. In order to assess the state of global peace and security, the present report provides a broad and integrated approach. A review of the evolving nature of conflict and violence is followed by an examination of seven interconnected trends that intersect in different ways with contemporary peace and security – human mobility, economic relations and trade, inequality, civic participation, digital technologies, climate change, and disarmament and the regulation of arms – and require the collective engagement of Member States

if they are to successfully respond to new and emerging threats, including pandemics, prevent new conflicts and crises and sustain peace. Such a response can only be collective, and will require Member States to work effectively, nimbly and innovatively with a number of stakeholders. As the challenges that Member States face have become more interconnected and complex, responses must follow suit.



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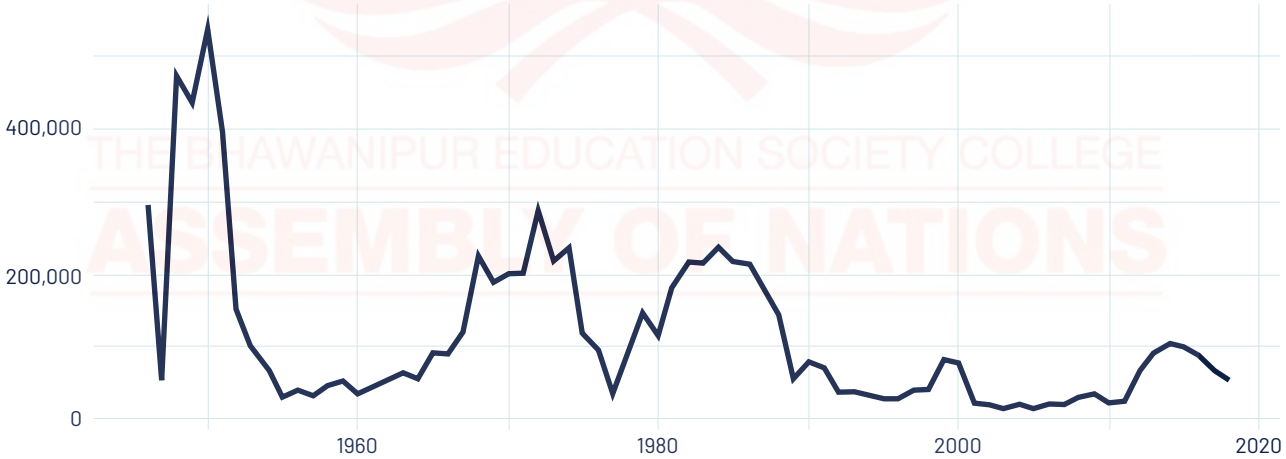
II. EVOLVING CONFLICT AND VIOLENCE

8. The scope and scale of armed conflict and violence are evolving. Inter-State war, the major preoccupation at the time the United Nations was founded, is a rare event today, even if the threat of a major global conflict remains real; meanwhile, intra-State armed conflict is resurgent.[2] Over the past decade, internal conflicts have contributed to the highest number of conflict-related fatalities since the end of the cold war. Their proliferation has also reversed the decline in the number of intra-State conflicts between the early 1990s and the early 2010s (see figure I), partly as a result of concerted multilateral efforts, underpinned by consensus within the Security Council, to manage or resolve them.

9. There are considerable geographic variations in conflict trends. Latin America and East Asia, for example, have experienced a remarkable reduction in conventional armed conflict over the past four decades, despite the recent rise in tensions affecting a number of countries. A positive trend is also evident in Europe, after a dramatic escalation at the end of the cold war as armed conflicts erupted in parts of the Western Balkans and Eastern Europe. There has been a significant increase in the number and intensity of violent conflicts in Africa and the Middle East, not least in the aftermath of the uprisings in the Arab world, albeit with notable exceptions within each region.[3]

Figure I

Number of conflict-related fatalities (1946–2018) in both inter-State and internal conflicts



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Source: Peace Research Institute Oslo/Uppsala Conflict Data Program database.

[2] Uppsala University, Uppsala Conflict Data Program database, available at www.pcr.uu.se/research/ucdp.

[3] Ibid.

10. Intra-State conflicts today are characterized by great complexity. They typically involve the proliferation of non-State armed groups, linkages with criminal and sometimes extremist interests, growing internationalization and connections to global supply chains. These factors have made conflicts longer and more difficult to resolve, while increasing the vulnerability of civilians to atrocity crimes, often on a large scale, and other grave human rights violations.

11. Many non-State armed groups active in intra-State conflicts operate with loose and fluid chains of command. Decentralized groups form shifting coalitions, maintaining links to external supporters while pursuing a wide range of ideological, political and economic agendas not necessarily amenable to negotiation. In many conflict theatres, armed groups are well-equipped with military-grade weapons acquired from poorly secured stockpiles and transfers from the illicit market, or from States.

12. A growing number of countries is engaging militarily in intra-State conflicts, not only as supporters or enablers of local actors, but as parties to the conflict in their own right. Critically, when external actors engage in intra-State conflicts, they often do so in support of competing internal forces, at times acting in direct violation of Security Council decisions. In many cases, such engagement appears to be aimed at countering other external actors, rather than pursuing stated aims of peace and stability.

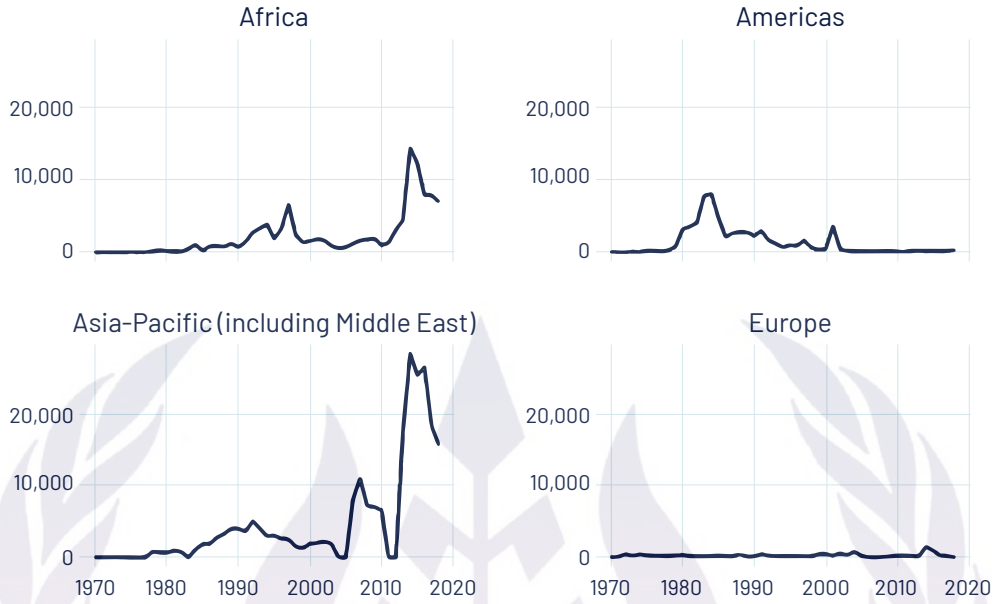
13. The impact of intra-State conflicts on civilians extends far beyond the number of reported battle deaths. Many contemporary conflicts are fought in urban centres, resulting in devastating and well-documented impacts on civilians, including massive loss of life and the extensive destruction of civilian infrastructure. Sexual and gender-based violence is all too prevalent, in particular directed at women and used as a tactic of war, along with forcible recruitment, including of children, into armed groups. Intra-State conflicts increase the risk of "excess deaths" among the population as a whole, disproportionately affecting women and children.

14. Since 1945, the United Nations has developed a number of practices and tools to prevent, manage and resolve conflict, from the discreet engagement of the Secretary-General's good offices and preventive diplomacy to the more formal establishment of the mechanisms and doctrine of United Nations peacekeeping and, more recently, peacebuilding. Regional organizations are taking on an increasingly important role. In 2000, a signal achievement was the adoption by the Security Council of its resolution 1325 (2000), launching an ambitious women and peace and security agenda. With the adoption of Council resolution 2250 (2015), youth and peace and security has emerged as another essential focus of the work of the Organization. Most recently, in its resolution 2475 (2019), the Council recognized for the first time the disproportionate impact of armed conflict on persons with disabilities and emphasized key actions to address it.

15. Addressing evolving global peace and security challenges, including complex, metastasizing intra-State conflicts, which are simultaneously subnational and transnational,[4] requires the continuous review and updating of tools and approaches. In recent years, the United Nations has, among other actions, brought about a surge in diplomacy for peace and further strengthened its mediation capacity. In 2018, Member States were invited to renew collective engagement with

[4] World Bank and United Nations, *Pathways for Peace: Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict* (Washington, D.C., World Bank, 2018).

Figure II
Number of deaths in terrorist attacks (1970–2018)



Source: Global Terrorism Database.

United Nations peacekeeping in the Action for Peacekeeping initiative, and on disarmament with *Securing Our Common Future: An Agenda for Disarmament*. The reform of the United Nations counter-terrorism architecture has enhanced coherence in that area. Not only is championing improved implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) a means of countering gender inequality, but the meaningful participation of women leaders and decision makers in mediation efforts and peace processes also contributes to more lasting and sustainable peace. On 23 March 2020, in response to the COVID-19 crisis, the Secretary-General issued an appeal for an immediate global ceasefire. He called upon warring parties to "silence the guns" and end air strikes to help to create corridors for life-saving aid, to open windows for diplomacy and to be inspired by coalitions and dialogue slowly taking shape among rival parties in some parts of the world to enable joint approaches to the crisis. Subsequently, along with special representatives and envoys, the Secretary-General engaged with parties to that effect. Some parties to conflict have already issued declarations of acceptance in response.

16. Beyond armed conflict, other forms of violence affect a wide range of countries.[5] The extent of violent activities linked to extremism and terrorism has increased, especially since 2001, and has become a global phenomenon, leading to large-scale military and counter-terrorism engagements by national and international actors. The overwhelming concentration of casualties of terrorism has been in the Middle East, South and South-East Asia and North and West Africa (see figure II).[6] A growing concern is the threat posed by right-wing extremism, including white supremacist, anti-Muslim and antisemitic violence.

[5] United Nations Information Service, Vienna, "Homicide kills far more people than armed conflict, says new UNODC study", 4 July 2019.

[6] Uppsala University, Uppsala Conflict Data Program database.

17. Criminal violence disproportionally affects young adult men and boys. In 2017, the most recent year for which comprehensive and standardized data are available, the number of homicide victims (464,000)[7] far surpassed the number of people reportedly killed in armed conflict (89,000) and terrorist-related violence (26,000).[8] Although the global burden of homicidal violence is significant, there is considerable variation in the prevalence between and within regions. In 2017, roughly 37 per cent of all reported homicides occurred in the Americas, 35 per cent in Africa and 23 per cent in Asia.[9] Overall levels of homicide are declining in most parts of the world, with the exception of South America and the Caribbean, as well as Central and Southern Africa. In some countries, while overall homicide rates fell, femicide is rising, meaning that the number of women being killed by an intimate partner or otherwise targeted for being women is on the rise.

18. While poorly documented, transnational organized crime has significantly benefited from the increase in global trade, air travel, shipping and containerization, combined with the lowered cost of communications technologies. Illicit trade and transnational organized crime cost trillions of dollars in lost revenue and productivity and generate hundreds of billions in profit.[10] Transnational organized crime threatens international peace and security and inhibits progress in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. In intra-State wars, the presence of criminal networks and their links to various parties to conflict affect the political economy of conflict and thus its broader dynamics, as access to illicit revenue sources can reduce the incentive to seek a peaceful settlement.

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[7] Of this figure, approximately 81 per cent (377,000) were men and boys.

[8] United Nations Information Service, Vienna, "Homicide kills far more people than armed conflict".

[9] Ibid. The homicide rate in 2017 in the Americas (17.2 homicides per 100,000 people) was the highest recorded since reliable records began in 1990. In the same year, the rate in Africa (13 homicides per 100,000 people) was almost twice the global average, whereas Asia, Europe and Oceania registered far lower incidences, averaging 2.3, 3 and 2.8, respectively.

[10] Transnational Alliance to Combat Illicit Trade, *Mapping the Impact of Illicit Trade on the Sustainable Development Goals* (2019).

III. MAJOR TRENDS RELATED TO GLOBAL PEACE AND SECURITY

19. Preventing and addressing conflict and violence constitute both a tremendous challenge and an urgent priority. Nevertheless, efforts to promote peace and security are interrelated with and complicated by other factors – some causing conflict and organized violence, some, at least in part, being consequences of it, and others undermining collective efforts to prevent, manage or resolve it. The General Assembly and the Security Council have on different occasions recognized the connections between peace and security and human mobility (Assembly resolution 70/1),[11] economic relations and trade (resolution 70/262 and Council resolution 2282 (2016)), inequality (resolution 70/1), civic participation (resolution 70/168), digital technologies (resolution 74/29), climate change (resolution 63/281) and the proliferation of weapons. In turn, it is necessary to comprehensively address these and other drivers of, and contributing factors to, conflict in order to achieve the 2030 Agenda (see A/73/890-S/2019/448).

A. Human mobility, including refugee flows, forced displacement and migration

20. Throughout history, mobility has been an integral part of the human experience. Today, human mobility is driven by many interrelated factors, most notably armed conflict and violence, but also the impact of climate change and environmental degradation, economic pressures and the absence of, or weak, governance. Armed conflicts, ethnic violence, terrorism-related activities and organized crime have led to the forced displacement of entire communities, both internally and across borders, and have severely disrupted traditional patterns of human mobility, including transhumance.

21. The number of humans on the move worldwide, including those forcibly displaced, reached an estimated 272 million in 2019, an increase of 51 million (or 23 per cent) since 2010.[12] That figure includes nearly 29.5 million refugees and asylum seekers worldwide – the highest figure recorded since the end of the Second World War.[13] The increase in mixed flows of refugees and migrants occurred primarily between 2012 and 2015 and was driven by conflicts in the Middle East and parts of Africa, although significant numbers were displaced in other regions too, including Latin America and South-East Asia. In addition, there were 41.3 million conflict-related

[11] See also the global compact on refugees and the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration.

[12] United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, "International migrant stock 2019: ten key messages", September 2019.

[13] Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, "Refugees and migrants from Venezuela top 4 million: UNHCR and IOM", press release, 7 June 2019; and see www.unhcr.org/ en-us/figures-at-a-glance.html.



Isaac Billy/UN Photo

internally displaced persons at the end of 2018, the highest number ever recorded. Women and girls make up around 50 per cent of any refugee, internally displaced or stateless population, frequently experiencing sexual violence and gender-based discrimination. Intersecting factors such as age, disability, ethnicity and sexual orientation further compound the risks.[14]

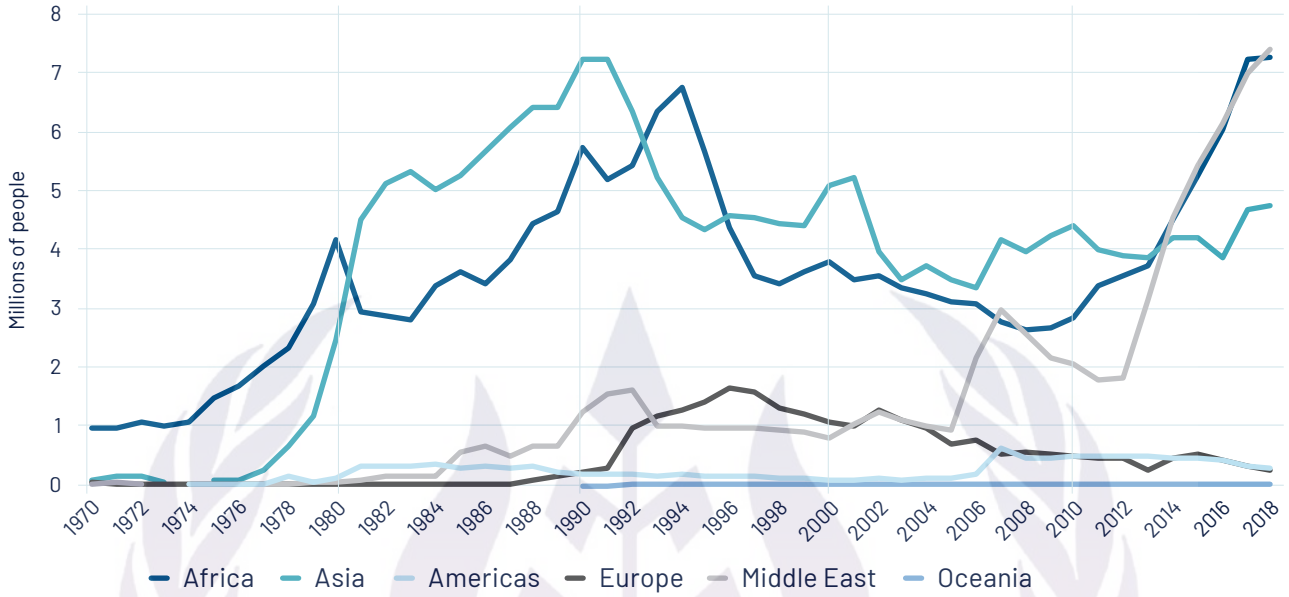
22. Responses to mixed flows of refugees and migrants continue to generate divisive debates. Anti-immigrant rhetoric exploits anxieties and perceptions of injustice among some populations in host countries and provokes fear of refugees, migrants and minorities associated with migration, often leading to their further exclusion or violent attacks against them. Many measures adopted by Governments to reduce mixed flows, such as pushbacks or policies of deterrence, erode human rights and refugee protection without addressing the drivers that compel people to move in the first place.

23. Human mobility is a global phenomenon, growing in scope, complexity and impact. At a minimum, the human rights of people on the move have to be respected and their humane treatment ensured, regardless of migration status, religion, nationality or ethnicity. This includes addressing particular gender-related barriers that women and girls may experience in the context of large movements. There is considerable evidence that, when they are supported by appropriate policies, refugee movements and migration can contribute to economic productivity and sustainable development in both origin and destination countries, while also benefiting refugee and migrant families and households. The global compact on refugees and the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration adopted in 2018 are aimed at building frameworks for cooperation and burden-sharing in addressing two distinct but related phenomena in a manner that addresses gaps in protection of the rights of refugees and migrants while also reaffirming the sovereign rights of States to determine their national migration policy in conformity with international law. The particular vulnerability of refugees and

[14] University of New South Wales, "The world's biggest minority? Refugee women and girls in the global compact on refugees", October 2017.

Figure III

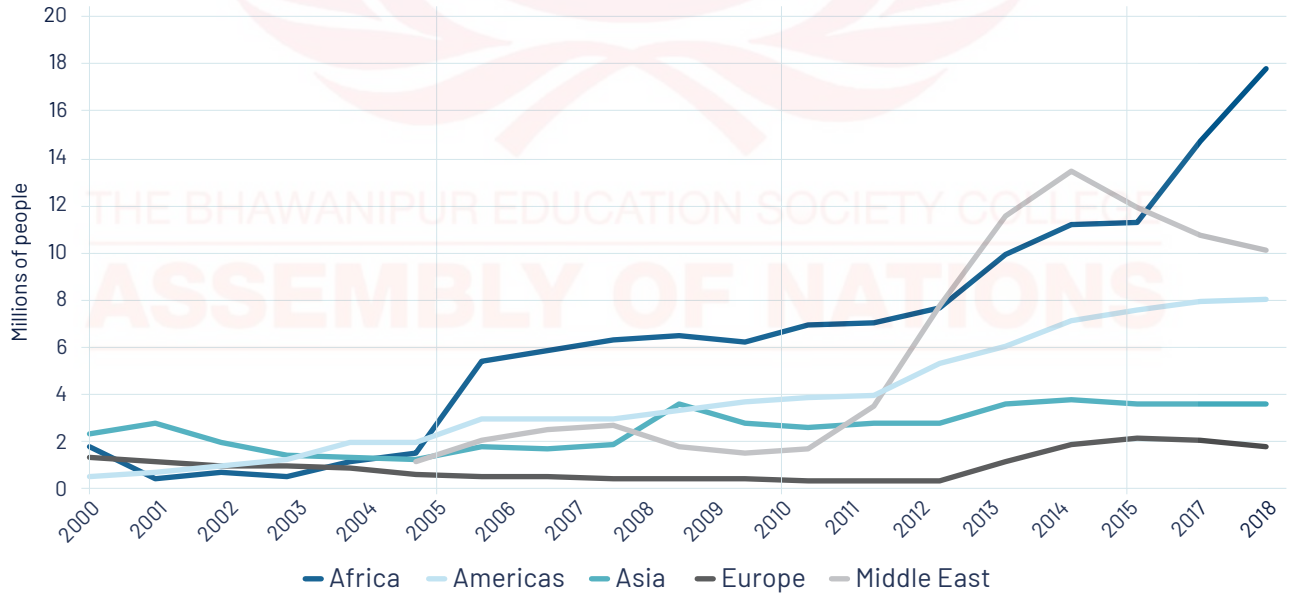
Number of refugees (including individuals in refugee-like situations) per region (1970–2018)



Source: UNHCR.

Figure IV

Number of Internally Displaced Persons per region (2000–2018)



Source: UNHCR.

migrants has also been exacerbated during the COVID-19 pandemic, and deeper consideration and planning for special measures to ensure their continued protection in times of global health emergencies are needed.

B. Economic relations and trade

24. Economic relations and trade have a significant bearing on peace and security. Economic and trade disputes can lead to conflicts within and between States. Similarly, well-managed and mutually beneficial trade and shared economic development – based on the principles of fairness, reciprocity and non-discrimination – have helped countries and societies to overcome generations of armed conflict and forge peaceful and cooperative relations.

25. There is increasing recognition that the gains from trade have been unevenly distributed between and within countries. This has fuelled discontent across the world. States are increasingly resorting to unilateralist strategies to resolve trade disputes, undermining the World Trade Organization and its multilateral trading system. At the same time, regional integration initiatives have advanced, including the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership in the Asia-Pacific region and the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area. The latter will create the largest free trade area in the world in terms of the number of participating countries. A total of 54 African States have signed the agreement to date, covering 1.3 billion people, with an estimated aggregate income of about $2.5 trillion.

26. Trade tensions have created uncertainties, caused significant disruptions to international supply chains and undermined global growth. In 2019, global trade expanded by only 0.3 per cent, and global growth stood at 2.3 per cent – the lowest figures in the past 10 years. Near-term global growth prospects remain weak,[15] which poses a considerable threat to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. Furthermore, a significant downturn is projected owing to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

27. Even with recent progress on some trade fronts, the potential for relapse is high, as important issues underlying the tensions have yet to be tackled in depth. Such a polarized environment could culminate in the creation of separate, incompatible and competing financial, trading and technology systems. This would threaten international cooperation, in addition to impeding flows of foreign direct investment, technology transfers and productivity.

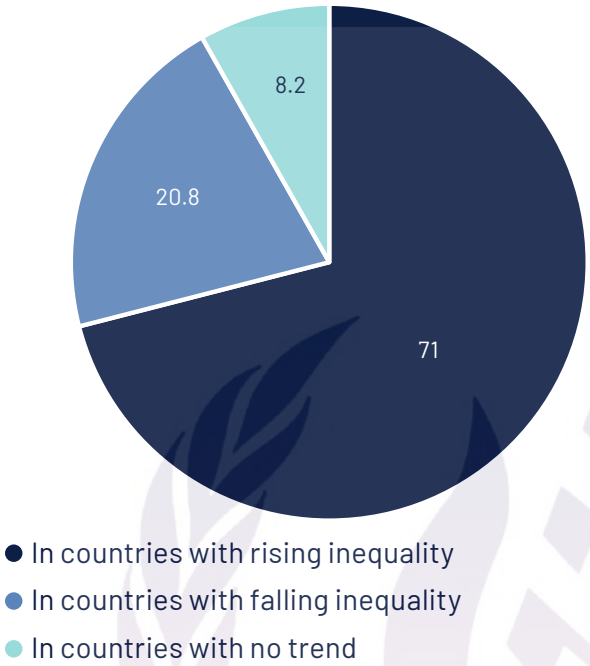
28. As the global economic balance is shifting from North America and Western Europe and other developed regions towards East and South Asia and their fast-growing economies, economic decision-making power is shifting as well. Global cooperation mechanisms will need to recognize the shifting balance while ensuring that the voices of the underrepresented, such as the least developed countries, can be heard. This will be key in building and maintaining trust and respect necessary for collective action.

C. Inequality

29. The links between inequality and various forms of organized violence are well established. High inequality between States can reduce cooperation and trust and, in extreme cases, lead to violent confrontation. Within States, high levels of inequality and exclusion, in particular if group-based,

[15] *World Economic Situation and Prospects* 2020 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.20.II.C.1).

Figure V
Inequality (*percentage of world population*)



Source: World Social Report 2019.

feed discontent, which in turn can find outlets in protests or drive instability and violence.[16] A combination of high inequality and economic insecurity undermines trust at many levels. Households that consider themselves economically insecure tend to have notably less trust in governance institutions. Lack of trust, in turn, can destabilize political systems.[17]

30. Despite significant progress in reducing extreme poverty, inequalities – not only in income and wealth, but also in health, education and gender – remain pervasive around the world. Notwithstanding achievements made by several fast-growing emerging economies, per capita income between developed and developing countries remains divergent.

31. By some metrics, such as the Gini coefficient, income inequality has risen in many countries – affecting more than two thirds of the world population. Other inequality measures, such as the income share of the top 10 per cent of earners, reveal that some countries that have seen their Gini coefficient decline have nevertheless experienced a growing concentration of income towards the top end of the income distribution.[18] Some of the greatest risks of violence stem from the mobilization of concerns of exclusion and injustice, rooted in in-country inequalities across groups, based on ethnic, regional or religious identity. Corruption, as both a cause and a consequence of governance deficits, can lead to violence and conflict. Evidence from Transparency International suggests that the lowest-scoring countries on the Corruption Perceptions Index are often those experiencing conflict or war. In many countries, young people identify corruption as one of the factors that drives violent extremism. Cross-country studies also reveal that high levels of gender inequality and gender-based violence in a society are associated with increased vulnerability to intra-State conflict and the use of more severe forms of violence in conflict.[19]

32. A number of policies advanced over the past three decades aimed at promoting liberalization, privatization and decentralization have eschewed income distribution, concentrated wealth, reduced social protections and services and intensified the sense of economic uncertainties and insecurity of millions who have not experienced benefits of the economic and political integration of

[16] World Bank and United Nations, *Pathways for Peace*.
[17] World Social Report 2020: Inequality in a Rapidly Changing World (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.20.IV.1).
[18] Ibid; United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, "Sustainable Development outlook 2019: gathering storms and silver linings", October 2019.
[19] World Bank and United Nations, *Pathways for Peace*.

societies over the same period. The international financial crisis in 2008 further contributed to a widening of income and wealth inequality, breeding discontent within and across countries with the social and environmental quality of economic growth. Ongoing austerity measures designed to raise revenues and reduce deficits have acted as major triggers for waves of popular protests around the world. The increasing discontent is compounded by rising inequalities in access to the more empowering opportunities of the twenty-first century – such as higher education and technology – and by the lack of social mobility.[20]

33. The General Assembly, by resolving to leave no one behind in its adoption of the 2030 Agenda, recognizes the adverse impact of inequalities within and among countries and aims to reduce them through cooperative action. For all countries, addressing inequalities and making institutions more inclusive are central to preventing the fraying of the social fabric that could escalate into crisis.

D. Civic participation

34. In the past year, people in many parts of the world have taken to the streets, with women and young people playing a prominent role in demands for change. Popular protests are fuelled by grievances related to inequality; restrictions on public freedoms and civic space; corruption or perceptions of corruption; dissatisfaction with public and social services; and concerns about the impact of climate change. Common demands include the call for more transparency and inclusiveness in decision-making.

35. Some Governments have responded to popular protests by restricting participation online and offline through laws, policies and other measures that may be in violation of international human rights norms. Such measures include resorting to the use of force in violation of international standards,



Martine Perret/UN Photo



Manuel Elias/UN Photo

[20] *Human Development Report 2019: Beyond Income, Beyond Averages, Beyond Today – Inequalities in Human Development in the 21st Century* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.20.III.B.1).

limiting or banning assemblies, online surveillance and shutting down the Internet or parts of it.

36. For several years, United Nations human rights mechanisms, civil society organizations and others have observed and documented attempts to shrink civic space by State and non-State actors. These measures include unduly restrictive laws – for instance, criminalizing support for certain groups – imposing limitations on the registration and funding of associations and the media and disproportionate taxes on civil society organizations, often under the pretext of maintaining security and combating terrorism. They have also taken the form of physical attacks.[21] Of particular note is the rise in threats and acts of violence against women, including women in politics, and human rights defenders. Discourse in which human rights defenders are portrayed as potentially undermining development and security has in some contexts made it harder to maintain public support for civil society. As stipulated in the Secretary-General's call to action for human rights, it is critical to protect civic space.

37. Elections continue to be compelling and effective ways for citizens to participate in the political processes in their countries and have their voices heard. Political leaders, from both government and opposition parties, bear the overriding responsibility for fair and transparent elections. This responsibility applies not only in the period leading up to an election, including engagement in civil and peaceful competition, respecting the integrity of the process and the rights of all and calling upon supporters to do the same, but also in the days and weeks that follow, when the results emerge and tensions may rise, providing tests of true leadership. Successful and defeated candidates all face the choice of reaffirming public trust in their country's democratic system or undermining belief in its legitimacy.

38. Around the world, digital tools are increasingly used to gain access to information, participate in debates and persuade others. They have created previously inconceivable avenues for involving more people, in particular young people, in the development of policies and the provision of feedback on their implementation. However, the same tools have also been used to restrict civic space, for instance by disabling the channels available for people to organize themselves or by tracking those who protest.

39. Over time, efforts to limit the space for critical voices may be translated into greater tensions and deepen social and political divisions. Ensuring broad-based participation, with the full and meaningful inclusion of women across all segments of society, makes communities safer and more resilient and policymaking more sustainable, effective and legitimate. Special measures are also necessary to involve young people, as well as other traditionally excluded groups, such as persons with disabilities.

40. In addition, to be truly effective, participation requires openness, transparency and an enabling environment that guarantees the safety of those who participate and provides remedies in case the right to participation is violated. Civic space is also protected when meaningful partnerships are forged with different social groups, civil society and communities, deepening their

[21] For example, between 1 January and 31 October 2018, the United Nations recorded and verified 397 killings of human rights defenders, journalists and trade unionists in 41 countries. See https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2019/goal-16.

role as stakeholders in a common future and in building a more peaceful and prosperous society for all.

E. Digital technologies

41. Rapid advances in digital technologies – powered by growth in computing, transmission speeds and storage capacities – are transforming every aspect of human life. Digital technologies, supported by advances in artificial intelligence, are catalysing breakthroughs in health, labour and the economy. Together with advances in automation, robotics, nanotechnologies and biotechnologies, they are reshaping human interactions in an unprecedented fashion. The global Internet penetration rate rose from 16.8 per cent in 2005 to 53.6 per cent in 2019, although it remains highly unequal among and within countries.[22]

42. Digital technologies have the potential to advance mediation and the field of peacemaking and peacebuilding in several ways. The most significant impact can be seen in the potential for the inclusion of a broader spectrum of views, including those of women and other groups traditionally excluded from peace processes, such as young people, minorities, indigenous communities and persons with disabilities. Greater use of data and statistical modelling tools can improve traditional analytical methods, potentially reducing bias, while helping with early warning and the detection of potential crises. Nevertheless, gender biases in machine learning models and data also run the risk of reinforcing stereotypes and locking in biases for the future. The Internet at large and social media in particular carry great promise for increasing participation and connecting people worldwide by enabling the exchange of information and ideas.

43. Nevertheless, social media have also helped to accelerate the spread of harmful content, including misinformation, hate speech and incitement to violence, often particularly targeting women, facilitated by algorithms and business models that prioritize viral content. In an electoral context, suspicion that information is manipulated can lead to an erosion of trust.

44. The Internet has provided tools for terrorists and violent extremist groups to incite violence, support recruitment and plan and finance attacks. At the global level, the Internet is growing in all its facets, including the dark web, but is increasingly fractured along ideological and political lines.

45. Cybercrime presents unique challenges for criminal justice agencies, in particular in view of the possibility of remote actions and the volatile nature of electronic evidence. In the face of rapid technological advances, existing regulatory frameworks, social norms and ethical standards may be lacking in some sectors or prove increasingly inadequate in others.

46. The High-Level Panel on Digital Cooperation established in 2018 convened a group of experts from diverse disciplines – Governments, the private sector, academic institutions and other entities – to push for dialogue, coordination and cooperation to prevent further political division and ensure that the Internet remains a force for good. In its 2019 report, the Panel concluded that it was necessary to focus on policies and investments that would enable people to use technology to build better lives and a more peaceful, trusting world. A road map for implementation of the Panel's

[22] International Telecommunication Union, *Measuring Digital Development: Facts and Figures 2019* (Geneva, 2019).

recommendations will embed human rights values and considerations in an improved global digital cooperation architecture.

47. Advances in digital technologies can be harnessed to maximize peaceful benefits and realize the goals of the Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the 2030 Agenda, while curtailing unintended consequences and malicious use. There is a need for new legal and ethical standards on the use of such technologies to foster trust, peace and stability. They must be grounded in internationally agreed instruments, which provide the framework for the protection of, and respect for, human rights, peace and security.

F. Climate change and peace and security

48. Peace today faces a new threat, the climate emergency, which is proceeding at a relentless pace.[23] The World Meteorological Organization, in its 2019 Statement on the State of the Global Climate, highlighted that the previous five years had been the hottest on record; sea levels were the highest in human history; biodiversity was shrinking; the incidence of droughts was advancing at alarming rates; and climate-related disasters were becoming more frequent and destructive. The magnitude of climate change means that its impacts extend far beyond the natural environment and increasingly affect human systems. While climate change and environmental degradation are rarely, if ever, the trigger for conflict, their interplay with other factors can multiply risks that are known to contribute to insecurity.



Eskinder Debebe/UN Photo

49. This is not a scenario of some distant future. For millions of people around the world, it is part of their daily reality. In parts of the Sahel and the Horn of Africa, where climate change parches water reserves and reduces the availability of productive land, competition over land and resources is severely testing existing mechanisms for peaceful dispute resolution. In the Lake Chad Basin and some parts of Central America, deteriorating livelihood opportunities lower the threshold for recruitment by organized crime syndicates or, in the case of Lake Chad, extremist groups. In Africa, the Middle East and South Asia, water scarcity exacerbates existing tensions between communities and between States.

50. The risk of climate change adversely affecting peace and security is greatest where institutions and communities are unable to manage climate stress or absorb shocks. In situations of conflict and insecurity, where underlying vulnerabilities are pronounced and adaptive capacity is weak, the effects of climate change will be felt more strongly. As conflict harms the structures, systems and institutional capacities

[23] António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations, "Secretary-General's Message for 2019", 21 September 2019.

that are necessary to facilitate inclusive and equitable climate adaptation or protect and manage natural resources, it can effectively accelerate climate change and environmental degradation. In conflicts around the world, for instance, warring parties have engaged in illegal logging to fund their armed struggles, but felling trees also decimates carbon storage capacity and removes natural barriers to floods and landslides.

51. Developing countries, in particular small island developing States, disproportionately face climate risks. Extreme weather phenomena in the Caribbean that used to occur once every 100 years are now taking place several times per decade.[24] With average global sea levels estimated to rise by up to 110 cm by 2100,[25] the Pacific Islands Forum has already declared climate change the primary threat to the security, livelihoods and well-being of peoples in the region. In Africa, weather shocks and an extreme climate were responsible for pushing 29 million people into situations of acute food insecurity during 2018.[26] In South Asia, Latin America and Africa, the worsening impacts of climate change could forcibly displace over 140 million people within their countries by 2050.[27]

52. Different social and economic groups are affected unevenly. People living in poverty and other disadvantaged groups – including indigenous peoples and small landholders – are more exposed to the impact of climate change, and their capacity to cope is lower. Dependence on agricultural, fishing and other ecosystem-related services increases the risks to livelihoods, while poverty further compounds the effects of diseases and health conditions aggravated by climate change. Women face additional risks, in large part owing to gender inequities that affect their ability to adapt to the challenges brought on by climate change. Persons with disabilities are also vulnerable, as they are usually among the poorest members of society and do not have access to the resources and knowledge to adapt to the impact of climate change.

53. Looking to the future, climate change threatens to be a destabilizing geopolitical factor as well. Melting ice caps are opening new shipping routes and access to natural resources, which could increase tensions between countries already at odds over maritime issues. If not managed carefully, the global energy transition towards climate-friendly economies could disrupt jobs, food prices and energy markets, potentially destabilizing entire regions.

54. In recent years, the Security Council has recognized the link between climate change and security on several occasions, including in the context of situations in West Africa and the Sahel, Central Africa and the Horn of Africa. The General Assembly, for its part, in 2009 requested a comprehensive report on climate change and its possible security implications in its resolution 63/281. In a similar vein, the Economic and Social Council and the Peacebuilding Commission have placed climate security challenges on the agenda of joint meetings.

55. There are no template solutions for how to deal with a danger to peace as complex and powerful as climate change. The most viable option in the long term is ambitious climate action, beginning with the full implementation of the Paris Agreement adopted

[24] Hans-Otto Pörtner and others, eds., *The Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate: A Special Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change* (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 2019).

[25] Ibid.

[26] Food Security Information Network, *2019 Global Report on Food Crises: Joint Analysis for Better Decisions* (2019).

[27] Kumari Rigaud and others, Groundswell: *Preparing for Internal Climate Migration* (Washington, D.C., World Bank, 2018).

under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in 2015. But in the meantime, as climate change advances, its repercussions will continue to grow. Conflict-sensitive adaptation and resilience-building form critical building blocks of effective prevention and sustaining peace. A genuinely integrated approach, combining short-term with long-term action and leaving no one behind, must guide collective efforts to address climate change in conjunction with other potentially destabilizing factors and catalyse coordinated risk prevention, early warning and transformative adaptation.

G. Disarmament and regulation of arms

Conventional weapons and mitigating the humanitarian impact of armed conflict

56. Increasing militarization is evident in many parts of the world. Global military spending has more than doubled in United States dollars, adjusted for inflation, since the end of the cold war. At an estimated $1.822 trillion in 2018, it is 76 per cent higher than the post-cold war low in 1998. International transfers of major weapons have steadily climbed since the early 2000s, including in regions affected by conflict.

57. Today more than 1 billion small arms are in circulation worldwide, three quarters of which are in civilian hands, the vast majority unlicenced. Insufficient regulation of small arms and their ammunition creates insecurity, harms civilians, facilitates human rights violations, hampers humanitarian action and fuels gender-based violence. Armed violence involving small arms breaks communities apart, undermines development, including access to basic social services, and compromises economic growth and investment.

58. In that context, it is encouraging that important gains continue to be made in the field of humanitarian disarmament. Several of the most egregious types of conventional weapons that have an inherently disproportionate impact, or cause unacceptable harm, have been regulated, restricted or banned outright. These include incendiary weapons, anti-personnel landmines and cluster munitions. Undertaking robust risk assessments before authorizing arms exports, in line with the provisions of the Arms Trade Treaty, has considerable potential to curb the flow of arms to situations in which they are likely to be used to commit violations of international humanitarian law or international human rights law or serious acts of gender-based violence. Authorizing any export of arms and ammunition, including their parts and components, is particularly problematic if there is an overriding risk that such items will be used to commit or facilitate violations of international humanitarian law or international human rights law, serious acts of gender-based violence or violence against children.

59. More work is required to achieve the full potential of global transparency and confidence-building mechanisms, with a view to facilitating agreement on the regulation of conventional arms and the reduction of military spending at the global level. Regulating conventional arms and their ammunition is not only a question of addressing stockpiles. All dimensions need to be addressed – from manufacture to border controls and from crime prevention to community violence reduction – in an inclusive, integrated and participatory manner, including at the country and subregional levels.

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Nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction

60. Nuclear weapons remain the most destructive weapons in existence and pose an existential threat to the planet. The humanitarian and environmental consequences of any further use of such weapons would be catastrophic. Throughout the cold war, a framework of instruments, multilateral, plurilateral and bilateral,[28] was developed to reduce the risk of nuclear war and implement progressive and irreversible steps towards a world free of nuclear weapons. Important reductions were made in the overall numbers of nuclear weapons – from a high of around 70,000 in 1986 to around 14,000 today.[29]

61. In recent years, however, progress has ceased. In some cases, it has been reversed. Prospects for the use of nuclear weapons – either intentionally, by accident or through miscalculation – are higher than they have been since the end of the Cold War. The demise of both the Treaty between the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on the Limitation of Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty Systems and the Treaty between the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on the Elimination of Their Intermediate-Range and Shorter-Range Missiles[30] removed important brakes on nuclear war. If the Treaty between the United States of America and the Russian Federation on Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms (New START Treaty)[31] is not extended, it will expire in 2021 leaving no constraints on nuclear arsenals.

62. There is renewed competition between nuclear-armed States. Unlike the quantitative arms race of the cold war, there is arguably now a qualitative arms race, as arsenals are being modernized in ways that create new capabilities and military missions. They include plans to pursue or deploy new and potentially destabilizing nuclear weapons and long-range delivery systems, including those designed for battlefield use or to evade defensive systems.

63. Many regional disputes involve a nuclear dimension, including conflicts in which nuclear-armed States support opposing parties. Regional proliferation challenges persist, especially on the Korean Peninsula. The growing proliferation of ballistic missiles into crisis-prone regions further intensifies risks to peace and security. The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action on the nuclear programme of the Islamic Republic of Iran is an important contribution to non-proliferation and regional security. The initiation of dialogue within the United Nations among the States of the Middle East on nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction has the potential to promote durable peace, arms control, confidence-building and political reconciliation. A renewed commitment to achieving a common vision for the total elimination of nuclear weapons and accelerating the implementation of past commitments is essential.

64. Advances in life sciences are contributing to increasing concerns regarding the potential utility of biological weapons. In

[28] See www.armscontrol.org/treaties.

[29] Hans M. Kristensen and Matt Korda, "Status of world nuclear forces", Federation of American Scientists, May 2019.

[30] See https://2009-2017.state.gov/t/avc/trty/101888.htm; and Michael Pompeo, Secretary of State, United States of America, "U.S. withdrawal from the INF Treaty on August 2, 2019", press statement, 2 August 2019.

[31] The Treaty was signed in Prague on 8 April 2010 and, after ratification, entered into force on 5 February 2011.

the absence of global, treaty-based verification mechanisms, the existing mandated authority for the United Nations Secretariat to conduct investigations of alleged use (General Assembly resolution 42/37 C) remains a central line of defence, despite its limited resources. Recent violations of the prohibition on the use of chemical weapons pose a grave risk to civilians, as well as regional security and the global disarmament and non-proliferation regime.

Developments in new weapons technologies

65. Developments in artificial intelligence are one of the drivers of growing military interest in lethal autonomous weapons.[32] While technological advances may be able to improve the accuracy of some weapons and reduce collateral harm, machines cannot reliably make the decisions required to comply with legal principles, such as distinction, proportionality and precaution.[33] No weapons system can take on that role in conformity with humanitarian principles, as the application of international humanitarian law is predicated on human judgment and accountability. Many technological advances, especially those resulting in greater autonomy and remote operation of weapon systems, could also create perceptions of casualty-free warfare, lowering the threshold for the use of force.

66. Conventionally armed ballistic missiles are prevalent in the arsenals of many States and some non-State actors, where they function as area bombardment weapons generally aimed at cities. The development of hypersonic glide vehicles, an advanced type of long-range manoeuvrable strike weapon, has considerable potential to spark new arms competition and impair strategic relations between States. Such weapons could reduce decision-making windows in high-pressure situations, leading to miscalculation or error. The problem may be exacerbated by ambiguity as to whether such systems carry a conventional or nuclear payload.

67. Advances in space technologies are contributing to all spheres of human life. However, increasing civil and military dependence on outer space is creating pressure for armed forces to defend against associated risks and vulnerabilities. While we have yet to witness a direct arms competition in outer space, various types of disruptive and destructive capabilities are under development in several States. This is evidenced by the growing number of countries that have conducted anti-satellite missile tests. The near-term deployment of capabilities with potential dual-use applications, such as rendezvous and proximity operations and active debris removal, can fuel mistrust in the absence of international norms and may constitute a further driver for weaponization.

68. Developments in missile technology are posing new challenges for crisis management, the protection of civilians and the achievement of broader disarmament objectives, in particular in the light of the lack of universal legally binding arrangements governing their use. It is necessary to re-engage and give higher priority to

[32] United Nations position, see Michael Møller, Director-General of United Nations Office at Geneva, "Secretary-General's message to meeting of the Group of Governmental Experts on Emerging Technologies in the Area of Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems", 25 March 2019; and stronger language used by the Secretary-General, who has labelled lethal autonomous weapons as "politically unacceptable and morally repulsive" and has called for them to be banned under international law (see Nina Werkhäuser, "UN impasse could mean killer robots escape regulation", Deutsche Welle, 20 August 2019).

[33] Switzerland, "Practice relating to rule 1 on the principle of distinction between civilians and combatants", in International Committee of the Red Cross, International Humanitarian Law, vol. II (practice) database, available at https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/customary-ihl/eng/docs/home.

addressing issues related to missiles, especially in the context of the nuclear disarmament process. Furthermore, it remains in the common interest of humankind for all States to work urgently to preserve outer space as a realm for peace, free from weaponization and the conduct of hostilities.

69. It is crucial to reach a common understanding on agreed limitations that should be applied to autonomy in weapons, as well as a broader consideration of the impacts of introducing autonomy and artificial intelligence into other military systems and of how effective governance and risk mitigation can be achieved. In the near term, the recommendations elaborated under the auspices of the General Assembly, which are aimed at building international confidence and greater responsibility in the use of cyberspace, provide important guidance to Member States.



Eskinder Debebe/UN Photo

IV. OBSERVATIONS: THE IMPERATIVE OF COLLECTIVE ACTION

70. The challenges identified in the present report are significant and include: (a) climate change, which is unprecedented and requires immediate action; (b) nuclear competition, which is re-emerging and further complicating the possibility of achieving an agreed governance framework for new weapons technologies, and (c) growing inequalities within countries that permeate all aspects of life, stifle opportunities, threaten to exacerbate gender and wealth gaps, derail the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and affect trust in institutions, including the United Nations.

71. The interplay of those three challenges with armed conflict and violence and the other trends examined in the present report creates a complex and dangerous mix, even before the addition of a global pandemic such as that of COVID-19. The response will require new forms of cooperation among all States and societies, underpinned by mutual respect, a common interest in putting the well-being and safety of people at the centre of concerted efforts and a sense of urgency. The time to address or reverse the biggest global challenges of today is limited.

72. Seventy-five years ago, in a world much less globalized and interconnected than today, the drafters of the Charter did not have the luxury to ask whether there was a need for a multilateral system. They understood that collective decision-making and continuous dialogue were essential to avert another global war. With a new global framework for peace and security in mind, they dared to imagine a system in which cooperation was for the greater good – to build peaceful societies, advance human rights and achieve sustainable development for all.

73. Nevertheless, in many instances, multilateral action has fallen short of expectations. Broad agreement on the goals of the multilateral system, captured in the Preamble and Chapter I of the Charter, has not been matched by a consensus on the methods to achieve them. States diverge in their interpretation of the principles espoused in the Charter. Compounding this long-standing divergence of views are new geopolitical tensions that are deepening divisions among States and in the Security Council. These divisions have impeded cooperation, eroding established treaties and encouraging some States to circumvent norms.

74. As in 1945, the present generation cannot afford to question the necessity of a multilateral system. The only choice is whether there is common resolve to work together to improve the existing system or leave such work to the next generation, burdening it with the consequences.

75. The past 75 years provide inspiration. Decolonization began a process of correcting historic injustices and unleashed tremendous human potential. Advances in human rights frameworks, including for the rights of women, children, refugees, indigenous communities and persons with disabilities, are unparalleled in their reach and impact on human lives. United Nations engagement – including when mandated by the General Assembly and the Security Council – has helped many countries to resolve conflicts and recover from them, address threats of violent extremism and build more peaceful societies. While violence remains a fact of life in many regions, the international community has become better at preventing armed conflicts and responding to them when they emerge, providing emergency humanitarian assistance on the ground and addressing the plight of refugees and others forcibly displaced.

76. With the launch of the decade of action for the Sustainable Development Goals, the United Nations reaffirmed that it would deliver on its commitments to support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. With the prevention of conflict, crisis and human suffering at the heart of the work of the United Nations, a surge in diplomacy for peace remains an essential element in achieving the transformative Goals.

77. United Nations partnerships with regional and subregional organizations have grown in size and substance and have led to notable progress, in particular in the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts in Africa.

78. The Paris Agreement was an important diplomatic achievement. Its implementation will require a significant level of trust and determination, with the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change needing to demonstrate an unprecedented level of ambition at its twenty-sixth session.

79. The 2020 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons is an opportunity for the States parties to ensure that the Treaty can fulfil its fundamental goals: to prevent nuclear war and facilitate the elimination of nuclear weapons. Building upon accomplishments, while not losing sight of the greatest threats confronting Member States, requires the urgent forging of a new consensus on the best methods for achieving the goals set out in the Charter. The most pressing issues of today do not respect borders and divisions. They require a joint response.

80. Global society has never been more complex and interdependent. Intergovernmental frameworks are flanked by regional and subregional counterparts. Cities are emerging as vocal subnational actors, eager to cooperate across borders to address shared challenges. Young people and women have been at the forefront of global voices calling for a change in governance, priorities and partnerships. They ask that a future for all be built with them rather than for them. They have proven to be important actors in the prevention of conflict and crises, peacebuilding and sustaining peace, advancing human rights and sustainable development and forcing attention to be given to the climate emergency. The private sector has also grown in size and influence, becoming a significant factor in global affairs.

81. In such a context, international cooperation has to reach beyond States and across borders, sectors and generations. Success requires that efforts include local actors, civil society and the private sector and are

anchored in the full and meaningful participation of women, young people and other segments of society, such as persons with disabilities. Addressing the unprecedented challenges of today with solutions fit for the twenty-first century entails extending boundaries of imagination and innovation. Heeding the demands of the young to be heard on issues that will shape their future, as called for in the political declaration adopted at the Nelson Mandela Peace Summit (General Assembly resolution 73/1), is imperative.

82. Trust is a prerequisite for collective action. However, each time the shared norms are breached and commitments remain unmet, trust is eroded. At the present time of heightened tensions and new threats and anxieties, there is no alternative but to return to the foundations of the global system of collective security and to uphold the purposes, principles and central mandates of the Charter, especially as they relate to its overarching goal of prevention. Adherence to the Charter remains the most effective way to face the global challenges of today collectively, to achieve the aspirations of the decade of action for the Sustainable Development Goals and, as the United Nations embarks upon the next decades, to make progress on a common future.

An official version of this report is available here: https://www.undocs.org/en/A/74/786; an immersive Virtual Reality (VR) experience inspired by the content of this report and produced in the Department of Political and Peacebulding Affairs is available under: https://dppa.un.org/en/innovation.

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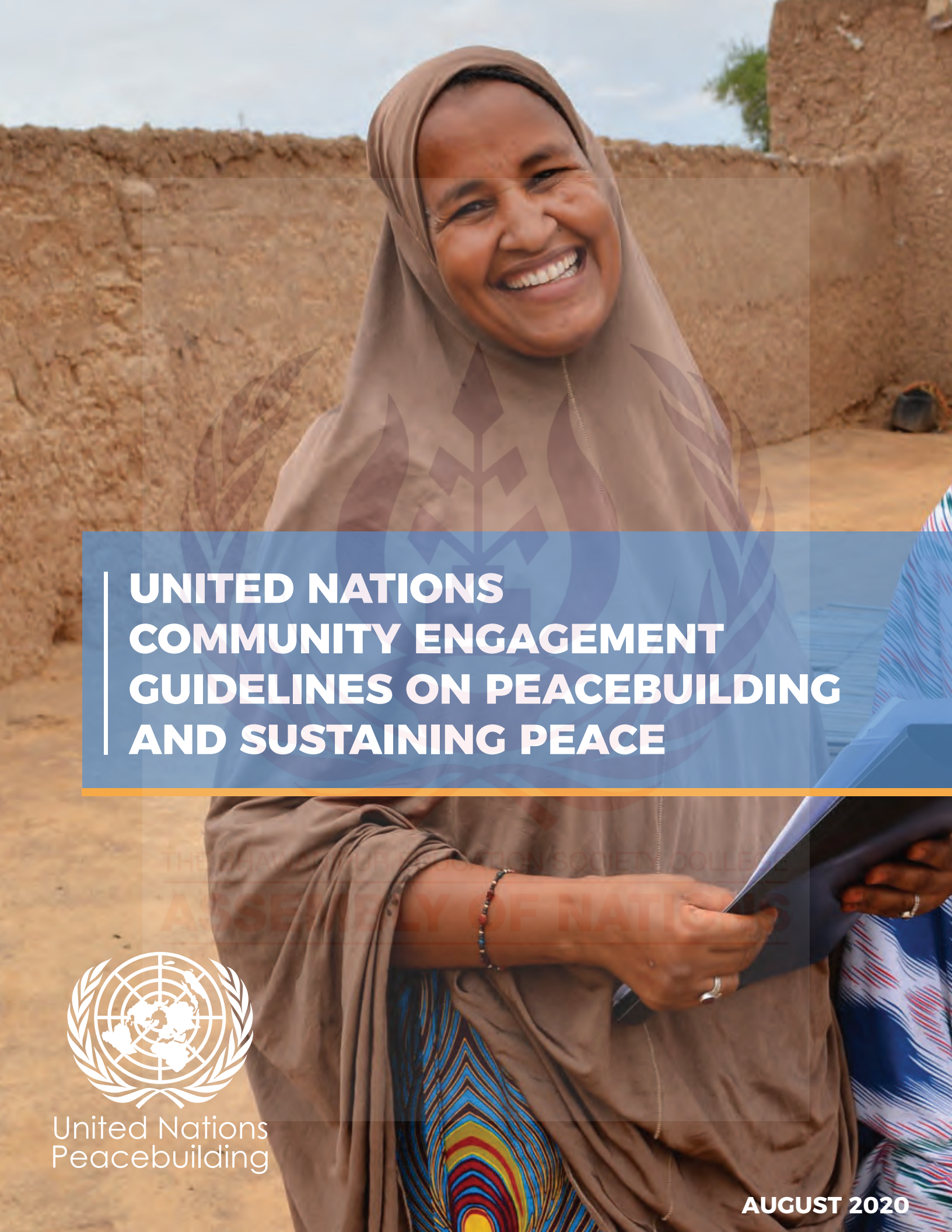


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UNITED NATIONS COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT GUIDELINES ON PEACEBUILDING AND SUSTAINING PEACE

United Nations Peacebuilding

AUGUST 2020

FOREWORD

Local civil society actors, including women and youth, are often primary agents of peacebuilding, playing key roles in conflict-affected societies and in situations of extreme fragility or transition. They are critical in promoting confidence and trust, encouraging cooperation, creating incentives for collective action and ensuring that efforts are adapted to local and national contexts. Their contributions range from providing basic services to enhancing cohesion and stability; from enabling communities to influence social norms to mediating relationships between the government and people through dialogue or mechanisms for state accountability. As such, community engagement with local civil society actors is a central component of peacebuilding and sustaining peace. This is why, in my 2018 report on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace (A/72/707 and S/2018/43), I called for wide-ranging efforts to strengthen this work.

The COVID-19 pandemic has made the value of community engagement clearer than ever. COVID-19 has caused an unprecedented worldwide crisis that is having devastating consequences on healthcare systems, livelihoods and the social contract, and threatens to aggravate long-standing inequalities and security challenges.

Local civil society actors are rising to the challenge. In countries around the world, young women and men are delivering supplies to frontline health workers and people in need. They are developing innovative communication methods to maintain social cohesion despite physical distancing. We know from previous public health crises such as HIV/AIDS and Ebola that faith leaders have enormous influence, and we have seen that impact today in promoting unity and solidarity. I am also grateful to the many local civil society actors worldwide who have echoed my appeal for a global ceasefire in order to focus our fight on our shared enemy – the disease.

The United Nations, in its efforts to promote sustained peace and security, is strongly committed to directly and meaningfully engaging local populations and communities. It is in this precious civic space that we can interact with the people whose lives we hope to improve and who are affected by what we do. I urge UN colleagues to draw on these guidelines to advance our efforts to build and sustain peace.

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António Guterres
Secretary-General of the United Nations

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2016 twin resolutions on the review of the UN peacebuilding architecture adopted in the General Assembly and Security Council (A/RES/70/262 and S/RES/2282 (2016), respectively) recognized the changing scale and nature of peacebuilding challenges. This led to shifting the long-term focus of the UN from crisis response to peacebuilding and sustaining peace, with a view to "prevent the outbreak, escalation, continuation and recurrence of conflict, addressing root causes, assisting parties to conflict to end hostilities, ensuring national reconciliation and moving towards recovery, reconstruction and development" through comprehensive and coherent approaches and strategic and operational partnerships including with civil society actors, especially women and youth-led organizations.

Following the Secretary-General's call for the UN's improved engagement with civil society at the local level in his 2018 report on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace[1], a joint UN-civil society working group[2] developed the UN system-wide Community engagement Guidelines on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace to:

- Support UN field presences in developing country-specific community engagement strategies on peacebuilding and sustaining peace; and
- Provide operational guidance to UN field presences on how to more effectively engage with civil society actors at the local level in peacebuilding and sustaining peace.

These Guidelines should also be understood in conjunction with the process, led by OHCHR and UN Women, to develop UN system-wide documents aimed at bringing more coherence to the UN's approach towards civic space.

COMMUNITY

Often a geographical subset of society at the local level, a "community" can be defined by **commonalities such as, but not limited to, norms, religion, shared interests, customs, values and needs of civilians.** A community is not static or closed, but constantly evolving subject to internal and external construction and reconstruction.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

A strategic process to directly involve local populations in all aspects of decision-making and implementation to strengthen local capacities, community structures and local ownership as well as to improve transparency, accountability and optimal resource allocations across diverse settings. In the context of peacebuilding and sustaining peace, community engagement is generally done through partnerships with a broad range of local civil society actors as intermediaries who work in the sphere of peacebuilding.

CIVIL SOCIETY

For the UN, "civil society" is a broad concept including any **collective civic arena of individuals, organizations, social movements, networks or coalitions that act or organize formally or informally to advance joint interests, values, objectives or goals of or across communities.**

In the context of the UN's engagement in peacebuilding and sustaining peace, the scope of civil society may be identified as, but not limited to: human rights defenders; independent media (online, off line); faith-based organizations and leaders; non-governmental organizations; community-based groups; professional groups or associations, including trade unions; women's groups; youth groups; religious, cultural, tribal or other informal organizations and civic movements that self-recognize as civil society; groups representing marginalized or underrepresented communities; social media communities; and academic institutions (schools, universities, research bodies). Additionally, civil society can include informal gatherings or multistakeholder networks and coalitions. It is important to note the identity of local actors within civil society may be fluid and dependent on the context in conflict-affected situations.

1. In his report on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace, reflecting on the UN's engagement with civil society, the Secretary-General points to the range of forms this may take, including "building capacity, sharing good practices, producing practical tools, fostering a conducive environment for robust civil society, and active engagement in analysis, planning, programming and monitoring and evaluation." He asked for the development, in consultation with civil society, of "guidelines on system-wide engagement with civil society for sustaining peace" (para. 61). He also asked for the "United Nations peace operations and United Nations country teams develop community engagement strategies in consultation with national and local stakeholders, particularly youth and women's groups, and that these be shared, monitored and reviewed with local actors".

2. The Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO) of the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA) has led a joint UN-CSO Working Group (including Policy Planning Unit (PPU)/DPPA, Division of Policy, Evaluation and Training (DPET)/Department of Peace Operations (DPO), OHCHR, UNDP, UN Women, Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC), International Peace Institute (IPI), Quaker United Nations Office (QUNO) and UN entities). to develop the UN system-wide Community engagement Guidelines on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace (UNCEG) through an innovative, uniquely inclusive and consultative process.

SEVEN RECOMMENDATIONS

1. DEEPER UNDERSTANDING OF LOCAL CONTEXT THROUGH RESPECTFUL, COHERENT AND FLEXIBLE ENGAGEMENT

- **Community ownership through home-grown peacebuilding solutions** that are prioritized and fostered through mutually beneficial, respectful and transparent partnerships.
- Full understanding of each community's distinct context, including, but not confined to, **language, demographic, ethnic groups, religion, culture and tradition etc.**[3]
- Gendered, conflict-sensitive and risk-informed **joint community contextual analysis and mapping of communities and local civil society actors** as part of the Common Country Analysis (CCA).
- **Operational flexibility including risk mitigation strategies** that are adjustable to community-specific contexts.

2. OPERATIONAL AND STRATEGIC COHERENCE AND EFFECTIVE COORDINATION IN COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT ACROSS THE UN IN THE FIELD

- **Streamlined community engagement** at the country level through senior leadership.
- **Designated civil society engagement capacity** within the country presence to create and maintain a comprehensive and centralized database on communities and local civil society actors in peacebuilding and promote sustainable participation (in integrated UN mission settings, jointly managed central database).
- Centralized coordination role by the senior leadership complemented **by strengthened individual community engagement capacities of various UN entities and agencies.**

3. SAFETY AND PROTECTION IN RESTRICTED ENVIRONMENTS THROUGH CONFLICT-SENSITIVE AND RISK-INFORMED APPROACHES

- **"Do-no-harm" approach** during, before and after community engagement.
- **Promote, protect and expand civic space** for robust community engagement.
- With the consent of those involved, **document any act of attack, threat, intimidation and reprisals** against local civil society actors for engaging with the UN and devise appropriate protection measures to address the situation, including in cases of credible threats of physical violence.
- **Context-specific protection needs and key safety and protection issues that can generate genuine progress** included in community contextual analysis.
- Integration of **advocacy goals for safety and protection of local civil society actors** in the UN's broader partnerships with national and regional stakeholders.
- **Regular full risk assessment and risk mitigation measures** for safety, security and protection.

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3. *At the same time, it is important to be mindful that in some contexts culture and tradition could be the underlying cause of discrimination, oppression and marginalization of certain groups in communities which should not be reinforced by UN support.*

4. INCLUSIVE AND MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION OF LOCAL CIVIL SOCIETY ACTORS

- **People-centered, locally-led approach** through institutionalized community engagement modalities through diverse range of local actors.
- **Meaningful participation of local civil society actors** in peace processes and the analysis, design, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation (M&E) and reporting of peacebuilding programmes, engaging communities at an early stage with a guaranteed feedback loop.
- **Conflict-sensitive and effective communication and outreach**, including through Information, Communication and Technology (ICT), for two-way communication.
- **Flexible reporting and monitoring and evaluation** modalities at the local level.

5. COMMUNITY-BASED CAPACITY-BUILDING, INCLUDING FINANCING FOR PEACEBUILDING

- **Regular conflict-sensitive guidance, tools and capacity-building opportunities for local civil society actors.**
- Smaller-scale, predictable, flexible and risk-tolerant local funding modalities.
- **Simple and user-friendly** grant application templates and selection/reporting criteria.
- The intermediary role of international and national civil society organizations with greater capacity, which can help trickle down resources to smaller organizations.
- **Broader partnerships** with regional and subregional organizations, private sector and international financial institutions (IFIs), including the World Bank.

6. MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION OF LOCAL WOMEN AND WOMEN CIVIL SOCIETY ACTORS IN PEACEBUILDING AND SUSTAINING PEACE

- **Create spaces for and encourage the meaningful participation of diverse women and women civil society actors** in all aspects of peacebuilding, including the negotiation and implementation of peace agreements, transitional justice processes, demobilization, disarmament and reintegration programmes, etc.
- **Incorporate gender-sensitive measures in all aspects of peacebuilding, including by ensuring** that a **gender analysis** is included in conflict analysis, and in programme planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.
- Wider access to **gender-sensitive, longer-term, flexible and multi-year funding models** at the local level.

7. MEANINGFUL YOUTH ENGAGEMENT IN PEACEBUILDING AND SUSTAINING PEACE AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

- Recognition of youth from diverse backgrounds and sectors, including those in informal groups, and increased investment in leadership of young people at the local level.
- Youth, Peace and Security (YPS) programming including partnership with **at least one youth-led civil society actor.**
- Local youth civil society actor **meaningfully engaged in all phases of peacebuilding interventions and treated as equal partners.**
- **Increased operational and financial sustainability** of youth civil society actors without over-bureaucratization by identifying innovative and flexible mechanisms.

1. INTRODUCTION

OBJECTIVES

Community engagement is at the heart of successful peacebuilding and sustaining peace efforts. In order to promote meaningful inclusion through broader partnerships, the Secretary-General's report on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace (A/72/707-S/2018/43) called for strengthened and systematized engagement with civil society, including women and youth groups and local communities at large. Reflecting on the UN's engagement with civil society, the Secretary-General points to the range of forms this may take, including "building capacity, sharing good practices, producing practical tools, fostering a conducive environment for robust civil society, and active engagement in analysis, planning, programming and monitoring and evaluation." He asked for the development, in consultation with civil society, of "guidelines on system-wide engagement with civil society for sustaining peace" (para. 61). He also asked for the "United Nations peace operations and United Nations country teams to develop community engagement strategies in consultation with national and local stakeholders, particularly youth and women's groups, and that these be shared, monitored and reviewed with local actors" (para. 59).

In response to the Secretary-General's recommendations, the Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO), now part of the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA), has led a joint United Nations-Civil Society working group to develop the UN system-wide Community Engagement Guidelines on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace through an innovative, inclusive and consultative process since 2018. This working group included the Policy Planning Unit (PPU) of DPPA, the Policy, Evaluation and Training Division (DPET) of the Department of Peace Operations (DPO), OHCHR, UNDP, UN Women, the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC), the International Peace Institute (IPI) and the Quaker United Nations Office (QUNO). This process included an online survey completed by more than 300 UN and civil society actors working in peacebuilding contexts; 42 video consultations with focus countries (Burundi, Cambodia, Guatemala, Liberia, Mali and Somalia); and a three-day global online consultation with more than 400 participants, mostly local peacebuilders.

These guidelines are intended to support UN field presences at the country-level in developing country-specific community engagement strategies, guided by a human rights-based approach and the key principles of conflict-sensitivity; inclusive and diverse representation; respectful and meaningful participation; flexibility and accessibility; transparency and accountability; and safety and protection. These guidelines are also to be understood in conjunction with broader UN system-wide initiatives to bring more coherence to the UN's approach towards civic space.

The specific objectives of the system-wide community engagement guidelines are:

- Support UN field presences in developing country-specific community engagement strategies on peacebuilding and sustaining peace; and
- Provide operational guidance to UN field presences on how to more effectively engage with civil society actors at the local level in peacebuilding and sustaining peace.

PEACEBUILDING AND SUSTAINING PEACE

The 2016 twin resolutions on the review of the UN peacebuilding architecture adopted in the General Assembly and Security Council (A/RES/70/262 and S/RES/2282 (2016), respectively) recognized the changing scale and nature of peacebuilding challenges. This led to shifting the long-term focus of the UN from crisis response to peacebuilding and sustaining peace, with a view to "prevent the outbreak, escalation, continuation and recurrence of conflict, addressing root causes, assisting parties to conflict

to end hostilities, ensuring national reconciliation and moving towards recovery, reconstruction and development" through comprehensive and coherent approaches. They also called for strategic and operational partnerships with civil society organizations, women's groups and youth-led organizations. This was reinforced by the joint UN-World Bank study Pathways for Peace: Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict, which underscored the changing nature of violent conflict—with more complex drivers and root causes and more non-state actors involved—and stressed the importance of inclusive participation of domestic actors, particularly civil society, in the prevention of violent conflict.

This new whole-of-UN approach to conflict prevention, response and sustaining peace requires enhanced operational and policy coherence. It also requires a comprehensive and strategic approach across all UN efforts in peace and security, development, human rights and humanitarian action to support nationally-owned initiatives before, during and after conflict.

While sustaining peace inherently recognizes the importance of national ownership and leadership, this goes beyond government ownership to encompass the need to build an **ecosystem of strategic and inclusive partnerships across society**, focusing especially on women and youth and local communities at large "to ensure that the **needs of all segments of society are taken into account**." Strengthening partnerships both within and beyond the UN, particularly with regional and sub-regional organizations, international financial institutions (IFIs), including the World Bank, and other multilateral donors, civil society and the private sector is a key aspect of sustaining peace in this regard, which needs to be upheld and implemented on the ground. The UN system-wide Community engagement Guidelines on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace serve as a step to improving the UN's partnership and engagement with communities and local civil society actors in the context of peacebuilding and sustaining peace in order to be more effective.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT THROUGH LOCAL CIVIL SOCIETY ACTORS

While **"Community"** is usually defined as a geographical subset of society at the local level, it can also be defined by commonalities such as, but not limited to, norms, religion, shared interests, customs, values and needs of citizens.

"Community engagement" is a strategic process to directly involve local populations in all aspects of decision-making, policy development and implementation to strengthen local ownership, capacities and community structures as well as to improve transparency, accountability and optimal resource allocations across diverse settings.[4] Different UN entities engage with communities in diverse ways and at different levels. In peacekeeping settings, local communities are engaged (through intermediaries) as key stakeholders alongside other actors in order to integrate different interests into successful strategies. In the context of peacebuilding and sustaining peace, the community engagement is generally done through partnerships with local civil society actors working in the sphere of peacebuilding.[5]

Building on a participatory approach, community engagement through local civil society actors is imperative in peacebuilding and sustaining peace. **Local civil society actors,** when legitimately representing their communities' interests, can support the UN to build and strengthen an environment for effective peacebuilding in the field with their knowledge and expertise. They can also create incentives for joint action in conflict-affected communities, including during transitions. For example, local civil society actors provide basic services; contribute to enhanced social cohesion and stability in communities; and enable communities to influence social norms and mediate relationships between the government and communities by creating and maintaining civic space for dialogues, accountability

4. *UNICEF Minimum Quality Standards and Indicators on Community engagement, 2019.*
5. *DPKO - Department of Field Support, Peacekeeping Practice Note: Community engagement, 2018*

and grievance mechanisms. Local civil society actors also have an important role to play in promoting awareness, understanding and trust in the formal system of justice in local communities by providing external checks and balances. Efforts to empower civil society are crucial to provide external oversight and increased public demand for integrity and accountability.[6]

"Civil society" is a broad concept including any collective civic arena of individuals, organizations, social movements, networks or coalitions that act or organize formally or informally on behalf of, or to advance, shared interests, values, objectives or goals within or across communities.

In general, civil society is set apart from government or private actors. Civil society actors are unarmed and do not seek profit or governing power. In the context of the UN's engagement in peacebuilding and sustaining peace, the scope of civil society may be identified as, but not limited to: human rights defenders; independent media (online, off line); faith-based organizations and leaders; non-governmental organizations; community-based groups; professional groups or associations, including trade unions; women's groups; youth groups; religious, cultural, tribal or other informal organizations and civic movements that self-recognize as civil society; groups representing marginalized or underrepresented communities; social media communities; and academic institutions (schools, universities, research bodies). It is important to note the identity of local civil society actors may be fluid and dependent on the context in conflict-affected situations.

Accordingly, "civic space" is the environment that enables civil society to play a role in the political, economic and social life of societies. Freedoms of expression, assembly, association and participation are the main vehicles of civic space.

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6. *DPO-OROLSI, Justice and Corrections Service (JCS) lessons learned study on extending effective and legitimate state authority through the delivery of rule of law services in conflict environment, 2020.*

7

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following seven recommendations have been agreed system-wide for the UN to more effectively engage with local civil society actors and their communities in peacebuilding and sustaining peace.

1. 

   DEEPER UNDERSTANDING OF LOCAL CONTEXT THROUGH RESPECTFUL, COHERENT AND FLEXIBLE ENGAGEMENT

2. 

   OPERATIONAL AND STRATEGIC COHERENCE AND EFFECTIVE COORDINATION IN COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT ACROSS THE UN IN THE FIELD

3. 

   SAFETY AND PROTECTION IN RESTRICTED ENVIRONMENTS THROUGH CONFLICT-SENSITIVE AND RISK-INFORMED APPROACHES

4. 

   INCLUSIVE AND MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION OF LOCAL CIVIL SOCIETY ACTORS

5. 

   COMMUNITY-BASED CAPACITY-BUILDING, INCLUDING FINANCING FOR PEACEBUILDING

6. 

   MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION OF LOCAL WOMEN AND WOMEN CIVIL SOCIETY ACTORS IN PEACEBUILDING AND SUSTAINING PEACE

7. 

   MEANINGFUL YOUTH ENGAGEMENT IN PEACEBUILDING AND SUSTAINING PEACE AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

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DEEPER UNDERSTANDING OF LOCAL CONTEXT THROUGH RESPECTFUL, COHERENT AND FLEXIBLE ENGAGEMENT

As a prerequisite, the UN should recognize and respect the fundamental and inalienable human rights of civil society actors, both individually and collectively. Local ownership through home-grown peacebuilding solutions should be prioritized and fostered through mutually beneficial, respectful and transparent partnerships with the UN and other relevant stakeholders. Such partnerships are contingent on the UN's comprehensive understanding of its local civil society partners and their communities.

Because social contexts and interactions constantly evolve, the UN should use in-depth community-specific conflict analysis and assessment of peacebuilding needs to ensure a deeper understanding of communities and their characteristics and interests, including, but not confined to, language, ethnic groups, belief system and religious practices as well as cultural and traditional norms.[7] Such context-specific reflection and understanding of communities and local civil society actors will help the UN determine the best way to engage.

In this regard, to the extent possible, it is important for the UN to regularly conduct a gendered conflict-sensitive and risk-informed joint community contextual analysis and mapping of local civil society actors to assess the latest peacebuilding needs and priorities. The **contextual analysis** would scope the general peacebuilding context of the relevant community while the mapping would, with guided criteria, identify specific local civil society actors working in peacebuilding within the community context (see Table 1 below).

NIGER

Since 2015, the UN has been implementing a project across the Diffa and Tillabéri regions of Niger challenged by violence stemming from Boko-Haram/ISIS-WA operations. The project works with communities to prepare them for government-led efforts aimed at the reintegration of defector groups associated with Boko Haram. Under this project, the UN did not engage directly with former combatants but instead worked closely with communities and local civil society actors, including local leaders and authorities, to prepare them to receive low risk individuals. Local communities participated in the identification of activities, such as cultural festivals and events, that assisted the communities in rebuilding the torn social fabric and reinforcing social cohesion. Because these activities were identified by the local communities and local civil society actors and deemed pertinent, they resonated with the local population and played a key role in transforming perceptions of violence and relationships with defector groups. Today, nearly 500 peace committees have been set up at the village level and at the border areas, trained in promoting peace, reconciliation and tolerance. These groups, comprised of women, youth, village chiefs and local imams, continue to provide early warning support to local authorities.

The mapping of local civil society actors should involve all relevant UN entities and international, regional, national and local partners, including think tanks and academic institutions. In some contexts, including in cross-border areas or where safety may be of concern, UN regional configurations or regional and national organizations as well as existing local civil society networks are well-positioned to perform consultation and information gathering activities. The mapping should include a diverse range of civil society actors, including women and youth-led organizations. It is important the UN allocates resources and time to build partnerships as mapping would require trust building in advance.

7. *At the same time, it is important to be mindful that in some contexts culture and tradition could be the underlying cause of discrimination, oppression and marginalization of certain groups in communities.*

It is also important that the contextual analysis and mapping are trauma-sensitive. This includes the need to liaise with relevant and gendered experts to identify and consult individuals and groups who experienced conflict-related trauma, requiring psychosocial support.

In efforts to complement the analysis and mapping, UN peacekeeping and special political missions and country teams should also conduct an internal assessment of the UN's collective capacity in civil society engagement in ongoing peacebuilding interventions at the local level.

TABLE 1. COMMUNITY CONTEXTUAL ANALYSIS AND MAPPING OF LOCAL PEACEBUILDING CIVIL SOCIETY ACTORS

CONTEXTUAL ANALYSIS OF RELEVANT COMMUNITY	**COMMUNITY-WIDE PERCEPTION AND UNDERSTANDING** • Collective perception of the UN • Understanding of peacebuilding and sustaining peace • Community-level conflict analysis (including both conflict drivers and peace mechanisms/factors), including those in need of psychosocial support **COMMUNITY BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT** • Community-wide perception and understanding • Demography (including information on marginalized populations) • Age and sex-disaggregated data • Language, culture and tradition (including communal calendar) • Previous and/or existing peacebuilding interventions (good practices and lessons learned) **OPERATIONAL SETTING** • Accessibility (including ICT capacity) and safety/protection needs and existing/available local resources • Popular mode of communication
MAPPING OF LOCAL CIVIL SOCIETY ACTORS WORKING IN PEACEBUILDING	• Type of peacebuilding work • Gender and age of leadership and membership (among other possible factors which could be considered developing on what is relevant in the context to ensure diversity). • Previous and ongoing peacebuilding interventions with the UN and/or international, regional or national stakeholders (including funding sources and modalities) • Urgent peacebuilding needs and potential initiatives • Existing capacity and capacity needs • Possible risks for project implementation • Relationship with the UN/Government (including partnering Ministries)
INTERNAL ASSESSMENT OF THE UN'S FIELD CAPACITY FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT	• Internal assessment of UN field missions and country teams' collective capacity for civil society engagement, including with women and youth-led organizations, against ongoing peacebuilding interventions.

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SRI LANKA

Every April, Sinhala and Tamil new year celebrations occupy the calendar of communities nationwide. Familial commitments are prioritized, especially by women, involving several weeks of intense preparation for the new year celebrations. Many local actors are inevitably less available during this period, but this is often overlooked in designing and planning peacebuilding interventions. Flexible operational rules and procedures could accommodate such cultural and changing contexts and help prevent implementation delays. This is also contingent on the flexibility of donors.

When conducting the contextual analysis and mapping exercise, the UN should be mindful of a wide spectrum of civil society actors, as well as their interests and capacity, to engage conflict-affected communities in relation to various factors, including political preferences, relationships with the government and different perspectives among national and local stakeholders. To the extent possible, the UN should seek to engage with a broad range of civil society actors at the local level with impartiality and transparency in order to ensure an inclusive and more sustainable peacebuilding process.

To accommodate community-specific contexts that could affect the implementation of peacebuilding interventions it is also important for UN entities to maintain operational flexibility and put in place risk mitigation strategies, including through identifying appropriate alternative spaces and mechanisms for community engagement and adjusting programming parameters, to best support the efforts of local civil society actors. Such strategies should be developed based on the national and local contexts and periodically revisited to ensure continued relevance.

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OPERATIONAL AND STRATEGIC COHERENCE AND EFFECTIVE COORDINATION IN COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT ACROSS THE UN AT THE COUNTRY-LEVEL

The Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General or the Resident Coordinator (RC) and her or his Office (RCO) should play a proactive role to **streamline and coordinate sustainable community engagement across UN entities at the country level.** It is important to ensure a coherent and strategic approach, avoiding duplication and building on existing engagements by each UN entity and agency. For example, it might be possible to combine surveys or focus-group discussions of several UN country team members.

SOMALIA

The UN in Somalia has promoted community-based planning (CBP) to strengthen engagement with local actors in development and peacebuilding processes in response to the country's mass displacement crisis. CBP is defined as a process which empowers communities, including vulnerable socio-economic groups and their leaders, to demand and actively participate in development interventions that are relevant to them. The desired outcome of this process is to agree on shared priorities within and among communities, assist communities to access resources and promote social cohesion and integration between displaced and host communities. The priorities provided the basis for community action plans that became the local reference point to which development actors can align their support.

Moreover, a designated civil society engagement capacity within the country presence should **create a comprehensive and centralized database on civil society** based on the contextual analysis (see Recommendation 1), local civil society mapping and internal assessment, in line with and complementary to the Common Country Analysis (CCA), and regularly update and share with relevant UN entities. This role could be assigned to existing mission or RCO staff.

In this context, a **joint UN-civil society standing body at the country-level** for internal UN system coherence and coordination can also be an effective vehicle for improving targeted communication, training and knowledge management and information exchange at both national and local levels, including on community engagement [8].

For example, the joint standing body can organize training for incoming UN and civil society staff on conflict-sensitive and effective engagement with local civil society actors.

Such a centralized coordination role by the senior leadership in mission and development settings should be complemented by **strengthened individual community engagement capacities across various UN entities and agencies** to ensure a wide spectrum of community concerns and local voices in peacebuilding and sustaining peace are understood and taken into account in the UN's strategic decision-making, political processes and programme design at the country level.

The UN's community engagement capacity could also be further strengthened by the **intermediary role of UN national staff and international, regional and national civil society partners** through their contributions to the abovementioned contextual analysis and mapping exercise, creating and maintaining the centralized database on local civil society actors and ensuring effective outreach and communication as relevant.

In integrated UN mission settings, **the centralized database on local civil society actors and their communities** (see Recommendation 1) **should be jointly managed** to ensure sustainability and operational coherence, minimize a potential gap in terms of financial support and continue strengthening partnerships at the local level in peacebuilding and sustaining peace, especially during transitions.

8. *In countries with humanitarian emergencies, the Humanitarian Country Team essentially fills this function. A similar model could be explored in the peacebuilding field.*

SAFETY AND PROTECTION IN RESTRICTED ENVIRONMENTS THROUGH CONFLICT-SENSITIVE AND RISK-INFORMED APPROACHES

A politically, legally, socially and/or culturally restricted environment may impede the ability of local civil society actors to promote peacebuilding and sustaining peace. Certain groups, such as women and youth, indigenous peoples, people with disabilities and those who experience caste-based discrimination or discrimination based on their sexual orientation or gender identity among other marginalized communities, are particularly vulnerable in such environments.

Restricted civic space is often an early warning sign for fragility, conflict and violence. Noting the inherent preventive value of civic space, including the important avenue civic space provides to address and resolve grievances through peaceful means, the UN should **promote, protect and expand civic space in order to enable robust community engagement.**

To ensure a **conflict-sensitive "do-no-harm" approach before, during and after community engagement**, the UN should discuss with local civil society actors in advance the detailed elements of the UN's community engagement so as not to expose these actors to risks and danger, and take preventive action in consultation with local civil society actors and their communities where necessary. Special effort should be made to consult with women, youth and other marginalized groups to ensure that specific risks are taken into account.

The safety and protection of local civil society actors begin with the conduct of a comprehensive community contextual analysis and local civil society mapping (see Recommendation 1) that reflect specific challenges and risks faced by local civil society actors, including their multiple and intersecting identities, in a restricted environment. When conducting the contextual analysis and mapping, it is important to note **context-specific protection needs as well as key safety and protection issues that can make genuine progress through constructive initiatives** with national and local authorities and/or armed groups.

In this regard, the UN should **integrate advocacy goals for safety and protection of local civil society actors in the UN's broader partnerships with national and regional stakeholders** and support local civil society protection networks through strategically identifying, advocating and advancing possible local safety and protection issues to advance in complementarity to the national context.

In deteriorating environments, the UN should be flexible and able to **adapt to changing conditions and consider sequencing activities based on risk mitigation measures and necessary conditions** for safety, security and protection. This would include establishing regular risk assessments and early-warning mechanisms in consultation with local civil society actors and their communities as well as relevant regional and subregional organizations.

MALI

A local civil society organization worked with the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) to establish a Community Watch group which engaged the entire community, including ex-combatants from armed groups that were integrated following the Algiers Agreement. This project focused on building trust among women in communities, security forces and armed groups to collectively advance the situation of local women. This initiative was deemed effective as the mission, through multiple consultations and mappings, was well-informed of the complex realities on the ground, including the dynamics among the relevant actors, prior to designing and planning the project. Today, the Ministry of Civil Defense has replicated this project in communities with similar contexts.

To the extent possible, the UN should identify, address and work to reduce general community security issues in restricted environments in partnership with local civil society actors, including through developing, strengthening and disseminating gender-sensitive and youth-inclusive safety and security policies and protocols (both online and offline) including the safe-handling of information related to the local civil society actors; mainstreaming conflict-sensitive approaches for all meeting and communication formats and tools; familiarizing with and proactively facilitating access to existing protection and emergency support mechanisms established by regional, national and local stakeholders; and conducting mandatory conflict-sensitive peacebuilding training for all UN staff and other international, regional and subregional partner organizations supporting or jointly engaging with local civil society actors and their communities.

The UN also needs to adopt a conflict-sensitive mindset, which includes an awareness of the fact that engagement with the UN in restricted environments can put local civil society actors at risk and can make them vulnerable to being accused of working against the interest of their country or as agents of other States, or supporting violent and criminal elements etc.

In such cases, and with the consent of those involved, the UN should **document and condemn any act of intimidation and reprisals** against an individual or community, which may arise in the context of their engagement with the UN and devise appropriate protection measures to address the situation, including in cases of credible threats of physical violence.

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INCLUSIVE AND MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION OF LOCAL CIVIL SOCIETY ACTORS

Recognizing the fundamental and inalienable human rights to freedom of opinion and expression, association and peaceful assembly, as well as to, individually or collectively, participate in public affairs at every level, the UN should prioritize a **people-centered and bottom-up approach** in community engagement efforts with diverse representation from women and youth-led organizations, ethnic groups, marginalized groups, indigenous communities, traditional leaders and peace makers, faith-based organizations and leaders, people with disabilities, refugees and internally displaced persons, sexual and gender-based minorities and other stakeholders. The UN should also make clear that peaceful assemblies and protest, which are protected under International Human Rights Law, are a channel of participation that help take the pulse of communities and identify grievances.

To integrate such an inclusive and bottom-up approach in the UN's culture and way of working, performance management systems should be realigned with the view of incentivizing staff to more proactively engage with diverse local civil society actors, especially marginalized groups, and support local peacebuilding initiatives.

Recognizing that local civil society actors are the main agents of change, the UN should also advocate for the effective participation of local civil society actors, especially marginalized groups, in national peace processes and peacebuilding interventions in order to ensure **broadly inclusive national ownership and to "leave no one behind."** The same principle applies to programme management to ensure the meaningful participation of local civil society actors in decision-making, analysis, design, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation (M&E) and reporting of peacebuilding programmes, engaging at an early stage and throughout the process with a guaranteed feedback loop and exit strategy with local resources for sustainable impact at the end of the project.

MOROCCO

The 2016 Marrakesh Declaration on the persecution of religious minorities reinforced how religious tradition and international human rights laws can be mutually reinforcing. This powerful initiative highlighted the important contributions made by traditional civil society actors, such as religious and traditional peacemakers (of whom many are women and youth) thanks to their unique connections to local communities and the trust they enjoy from relevant stakeholders. Religious leaders, however, continue to lack recognition and support from the international community. Religious leaders should not only be more actively involved in consultations to plan, design and implement peacebuilding initiatives, but should also be better utilized as "community champions" and leaders through more meaningful participation, such as mobilizing community actors and facilitating consultations and conflict resolution dialogues, etc.

In this context, as part of the country-level community engagement strategy and overall civic space work, [(senior leadership) the Special Representative of the Secretary-General or Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General (in mission settings) or the Resident Coordinator] should develop and institutionalize **community engagement modalities**[9] **for consistent and coherent rules of engagement** with a broad range of local civil society actors and further liaise with existing mechanisms at the community level, including community grievance mechanisms.

These mechanisms should aim at enabling local civil society actors to not only share their experiences, grievances and needs, but to also more actively engage in peace negotiations; implementation of peace agreements and political transitions; design and planning of peacebuilding interventions from an early stage with a focus on developing an exit strategy with local resources for

9. *For further reference for missions, see Annex I: Spectrum of Interaction Modes with Civil Society (from DPKO/DFS, Understanding and Improving Engagement with Civil Society in Multi-Dimensional UN Peacekeeping: from Policy to Practice, 2016); "Interaction modes" include 'inform, consult, involve, collaborate, empower.'*

sustainable impact. Where available, the UN should consider building on existing community engagement mechanisms to avoid duplication and ensure complementarity.

It is also important to ensure **conflict-sensitive and effective outreach and communication** to articulate not only the UN's role and work in peacebuilding and sustaining peace at the local level, including its limitations and own challenges in general as well as in certain contexts, but also the concrete objectives of community engagement and the selection criteria or process of engaging with local civil society partners on behalf of communities, where applicable or relevant. A lack of clear communication and understanding can result in mismanaged and/or unfulfilled expectations.

INDIA

While organizing a social advocacy campaign at the local level, UN agencies and community-based actors jointly identified and utilized various and creative communications channels that could best reach communities: from children-led radio shows and reality TV series to sports coaches, tuk tuk drivers and town criers.

This joint exercise highlighted the importance of investing in identifying the appropriate and best-received messenger and platform for communication in communities in the early stages of planning initiatives. Once the communication platforms are identified and connected, the messages penetrated in communities more effectively in efforts to raise awareness and foster communal dialogue.

In this regard, the UN should identify the most **context-appropriate communication channels**, with consideration of reach and credibility, particularly among women, youth and other marginalized population, including by way of the central local civil society database where helpful. Based on this information, the UN should develop **user-friendly communication materials and platforms grounded in the capacities and context of communities.** These could include leaflets, social media, television and radio programmes that are simplified with diagrams and translated into local languages, or community-level town halls aimed at local civil society actors and communities.

To further ensure effective communication at the local level, more resources should be allocated to ensuring safety and security, sensitization and capacity building of local journalists and media outlets on **conflict-sensitive and risk-informed reporting and hate speech monitoring,** especially during periods of political transition.

Where available, the UN should also refer to **centralized messages** related to the mission or country team's mandate and objectives as well as expected outcomes of community engagement through local civil society actors, developed by the Public Information Office or the RCO's communications team in missions and country teams respectively.[10]

MALI

In order to effectively inform MINUSMA of local priorities and community-specific security needs, local civil society partners collaborated to organize dialogues and consultation sessions in communities, including in hard-to-reach rural areas. Based on the local communities' collective understanding of "local security" and their specific security needs – which was slightly different from the UN's "human security" perspective – local society actors collaboratively contributed to developing a security training module for MINUSMA personnel and national security forces.

Regular consultations should be systematized between the UN and local civil society actors and communities, especially with women and youth. For example, the UN could establish a permanent dialogue and/or grievance mechanism (see Recommendation 4) through which local civil society actors and communities could engage with the UN as a one-stop shop, helpline, ombudsman and physical space, etc., which can be further directed to specific issue-based UN entities if necessary. Such consultations could provide a space where specific needs and concerns of local civil society actors and communities could be communicated through a bottom-up approach. These platforms could also serve as opportunities for informal peer review and guidance on peacebuilding initiatives and networking with the UN and other stakeholders working in peacebuilding and sustaining peace.

10. *For further guidance, DPKO/DFS Engagement with Civil Society, June 2017.*

CAMBODIA

In the 1990s, the UN's main purpose in Cambodia was humanitarian assistance including providing food supply. This changed in 2004, when the UN's objective shifted towards a more policy-oriented role. The UN's updated capacity, however, had not been communicated to previous local partners and communities and many had expectations of continued food supply. This led to disappointment and misguided perception of the UN and its work in Cambodia. This was especially true for communities and local actors with little knowledge of the UN and who rely on local hearsay.

In July 2019, Cambodia's first "Civil Society and UN dialogue on Sustaining Peace" served as a platform to better communicate with local actors on the UN's specific role in peacebuilding and sustaining peace in Cambodia, including the work of each agency as well as good practices and lessons learned in sustaining peace. This helped communities acquire an improved understanding of the UN's work in peacebuilding, network with other national and local stakeholders, and share collaboration ideas and opportunities.

To the extent possible, the UN should actively seek to prioritize home-grown peacebuilding solutions and participate in community events hosted by local civil society actors to build trust with the relevant communities. Such local gatherings can also serve as outreach opportunities to narrow expectation gaps and serve as platforms to further discuss peacebuilding objectives, needs and challenges.

Recognizing the evolving relationship between the UN and civil society actors, the UN is encouraged to explore and experiment innovative forms of meaningful engagement, collaboration and partnership with broader and diverse group of local civil society actors and communities.

For example, **Information and Communications Technology (ICT)**, such as webcast, videoconference, social media, online consultations and mobile texts, should become a regular part of the UN's communication strategy, as relevant to the local context and carried out in a conflict sensitive and risk informed manner, to ensure real-time **two-way communication** with a broader range of local actors. The UN should work with local civil society networks to better understand, support and utilize existing local communication platforms to facilitate peacebuilding interventions, foster participation, promote interactive reporting and share information on peacebuilding developments in communities.

KYRGYZSTAN

An innovative project implemented in four regions of Kyrgyzstan utilized the innovative use of participatory video (PV) methodology in a series of training sessions for 128 children and 32 teachers in 16 schools. Children worked in diverse multiethnic groups to produce videos where they were able to showcase various peacebuilding issues in their communities. This contributed to creating spaces for dialogue and reconciliation, realizing stereotypical thinking and behavior and increasing tolerance and understanding of "the other."

Where needed, the UN should **invest more in building ICT capacity in hard-to-reach areas with limited accessibility** to foster more effective two-way communication. For example, the UN, in collaboration with other stakeholders, could establish community ICT centers and involve youth groups and actors to manage and coordinate. These centers would allow various local actors from rural areas to virtually participate in consultations and dialogues as well as raise possible concerns at all levels through video technology. Where ICT capacity has already been identified through the mapping exercise, the UN should avoid reinventing the wheel and instead further strengthen existing capacities.

KENYA

The national conflict prevention strategy 'UWIANO platform for peace' provides space for collaboration among peace actors and coordination of national and local stakeholders to promote initiatives that mitigate electoral violence. This platform is also an early warning/early response mechanism which enhances community security, cohesion and resilience between actors and at different societal level through innovative technology.

Various social media platforms could also be used for local civil society actors to informally report on project implementation and/or communicate situations at the local level, including opportunities and challenges, good practices and lessons learned in order to allow more effective community engagement.

The UN should also systematize **flexible modalities of reporting and monitoring and evaluation at the local level,** including through perception surveys and community-based monitoring throughout the project cycle, which would help foster local-level

dialogue and strengthen the capacity of local civil society actors, community-based institutions as well as accountability and grievance mechanisms.

In efforts to promote local ownership, evaluations should also include the impact of local civil society partners and the effectiveness of their leadership in communities throughout project implementation.

To ensure an active and sustainable exit strategy and feedback loop at the local level, relevant UN and local civil society partners should report and present the outcomes and exit strategy to the target communities following the closure of projects.

COMMUNITY-BASED MONITORING (CBM)	Community-based monitoring allows for communities of participants to monitor the local effects and impact of an intervention. Ideally, this system empowers the community to indicate whether their expectations are being met and to provide suggestions to decision-makers for possible re-focusing. This may employ a range of data collection methods, including short standard surveys, rapid SMS surveys, semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions, etc.
PERCEPTION SURVEY	Perception surveys collect formal and informal views on specific issues (including specific qualitative project indicators) from a randomly selected sample of community respondents through their response to standardized questions in order to depict a snapshot of the situation and to help monitor progress and direct programming.

SIERRA LEONE

In order to ensure live community feedback throughout project implementation for quality control, the UN installed a "hot line" for local civil society partners and communities to call UN partners for questions on a wide spectrum of issues and concerns on project implementation.

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COMMUNITY-BASED CAPACITY-BUILDING, INCLUDING FLEXIBLE FINANCING FOR PEACEBUILDING

The UN should provide **regular conflict-sensitive, gender-sensitive and women and youth-inclusive guidance, tools and capacity-building opportunities to local civil society actors,** including on the concept of peacebuilding and sustaining peace.[11] This could include related frameworks and policies and their application in local contexts and conflict-sensitive peacebuilding project design, implementation, reporting and monitoring and evaluation.

The UN should also **direct specific allocations to community engagement,** including the cost for travel of local civil society actors for consultations, training and learning exchange opportunities, institutional support and basic management training, including fundraising, financial management, grant writing and reporting, catered towards the context-specific needs of local civil society actors and essential to sustaining local capacity.

The mapping of local civil society actors should involve all relevant UN entities and international, regional, national and local partners, including think tanks and academic institutions. In some contexts, including in cross-border areas or where safety may be of concern, UN regional configurations or regional and subregional organizations as well as existing local civil society networks are well-positioned to perform consultation and information gathering activities. The mapping should include a diverse range of civil society actors, including women and youth-led organizations. It is important the UN allocates resources and time to build partnership as mapping would require trust building in advance.

Financing for peacebuilding at the local level is critical yet underexplored. While existing funding mechanisms have supported local civil society actors to engage in peacebuilding processes, more could be done to adequately accommodate specific funding needs at the local level. To build more understanding around the funding needs at the local level, the UN could conduct perception surveys to gather information about experiences and specific needs of local civil society actors that apply for UN funds.

Local civil society actors promoting peacebuilding and sustaining peace require **smaller-scale funding** to explore, test and implement home-grown and sustainable peacebuilding solutions. To accommodate, the UN should introduce **innovative, predictable, flexible and risk-tolerant funding modalities**[12] that allow local initiatives to build measurable impact towards longer-term and structural change.

PEACEBUILDING FUND (PBF)

The Secretary-General's Peacebuilding Fund's Gender and Youth Promotion Initiative (GYPI) strongly encourages 40% of project funding to be allocated to local civil society organizations.

LANGUAGE

Language is a main barrier for local civil society actors to engage in the application process for peacebuilding funds. It is important application forms are accessible in all UN languages and further adapted to relevant local languages in every occasion. In particular, for local civil society actors working in conflict-affected countries in the Middle East, UN application forms should be available in Arabic.

UN grant application procedures and attached administrative requirements are also often complicated and prohibitive for local civil society actors, including new and/or smaller organizations, particularly in conflict-affected settings.

11. At times training and capacity building can generate alternative livelihoods. For example, UNMAS (United Nations Mine Action Service) provides regular trainings to local civil society actors on ordnance disposal, which leads to employment opportunities at both national and international levels.
12. Examples of existing modalities (Peacebuilding Fund, UN Democracy Fund)

To the extent possible, the UN should lead efforts, including encouraging the donor community, to **simplify and/or develop innovative grant application templates and selection/reporting criteria** for local civil society actors, especially women and youth. For instance, local civil society actors with limited capacity that do not receive more than US$50,000 could apply with more lenient standards, such as a short description of their vision and expected outcomes, which could then be further polished with the support of the UN and intermediary civil society actors. For reporting mechanisms, photos or video footages of activity outcomes could also be accepted as an alternative.

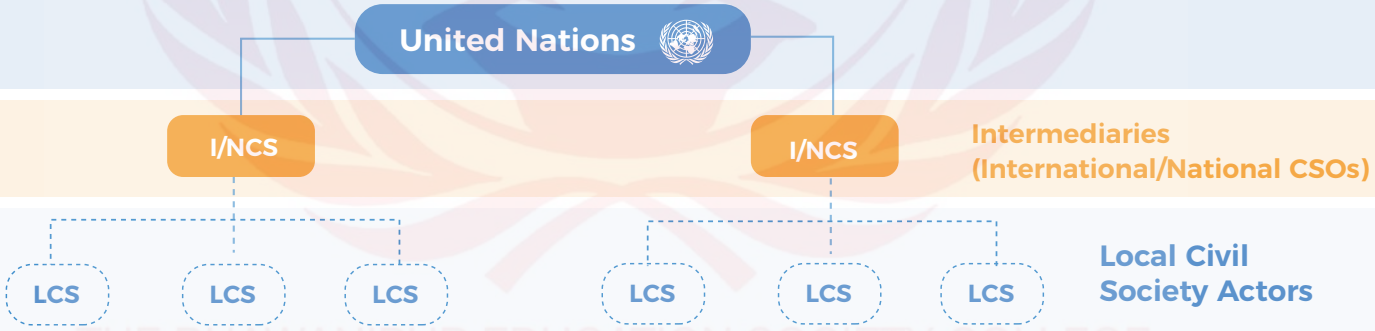
Where there is not yet sufficient capacity or funding modalities to directly support local civil society actors, the UN should further explore the **intermediary role of international and national civil society organizations** to support local civil society actors. For example, the UN could fund intermediary civil society actors with greater capacity which can then trickle down the support to smaller organizations. See Figure 1.

While this funding modality is proposed as a way forward, it is critical the UN continues to explore sustainable funding avenues that can more effectively support local civil society actors. Until then, such modalities in partnership with intermediary civil society organizations should be regularly monitored and evaluated to contextualize to the specific visions and needs of local civil society actors.

GUATEMALA

Local women groups and actors who have mobilized in communities to combat femicide require urgent, flexible and long-term support to help build or sustain grievance mechanisms and provide legal and psychosocial support to families and relatives of femicide victims. Local women actors, however, noted the difficulty in completing application forms that are too long and complicated, which often made it difficult to accurately deliver their peacebuilding vision, objectives and needs. This difficulty was further compounded for local women peacebuilders with no previous connection to the UN. Required documents, such as audited financial records for more than two years, discouraged newly established local groups from applying. In this regard, the UN could create a flexible funding mechanism where funding is made available specifically to smaller and newly established organizations to help them grow in their communities.

FIGURE 1. FINANCING FOR PEACEBUILDING AT THE LOCAL LEVEL



In recognition that the UN alone cannot change existing funding modalities to meet the needs of local civil society actors, senior leadership in missions and country teams should encourage relevant partners, including **regional and subregional organizations, private sector, international financial institutions (IFIs), including the World Bank, and regional development banks**, to collaboratively explore exploring innovative funding modalities in efforts to narrow the funding gap of local civil society actors as well as to scale up their initiatives and impact.

MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION OF LOCAL WOMEN AND WOMEN CIVIL SOCIETY ACTORS IN PEACEBUILDING AND SUSTAINING PEACE

Local women and women civil society actors are essential actors for conflict prevention, peacebuilding and sustaining peace. The Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda, comprised of ten Security Council resolutions and reinforced by human rights obligations including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), reinforces the importance of women's meaningful participation in national and local contexts, and centers gender inequality as a root cause of conflict. Efforts to implement the WPS agenda include, but are not confined to, establishing women's mediators' networks, mainstreaming gender into national and local peacebuilding priorities, preventing and responding to women's rights violations and conflict-related sexual violence, engaging men in the promotion of gender equality and building gender-responsive early warning mechanisms. The wealth of experience, knowledge and expertise of local women and women civil society actors make them valuable partners in efforts to improve the UN's community engagement in peacebuilding and sustaining peace.

Women's meaningful participation is both a human right and improves the effectiveness of our efforts to build and sustain peace. It is therefore important that the UN mainstreams gender-sensitive measures in both informal and formal peace processes, peacebuilding efforts, and grievance mechanisms, including the crafting and implementation of peace agreements and political transitions. The UN should also ensure that such an inclusive approach extends to women from different backgrounds and sectors. This includes actively identifying and addressing socio-cultural and institutional barriers to the participation of local women and women civil society actors. In particular, the UN should develop measures to actively protect women human rights defenders and peacebuilders under persistent threats and direct targeting for challenging such traditional gender and cultural norms.

The UN should also continue to support local women and women civil society actors' meaningful participation in the implementation of the peace agreement after it is signed. It is important to ensure that UN peacebuilding priorities at the national and local levels are gender-sensitive and reflect the core values of global frameworks and polices to promote gender equality and strengthen women's participation, protection and rights across the conflict cycle. These include the Beijing Platform for Action, ten UN Security Council resolutions on WPS[13] and the CEDAW.

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LIBERIA

Following the recommendations on the need for communal and traditional mechanisms under the national reconciliation programme to redress and resolve community conflicts remaining from the civil war, the UN supported local women's indigenous peacebuilding structures called the "Peace Hut." The traditional conflict resolution setting, "palava huts", brought together village elders, all of whom who were men, to address issues of conflict between members of the community. By being led by women peacebuilders who had led the mass action for peace during the war, "Peace Huts" addressed deep-rooted gender inequalities of the traditional "palava hut" where women had little or no access to meetings.

In 2019, there were 38 "Peace Huts" throughout Liberia, providing spaces for women and young women to engage in mediating local disputes, serve as vigilant watchdogs on the police and justice services, prevent gender-based violence (GBV), refer GBV victims to support services, raise community awareness of peacebuilding priorities and mobilize on other critical issues such as elections and the importance of women's political participation and governance. Peace Hut women have also recently formed partnerships with male champions, justice and security actors and other communities.

13. *UN Security Council resolutions on Women, Peace and Security: 1325 (2000); 1820 (2009); 1888 (2009); 1889 (2010); 1960 (2011); 2106 (2013); 2122 (2013); 2242 (2015), 2467 (2019) and 2493 (2019).*

Wider access to gender-sensitive, longer-term, flexible and multi-year funding models at the local level, including easier application process, smaller grant mechanisms with access to cash for travel, is critical to local woman and women civil society actors in order to secure and sustain their local level interventions in peacebuilding and sustaining peace.

In this regards, the Women's Peace & Humanitarian Fund (WPHF) mobilizes critical support for local and grassroots civil society organizations working on women, peace and security and humanitarian action. WPHF is a flexible and rapid financing mechanism supporting quality interventions designed to enhance the capacity of women to prevent conflict, respond to crises and emergencies, and seize key peacebuilding opportunities. Since its launch in 2016, WPHF has funded over 140 civil society organizations in 12 countries working to support women to be a force for crisis response and lasting peace. UN Women serves as the secretariat.

In this context, the UN should pay distinct attention to women in certain socio-cultural contexts or with caring responsibilities, who may have less mobility than men and cannot move to another job or location once project funding has ended. The precarious employment situation and protection needs of women human rights defenders who are under constant threat of violence should also be identified, addressed and monitored as they face considerable pressure from families to stop their activism.

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MEANINGFUL YOUTH ENGAGEMENT IN PEACEBUILDING AND SUSTAINING PEACE AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

The UN Security Council resolutions 2250 (2015), 2419 (2018) as well as the new resolution 2535 (2020) on youth, peace and security (YPS) recognize that young people at the local level, either as civil society actors or community members, have already been contributing to peacebuilding and sustaining peace by strengthening resilience of their communities, including through driving inclusive social progress, inspiring political change and proposing innovative solutions. However, their contributions have often been met with resistance and have entailed risks world-wide.

It is therefore important for the UN, in the implementation of the YPS agenda, to acknowledge the unique risks and challenges faced by young people in peacebuilding and sustaining peace, including at the local level, and utilize the UN's global convening role and mandate to support the vision and protect their platform and space through which their needs can be addressed, voice can be amplified, and their engagement advanced.

Moreover, it is imperative that youth-led civil society partners are recognized by, and accountable to, the young people for whom and with whom they work. Working with informal youth groups and movements in communities from diverse backgrounds and sectors should also not be precluded, as not all young people work in registered organizations.

SOMALIA

In 2017, the government of Somalia and two UN agencies launched an annual innovation challenge camp called "Innovate for Somalia" which was a platform for young people to pitch their business ideas on improving the living conditions of internal displaced persons (IDPs) in order to raise start-up funding. Select ideas and solutions were supported through entrepreneurship training, incubation and access to direct funding support and alternative financing mechanisms.

Also, a Youth Advisory Board for the UN in Somalia was created in 2019 following an open nomination process. The Board comprises of 18 young Somalis (nine male and nine female) from across the country. The Board was created as a way of strengthening the UN's engagement with youth in Somalia with regard to their meaningful involvement in political processes and peacebuilding initiatives. including the implementation of the Youth, Peace and Security (YPS) Agenda at the national and local levels.

The UN should invest more in the leadership of young people at the local level working on peace and security, recognizing that young leaders are not only civil society actors but also embedded in communities in various capacities. In this context, any funding support for Youth, Peace and Security programming should include partnership with at least one youth-led civil society actor at the local level.

Young people at the local level should also be engaged in the early decision-making stages for peace processes and peacebuilding interventions, including in all phases of programme design and implementation and the selection of local youth civil society partners. When engaging with young people, it is critical that the UN ensures that they are meaningfully engaged throughout and treated as equal partners.

The UN should prioritize building organizational capacities in basic management for youth civil society actors to increase their operational and financial sustainability and the impact of their work, including through networking opportunities with other young people and youth civil society actors and collaboration with more experienced youth civil society actors, where relevant. At the same time, the UN should be mindful not to over-bureaucratize grassroot and volunteer-driven youth civil society actors with heavy administrative standards by identifying innovative reporting and small grant management mechanisms.

Where possible, the UN should also ensure that a significant percentage of peacebuilding funding is specifically allocated to interventions facilitating meaningful youth participation, as well as youth-led and youth-focused civil society actors at the local level from diverse backgrounds and sectors. This should also include a minimum percentage of funding going directly to local youth-led organizations working with young women and on gender equality issues, as well as directly to organizations led by young women.

SRI LANKA

In Sri Lanka, a UN project noted the disproportionate challenges of young women in peacebuilding and adopted an innovative engagement approach called the "360-degree methodology," where young women were asked to collaboratively identify local issues related to peace and security and design community-level responses and solutions. Young women leaders were then supported to implement their ideas peacebuilding initiatives through a tailored mentorship from senior local and national female leaders and a small grants programme. This initiative aims to identify and address added peacebuildign challenges for young women and to empower emerging young women leaders as drivers of peace.

NIGER

In 2019, the UN supported a project aimed at addressing the recruitment of Nigerien youth by violent extremist organizations on the cross-border regions with Mali and Burkina Faso. The goal of the project was to prevent recruitment and cross-border tension through increased social cohesion among different ethnic youth groups by collaborating on governance and peacebuilding initiatives. Under the guidance of two grass root organizations, youth actors from different areas and backgrounds came together and engaged with a wide range of local stakeholders to conduct community-wide conflict mappings.

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3. THE ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY IN FOSTERING STRATEGIC AND OPERATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS FOR PEACEBUILDING AND SUSTAINING PEACE AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

While these guidelines are centered on articulating UN efforts to better promote meaningful inclusion and partnerships with civil society at the community level, there is also a role civil society can play in fostering strong and operational partnerships for peacebuilding and sustaining peace. The recommendations have been developed through a series of online and in-person consultations with civil society.

Existing civil society networks and coalitions, both formal and informal, can be effective in trust-building, coordination, and the implementation of initiatives to foster and sustain peaceful societies. As such, the UN, through engaging with such networks and coalitions, can enhance its partnership with civil society, and strengthen efforts to build peace. To contribute to this work, if relevant and impactful for the context, civil society could coordinate with like-minded organizations, build coalitions to strengthen peacebuilding efforts, and connect such work with in-country UN actors.

Civil society actors, networks and coalitions can play a key role to support and strengthen UN mapping exercises given their sustained and lasting organizational relationships, and practical, on the ground experience and analysis. It is important to build in time and capacity to support and sustain the relationship and knowledge development that is needed for successful mapping. Where the context allows, civil society contributions may include sharing information from their own mappings and networks. It is critical that any engagement and partnership between UN and civil society entities, especially those involving information or knowledge exchange, is grounded in principles and practices that prioritize safety and security for all involved.

Civil society actors can consider avenues to support perception surveys and community-based monitoring and assessment of UN peacebuilding interventions and their impact. Information can then be shared in a systematic way with UN partners to inform the design, monitoring, evaluation and implementation of peacebuilding initiatives. This work can also serve as an avenue for civil society to hold the UN accountable in its efforts to support peacebuilding and sustaining peace.

Civil society actors recognize the need to better work across peace and security, development, human rights and humanitarian action to encourage coherent and joint approaches, including within local networks. They also see the importance of cross-regional and cross-national experience sharing, learning and programming, particularly in partnership with local and grassroots civil society from conflict-affected countries. Civil society can then consider avenues to share experiences, good practices and lessons learned from their own peacebuilding initiatives, as well as seek to develop cross-sector programming to build peace. When relevant, this information exchange and joint programming can be carried out in partnership with the UN. As civil society enhances its coordination to be more impactful for building sustainable peace, the UN should play an active role in supporting cross-sector and cross-regional partnerships and contribute towards building an enabling environment for such partnership.

Efforts can be taken to determine what safe and secure online coordination, learning and exchange platforms exist for civil society. If a gap is identified, civil society can consider creating an online

"Community of Practice on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace" to serve as a platform to connect, exchange and network; enhance solidarity; and build capacity for sustaining peace by sharing civil society knowledge and experience from their communities throughout the peace continuum in various countries and contexts. The UN can contribute by uploading learning and training resources and sharing good practices and lessons learned from its own peacebuilding interventions. Learning from such exchanges can inform the development, monitoring and assessment of programmes and policies, and build capacity for joint strategies for peacebuilding and sustaining peace.

International and national civil society actors can play a key intermediary role in local peacebuilding initiatives. As intermediaries, these actors should continue to be mindful of ensuring that peacebuilding efforts reach communities with the best possible impact, particularly in risk-prone and underrepresented areas. Capacity building of local civil society actors should be given more consideration by intermediaries to foster meaningful participation and wider access to funding support towards home-grown resolutions on the ground. International and national civil society actors could leverage their capacities to coordinate efforts with other civil society actors and the UN to facilitate locally driven approaches and ensure that initiatives are not duplicative but complementary.

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ANNEX

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Annex. Key Documents and Training Resources on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace

	Title	Year
	Concept of Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace	
1	A/73/890-S/2019/448, Report of the Secretary-General on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace	2019
2	A/73/724-S/2019/88, Annual Report of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) on its 12th Session	2018
3	A/73/829, Report of the Secretary-General on the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF)	2018
4	A/72/707-S/2018/43, Report of the Secretary-General on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace	2018
5	A/RES/72/276-S/RES/2413, Follow-up to the report of the Secretary-General on peacebuilding and sustaining peace	2018
6	A/RES/70/262-S/RES/2282, Resolutions on the review of the Peacebuilding Architecture	2016
	Definition of Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace	
1	Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace (Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation, https://www.daghammarskjold.se/peacebuilding-and-sustaining-peace/)	2018
2	Sustaining Peace and Prevention (International Peace Institute, https://www.ipinst.org/programs/sustaining-peace-and-prevention)	2016
3	What does Sustaining Peace mean? (UN Peacebuilding Support Office, https://www.un.org/peacebuilding/policy-issues-and-partnerships)	2016
4	What is Peacebuilding (Alliance for Peacebuilding, https://allianceforpeacebuilding.org/what-is-peacebuilding/)	2018
5	What is Peacebuilding? Do no harm, conflict sensitivity and peacebuilding (Interpeace, https://www.interpeace.org/resource/what-is-peacebuilding-do-no-harm-conflict-sensitivity-and-peacebuilding/)	2010
	Conflict Analysis & Peacebuilding Programming	
1	Assessment Framework for UN Preventive Diplomacy: An Approach for UN Mediators and International Policymakers (UNU Centre for Policy Research, https://i.unu.edu/media/cpr.unu.edu/post/2729/UNPreventiveDiplomacyAssessmentFramework.pdf)	2018

2	Conducting a Conflict and Development Analysis (UNSDG, https://unsdg.un.org/resources/conducting-conflict-and-development-analysis-tool)	2016
3	Conflict Analysis Framework: Field Guidelines and Procedures (GPPAC, https://www.gppac.net/publications/conflict-analysis-framework-field-guidelines-and-procedures)	2017
4	Conflict Scans: Guidance Note for the Conflict Scan Methodology (Search for Common Ground, https://www.dmeforpeace.org/peacexchange/conflict-scans-guidance-note/)	2015
5	Conflict Sensitivity and Peacebuilding. Programming Guide (UNICEF, https://www.unicef.org/media/59156/file)	2016
6	Local Conflict Analysis and Planning (LCAP) tool (DPET/ZIF)	2018
7	Guide to Conflict Analysis (UNICEF, https://www.eccnetwork.net/resources/guide-conflict-analysis)	2016
8	Integrating Human Rights and Sustaining Peace (QUNO, https://quno.org/resource/2018/4/integrating-human-rights-and-sustaining-peace)	2018
9	United Nations Conflict Analysis Practice Note (UNSDG, https://unsdg.un.org/resources/un-conflict-analysis-practice-note)	2016
	Community and Civil Society Engagement	
1	Peacekeeping Practice Note: Community engagement (DPKO-DFS)	2018
2	A Survey of Practice. Civil Affairs Interventions to Address Local Conflict Dynamics (PBPS/DPET, DPKO-DFS)	2018
3	Civil Affairs Handbook (PBPS/DPKO-DFS/ACCORD, https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/civil_affairs_handbook.pdf)	2012
4	Community Security and Social Cohesion. Towards a UNDP Approach (UNDP, https://www.undp.org/content/dam/thailand/docs/CommSecandSocialCohesion.pdf)	2009
5	DPO/OROLSI (DDR) – Community Violence Reduction: Creating Space for Peace	2019
6	DPO/OROLSI (UNPOL) – Community-Oriented Policing in United Nations Peace Operations	2018
7	Guidelines on Engagement with Civil Society (DPKO-DFS, http://dag.un.org/handle/11176/400648)	2017
8	Handbook on Human Security: A Civil-Military-Police Curriculum (GPPAC, https://gppac.net/publications/handbook-human-security-civil-military-police-curriculum)	2016

9	Justice and Corrections Service (JCS) Lessons Learned Study on Extending Effective and Legitimate State Authority through the Delivery of Rule of Law Services in Conflict Environments (DPO-OROLSI/JSC)	2020
10	Local Ownership, Civil-Military-Police Coordination & Human Security (GPPAC, https://www.gppac.net/publications/local-ownership-civil-military-police-coordination-human-security)	2016
11	Multi-Stakeholder Processes for Conflict Prevention & Peacebuilding: A Manual (GPPAC, https://www.gppac.net/publications/multi-stakeholder-processes-conflict-prevention-peacebuilding-manual)	2017
12	Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) on Community Violence Reduction (CVR) in Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Processes (DDRP) (DPO-OROLSI/DDR)	2020
13	Understanding and Improving Engagement with Civil Society in UN Peacekeeping: From Policy to Practice. (DPKO-DFS/DPET, http://dag.un.org/handle/11176/400649)	2016
	Women, Peace and Security (WPS)	
1	A/65/354–S/2010/466, Women's Participation in Peacebuilding	2010
2	A/67/499–S/2012/746, Peacebuilding in the Aftermath of Conflict (Advancement of Women)	2017
3	Gender and Conflict Analysis (UN WOMEN, http://www.unwomen.org/~/media/Headquarters/Media/Publications/en/04AGenderandConflictAnalysis.pdf)	2012
4	Gender analysis of conflict (Saferworld, https://www.saferworld.org.uk/resources/publications/1076-gender-analysis-of-conflict)	2017
5	Gender and conflict analysis toolkit for peacebuilders (Conciliation Resources, https://www.c-r.org/resources/gender-and-conflict-analysis-toolkit-peacebuilders)	2015
6	Increasing Women's Political Participation Through Effective Training Programs (National Democratic Institue, https://www.ndi.org/sites/default/files/Training-Manual-Increasing-WPP-Through-Effective-Training-Programs.pdf)	2013
7	In Focus: Women, peace and security (UN WOMEN, http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/in-focus/women-peace-security)	2020
8	KOFF Factsheets on Gender & Peacebuilding. Gender Analysis of Violent Conflict (Swisspeace, http://koff.swisspeace.ch/fileadmin/user_upload/koff/Publications/GENDERAnalysis_of_Conflic_Handout.pdf)	2013
9	Mainstreaming Gender in Conflict Analysis: Issues and Recommendations (World Bank, http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/449571468144266512/pdf/351500Mainstreaming0gender0WP3301Public1.pdf)	2006

10	Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing the Peace. A Global Study on the Implementation of UNSCR 1325 (UN WOMEN, https://wps.unwomen.org/resources/)	2015
11	S/2015/716, Report on Women, Peace and Security	2015
12	Women, Peace and Security (United Nations, https://www.un.org/ruleoflaw/files/womenpeaceandsecurity.pdf)	2002
	Youth, Peace and Security (YPS)	
1	Amman Youth Declaration, (Global Forum on Youth, Peace and Security, https://www.un.org/peacebuilding/sites/www.un.org.peacebuilding/files/documents/amman_youth_declaration.pdf)	2015
2	PBF Guidance Note on Youth and Peacebuilding (DPPA-PBSO, https://www.un.org/peacebuilding/sites/www.un.org.peacebuilding/files/documents/pbf_guidance_note_on_youth_and_peacebuilding_2019.pdf)	2019
3	The Missing Peace: Independent Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security (UNFPA, https://www.youth4peace.info/ProgressStudy)/ Security Council version: A/72/761–S/2018/86	2018
4	We are here: an integrated approach to youth-inclusive peace processes (UN Office of the SG's Envoy on Youth, https://www.un.org/youthenvoy/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Global-Policy-Paper-Youth-Participation-in-Peace-Processes.pdf)	2019
5	Young People's Participation in Peacebuilding: A Practice Note (UN Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development, http://unoy.org/wp-content/uploads/Practice-Note-Youth-Peacebuilding-January-2016.pdf)	2016
6	Guiding Principles on Young People's Participation in Peacebuilding (UN Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development, https://www.sfcg.org/guidingprinciples/)	2014
7	S/2020/167, Report of the Secretary-General on youth, peace and security	2020

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UN COMMUNITY-ENGAGEMENT

Guidelines on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace

The Peacebuilding Support Office of the UN Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs would like to thank all members of the joint UN-civil society working group for their critical contribution in developing the UN Community Engagement Guidelines on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace, as well UN staff, civil society organizations and local peacebuilders who participated in the global consultations.

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DPPA Preventing Conflict. Sustaining Peace

United Nations Peacebuilding

UN

UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER

UNDP

UN WOMEN United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

GPPAC A Network of People Building Peace

IPI INTERNATIONAL PEACE INSTITUTE

QUNO Quaker United Nations Office

UN DPPA Women, Peace and Security Policy October 2023

This updated WPS Policy builds on the 2019 WPS Policy and references DPPA's 2021 WPS Indicators, new focus areas such as climate security and digital inclusion, and additional proposed actions in the annex to implement the Policy. The five priorities outlined in the original Policy remain valid.

1. Purpose

The Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs' (DPPA) Women, Peace and Security Policy (hereafter the Policy) outlines the Department's approach and commitment to the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and nine subsequent resolutions on women, peace and security (WPS) as well as the gendered dimensions of the General Assembly's resolutions on mediation and conflict prevention, financing for peacebuilding and the twin resolutions from the two entities on sustaining peace. The Policy seeks to ensure that gender relevant issues and perspectives are integrated into all the Department's activities to promote inclusive conflict prevention, mediation and peacebuilding.

2. Scope

The Policy identifies principles and parameters for the implementation of the WPS agenda and gender mainstreaming. It applies to Special Representatives of the Secretary-General (SRSGs), Special Envoys, management and staff, including those within the joint Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs – Department of Peace Operations (DPO) regional structure working on or within special political missions (SPMs) or non-mission settings, as well as Liaison presences. It is complementary to the 2018 Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO), now DPO, policy on Gender Responsive United Nations Peacekeeping and should be implemented in close cooperation with relevant UN partners, in particular UN Women and the Development Coordination Office (DCO), the Office of Counter Terrorism (OCT), the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR),) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

3. Priorities for DPPA's implementation of the women, peace and security agenda

The Policy builds on experiences and good practices from across the Department's divisions, offices and SPMs. Annex I outlines actions to ensure that the following priorities are integrated into the daily work of the Department.

a) Gender sensitive political and conflict analysis

Gender-sensitive political and conflict analysis is a first and essential step towards gender-sensitive and inclusive conflict prevention, mediation and peacebuilding and should be integrated into written and other outputs as a matter of course. Gender perspectives should be applied throughout any political and conflict analysis undertaken to address gendered triggers of violence and responses to conflict, as well as to ensure attention to the gendered impact of armed conflict and the (different) gendered roles of women, men, girls, boys, and LGBTI people. This should include the recognition of the specific challenges and exclusion of young women, both in online and

offline spaces. This includes identification of challenges, such as practices of gendered violence, discrimination and exclusion, as well as opportunities for the direct and meaningful participation of women in political, peace and reconciliation processes. It also includes identification of efforts to engage with and address the priorities of women human rights defenders, women peacebuilders and women civil society groups as key stakeholders for gender equality and peace. As a general practice, opportunities should be pursued to include implementation of the WPS agenda in the formulation of mandates for missions, including through advocacy efforts with relevant Member States/Security Council members.

DPPA staff in HQ and within SPMs, including SRSGs and Envoys, should include gendered analysis, including sex-disaggregated data and information on women's participation, sexual violence, or gendered aspects of conflict in substantive products. In addition to reports of the Secretary-General to the Security Council and to the General Assembly, including oral briefings, this also includes: written materials for senior officials; internal learning documents; external documents; internal guidelines, policies and procedures; and PBSO-specific products.

Gender-sensitive conflict analysis should also guide the design and implementation of all projects of the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) and be made available to the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) for it to include in all its substantive documents updates and advice, consistent with its Gender Strategy. For the identified actions, see objectives 1 and 2 in Annex I.

b) Promoting inclusion and women's meaningful participation in all peacemaking and peacebuilding efforts

The full, equal and meaningful participation of women in conflict prevention, mediation and peacebuilding processes is fundamental to the full realization of their human rights, and has been affirmed through the Secretary-General's (2020) 5 Goals for the Decade (S/2020/946, para 113), and (2019) 10 UN Directives on women, peace and security (S/2019/800, para 120). Peacemaking strategies that systematically include women and civil society are more likely to generate national ownership and support for a negotiated settlement and to lead to more sustainable peace. This is in part due to collaboration and knowledge building between women in formal processes and diverse women's groups, which results in better substance of peace agreements and higher rates of implementation. Inclusive conflict prevention, peacemaking and peacebuilding efforts can help identify alternative entry points and solutions. Broader constituencies can also increase the potential to identify and address the root causes of conflict and meet the needs of those it affects. DPPA works to promote multi-track approaches that consistently advocate for the active and meaningful participation of women in peace and dialogue processes, including through identifying and implementing targeted measures (i.e., bold targets, inclusive selection measures, independent delegations) to advance women's direct participation, as well as by ensuring SRSGs and Special Envoys consistently engage women's rights constituencies to help shape their peacemaking work. For the identified actions, see objective 3 under Annex I.

c) Women's participation in electoral and political processes

The participation of women in electoral and political processes, including at the sub-national level, and women's leadership in decision-making have been globally acknowledged, including in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as vital contributors to more stable and prosperous societies. The Under-Secretary-General of DPPA, as the UN system-wide focal point for electoral assistance, has an important responsibility to ensure that gender will continue to be mainstreamed in all UN electoral assistance activities. The focal point coordinates the provision of UN technical support and advice to Member States, upon request, in their efforts to promote women's participation in

electoral processes as voters, candidates and electoral officials, including through adopting temporary special measures, such as quota. These efforts are based on existing electoral policies issued by the focal point. For the identified actions, see objective 4 under Annex I.

d) Preventing and addressing conflict-related sexual violence as a priority for peace

Conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) can be a tactic of war and terrorism. Beyond the serious consequences for survivors, their families and communities, and the need to ensure accountability for violations, CRSV risks triggering acts of vengeance and renewed violence that can undermine conflict prevention, peacemaking and peacebuilding efforts. The threat of CRSV can have a chilling effect on women's political participation, including in peace and electoral processes. In order to achieve sustainable peace, DPPA shall take steps to strengthen prevention, deterrence and response to CRSV throughout its work, in accordance with international law and relevant Security Council resolutions. For the identified actions, see objective 6 under Annex I.

e) Programmatic – ensuring gender mainstreaming in all projects through resource allocations, gender markers and tracking

The inclusion of gender analysis is a requirement for DPPA's proposals for extra-budgetary funding under the Multi-Year Appeal. In addition to a revised and strengthened gender marker, project managers must clearly demonstrate how gendered analysis has informed the design of the project, and how efforts will be made to ensure women and civil society's participation and involvement throughout the project's implementation. The same principle applies to the reporting and possible evaluation of the projects. DPPA has established an 18 % benchmark for its annual multi-year appeal, as well as a new dedicated window for WPS, to strengthen activities to implement and operationalize the WPS policy and agenda. All PBF funded peacebuilding interventions should consider gender issues as part of the conflict analysis, priority setting, budget allocation, and implementation, as well as in monitoring and evaluation. The PBF will continue to allocate at least 30 per cent of its investment towards gender equality and women's empowerment, exceeding the 15 per cent target included in the Secretary-General's Seven Point Action Plan on Gender Responsive Peacebuilding. The Support Branch of the PBC, located within DPPA's Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO), will continue to support the PBC in the implementation of its Gender Strategy adopted in 2016 and its Gender Action Plan of 2021, consistent with the principles outlined in this Policy, to ensure the substantive, cross-cutting integration of gender perspectives in all country specific thematic and strategic engagement. For the identified actions, see objective 7 in Annex I.

4. Roles and Responsibilities

The implementation of this Policy and the WPS agenda more broadly is both a key leadership responsibility, including for all SRSGs and Envoys as reflected in their compacts with the Secretary-General, as well as the responsibility of all DPPA managers and staff at Headquarters and in SPMs and Liaison presences as included under the leadership competency and required for all individual workplans, performance evaluations and office workplans. The Under-Secretary-General and senior management at Headquarters and in SPMs are responsible for providing leadership and guidance and for ensuring accountability for implementation of the institutional commitment to gender equality and WPS mandates. For the identified actions, see objective 8 under Annex I.

5. Accountability, monitoring and tracking of progress

To monitor the implementation of SCR 1325 (2000), at its 10th anniversary 26 UN system-wide global indicators were developed at the request of the Security Council. DP(P)A pledged to monitor and report on six indicators that pertain to its conflict prevention and mediation mandate; establish a 2010 baseline; and set realistic WPS targets for 2015 and 2020. The UN Strategic Framework was adopted in 2011 to track implementation of SCR 1325 (2000). In 2011, DP(P)A also took on fifteen concrete WPS-related commitments, which have been continually updated since then. These commitments were strategically chosen to contribute to a range of DP(P)A workstreams and deliverables and to build department-wide capacity.

In 2022, DPPA finalized the revision of its 2010 WPS indicators. The revised set of 22 indicators covers a broader range of DPPA's mandate, including peace processes, peace agreements, electoral support, Security Council work, peacebuilding, collaboration with regional organizations, and extra-budgetary funding. The new indicators are used to measure DPPA's progress on WPS for internal analysis, planning, and accountability, and for DPPA's reporting to the Security Council. Some of the new DPPA indicators are also integrated into the UN system-wide Monitoring Framework on WPS, led by UN Women.

Compliance with the Policy is mandatory, as is annual monitoring and reporting. This includes annual reporting on DPPA's Results Framework, the UN System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (SWAP), the Secretary-General's Seven Point Action Plan on Gender Responsive Peacebuilding and the Women, Peace and Security and Humanitarian Action (WPS-HA) Compact. DPPA will also continue to report annually to the Security Council on progress made against these commitments by SPMs and at Headquarters. The Policy and its implementation will be reviewed in 2026.

6. Contact and Support

Within DPPA, the Gender Peace and Security (GPS) Unit in the Policy and Mediation Division will continue to support implementation of the WPS mandate through technical support, policy advice, capacity building and monitoring and reporting, and serve as the Department's focal point. PBSO's Gender Adviser will continue to strengthen the gender responsiveness of the PBC, the PBF, and its partnership work under the sustaining peace mandate. Annex I contains more information on the specific commitments, tools and support available to implement this Policy. Annex II lists our 22 WPS Indicators.

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Contact email address for the GPS Unit: DPPA-GPS-unhq@un.org

Annex I: Actions to Implement the DPPA Women, Peace and Security Policy

Objective	Required action by DPPA	Accountable:	Available support
1. Prioritize the gender/WPS agenda in DPPA's work.	- Ensure timely gendered conflict and political analysis is undertaken to inform conflict prevention, peacemaking and peacebuilding efforts; - Ensure women leaders and civil society, including women's groups, are consistently engaged to inform peacemaking, conflict prevention, and peacebuilding efforts across different tracks by Mission leadership as well as during field visits, including high level visits, strategic and other assessments to peace operations, Liaison presences or non-mission settings, and at Headquarters when feasible. - Reinforce the importance of women's participation and rights, at all levels, including in formal negotiations, in public messaging and engagement with stakeholders by all USGs/ SRSGs Special Envoys' briefings to the Security Council, and in other speeches and remarks, including those outlining the UN's strategic priorities.	SRSGs and Special Envoys in mission settings USG, ASGs and Division Directors at Headquarters	- GPS Unit to provide guidance on the integration of the WPS agenda in ToRs for assessment missions, policies on mission transitions, guidelines for project proposals, all DPPA guidance, training material and knowledge products as relevant etc. - GPS Unit to review and conduct the DPPA Gender/WPS staff training bi-annually, and one annual UN High-Level Seminar on Gender and Inclusive Mediation Strategies for senior mediation actors from the UN, Member States, regional organizations and (I)NGOs. - Mission-based Gender Advisers and gender focal points to be consulted in the planning of senior-level visits.
	- Include information on trends in gender-based hate speech and violence (both on – and off-line), and risks and acts of conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) in all relevant materials (including talking points, background notes, analysis, and briefings) to UN leadership and the Security Council;	All staff	
	- Facilitate women civil society briefers to the Security Council on country-specific	Division Directors at	

	situations to brief alongside SRSGs and Envoys (when appropriate and take measures to prevent and address any risks of reprisals against briefers).	Headquarters Offices of the SRSG/ Special Envoy in Missions	
	- Ensure that DPPA-led mediation teams and DPPA delegations to high-level meetings are gender balanced - Ensure DPPA-led events include a gender balance on panels, and decline to participate in all-male panels	SRSGs/ Special Envoys All Staff	
	- Mainstream gender/WPS in all capacity building initiatives led by DPPA and in engagements with regional organizations.	All staff	
2. Written products to include gender dimensions.	- Ensure all political and conflict analysis is gender-sensitive. This includes: background notes, notes to the USG/SG, EC/DC checklists and background papers, RMRs, SG reports, as well as other products to senior UN officials, internal learning products, external products, and PBSO-specific documents. - Ensure conflict and political analysis includes inputs from gender focal points/teams, addresses key WPS priorities for the particular area, includes WPS in any recommendations or decision points, disaggregates data by gender (and age, ethnicity, disability, etc.), and – for longer products – includes a dedicated section on gender as well as mainstreaming gender throughout.	Team Leaders and Directors	- In consultation with the regional pillar, and the DPO Gender Unit, GPS Unit to roll out tailored trainings for regional divisions – including managers and gender focal points – in line with new guidance on gender sensitive analysis, upon request. - GPS Unit to offer managers and gender focal points, as needed, targeted division-wide meetings to help address more specific gender-inclusion inquiries from colleagues.
	- Prioritize the inclusion of gender-relevant issues, such as the gendered dimensions of conflict, climate and security considerations; women's participation in peace and political	All staff	

	processes, conflict-related sexual violence, gender-based violence including hate speech, the role and priorities of women human rights defenders and peacebuilders in Code Cables, talking points and background notes for UN leadership, where relevant and appropriate. - Where necessary, provide training and capacity-building for gender analysis.		
	- Make gender sensitive conflict analysis available to feed into outcome documents and updates of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) as per the Commission's Strategy and Gender Action Plan. - Women peacebuilders regularly brief the PBC as per the PBC Gender Strategy and Action Plan.	PBSO/PBC Support Branch	
3. Promote inclusion and women's participation in conflict prevention, mediation and peacebuilding efforts.	- Support multi-track efforts that use targeted measures to advance women's direct participation, ensure gender responsive outcomes, and shape strategies based on the priorities of women civil society and women's rights constituencies. - Identify and implement targeted measures to advance women's direct and meaningful participation at all phases and levels, particularly as delegates to peace talks, including in the pre-negotiation and implementation phase, as well as other decision-making processes (e.g. elected and appointed positions in dialogue processes; constitution making etc.). Advocate for a 1/3 minimum of women or 2/3	SRSGs/Special Envoys Team Leaders and Directors	- The GPS Unit and the UN Standby Team to provide technical support, where requested by desks, SPMs etc. - GPS to share options and key messages on fast-tracking women's direct participation in mediation and peace processes, as well as sharing past and current good practices of modalities for civil society inclusion. - SPM staff (with support from GPS and the desks) to conduct high level strategy meetings on advancing women's participation and gender inclusion in UN-supported

	maximum of any one sex, aiming toward 50/50 in other political and electoral contexts as well as mechanisms to implement aspirational targets (i.e. inclusive selection measures, "use-it-or-lose it" seats, other incentives, and independent delegations). - In line with the Secretary-General's commitment to the Security Council, convene strategy meetings on designing and supporting inclusive processes to fast-track women's participation and strengthen gender mainstreaming across mission work at the start of every mediation process and every subsequent year for ongoing processes.		peace processes. - SPM staff to identify and implement targeted measures to help advance women's direct participation and liaise with representatives of women´s s organizations enabling ongoing dialogue with SRSGs, Special Envoys and senior management to shape priorities and work. - The PBSO gender adviser will provide technical support to the PBC Secretariat for the implementation of its Gender Strategy and Action Plan.
	- Facilitate transparent, accountable, and ongoing engagement with women human rights defenders and peacebuilders as important stakeholders in shaping peacemaking and peacebuilding priorities. Enhance analysis of, and advocacy on, protection concerns of women human rights defenders including online gender-based hate speech and SGBV in the context of elections. Identify and implement modalities to include the perspectives of diverse women in the process (i.e. consultations and dialogue with the mediator and conflict parties; technical or women's advisory boards to the mediator; civil society forums; national/digital dialogues for infrastructures for peace; negotiations and implementation of ceasefires and	All staff The PBC Secretariat	

	other peace agreements; and multi-stakeholder consultations). - Support the implementation of the PBC Gender Strategy through the substantive, cross cutting integration of gender perspectives in all PBC country-specific thematic and strategic engagements.		
4. Promote women's political participation in electoral processes.	- Provide technical advice and support to Member States, upon request, in their efforts to promote women's participation in electoral processes, including through advice on the design or reform of electoral systems and frameworks as well as on temporary special measures (TSMs).	EAD, SPMs	- EAD's gender focal points continuously support gender mainstreaming of DPPA's electoral work.
	- Mainstream gender in all UN electoral assistance activities, including in all aspects of Needs Assessment Missions (NAMs).	EAD, SPMs	
	- Include gender expertise in all UN Electoral Needs Assessment Mission teams.	EAD, SPMs	
	- Coordinate with relevant UN entities to effectively implement the UN Policy Directive on "promoting women's participation in electoral and political processes through UN electoral assistance".	EAD, SPMs	
	- Increase focus on issues related to violence against women (as voters and political candidates) in elections including through incorporating relevant aspects in trainings on elections and violence.	EAD	
	- Ensure gender is a key component in providing electoral capacity (development) and training support to regional organizations.	EAD, SPMs	

5. Empower gender advisers in SPMs to effectively provide political and strategic advice			
	- Locate all Gender Advisers in the Office of the SRSG in SPMs or within the Office of the DSRSG Political, prioritize hiring of gender posts, and provide them with support from gender expertise embedded in all relevant functional mission components (S/RES/2242). - In line with the 2021 EC decision that a track record on gender is to be required for all SRSGs/SEs, and the related decisions on gender in workplans and as part of the leadership competency, senior leadership to emphasize that gender equality and WPS issues are not only the responsibility of the gender adviser, but the responsibility of all staff. Gender should be prioritized across workstreams, including in workplans and strategic assessment reviews, with team leaders/section chiefs to be accountable for gender and WPS mainstreaming in their area of work. - Nominate a dedicated gender focal point [preferably with seniority/influence] and conduct regular consultations with the mission's Gender Adviser and/or focal points and (where relevant) Women Protection Advisers. For non-mission settings, closely coordinate with gender advisers and focal points in the UNCT.	SRSGs/Envoys/ Chiefs of Staff All headquarters desks supporting a special political mission as well as those working on non-mission settings	- GPS Unit to offer a workshop for field-based Gender Advisers and Focal Points app. every two years to discuss challenges and explore initiatives and good practices for ongoing and future workstreams. - GPS to host monthly meetings with Gender Advisers, to facilitate exchanges and lessons-learned

	- Include gender advisers in senior management meetings in missions in HQ to provide strategic and political advice to mission leadership on increasing women's political participation and gender sensitive approaches to conflict prevention and resolution efforts. - Include gender advisers in meetings with UN Country Teams and other relevant coordination mechanisms, to ensure gender advisers have a strategic overview and can align their work with relevant partners	SRSGs/Envoys/ RCs, and HQ	
6. Prevent and address conflict-related sexual violence	- Implement the UN's Policy on Prevention and Response by United Nations Peace Operations to Conflict-related Sexual Violence;	All staff	- The GPS Unit to provide technical support to desks and SPMs on request, including on early-warning indicators of CRSV for prevention and analysis; good practices in incorporating CRSV considerations in ceasefire and peace agreements; liaising with CRSV survivors on a do-no-harm basis; and coordination with UN entities and agencies working on CRSV at HQ and on the ground.
	- Include early consideration of risks regarding CRSV, and perpetration of acts, in all relevant conflict analysis and reporting, including to the UN Security Council, senior leadership and sanctions panels;	All staff	
	- Consult regularly with CRSV experts including Women Protection Advisers, GPS, OSRSG-SVC, OHCHR, UN Women, and local women and civil society organizations - Support the recruitment of Women Protection Advisers in all relevant SPMs and push for them to be located in the Office of the SRSG in SPMs or within the Office of the DSRSG Political, as appropriate, to ensure they have access to information, and are able to advise senior leadership on CRSV prevention and	All staff	

	response advocacy and strategies.		
	- Work with relevant UN entities to raise CRSV concerns with conflict parties, sensitize parties to the CRSV normative framework, and work to secure commitments to halt CRSV violations, including as early confidence-building measures, through unilateral or joint communiques.;	All staff working with conflict parties	
	- Address CRSV issues in relevant mediation and peacebuilding efforts, including prohibition of CRSV acts in ceasefires and peace agreements, protection of civilians, transitional justice, remedies and reparations for survivors.	All staff	
7. Gendered analysis to inform budget and project proposals	- Design and implement project interventions of the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) guided by gender sensitive conflict analysis and make use of the gender marker system and guidance to track its financial allocation to projects that promote gender equality and women's empowerment.	All staff involved in PBF funding	- PBSO's Gender Adviser to provide technical support to the PBF.
	- Explicitly state how gendered analysis has informed the design of the XB project, including through consulting the gender advisor in those missions that have one, and how women's participation and civil society consultations will be promoted in addition to completing the gender marker.	All staff involved in seeking DPPA XB funding	- The GPS Unit to develop guidance on integrating gender/WPS in XB budget proposals, including the proper use of the gender marker, and dedicated projects to promote the implementation of the WPS agenda.
8. Accountability and compliance	- Include at least one gender/WPS deliverable in all individual and team workplans and performance reporting documents (E-Pas). - Ensure that in SPMs all section chiefs mainstream gender/ WPS in their section's annual planning and reporting	Directors, Team Leaders, Section Chiefs, Chiefs of Staff	- GPS, EO and ODCSS to offer support as needed.

	- Include at least one question related to prior gender/WPS work undertaken when interviewing candidates and consider past track record on gender/WPS in hiring decisions. Ensure women staff are represented on all panels.	Hiring managers	
	- Require the inclusion of at least one gender/WPS deliverable in their annual performance goals and/or workplans.	PDAs	
	- Report on the implementation of this Policy, in connection with the annual reporting on DPPA's commitments on WPS to the Security Council.	SRSG / Envoy and all staff	

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Annex II: 2021 DPPA Women, Peace and Security Agenda Indicators

	Peace Processes
1	# and % of women appointed as Deputy or Head of Mission in Special Political Missions.
2	# and % of women, and their individual level of seniority, on UN mediation support teams in UN-(co)-led peace or constitution making processes.
3	# and % of UN-supported peace or constitution making processes in which gender expertise was provided. *To be included in reporting: Narrative description of where gender expertise was provided and the specific issues that gender expertise was intended to address. Please describe the impact the inclusion of gender expertise might have had on the peace process. Please also provide the seniority of the gender expert(s) involved using sex-disaggregated data.*
4	# of women and % of total participants included in formal/Track 1 negotiations of peace processes (co-)led/supported by UN and description of roles (1) delegate, (2) signatory, (3) expert, observer, and/or (4) mediator.
5	# and % of UN(co)-led or supported peace or constitution making processes with a strategy for women's inclusion.
6	# and % of UN-led or co-led peace or constitution making processes where women civil society was regularly consulted # and % of UN-led or co-led peace or constitution making processes where the UN supported consultations/meetings/other exchanges between the conflict parties and women civil society. *To be included in reporting: Narrative description of these consultations/meetings/exchanges, including the stage of the process when they took place, the frequency and if they are ongoing.*
7	# of peace and ceasefire agreements that resulted from UN-led or co-led negotiations with provisions that reference women or gender equality and # of these provisions. In contexts where verified cases of CRSV have been found, # and % of ceasefire and/or peace agreements resulting from UN-led or co-led negotiations that include CRSV provisions. *To be included in reporting: Copy-paste the provisions in ceasefire/peace agreements that relate to women, gender equality or CRSV or GBV violations.*
	Elections
8	% of cases where Electoral Needs Assessment Missions (NAM) included gender expertise.
9	# and % of trainings for UN staff on electoral violence that address violence against women.
10	# (and %) of electoral capacity-building initiatives (including trainings, workshops and seminars) conducted with/for/in partnership with Member States and regional organizations, where gender is a key component.

	Peacebuilding
11	# and % of PBC relevant outcome documents which include country and region-specific gender analysis based on sex-disaggregated data.
12	# and % of women peacebuilders invited to brief the PBC.
13	Amount of PBF funding per annum dedicated to the Gender Promotion Initiative.
14	# and % of country eligibility packages based on conflict analysis that is gender-responsive.
15	% of total PBF funds per annum allocated towards advancing gender equality and/or women's empowerment. *(Optional) Narrative description of 1-3 especially representative projects funded in most recent year.*
	Security Council
16	# (and %) of relevant SPM reports to the Security Council that include gender analysis/information on the gendered dimensions of conflict, women's political participation or the gendered dimensions of conflict prevention, mediation or peacebuilding efforts per year. # (and %) of recommendations in relevant reports to the Security Council on the gendered dimensions of conflict, women's political participation, or the gender dimensions of conflict prevention, mediation, or peacebuilding efforts per year.
17	Breakdown of the Security Council Panel of Experts by gender, nationality, and area of expertise, (noting which panel(s) each expert attended).
	Regional organization
18	# of joint WPS strategies or engagements with regional organizations *To be included in reporting: Narrative description of work undertaken with regional organizations. Outline key priorities developed together, and outcomes and impact of work with regional organizations.*
	Gender capacity
19	# of gender advisors and gender focal points in SPMs, disaggregated by sex, seniority and placement within the office/mission
	XB financing
20	% of XB projects with gender marker 2 or higher.
	Joint programme
21	% of PDAs engaged with women groups on conflict prevention
22	% of the Joint Programme's seed funding for catalytic initiatives allocated towards advancing gender equality and/or women's empowerment.

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United Nations Electoral Assistance



REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

Strengthening the role of the United Nations in enhancing the effectiveness of the principle of periodic and genuine elections and the promotion of democratization

A/74/285
6 AUGUST 2019

United Nations General Assembly A/74/285

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Promotion and protection of human rights: human rights questions, including alternative approaches for improving the effective enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms

Strengthening the role of the United Nations in enhancing the effectiveness of the principle of periodic and genuine elections and the promotion of democratization

Report of the Secretary-General

* A/74/150

UNITED NATIONS ELECTORAL ASSISTANCE DIVISION WEBSITE:
https://dppa.un.org/en/elections

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United Nations Electoral Assistance



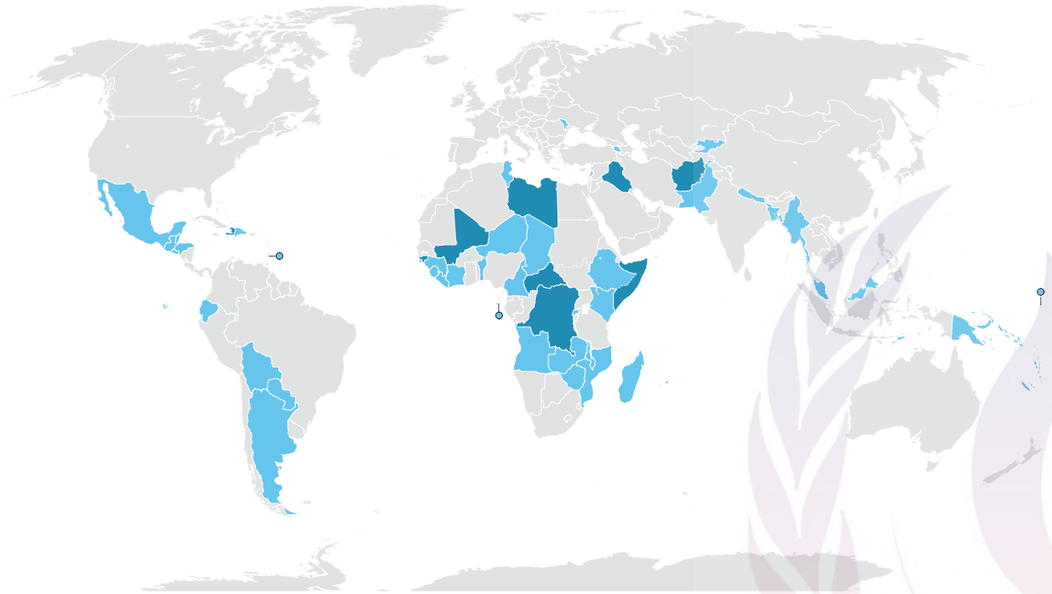
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Summary



*Map of States and Territories that received United Nations electoral assistance during the reporting period (1 August 2017 – 31 July 2019)**

In the present report, the Secretary-General discusses developments in the field of United Nations electoral assistance since the issuance of his previous report (A/72/260). During the reporting period, from 1 August 2017 to 31 July 2019, the United Nations assisted, at their request or on the basis of a Security Council mandate, more than 50 Member States.

The report notes the contributions of multiple United Nations entities involved in electoral assistance. Progress in ensuring coherence and coordination within the United Nations system is described, and efforts to strengthen cooperation and partnership between the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations and other international assistance providers are highlighted.

Elections continued to be compelling and effective ways for citizens to participate in their countries' political processes. In some cases, however, Member States faced challenges in holding free and genuine elections. A key factor shaping public confidence in an election is the conduct of political leaders, from both winning and losing parties. Winning magnanimously entails, among other things, recognizing that part of the electorate preferred another candidate or party; losing graciously after a credible process involves refraining from broad, potentially inciting comments about an "illegitimate" election without sufficient evidence.

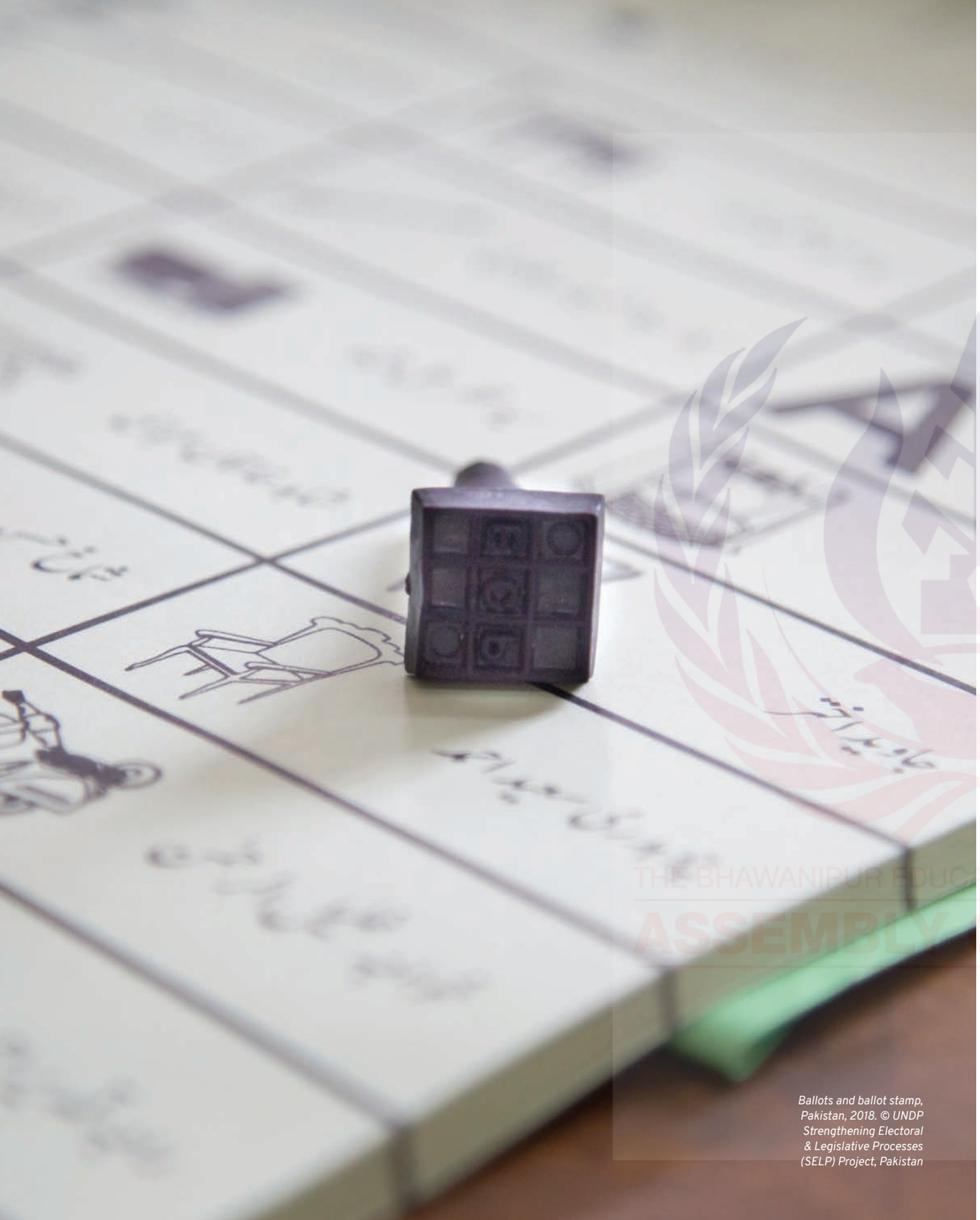
Various aspects of inclusion in elections are touched on in the report, with examples highlighting specific groups, including women, that deserve special attention to ensure their full participation. Although there has been a continuous increase in terms of their representation in parliaments worldwide, much more needs to be done to ensure not only greater numbers of women in representative bodies, but also their actual empowerment.

The use of the Internet and social media in the context of elections, as both enablers of participation and tools for spreading disinformation and hate speech, raised complex issues for Member States. The paralyzing suspicion that any information or discourse can be manipulated – and the resulting erosion of trust – lies at the heart of the Internet's challenge to democracy. The importance of, among other measures, building societies' resilience against the spread of false or hateful content, increasing transparency in public discourse and pursuing multi-stakeholder dialogue to find answers to those policy challenges, is underlined.



Ballots arrive at the count centre following the end of voting in Anabar, Nauru, 2019. © UNDP Nauru Election Support Project (NESP)

The State of Palestine also received United Nations electoral assistance during the reporting period. The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations. ** Dotted line represents approximately the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir agreed upon by India and Pakistan. The final status of Jammu and Kashmir has not yet been agreed upon by the Parties. * Final boundary between the Republic of Sudan and the Republic of South Sudan has not yet been determined. **** A dispute exists between the Governments of Argentina and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland concerning sovereignty over the Falkland Islands (Malvinas)*



Ballots and ballot stamp, Pakistan, 2018. © UNDP Strengthening Electoral & Legislative Processes (SELP) Project, Pakistan

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I. Introduction



Voter registration cards being distributed in Bamako, Mali, 2018. © MINUSMA/Harandane Dicko

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 72/164. It provides a description of United Nations activities in the field of elections and electoral assistance since the issuance of the previous report on the subject (A/72/260).

2. During the reporting period, from 1 August 2017 to 31 July 2019, the Organization continued to respond to significant demand from Member States for electoral assistance, in particular technical assistance and efforts to strengthen the capacity of national electoral authorities. The United Nations assisted, at their request or on the basis of a Security Council mandate, more than 50 Member States in conducting elections, through a variety of electoral assistance activities described herein. The report includes broader observations on opportunities and challenges facing Member States with respect to elections and in the field of electoral assistance.

II. United Nations electoral assistance during the reporting period

A. MANDATES

3. The framework for United Nations electoral assistance was established by the General Assembly in 1991. Assistance is provided only at the specific request of the Member State concerned or as mandated by the Security Council or the General Assembly. Before assistance is agreed upon and provided, the United Nations assesses the needs and capacities of the Member State concerned to ensure that its support is tailored to the specific situation. The Assembly has reiterated on many occasions that assistance must be carried out in an objective, impartial, neutral and independent manner, with due respect for national sovereignty. It has also reaffirmed that there is no single model of democracy and that the responsibility for organizing elections lies with Member States.

> **“In a field of diverse United Nations actors, the Assembly has repeatedly highlighted the importance of system-wide coherence and consistency and has reaffirmed the leadership role of the focal point in that respect.”**



Voter education in Nepal. © UNDP Electoral Support Project (ESP), Nepal

Figure I Number of States and Territories receiving United Nations electoral assistance, by biennium, 1991–2019



Source: reports of the Secretary-General.

4. Since its forty-fourth session, the General Assembly has regularly considered the question of enhancing the effectiveness of the principle of periodic and genuine elections, including with respect to United Nations electoral assistance. Most recently, in its resolution 72/164, the Assembly recommended that the United Nations continue to provide technical advice and other assistance to requesting States and electoral institutions in order to help to strengthen their democratic processes, bearing in mind that the relevant office may provide additional assistance in the form of mediation and good offices, upon the request of Member States.

5. In 1991, the Secretary-General, with the endorsement of the General Assembly, designated the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs as the focal point for electoral assistance matters. The number of entities involved in elections has grown since that year. In a field of diverse United Nations actors, the Assembly has repeatedly highlighted the importance of system-wide coherence and consistency and has reaffirmed the leadership role of the focal point in that respect. Accordingly, the focal point is responsible for setting electoral assistance policies, for deciding on the parameters for United Nations electoral assistance in a particular requesting country and for maintaining, as mandated by the Assembly, a single electoral roster of experts who can be deployed rapidly when required for any assistance activity. Effective 1 January 2019, with the restructuring of the United Nations peace and security pillar, the Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs serves as the focal point. The number of States and territories having received United Nations electoral assistance since 1991 is illustrated in figure I.

6. The focal point is supported by the Electoral Assistance Division of the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs. Pursuant to requests from Member States and in consultation with relevant United Nations entities, the Division is responsible for conducting electoral needs assessments. It recommends to the focal point the parameters for all United Nations electoral assistance and gives advice on the design of electoral mission components or assistance projects. The Division also develops and maintains the single electoral roster of experts and is entrusted with maintaining the institutional memory of the Organization, in collaboration with agencies of the United Nations system. On behalf of the focal point, the Division provides political and technical guidance to all United Nations entities involved in electoral assistance, including on policies and good practices. When required, the Division provides support to the Secretary-General and his envoys and to political and peacekeeping missions in the prevention and mediation of electoral crises. It also maintains partnerships with other regional and intergovernmental organizations involved in elections.

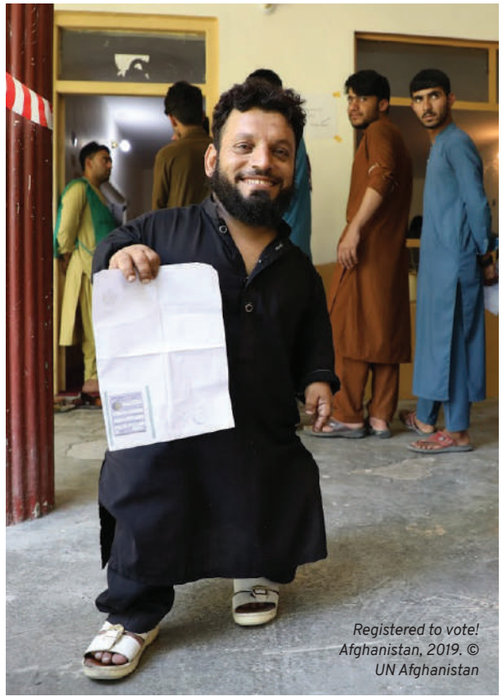
7. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is the major body of the Organization supporting the development of electoral institutions, building partnerships, legal frameworks and processes and supporting elections in non-mission settings. In its resolution 72/164, the General Assembly requested UNDP to continue its democratic governance assistance programmes in cooperation with other relevant organizations, in particular those that promote the strengthening of democratic institutions and linkages between civil society and Governments.

8. In mission settings, electoral assistance is generally provided through components of field missions under the auspices of the Department of Peace Operations or the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs. Military and police components of peacekeeping missions support national law enforcement agencies in providing security for electoral processes. UNDP usually contributes to the implementation of electoral assistance mandates undertaken by field missions. In countries with peacekeeping, peacebuilding or special political missions, electoral assistance is delivered in a fully integrated manner, under the mission's lead, irrespective of whether the mission is structurally integrated. In non-mission settings, resident coordinators play the critical role of ensuring that electoral support is delivered in a coordinated manner. In some 50 Member States, resident coordinators are supported by Peace and Development Advisers deployed as part of the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs-UNDP Joint Programme on Building National Capacities for Conflict Prevention. They assist resident coordinators in building trust among communities, promoting non-violent communication and coordinating targeted advocacy and outreach efforts among key stakeholders.



Casting a ballot at a polling station in Bamako, Mali presidential election 2018. © MINUSMA/Harandane

> “The experience of the United Nations suggests that such confidence is shaped by factors that go beyond the technical quality of an electoral process, compliance with international obligations or the effective performance of the electoral management body; it is also formed by the broader political and economic context.”



Registered to vote! Afghanistan, 2019. © UN Afghanistan

9. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) monitors and reports on human rights in the context of elections and engages in advocacy for upholding human rights and fundamental freedoms in such contexts. OHCHR also provides technical advice and capacity-building assistance on ensuring that local norms and institutions are in compliance with international human rights law.

10. The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) works for the elimination of discrimination against women and girls, the empowerment of women and the achievement of equality between women and men as partners and beneficiaries of development, human rights, humanitarian action and peace and security. Within that mandate and through its normative support functions and operational activities, UN-Women provides guidance and technical support to Member States, at their request, on gender equality, the empowerment of women, women’s rights and gender mainstreaming. It promotes gender equality and women’s participation in electoral processes and provides training and advice in those areas. UN-Women is also mandated to lead, coordinate and promote the accountability of the United Nations system in its work on gender equality and the empowerment of women.

11. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) promotes and supports freedom of expression, freedom of the press, the safety of journalists and access to information. Free and independent media, online and offline, are essential to democracy, and UNESCO aims to support the development of fair, safe and professional media coverage, including by building the capacity of media professionals, media regulators and policymakers and by supporting access to information as well as critical thinking on the part of citizens.

12. There are other entities of the United Nations system that are involved in electoral activities or whose mandate or area of focus sometimes touches on electoral matters. The Department of Operational Support provides administrative and logistical support



Deputy Special Representative Alice Walpole visits a voter registration centre for internally displaced persons in Dahuk, Kurdistan region, Iraq, 2019. © UNAMI PIO/Rashwan Salih

to peacekeeping operations, special political missions and other field presences. The United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) supports, in partnership with other United Nations entities, the implementation of electoral activities in post-conflict and peacekeeping environments as well as in non-mission settings. The United Nations Volunteers programme works with multiple partners to integrate qualified and highly motivated personnel into electoral projects and electoral components of peace operations, while promoting the value and global recognition of volunteerism. The Peacebuilding Fund can support elections at the critical juncture of building and sustaining peace, as well as pre-election efforts to create an environment conducive to peaceful elections. The United Nations Democracy Fund supports projects that strengthen the voice of civil society, promote human rights and encourage the participation of all groups in democratic processes. It supports civil society projects in such processes, including in monitoring and training, as well as education and awareness-raising. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is

> “The approach of the United Nations is generally to respond positively to requests for support…”

mandated to provide international protection and to seek permanent solutions to the refugee problem, which includes assisting Member States, where relevant and appropriate, in facilitating the participation of refugees in electoral processes. UNHCR has also been authorized by the General Assembly to be involved operationally under certain circumstances in enhancing protection and providing humanitarian assistance to internally displaced persons. The International Organization for Migration, which is the leading intergovernmental organization in the field of migration, supports the implementation of out-of-country voting programmes for refugees, asylum seekers and migrants.

B. ELECTORAL ASSISTANCE ACTIVITIES

13. During the reporting period, the United Nations continued to provide assistance to Member States in conducting their electoral processes in a credible, professional, accurate, impartial and transparent manner, as well as in implementing the democratic principles of universal and equal suffrage and other international obligations. The Organization emphasized helping Member States to build public confidence in electoral administrative bodies and electoral processes themselves. The experience of the United Nations suggests that such confidence is shaped by factors that go beyond the technical quality of an electoral process, compliance with international obligations or the effective performance of the electoral management body; it is also formed by the broader political and economic context. Consequently, where appropriate and as requested, the United Nations also assisted Member States in creating an environment conducive to the holding of peaceful and credible elections through good offices, support for political dialogue, facilitation and mediation. Those efforts were often accomplished in collaboration with regional and subregional entities and other actors. Since 1991, 113 Member States have received electoral assistance from the United Nations. A list of States and territories that received electoral assistance during the period under review is provided in annex I, selected examples of United Nations assistance activities is set out in annex II, and a map illustrating the States and Territories receiving electoral assistance is presented in annex III.

14. Member States expect the Organization to understand a country's needs before deciding how to respond to a request. The focal point therefore continued to assess each request to determine whether and how best the United Nations could provide support. In carrying out such assessments, which can also be helpful in gauging the potential financial support of donors, the focal point considers the national electoral context, including women's participation in electoral processes, and makes recommendations to ensure gender mainstreaming. The approach of the United Nations is generally to respond positively to requests for support, but there can be limitations. For example, there may be insufficient funding or time to deploy the assistance capacity. There have also been cases in which a request is in an area that the Organization traditionally does not cover, in which it has limited expertise, in which national capacity is extensive or in which it otherwise appears that United Nations expertise would not add value. In addition, the Organization is more likely to provide assistance if there is broad public support for its assumption of such a role. Furthermore, unless specifically mandated to do so by the Security Council or the General Assembly, the United Nations does not organize, certify, supervise or observe an electoral process. Technical assistance is by far the most frequent form of assistance provided by the United Nations.

C. COOPERATION AND COORDINATION WITHIN THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM

15. The General Assembly has often reiterated the need for ongoing comprehensive coordination among United Nations entities under the auspices of the focal point, most recently in its resolution 72/164. The Electoral Assistance Division, in advising and supporting the focal point, continued to lead in the development of system-wide electoral assistance policies, in consultation with United Nations entities.

16. The Inter-Agency Coordination Mechanism for Electoral Assistance, convened and chaired by the Electoral Assistance Division, continued to serve as the platform for information exchange, coordination and the development of internal policies among members of the United Nations system involved in electoral matters. The Mechanism now includes representatives of UNDP, the Department of Peace Operations, OHCHR, UN-Women, UNESCO, UNOPS, the United Nations Democracy Fund, UNHCR and the United Nations Volunteers programme. The Peacebuilding Support Office continues to be represented in the Mechanism as part of the reorganized Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, in recognition of its role and the Peacebuilding Fund's support for electoral activities.

17. The United Nations single electoral roster continued to be used for meeting staffing requirements in field operations of the Secretariat and other participating entities, including UNDP. Persons on the roster have been assessed and cleared as electoral experts at various levels and in different fields of electoral expertise and can be deployed readily. Preparations have begun to launch, before the end of 2019, a new campaign to update the roster.

18. In its resolution 39/11, the Human Rights Council presented a set of draft guidelines on the effective implementation of the right to participate in public affairs, prepared by OHCHR, as a set of orientations for States, as well as for, where appropriate, other relevant stakeholders. The Council requested OHCHR to disseminate and promote the use of the guidelines and to provide technical cooperation and capacity-building to States upon their request. In line with the framework established by the General Assembly, OHCHR will coordinate closely with the focal point for electoral assistance in implementing the resolution.

D. COOPERATION WITH OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

19. The role of the focal point for electoral assistance includes ensuring appropriate working arrangements with regional and intergovernmental organizations engaged in electoral assistance. The Electoral Assistance Division continued to strengthen its collaboration with such organizations during the reporting period. For example, the United Nations conducted nine regional training sessions, workshops and round-table discussions in partnership with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, the Caribbean Community secretariat, the Commission of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the League of Arab States (LAS), the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC). Topics included women and elections, the prevention of electoral violence and election observation. The Organization also engaged in new partnership activities with the



Participants of UN and International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) joint BRIDGE workshop on Election Observation and Roundtable on Gender, Media and Elections, Kenya, 2019. © UN Electoral Assistance Division



UN Electoral Assistance Division, UNDP and Organization of Islamic Cooperation joint BRIDGE workshop on Gender and Elections, Turkey, 2017. © UN Electoral Assistance Division

Indian Ocean Commission and organized electoral staff exchange programmes for SADC, OIC, ECOWAS, LAS and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region.

20. The United Nations has long-standing partnerships with other regional and intergovernmental organizations, including the African Union, the Commonwealth Secretariat, the European Union, the Organization of American States, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, as well as with several non-governmental organizations active in the international arena.

21. The United Nations continued to support key platforms for building electoral capacity and institutional memory and sharing knowledge at the global level, such as the Building Resources in Democracy, Governance and Elections (BRIDGE) project and the ACE Electoral Knowledge Network. United Nations support included updating a BRIDGE module on gender and developing new ACE topic areas on youth and on gender so as to maintain them as primary resources for electoral practitioners across the globe.

22. The Organization also continued to support the Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation, which was commemorated at the United Nations in 2005. The Declaration, currently endorsed by 55 organizations from various regions of the world, has continued to play an important role in enhancing the professional international observation of electoral processes. The Declaration of Global Principles for Non-partisan Election Observation and Monitoring by Citizen Organizations, launched at the United Nations in 2012, continues to provide an important normative framework for organizations engaged in non-partisan citizen election monitoring.

III. United Nations electoral assistance resources

23. The core staff of the Electoral Assistance Division continues to be primarily funded by the regular budget of the United Nations. Extrabudgetary funds continued to play a vital supplementary role, enabling the Division to carry out needs assessments and advisory missions, provide capacity-development support to regional organizations, rapidly deploy experts to the field upon the request of Member States and perform other substantive activities. The trust funds administered by the Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, along with the UNDP funding window for governance and peacebuilding, continued to enable the Organization to implement rapid response and catalytic projects and programmes, including those aimed at preventing conflict and supporting the participation of women and underrepresented groups in political processes. Extrabudgetary funds administered by UN-Women were used to support programming to promote women's political and electoral participation.

24. United Nations electoral assistance projects are generally funded by voluntary contributions from development partners and are managed mainly by UNDP, often through multi-partner basket funds established in the Member States concerned. While the demand for United Nations support remains high, electoral support projects in the field have faced funding challenges in past years, leading to instances in which donor funding was not sufficient to launch or complete an assistance project even after the focal point had approved a package of technical electoral assistance. There have also been instances in which partners have decided to grant funding to other non-governmental electoral assistance providers instead of the United Nations.



A United Nations Volunteer assisting National Electoral Commission staff, Oio province, Guinea-Bissau, 2019. © Edilson C.A.A. da Silva

IV. Gender equality and elections

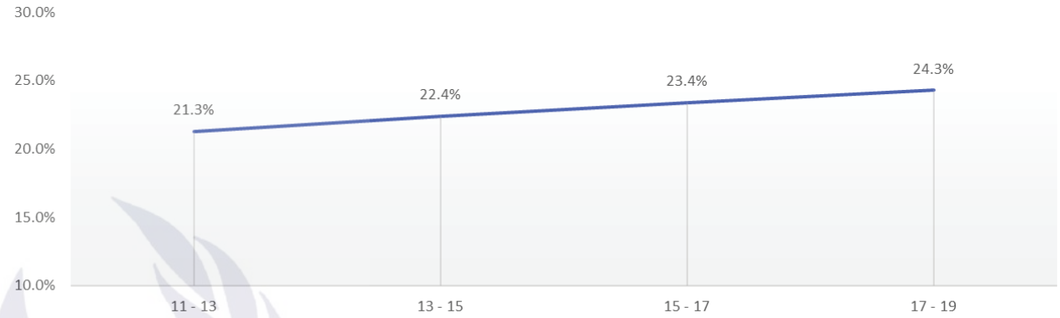


Bissau Guinean women after voting in the legislative elections in Guinea Bissau, 2019. © UNIOGBIS

25. Despite some improvements in recent years, progress on women's representation in elected and appointed positions continued to be slow. The global share of women in lower or single houses of parliament is currently only 24.3 per cent (see figure II). This is slightly higher than in the previous reporting period, but again falls short of the gender balance requirements highlighted in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, which will be reviewed, at its 25-year mark, in 2020. Women are even less represented in other branches of government across the globe. As at 1 January 2019, only 6.6 per cent of Heads of State and 5.2 per cent of Heads of Government were women. There is a clear need for concerted efforts to address the various challenges to women's equal participation in electoral and political processes.

> "Despite some improvements in recent years, progress on women's representation in elected and appointed positions continued to be slow."

Figure II Percentage of women in lower or single houses of parliament worldwide, 2011–2019



Source: reports of the Secretary-General.

26. During the reporting period, gender equality continued to be a key consideration in the provision of electoral assistance, and United Nations entities carried out various initiatives in that regard. For example, in Afghanistan, the United Nations assisted the national electoral authorities in mainstreaming gender in all administrative and operational processes and communications for the parliamentary elections in 2018. The support contributed to sustained levels of women's participation as voters, candidates and election administrators. In Malawi, there was an increase in the number of women parliamentarians elected in 2019, which followed national efforts, supported by the United Nations, to promote the participation of women. A gender-mapping exercise in Mali, conducted by national authorities with the help of the United Nations, identified women's priorities and expectations ahead of the 2018 presidential elections. UN-Women supported gender assessments and strategies for strengthening women's participation in electoral processes in Bangladesh, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Nigeria, Uganda and Zimbabwe. Further examples of United Nations support for gender equality are described in annex II.

27. In 2018, UN-Women launched a global compilation of data on women's political participation at the local level, which was the first such exercise to obtain comparable high-quality data in respect of women's representation in local government pursuant to the Sustainable Development Goals. As at 1 May 2019, in 103 countries and areas, women's representation in local elected bodies varied from less than 1 per cent to 50 per cent, with a median of 26 per cent.

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ASSEMBLY OF NATIONS

V. Observations



Vote counting at a polling station, presidential election 2019, Mali. © MINUSMA/Harandane Dicko

28. During the reporting period, elections continued to be compelling and effective ways for citizens to participate in their countries' political processes and have their voices heard. In some cases, however, Member States experienced tension and disputes around elections or faced challenges in carrying out a free and genuine process in which human rights and political participation were protected for all. The result at times was violence and loss of life. There were also instances in which the results were rejected or political actors withdrew in protest from the electoral contest.

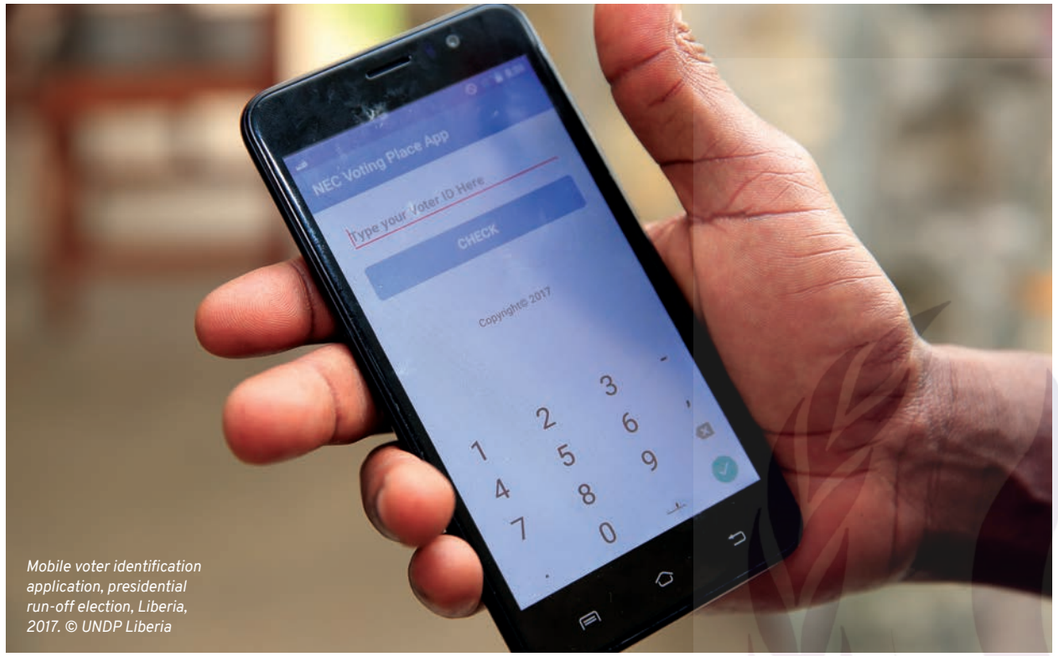
29. Those experiences confirmed lessons outlined in the previous report, including the recognition that it is political leaders, from both government and opposition parties, who bear the overriding responsibility for successful elections. This applies not only in the period leading up to an election, in which they must engage in civil and peaceful competition, respect the integrity of the process and the rights of all and call upon supporters to do the same, but also in the days and weeks that follow, when the results emerge and tensions may rise, providing tests of true leadership. Both those who end up winning and those who are defeated face the choice of reaffirming public trust in their country's democratic system or undermining belief in its legitimacy. Winning magnanimously entails recognizing that a part of the electorate preferred another candidate or party, giving appropriate political space to such different views and refraining from monopolizing a hold on State institutions or harassing opponents. Losing graciously after a credible process involves refraining from broad, potentially provocative comments about an "illegitimate" election without sufficient evidence, challenging results through legal and peaceful means only, adequately substantiating any allegations of irregularities, accepting a loss arising out of a credible process, playing an active and constructive opposition role and focusing, perhaps, on the next opportunity at the ballot box.

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30. It is important for the Organization, where requested or mandated to provide support, to develop a comprehensive approach to its engagement well in advance of an election. Just as elections are not isolated technical events but rather an integral part of national political processes, United Nations electoral support should be incorporated within a broader engagement to help Member States promote peace and stability as well as democratic governance, as appropriate. This includes combining technical support with engagement with political leaders and good offices efforts by envoys and special representatives of the Secretary-General, at both the national and regional levels.

31. In previous reports submitted to the General Assembly, the importance of inclusiveness in national democratic processes has been consistently highlighted. In adopting the Sustainable Development Goals, Member States committed to ensuring, among other targets, responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making processes at all levels, women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life. In its resolution 73/148, the Assembly reiterated those principles with respect to women's participation, encouraging national legislative authorities and political parties, as appropriate, to state zero tolerance for sexual harassment, intimidation and any other form of violence against women in politics. Member States



Mobile voter identification application, presidential run-off election, Liberia, 2017. © UNDP Liberia

are again called upon to undertake more systematic efforts to promote and enable women's participation in politics and in elections, which does not end with increasing their numbers on elected or appointed bodies, and rather requires their full empowerment as active participants and leaders.

32. In December 2018, at an intergovernmental conference held in Marrakech, Morocco, the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration was adopted, in which the benefits of migration and the huge contributions migrants make to both their host countries and their countries of origin were recognized and reinforced. Participating States committed to the creation of conditions allowing migrants and diasporas to fully contribute to sustainable development. The Compact highlights, among other possible actions, enabling the political participation and engagement of migrants in their countries of origin, including in elections, such as by establishing voter registries for citizens abroad and through parliamentary representation, in accordance with national legislation.

> **"The paralyzing suspicion that any information or discourse can be or has been manipulated, leading to the erosion of trust, lies at the heart of the Internet's challenge to democracy."**

33. As part of the United Nations youth strategy, launched in 2018, the Secretary-General committed to leveraging the capacity of the United Nations to promote the right of young persons to participate in public affairs, including in political and civic processes, platforms and institutions at all levels. As in the previous report, Member States are urged to consider ways to increase the participation of youth in decision-making and in electoral processes as candidates, voters, electoral officials, party agents and observers. In this context, the approach taken by some Member States to align the minimum age of eligibility to stand for elections with the minimum voting age is noted as being a possible path to greater participation. Member States are also encouraged to recognize the particular needs of persons with disabilities and to remove obstacles that prevent them from fully and equally participating in electoral processes.

34. Inclusion needs to be understood and applied within the context of each Member State, reflecting the diversity of its society. In this context, the efforts of some States to overcome discrimination and barriers to political participation faced by persons on the basis of their sexual orientation or gender identity are noted. The new Constitution of Nepal, for example, approved in 2015, grants citizens the freedom to decide the gender identity that appears on their citizenship documents. In 2010, the Election Commission of Nepal had already included a "third gender" category in its list of voters, complying with a decision of the Supreme Court to offer such an option on all official documents. A similar right to determine one's own gender identity in official documents was guaranteed in Pakistan in a law adopted in 2018. In New Zealand, too, as a result of a policy change adopted in November 2012, all persons can choose to have their gender marked in their passports as male, female or a third category, based solely on self-determined identity. Those cases represent what are still exceptional examples of State practice regarding the recognition of gender identity. Other notable efforts include those initiated by electoral management bodies, such as the National Electoral Institute of Mexico, which, for the 2018 elections, established a protocol to enhance the participation of transgender voters.

35. The growing influence in elections of the Internet and social media, being both enablers of participation and tools for spreading disinformation and hate speech, including against women, and to incite violence, raised complex issues for Member States. The risks of manipulation and of activities aimed at undermining political processes are worrisome and must be taken seriously, even if the actual threats and their effects on election outcomes remain difficult to gauge. The paralyzing suspicion that any information or discourse can be or has been manipulated, leading to the erosion of trust, lies at the heart of the Internet's challenge to democracy. Member States have already been confronted with instances of real, if sometimes indirect, political impact. Furthermore, the spread of hate speech through online platforms can have a damaging impact on an electoral process and be a trigger for violence. As part of the effort of the United Nations to combat such phenomena, the Secretary-General in June 2019 launched the United Nations Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech, which points to concrete ways in which the Organization can counter hate speech while upholding the freedom of opinion and expression.

36. The response to those challenges is evolving, as are opinions on how best to confront them. Thinking varies widely as to what is the appropriate role of the State in regulating public discourse while at the same time respecting freedom of expression and protecting journalists, including during elections. Whichever path Member States choose to follow in that regard, they may wish to focus on building the resilience of their societies to handle potentially false, emotive and incendiary content spread online and through social media, including by promoting critical thinking and digital literacy and supporting professional journalism. They may also consider requiring greater transparency of sources of information disseminated online and providing citizens access to other tools that enable them to verify information sources and reporting. In that regard, the steps being taken by some social

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Voters queuing to vote, Nguna island, Vanuatu, 2019. © Anne-Sofie Gerhard

> **“...Particular attention must be focused on protecting those who are often the target of hate speech, such as women and vulnerable groups.”**

media companies to voluntarily assume greater responsibility for countering the misuse of their platforms and to explore ways to review online content while respecting basic rights and freedoms are noted. Broad, inclusive dialogue and engagement with all stakeholders – political actors, citizens, social media platforms, media representatives and civil society – appear to offer the best prospect for arriving at sound legislative and policy initiatives in this area, based on internationally protected rights and freedoms, including the right to information, the freedom of expression and the right to privacy. Similarly, non-partisan and consultative processes for monitoring, investigating and resolving disputes around allegations that false or misleading information may have influenced an election may be effective in reducing tensions. Furthermore, particular attention must be focused on protecting those who are often the target of hate speech, such as women and vulnerable groups.

37. While the focus concerning online communication tools is sometimes on misuse and manipulation, their potential to expand free speech and political participation for underrepresented and marginalized groups, including women, youth, persons with disabilities, refugees and internally displaced persons, and to empower them should not be overlooked. In keeping with the Secretary-General’s strategy on new technologies launched in 2018, a balanced approach is required, one that recognizes that there is nothing inherently negative about digital technology and online communication per se – the question is the way in which they are used. In its commentary on the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the Human Rights Committee addressed the importance, for the full enjoyment of the right to political participation, of the freedom to debate public affairs, to criticize and oppose, to publish political material, to campaign for election and to advertise political ideas (CCPR/C/21/Rev.1/Add.7, para. 25). Clearly, the Internet and social media offer citizens the means to exercise those rights freely and independently, and a blanket suspension or shutdown of the Internet during an electoral period would be likely to provoke widespread protest that this constituted their restriction or violation.



Recounting ballots, Iraq, 2018. © Richard Gee

38. With respect to the use of digital technologies for electoral operations, such as voter registration, voting and counting, there were again instances in which Member States grappled with balancing the promises and the pitfalls of innovations. The United Nations neither encourages Member States to introduce digital innovations in their operational processes nor discourages them. Their potential for increasing participation, reducing certain irregularities and strengthening public trust can be great. At the same time, some of the sobering conclusions outlined in previous reports have been confirmed by recent experience. Those include the importance of ensuring, first and foremost, clarity about the problem to be resolved through any new technology, of taking ample time to consider the technical, financial and political feasibility of the innovation through a broad consultative process and of gradually introducing new technology to allow for thorough testing and adjustment. Such testing should also take into account increasing concerns regarding the vulnerability of national electoral infrastructures to cyberattacks. Attempts to interfere in elections are not new, but the impact of cyberthreats has redefined potential targets and elevated possible damage and requires a reassessment of responses. A number of important initiatives on digital security are being established through multidisciplinary and cooperative approaches, such as the 2018 Paris Call for Trust and Security in Cyberspace. Building on such initiatives, universal and multi-stakeholder commitments with respect to digital trust and security are critical for addressing such threats, including in elections. In this context, the Secretary-General looks forward to studying the recommendations of the High-level Panel on Digital Cooperation and considering their application for electoral processes.

39. An independent judiciary plays a critical and sometimes underappreciated role in protecting the right to political participation. National courts are vital in establishing or upholding citizens' confidence in an election by adjudicating challenges to the results or to the process itself. All Member States are encouraged to ensure that their relevant courts and judges are able to act and make decisions independently and in accordance with the rule of law and their human rights obligations. Courts should also have the resources necessary to fulfil their functions within the short time frame allotted for bringing an election process to a credible conclusion. This implies a detailed knowledge of electoral operations, as bona fide challenges can be resolved most effectively when there is a good understanding of the procedural intricacies of polling, counting and tabulating results. Such an understanding is essential for striking a proper balance between the conflicting demands of speed in reaching clarity regarding an election outcome and fairness and deliberation in the adjudication process.

40. Member States are therefore encouraged to ensure the appropriate level of legal certainty in their national systems and to define, through suitable legislation, the powers of the judiciary and the process of resolving electoral challenges. This is particularly true with respect to the power to annul an election or parts of an election or to implement other corrective measures, such as a recount. It is important for courts and the electorate alike to know in advance under which circumstances an election may, or perhaps even must, be voided, and how the evidence can or will be weighed. An important question to address is whether annulment may be initiated only if the alleged fraud or irregularities have affected the result of the election – that is, if the allocation of seats to parties or candidates would be otherwise if it had not been for the alleged acts – or whether it is sufficient that a particular irregularity has occurred irrespective of its impact. This is of course a matter for Member States to decide in the context of their own political and legal systems. In codifying judicial powers and processes concerning remedial measures in elections, however, Member States are encouraged ensure that corrective measures are in proportion to the alleged infraction and should protect otherwise unaffected election results and validly cast votes.



Voter registration process, Afghanistan, 2019. © UN Afghanistan

41. In the previous report, attention was drawn to instances in which international funding was insufficient either to complete or to launch an electoral assistance project. Such instances continue to occur, limiting the ability of the Organization as a whole to deploy one of its conflict prevention tools. Member States are again called upon to ensure sufficient funding when the United Nations has been requested or mandated by the Security Council or the General Assembly to provide electoral assistance in order to honour that request or to implement that mandate.

42. In 1991, the General Assembly established a framework for United Nations electoral assistance that continues to be applicable and essential today. A primary objective was to ensure that electoral assistance would be provided by the United Nations in a coherent and coordinated manner. In the decades since, the number of entities involved – and thereby the range of expertise that the United Nations can offer in support of Member States' elections – has grown, and with it the importance of delivering as one. The move towards a single peace and security pillar and the changes to the development system that entered into effect in 2019 have strengthened the ability to do so. In collaboration with all United Nations entities involved, the focal point will continue to pursue unity in diversity and cohesive engagement in support of Member States.



Voters being issued ballots, 2019 Malawi Tripartite Elections. © UNDP Malawi

Annex I: United Nations electoral assistance provided during the reporting period

MEMBER STATES RECEIVING ASSISTANCE

Afghanistan*
Angola
Argentina
Armenia
Bangladesh
Belize
Benin
Bolivia (Plurinational State of)
Cameroon
Central African Republic*
Chad
Côte d'Ivoire
Democratic Republic of the Congo*
Dominican Republic
Ecuador
El Salvador
Ethiopia
Gambia
Guatemala
Guinea
Guinea-Bissau*
Haiti*
Honduras
Iraq*
Kenya
Kyrgyzstan
Lebanon
Liberia
Libya*
Madagascar
Malawi
Malaysia
Mali*
Mauritius
Mexico
Mozambique
Myanmar
Nauru
Nepal
Niger
Pakistan
Papua New Guinea
Paraguay
Republic of Moldova
Rwanda
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines
Sao Tome and Principe
Sierra Leone
Solomon Islands
Somalia*
Timor-Leste
Tunisia
Vanuatu
Zambia
Zimbabwe

OBSERVER STATES RECEIVING ASSISTANCE

State of Palestine

NON-SELF-GOVERNING TERRITORIES RECEIVING ASSISTANCE

New Caledonia

** Assistance provided under a Security Council mandate.*

Annex II: Examples of United Nations electoral assistance provided during the reporting period



Voting at a polling station in Gao, Mali run-off presidential elections 2018. © MINUSMA/ Marco Dormino

ARMENIA

1. In preparation for early parliamentary elections, held in December 2018, the United Nations, through a project of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), supported the Central Election Commission in procuring electoral materials, training polling staff on voter authentication devices, developing a searchable voter list application and implementing its voter education programme.

EL SALVADOR

2. In preparation for the February 2019 presidential election, the United Nations supported the training and capacity-building of the electoral tribunal, facilitated dialogue forums for national actors and helped raise awareness of violence against women during elections. The entities involved, UNDP and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), promoted and supported the conclusion, in October 2018, of a political pact for the guarantee of the human rights of women among political parties, candidates and the electoral management body, which included commitments to stop violence against women. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) monitored the protection of human rights in the context of the elections and supported the national human rights institution in that regard.

GUINEA-BISSAU*

3. The United Nations, through an integrated effort by the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau and UNDP, provided technical, financial and material support to the national election commission and the technical office in support of the electoral process for the legislative elections held in March 2019. The Organization also provided assistance in the establishment of what is referred to as an "election situation room", a civil society platform established in some countries to track information about electoral developments, mitigate the risk of violence and help increase the participation of women and youth. The Peacebuilding Commission was engaged in sustaining international support for the timely conduct of inclusive and peaceful elections and to advocate a quota for women in parliament. The United Nations further supported national authorities in the drafting and adoption, in December 2018, of a gender parity law, which requires that the share of women on party candidate lists must be at least 36 per cent. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa and the Sahel complemented the good offices efforts of the mission, carried out in collaboration with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and other international organizations.

HONDURAS

4. Honduras held general elections in November 2017. The United Nations continued to provide technical support for the electoral tribunal through a UNDP project that had been active since 2015. The full implementation of the project was hindered by interrupted and partial funding. OHCHR, pursuant to an agreement with the Government of Honduras signed in 2015, monitored the protection of human rights in the context of the election and the protests that followed. A public report detailing the findings of OHCHR was issued in May 2018. In the post-electoral period, the United Nations supported a high-level dialogue among political parties that led to a consensus on the creation of two new electoral entities, namely, a national electoral council and an electoral tribunal, as well as reforms to the civil registry, and the enactment of those reforms by the National Congress in February 2019.

IRAQ*

5. Pursuant to Security Council resolution 1770 (2007), the United Nations continued to support the efforts of Iraq to reform its electoral laws, institutions and processes and to promote the political participation and representation of women and minorities in the electoral process. In the context of the May 2018 legislative elections (the first following the defeat of Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant and the fourth under the 2005 Constitution), the Organization provided technical assistance to the Independent High Electoral Commission, including in the use of new election technologies. The United Nations also provided technical support to the legislative elections held in September 2018 in the Kurdistan region, organized for the first time by the regional election authority.

LEBANON

6. Following the adoption of new electoral legislation, parliamentary elections were held in May 2018, the first since 2009. The United Nations provided technical assistance to the Ministry of Interior and Municipalities, the Supervisory Commission for Elections and a number of civil society organizations. The Organization, through the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon, UNDP and UN Women and including the participation of the United Nations Volunteers programme, provided support in such areas as candidate registration, the training of election officials, the design and production of new uniform ballots, the management of results and the monitoring of the media. The United Nations also advocated and supported efforts to increase the political participation of women.

LIBERIA*

7. In preparation for the presidential and legislative elections held in October and December 2017, the United Nations provided logistical and technical support to the National Elections Commission, as well as training in the management of election security to Liberian security agencies. Its support was aimed at improving electoral institutions, processes and laws, increasing women's political participation and training young journalists on conflict-sensitive reporting in the context of elections. In addition, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Liberia engaged in good offices efforts in collaboration with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa and the Sahel; Olusegun Obasanjo, the former President of Nigeria (a member of the Secretary-General's High-level Advisory Board on Mediation); and representatives of the African Union and ECOWAS. In the post-election period, UNDP support was focused on electoral reform, the development of the National Elections Commission's administrative support systems and the rehabilitation of the Commission's warehouses.



Polling official, Liberia presidential run-off election, 2017. © UNDP Liberia



Vote counting, legislative elections 2019, Madagascar. © Josselin Brémaud

MADAGASCAR

8. At the request of the Government, the United Nations, through UNDP and others, provided technical assistance to the Independent National Electoral Commission for the presidential election in November and December 2018 and the legislative elections in May 2019. Areas of support included capacity-building of the electoral authority, advice on electoral legislation, support for the consultative framework and civic education, and strengthening of the capacity of women candidates. The Special Adviser of the Secretary-General on Madagascar and the resident coordinator provided good offices in the lead-up to the presidential election, in coordination with envoys of other organizations. Those efforts helped to support a peaceful transition of power following the presidential election.

MALI*

9. Pursuant to Security Council resolution 2423 (2018), the United Nations provided logistical and technical assistance, as well as aid to national security forces, for the conduct of the presidential election in August 2018, mainly through the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali and UNDP. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Mali provided good offices in close collaboration with representatives of the African Union and ECOWAS. The Organization, including through UN-Women, also supported efforts to increase women's electoral participation, including through educational campaigns and technical assistance for women's organizations.

NEPAL

10. The United Nations, through a UNDP project, provided capacity-building assistance to the Election Commission for the preparation and conduct, in 2017, of local, provincial and national elections, followed by indirect elections for the National Assembly (the upper house), President and Vice-President. The elections were part of a political process that had ended a 10-year conflict. They also marked the start of the devolution of power to newly established provincial and local governments, as envisaged in the Constitution adopted in 2015.



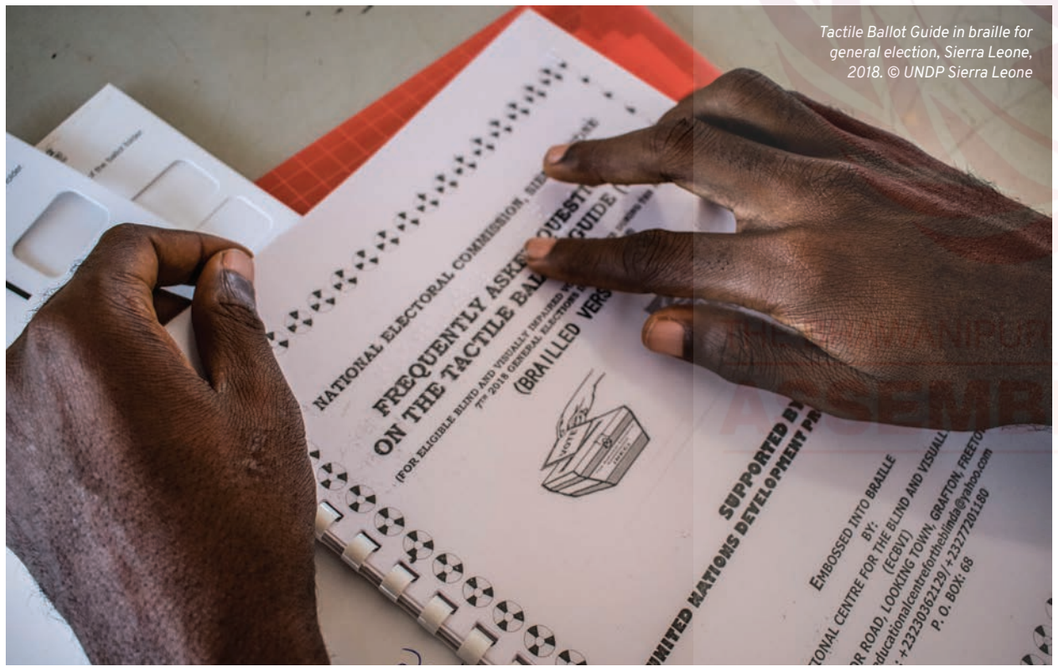
Women voters on election day, Lalitpur, Nepal. © UNDP Electoral Support Project (ESP), Nepal

REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

11. Parliamentary elections were held in February 2019. Through UNDP and UN Women, the United Nations supported the electoral process with the aim of strengthening its transparency, credibility and inclusiveness. This included building the capacity of the Central Electoral Commission through the use of modern information technology infrastructure; promoting women's participation; supporting the participation of persons, in particular women, with disabilities; furnishing technical advice on electoral systems and processes; carrying out voter information and civic education initiatives; and supporting civil society organizations and other electoral stakeholders.

SIERRA LEONE

12. The United Nations supported the National Electoral Commission in strengthening its planning and management capacity and its results management system for the presidential, parliamentary and local elections held in March 2018. The Organization also supported efforts to increase women's participation, to prevent violence against women in elections and to develop conflict prevention and mitigation initiatives focused on the peaceful resolution of electoral disputes. The entities involved in those activities within their respective areas of work were UNDP, UN Women, OHCHR and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, with the support of the Peacebuilding Fund. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa and the Sahel, in collaboration with representatives of other organizations, engaged in good offices to support the peaceful acceptance of the outcome of the presidential run-off election. The United Nations and other international actors continued to encourage dialogue among key stakeholders after tensions rose following a ruling in which the High Court overturned a number of parliamentary election results.



Tactile Ballot Guide in braille for general election, Sierra Leone, 2018. © UNDP Sierra Leone



Referendum on self-determination, New Caledonia, 2018. © Ali Diabacte

NEW CALEDONIA

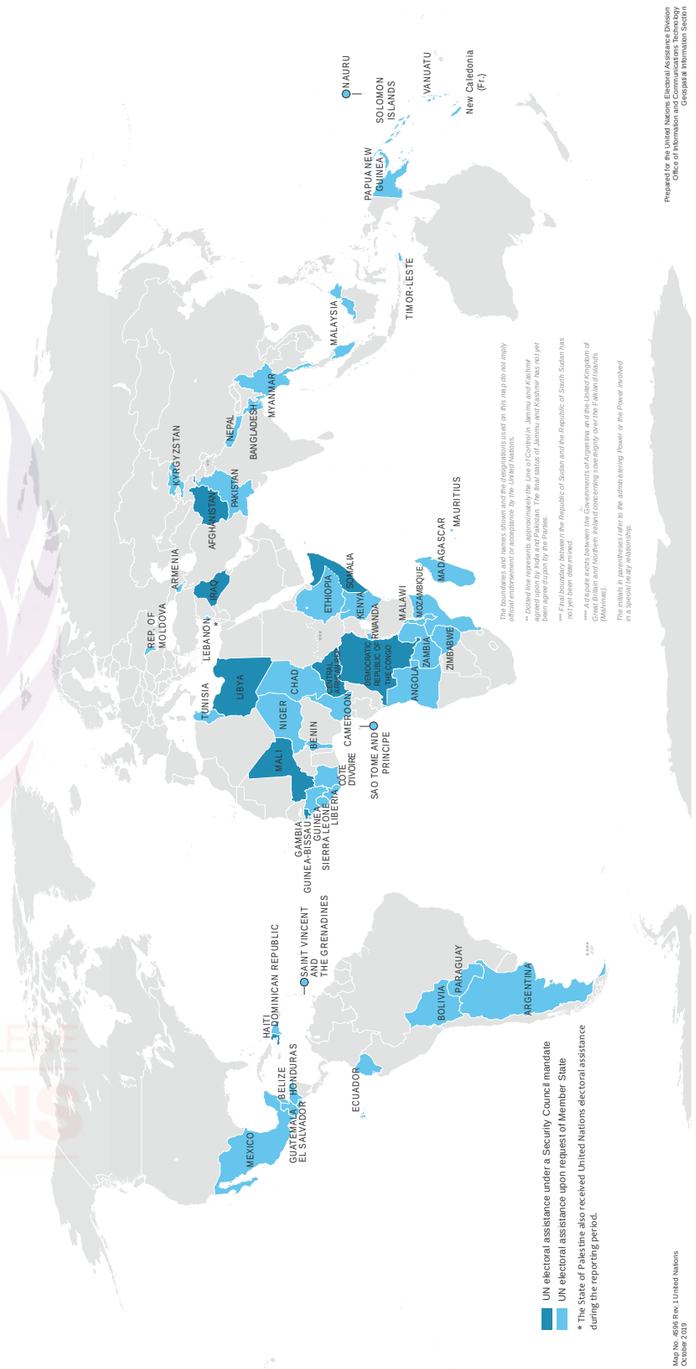
13. Pursuant to a request from the Government of France in 2016, the United Nations, through a project administratively supported by the United Nations Office for Project Services, deployed experts to advise the relevant authorities during the annual update of the special voter rolls in preparation for provincial elections and a referendum on self-determination in New Caledonia in November 2018. Similarly, in 2019, experts were deployed during the annual update of the voter rolls. In addition to this advisory capacity, the United Nations deployed a panel of experts to report to the Secretary-General on the environment and the technical organization of the referendum and to provide recommendations to the Government of France and New Caledonian stakeholders.



Outside polling station, Nauru election 2019. © UNDP Nauru Election Support Project (NESP)

Annex III: Map of States and Territories that received United Nations electoral assistance during the reporting period

1 AUGUST 2017–31 JULY 2019



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हातहतियार निषेध
बाहिर




VOTING STEPS
AT THE POLLING STATION
PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS
PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION














ELECTORAL COMMISSION
NAOERO
ELECTORAL COMMISSION
NAOERO





ABOUT THIS REPORT

The United Nations has been providing electoral assistance to Member States since its early years. Demand continues to be strong: at present, almost a third of the Organization's membership benefits from some form of assistance. In this special edition of the report to the General Assembly, the United Nations Secretary-General looks back at the electoral activities of the UN system in the period between mid-2017 and mid-2019. It sets out his reflections on typical challenges that Member States face in conducting credible elections. These include questions related to the responsibility of political leaders for a successful election; winning elections magnanimously – and losing them graciously; the limitations in responding positively to requests for UN electoral assistance; and the slow progress in improving women's participation. The report also pays considerable attention to the use of social media and internet in elections, including disinformation and hate speech, and shines a spotlight on the role of courts in resolving electoral disputes.

REPORT AVAILABLE IN OFFICIAL UN LANGUAGES
https://undocs.org/A/74/285

STRATEGIC PLAN

2023-2026

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DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL AND PEACEBUILDING AFFAIRS

DPPA

Preventing Conflict. **Sustaining Peace**

STRATEGIC PLAN

2023-2026 IIII

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ASSEMBLY OF NATIONS

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VISION OF THE UNITED NATIONS PEACE AND SECURITY PILLAR

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Adapting to the peace and security challenges of the future

The United Nations peace and security pillar is at the core of the Organization's global mandates to prevent and resolve violent conflict. Within a changing and challenging geopolitical landscape, the number of crises around the world has grown and distinct crises have converged. The Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA) and the Department of Peace Operations (DPO) and their field operations have been called upon by the Secretary-General to enhance the UN's capacities to prevent, manage and resolve conflict and sustain peace and to work more efficiently, effectively, inclusively and innovatively to deliver collective impact on the ground. In line with the Secretary-General's report *Our Common Agenda*, issued in response to the UN75 Declaration of September 2020, his *New Agenda for Peace* calls for renewed commitments to the collective security system and puts forward proposals to revitalize multilateral action to reduce risks and address threats.

In a context of growing polarization at the national and international levels, political processes and conflict management initiatives are becoming more fraught and fragile. Megatrends such as the climate emergency, digital disruption and inequality are increasingly playing central roles as drivers of more localized conflicts, while crises are becoming multifaceted and overlapping, combining, for example, violent conflict with public health emergencies. Going forward, to play its central role in preventing, managing and resolving conflicts, the Organization will need to develop more holistic, integrated strategies to address peace and security challenges comprehensively. Ensuring that DPPA and DPO are effective and impactful in today's diversifying and highly complex contexts requires a learning and innovative approach with inclusion at its centre. Building on DPPA's 2019 Women, Peace and Security Policy and DPO's Action for Peacekeeping Initiative, the two Departments are also working to fast-track women's full, equal and meaningful participation in peace and political processes through bold leadership and targeted measures that address entrenched obstacles to women's participation, protection, and rights.

Consolidating and strengthening the peace and security pillar

Over the past several years, DPPA and DPO have undertaken significant efforts to harmonize work processes, consolidate management practices, and build a common culture across the two Departments. These efforts have borne fruit. The shared regional political-operational structure is working with increasing cohesion to join regional scope and strategies with country-based analysis and planning. In the pursuit of these goals, peacebuilding support is being more seamlessly integrated into political and programming strategies in both mission and non-mission settings, promoting more inclusive, durable and sustainable peace processes that incorporate, for example, the perspectives of minorities, indigenous groups, and other marginalized communities. Staff across the pillar seek to forge strategies that combine short- and long-term solutions. Activities to achieve a cessation of hostilities or a political settlement, for example, benefit from the accumulated experience and the structural resilience brought about by peacebuilding and development work. While the Departments retain discrete mandates, plans, and sources of funding, they draw on an evolving set of tools and resources that are employed flexibly in mission and non-mission settings to deliver increasingly strategic results.

Peacekeeping operations and special political missions are increasingly able to make use of a broad range of expertise across the two Departments, including mediation support; military, police and rule of law and security institutions expertise; electoral assistance; climate, peace and security analysis; and peacebuilding support. The Action for Peacekeeping Plus (A4P+) initiative is designed to accelerate the progress made by the UN and its partners to improve the impact and effectiveness of peacekeeping operations in supporting conflict-affected countries to transition to durable peace. In the same vein, the Departments now regularly conduct joint learning exercises to generate insights and identify opportunities to strengthen the effectiveness of their activities and operations.

The process of digital transformation across the two Departments, hastened by the COVID-19 pandemic, has facilitated the creation of common work processes and platforms for cooperation. Going forward, the two Departments have considerable opportunities to jointly advance the goals of the "Quintet of Change" set out in *Our Common Agenda*, which highlights key areas of transformation to develop and scale new capabilities that promote agility, integration, and cohesion across the UN system. The Departments will leverage their respective comparative advantages to advance joint and UN-wide data, analysis and communications tools and working methods; innovation and digital transformation resources and technical support; strategic foresight capabilities; performance- and results-oriented decision-making and operational mechanisms; and behavioural science insights.

Informed by an ongoing process of staff consultation, DPPA and DPO are working to leverage the structural reforms to forge a stronger, common professional culture and management environment across the pillar that empowers and fosters creativity, collaboration and innovation through the #BuildingOurPillar initiative.

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Our shared priorities

Our ability to achieve these goals will be strengthened by deepening our commitment to a number of shared priorities. These include:

Politics: We work towards the promotion of political solutions to conflicts, which are a prerequisite to sustainable peace.

People: We work to engage societies beyond political elites and ground our action in a deep knowledge of socio-economic, environmental, and structural aspects of the communities and peoples we serve. We are committed to promoting peaceful, just and inclusive societies, centred on human rights for all people, including by integrating a gender perspective and taking measures to advance the participation, protection, and rights of women, youth, and marginalized groups or communities.

Impact: We support effective and efficient field presences, working to maximize their impact and deliver positive change on the ground.

Partnerships: We engage in partnerships across the United Nations system, with Member States, with international, regional, sub-regional organizations, and with local institutions and actors.

Digital transformation, data and innovation: We embrace the opportunities of digital transformation, use of data, and a culture of innovation to advance our work on peace, while being mindful of new challenges generated by digital hate speech and disinformation, cyber security, and other emerging risks.

Staff: Our most crucial resource is our staff, who carry this vision into action. We will rely on and invest in them to build a culture of mutual learning, creativity, growth, and ownership.

STRATEGIC PLAN
2023-2026

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Overview and context analysis

A more complex and crisis-driven context in a new geostrategic era

The international peace and security landscape has transformed rapidly over the last few years. Geostrategic competition at the global and regional levels has reached heights not seen since the Cold War. The war in Ukraine accelerated trends that, while visible for most of the last decade, are redefining international relations and mark the end of the post-Cold War period. While the contours of the emerging global order remain to be defined, we are undergoing a significant and inherently unstable transition. This period will be characterized not only by intense competition for power, security and regional influence but also by competing interpretations of the normative underpinnings of the international system.

Meanwhile, multiple threats to global peace and security are converging. Armed conflicts continue to exact a devastating toll. Digital technologies, hate speech and disinformation are having a significant effect on national- and regional-level conflict dynamics. Populism is on the rise, and democracy is being challenged. An existential climate crisis has profound implications for peace and security. The COVID-19 pandemic has undermined trust in institutions and exacerbated inequality and tensions. The pandemic is estimated to have erased six years' worth of progress in human development, and, even prior to it, only 18 per cent of countries affected by conflict or facing humanitarian crisis were on track to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

Together, these interlocking threats have systemic implications that compound their individual effects. And yet, growing divisions at the global level make multilateral action to address them more difficult. Maintaining peace and security will require new approaches: prioritizing areas where the UN can make a difference; learning how to operate when political space is narrow and our work more contested; and reasserting our impartiality – including by working more effectively with a wider range of Member States. We need to build guardrails – at the global, regional and national levels – to absorb shocks which could trigger escalation and conflict.

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In the coming four years, DPPA will have a crucial role to play in helping shape how the UN adapts its work to this new global environment and in supporting the Secretary-General and the wider system to chart the path through this transition.

As the UN Department with primary responsibility for operationalizing the Organization's work to promote the pacific settlement of disputes, DPPA will seek to elaborate and apply new approaches to its conflict prevention, peace-making and sustaining peace mandates and help address new peace and security challenges while redoubling efforts to resolve long-standing ones. In doing so, the Department will work to maximize the potential of the "diplomatic toolbox" of the UN Charter, as called for by Member States in the UN75 Declaration.

The Secretary-General's forthcoming *New Agenda for Peace* will lay out a set of recommendations to address peace and security challenges for the consideration of Member States at the Summit of the Future in September 2024. DPPA has a lead role in the development of the *New Agenda for Peace* and in operationalizing new steps to manage risks, with a focus on:

- Prevention, by helping revitalize the mechanisms contained in Chapter VI of the Charter and investing in national capacities for prevention;
- Peacebuilding, including by strengthening the role of the Peacebuilding Commission as a body that can help mobilize international political and financial support for sustaining peace at the national level, with robust support from the Peacebuilding Fund to align strategic priorities with programmatic action;
- Inclusion, to make progress in promoting women's participation in political processes; and
- Investments – political and financial – for conflict prevention and peacebuilding.

More broadly, the *New Agenda for Peace* will look to renew Member States' commitments to the collective security system and to collective action to build trust, reduce risks and address threats. It will demonstrate that even in a more divided world, Member States can move away from a logic of competition to embrace cooperation towards shared interests and in response to shared challenges.

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Preventing and resolving conflict

It is expected that the demand for DPPA's work to prevent and resolve violent conflict will remain high. 2021 recorded a global increase of 46 per cent in deaths from organized violence, following several years of decline.[1] The war in Ukraine has shaken the foundations of both the United Nations system and the Charter and will continue to reverberate throughout the period of this Strategic Plan. It has aggravated a global food and energy crisis, with effects across multiple regions including many conflict-affected countries where DPPA is engaged. Major conflicts, political crises and complex transitions, such as those in Afghanistan, Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa, Libya, Myanmar, Sudan, Syria, West Africa and the Sahel, and Yemen demand an increasing share of the Department's attention. These threaten to burden existing crisis management systems, while putting pressure on the political space and resources available for conflict prevention.

During 2023-2026, DPPA foresees increased demand for: support to strengthening national capacities for conflict prevention; facilitating dialogue; preventive diplomacy; advancing inclusive political and peace processes; providing electoral assistance, and contributing to long-term sustaining peace efforts by Member States. In working across these areas, DPPA will harness the network of field presences it oversees: Special Political Missions (SPMs), liaison offices to regional organizations, as well as Peace and Development Advisers (PDAs) jointly deployed with UNDP. Continued progress on the structural integration of DPPA, leveraging the role of the Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO) and the programming supported by the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF), as well as closer collaboration with the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), will further contribute to enhancing prevention and sustaining peace. DPPA will continue to work with partners across the development, humanitarian and human rights pillars of the Organization, in particular, Resident Coordinators (RCs) and UN Country Teams (UNCTs), working in complex political situations, to offer political analysis, guidance and support and advance cohesive UN action grounded in conflict sensitivity and political approaches. In all areas of our work, we will continue to explore innovative practices and technologies to enable more data-driven, evidence-based and anticipatory decision-making.

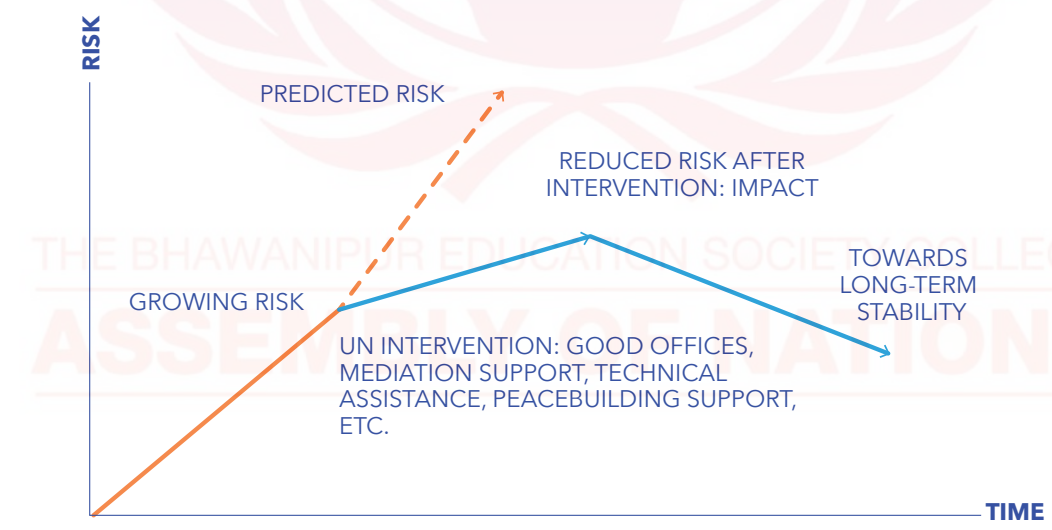
[1] Shawn Davies, Therése Pettersson and Magnus Öberg, 2022. "Organized Violence 1989–2021 and Drone Warfare." *Journal of Peace Research*, 59 (4).

Theory of change

If DPPA deploys the full range of its resources based on cross-cutting analysis, in collaboration with others within the UN system and in partnerships with regional, national and local stakeholders, drawing on an internal culture shaped by a commitment to learning and innovation, it will contribute to the prevention and resolution of violent conflict and to sustainable peace.

DPPA's overarching priority is to anticipate and contribute to a reduction in the risk of the outbreak, escalation, continuation and recurrence of violent conflict globally, while also helping move towards recovery, increased inclusion, social cohesion, resilience and development. While demand for its services has grown, the fundamental understanding of how, when and why DPPA's work is effective in meeting this objective remains unchanged from the 2020-2022 Strategic Plan. However, as recommended by the mid-term review of the previous Strategic Plan, the Results Framework accompanying the 2023-2026 Plan articulates more explicitly and in greater detail how the theory plays out in operational terms, at different levels of the Plan's Objectives and with different tools and partners.

The risk reduction model for DPPA's work



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DPPA's impact in contributing to the prevention and resolution of violence conflict and to sustainable peace can be understood in terms of a "risk reduction model," under which the Department continuously works to reduce the risk of the outbreak, escalation or recurrence of violent conflict, often as one actor among many. The model rejects the notions that the impact of the UN can be measured in terms of the simple binary of "whether or not conflict occurred," nor whether its efforts were a "success or failure." Instead, we must examine the extent to which DPPA has contributed to a diminishment in the risks of violence across a wide range of settings and timeframes, and in conjunction with other actors.

Devising and coordinating political strategy across the UN system

In practice, DPPA contributes to the reduction of risk through its leading role in designing and coordinating the UN's political and peacebuilding responses, both in the face of acute risks of conflict, and with respect to longer-term conflict prevention and sustaining peace efforts. The Department works across multiple types of interventions to facilitate delivery of a strategic, coherent and sustainable political strategy for ending violent conflict, reducing risk, and promoting long-term resilience and stability.

In devising strategies for integrated political responses, DPPA draws on internal capacities and resources - that is, the regional divisions shared between DPPA and DPO - and from other parts of the UN system. SPMs and special envoys, supported by DPPA, bring the Secretary-General's good offices directly to conflict parties to help defuse tensions, end violence, build peace processes, and reduce risk over time. DPPA's Policy and Mediation Division supports peace and dialogue processes, and provides expert advice on process design, constitutional assistance, ceasefires and gender inclusion, among others, completing 142 operational deployments in 2021 as well as provides advice and devises support on innovation and technologies across the peace and security pillar. Leveraging the role of PBSO as a connector to key partners such as the international financial institutions (IFIs), and in close coordination with Resident Coordinators and UN Country Teams is essential to support informed, joint analysis and their design of in-country responses to advance sustainable development.

As such, DPPA is necessarily a crisis actor, engaging in crisis diplomacy and management in tandem with SPMs, UNCTs, envoys and through its own staff, and at the same time, works towards implementing its core mandate of conflict prevention and sustaining peace. This requires an ability to prioritize, when necessary, but both key functions must be carried out as part of DPPA's overall approach to conflict as the Organization's lead actor in peace and security. DPPA often leads the development of political analysis and strategy, and guides the UN system, including by convening actors across the system and helping shape politically informed approaches that contribute to reducing the risks of conflict.

Assumptions and risks underlying the theory of change

The theory of change makes five key assumptions about the nature of conflict and international peace and security landscape during the 2023-2026 period, and the role and positioning of DPPA. Should these assumptions fail to hold due to the risks discussed below, DPPA's capacity to execute its mandate according to the theory of change could be compromised.

First, because risk of conflict is complex, multidimensional and involves varying timescales, DPPA's responses must involve a flexible combination of interventions that range from political engagements aimed at reducing the risks of immediate escalation, to the facilitation of inclusive peace processes, to support for peacebuilding initiatives that build resilience and ultimately help a country along on the path to sustainable development.[2]

Second, DPPA is often one among multiple actors. Regional and sub-regional organizations, other international, national and local actors frequently work alongside the UN, with varying degrees of coordination.

[2] DPPA's understanding of the causal pathways for conflict escalation and de-escalation are generally contained in the 2018 joint UN-World Bank study *Pathways to Peace: Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict*, to which it was a major contributor. Retrieved from: https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/28337.

The Department's impact must therefore be measured as much in terms of its effects in enabling and maximizing the efforts of others to reduce risk as by its direct political engagement with conflict drivers and actors. DPPA will seek out and maximize its added value and comparative advantages in each situation.

Third, the theory of change assumes that, within the UN system, DPPA will continue play a leadership role in analyzing, advising on and taking action when faced with risks of violent conflict, under the broader rubric of the Secretary-General's mandate and authority, and with respect to the UN's global conflict prevention mandate. This will require clarity on the intention and direction of DPPA's role both within evolving UN institutional structures and across the international system.

Fourth, perceptions of the UN in general and DPPA in particular; levels of national and regional comfort with international involvement; and the breadth and depth of pre-existing relationships will affect the Department's impact. In a global context in which disinformation is being used to advance political agendas with increasing frequency, effective strategic communications, multilingualism and strong anticipatory relationships are likely to be decisive for DPPA's ability to have an effect. At the international level, when there is a lack of consensus among key global powers – including within the Security Council – on the role for the UN in a given situation, it is challenging for the Secretariat, including DPPA, to decisively influence a situation.

Fifth, the implementation of the Strategic Plan is dependent on the availability of sufficient, predictable and sustained resources. DPPA's primary source of financing is the regular programme budget of the United Nations, which remains under considerable strain. With the growth in demand for DPPA activities at Headquarters and on the ground, the Department has come to rely increasingly on voluntary contributions for both core needs and capacities, and for operational and programming engagement in the field, including travel. The Multi-Year Appeal is DPPA's primary extra-budgetary instrument and is calling for $170 million until 2026.

Goals and objectives

The Strategic Plan organizes the Department's work into three broad Goals, two of which are externally facing and one of which is more focused on internal systems and working methods. Under each Goal are more specific Objectives, which describe discrete areas of work that will contribute to the achievement of the Goals. Together, these Goals and Objectives underpin the Department's Results Framework, which will be used to monitor and report on its performance. DPPA's Multi-Year Appeal, in turn, funds activities and additional capacities across all the Goals and Objectives.

Goals 1 and 2 divide DPPA's substantive work into two categories, the first covering the Department's engagement in specific conflict situations, and the second on DPPA's interaction with, and contribution to, the mechanisms and frameworks that constitute the international architecture for peace and security.

Goal 1 is concerned with how DPPA, SPMs, and other field presences support the Secretary-General in preventing and resolving conflict and sustaining peace in specific field situations. This work includes "good offices", preventive diplomacy, mediation and crisis resolution to electoral assistance and local-level programmatic initiatives and the strengthening of national institutions to build peace.

Goal 2 is concerned with DPPA's contribution to the multilateral system for international peace and security at the global and regional levels. This includes its mandated support of UN bodies and mechanisms, its efforts to advance critical normative agendas, such as Women, Peace and Security (WPS) and Youth, Peace and Security (YPS), and its engagement on major trends that impact conflict dynamics, such as the effects of climate change and the roles played by digital technologies. The two Goals are closely linked, and both focus on partnership building, enhancing inclusion, working with civil society, and greater use of data analytics, innovation and evidence-based analysis, policies, and political strategies.

GOAL 1

Preventing and resolving violent conflicts and sustaining peace

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

1 

Analysis

2 

Crisis response and support to "good offices"

3 

Longer-term prevention and peacebuilding support

GOAL 2

A more effective multilateral architecture for international peace and security

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

4 

Support to UN bodies

5 

Multilateral partnerships and frameworks

GOAL 3

A stronger, more diverse and more effective Department

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

6 

Innovation and continuous learning

7 

A more collaborative, creative, diverse, inclusive and empowering work environment

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GOAL 1 Preventing and resolving violent conflicts and sustaining peace

Through its network of SPMs, PDAs, Headquarters-based capacities and field presences and working with the UN system (notably RCs and UNCTs) and external partners, DPPA will act in response to violent conflict that is occurring or at risk of breaking out. This work, which is central to the operationalization of Chapter VI of the Charter, encompasses a wide variety of tools and approaches such as mediation, preventive diplomacy and support to peacebuilding delivered through operational activities of Headquarters staff, SPMs and other field entities. It also includes peacebuilding programming and support that strengthen national resilience, local mediation capacities and mechanisms for social cohesion. It further comprises the identification and implementation of measures to ensure the full, equal and meaningful participation of women and to engage young people, as well as groups that are marginalized or at risk of being left behind.



Objective 1. Analysis

DPPA will conduct analysis of country and regional situations to provide situational awareness to the Secretary-General and Member States, support early warning, inform inclusive political strategies and new operational activities, and identify entry points for action at Headquarters, by SPMs, and among other UN entities and presences in the field. The Department will provide timely, integrated, multidimensional, gender-responsive, data-driven and climate-informed analysis, leading to UN responses that are better informed and targeted. DPPA's analysis will also support, and provide political guidance to, the work of other parts of the UN system, including through Headquarters mechanisms such as the Secretary-General's Executive Committee and Regional Monthly Reviews; regional and country-level analytical and planning documents, such as Common Country Analyses (CCAs) and Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks (SDCFs), integrating political analysis with, among others, human rights, socio-economic and humanitarian lenses. Analysis also draws on, and informs, the work of external partners, for example the World Bank through its fragility assessments, as well as regional development banks, civil society (including women's and youth groups), regional and sub-regional organizations, and the international research community.

The Department continuously works to improve and innovate in its use of methods, practices and processes for developing and communicating analysis such as the use of digital technologies, new forms of data, and visualization tools across the peace and security pillar. DPPA also strives to expand its analytical scope to systematically integrate emerging peace and security issues, including the effects of climate change, into foresight. DPPA will seek to improve the rigour and depth of its analyses by employing a range of futures thinking methodologies, and by periodically conducting deeper analytical exercises on country and regional situations identified through a prioritization process that will form part of regional divisions' work plans. These exercises will seek to promote creative and unconventional thinking, including by employing "Red Teams" or other sources of external review to challenge assumptions, mitigate cognitive bias (including in relation to gender or race), and hedge against institutional orthodoxies.



Objective 2. Crisis response and support to "good offices"

DPPA has a leadership role to play within the UN system to promote the pacific resolution of disputes, including under Chapter VI of the Charter. It works to identify and open entry points for action and formulate, plan and operationalize political strategies to resolve violent conflicts peacefully. As part of the UN's responses to emerging and ongoing conflict, DPPA and its components, including SPMs, directly execute activities such as crisis response, preventive diplomacy, and mediation, and provide political guidance to the activities of others at Headquarters and in the field, in partnership and operational coordination with other national, regional, and international actors. This entails convening the relevant actors and rallying them around politically informed approaches and strategies that contribute to reducing the risks of conflict and sustaining peace. In this respect, DPPA offers guidance and support, particularly to actors across the three pillars of the United Nations.

DPPA will ensure that its approach is rapid and flexible and supportive of multi-track efforts that promote inclusivity and sustainable peace outcomes. The Department seeks to advance women's direct participation through targeted measures, effectively engage women's groups and women-led civil society and integrate gender expertise to ensure gender-responsive work. It similarly seeks to systematically enhance the participation of youth in peace and security dialogue and processes, including through support to and engagement with youth associations and groups. By being reflective of a diverse set of voices and experiences, DPPA will be able to provide appropriate and effective expertise to crisis responses in both mission and non-mission settings, including advice to RCs and UNCTs, as well as other UN partners that engage with political and conflict actors.



Objective 3. Longer-term prevention and peacebuilding support

DPPA works with partners to help build national capacities for inclusive dialogue, conflict prevention and peacebuilding and sustaining peace in accordance with national priorities. The Department will support national actors, including civil society organizations, through, for example, electoral assistance, SPMs' work to deliver local capacity-building initiatives, and technical support to national dialogue initiatives, in addition to the Peacebuilding Fund's support through its Gender and Youth Promotion Initiatives.

As part of this work, it will contribute to stronger linkages between humanitarian-development-peace work and provide political guidance for the design and implementation of programming by UNCTs. This includes support on key issue areas in peace and political processes, including on WPS, YPS, climate, peace and security, and efforts to combat hate speech and misinformation, all of which underscore the importance of holistic and people-centered approaches. Such approaches also contribute to the promotion of mental health and psychosocial support through DPPA's conflict resolution, prevention, and peacebuilding engagements. Longer-term prevention and peacebuilding support also includes focus on UN mission transitions, in which continued political engagement and catalytic support to programming such as that provided by the Peacebuilding Fund can play a critical role to shore up hardwon gains.

Ultimately, the emphasis lies on contributing to the achievement of sustained peace and sustainable development, with transitions away from a mission deployment in countries and regions where this is the case. This work overall requires consistent relationship-building with national, regional, and international partners through regular dialogue and joint initiatives, including through south-south and triangular cooperation as well as fragile-to-fragile cooperation and an enhanced focus on civil society, including women-led civil society, youth, and other marginalized communities.

GOAL 2 A more effective multilateral architecture for international peace and security

DPPA serves and helps the international peace and security architecture and contributes to more effective and networked multilateralism. This includes the support DPPA provides to UN bodies (including the Security Council, the General Assembly, the Peacebuilding Commission, and other subsidiary organs) to enable them to effectively perform their functions and deliver on their respective mandates, as well as innovation in the types and methods of support DPPA provides. It also concerns the building of strategic partnerships with other multilateral organizations, including regional and sub-regional organizations and IFIs, that establish the frameworks for cooperation on specific situations foreseen under Goal 1. DPPA further plays an important leadership role in advancing the UN's normative role on priority global issues affecting peace and conflict dynamics.



Objective 4. Support to UN bodies

DPPA provides support to UN organs and bodies, including its assistance to the Security Council and analytical outputs on Council precedent and practice, the Peacebuilding Commission, the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (CEIRPP), and the Special Committee on Decolonization (C-24).

DPPA will continue to enhance its administrative, analytical and technical support to UN bodies, facilitating Member State decision-making and communicating with wider UN stakeholders, in order to position multilateral architecture for international peace and security to be more effective, credible, inclusive and complementary. DPPA will encourage and enable innovation in how the UN's support is delivered, including by leveraging digital technologies and data platforms to deliver visualizations of information and analysis in support of better informed and more efficient decision-making.



Objective 5. Multilateral partnerships and frameworks

DPPA builds strategic institutional relationships, including substantive and capacity- building partnerships, with multilateral and regional and subregional organizations, and contributes to the global normative discourse on critical issues of international peace and security. The Department also plays an important role in implementing aspects of the Secretary- General's Call to Action for Human Rights and works closely with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). DPPA will similarly seek to increase engagement on conflict prevention and crisis responses with non-traditional partners that may be expected to play increasingly important roles in international peace and security framework and operations in the coming years, such as the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), or youth-focused actors. Continuing to build and strengthen these partnerships will enhance its capacity and those of its partners to act effectively to reduce conflict and sustain peace. Critically, this will include efforts to ensure that investments by partners are conflict-sensitive and peace-supporting. DPPA is central to advancing the UN's normative role within the multilateral system and the broader public discourse, for instance on the WPS agenda and on priority global issues affecting conflict dynamics, such as the accelerating effects of climate change and the impacts of digital technologies on peace and security.

GOAL 3 A stronger, more diverse and more effective Department

DPPA strives to be an inclusive, collaborative, creative, diverse, innovative and learning work environment that supports staff in continuous improvement, innovation, and enhances cross-pillar cohesion, to strengthen internal effectiveness, coherence, and efficiency.



Objective 6. Innovation and continuous learning

DPPA undertakes active formal and informal learning in the Department to feed innovation and continuous improvement of staff skills, technical tools, and working methods, while improving its digital infrastructure and approach. Jointly with DPO wherever appropriate, the Department systematically reflects on its work and translates these lessons into improvements to its policies, procedures, tools, and skills-based training, while at the same time undertaking targeted initiatives to generate innovative new approaches and working methods across the peace and security pillar. This includes innovations that help DPPA and its partners reach a broader and more gender- and age- diverse set of interlocutors, and reinforces efforts to implement the zero-tolerance policy for sexual exploitation and abuse. The lessons learnt through these processes inform Department- and pillar-wide efforts to devise new strategies, ways of working, and tools to improve mandate delivery. The evidence of the Department's impact also supports a more deliberate approach to strategic communications to effectively convey DPPA's work and impact to Member States and beyond.

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Objective 7. A more collaborative, creative, diverse, inclusive and empowering work environment

DPPA's diversity is its strength. More inclusive and collaborative approaches to its tools and working methods will increase its impact in preventing and resolving violent conflict and sustaining peace. The Department will work proactively to improve its operational, administrative, management and recruitment practices and culture to enhance the effectiveness and diversity of its staff in delivering on their responsibilities, and to empower staff to take appropriate action. DPPA aspires to be part of a cohesive, integrated peace and security pillar that encourages and catalyzes innovation in tools, frameworks and working methods, combats prejudice, discrimination and racism, and promotes LGBTIQ+ and disability inclusion. As efforts to achieve gender parity continue, DPPA will continue to advance the empowerment of women at all levels. The Department will leverage innovative practices and techniques for collaboration, accountability mechanisms, training programmes and internal communications and decision-making channels to maximize the collective impact of its staff.

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DPPA's approach

In the execution of its Strategic Plan, DPPA will leverage an array of tools and capacities and adopt several ways of working, guided by a principled approach based on UN values, lessons learned, and the Secretary-General's guidance.

The following considerations will inform the Department's way of doing business:

A field-facing posture

Analysis and expertise must be translated into action in the field to reduce the risks of violent conflict. In 2023-26, DPPA will continue to strengthen the strategic focus and impact of its work in the field with and through SPMs, its liaison offices, and the PDAs deployed under the UNDP-DPPA Joint Programme on Building National Capacities for Conflict Prevention, RCs and UNCTs, and through the programming supported by the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF). DPPA offers political analysis and support both at Headquarters-level and to actors across the UN spectrum deployed in the field. Its Headquarters-centric role, however, must also remain focused on what can be achieved on the ground, including through convening the relevant actors and rallying them around politically informed approaches and strategies for conflict resolution, risk reduction, peacebuilding and sustaining peace.

Prioritization

In a context of constrained resources and multiple crisis situations, DPPA's global mandate contains both crisis response and conflict prevention actions. It presents the Department with numerous competing country and regional situations and mandates. Ensuring that all situations benefit from systematic reviews of political analysis and strategy presents a considerable challenge that has only grown in recent years, as the reforms to the peace and security pillar have meant that the regional Assistant Secretaries-General (ASGs) and divisions are expected to engage substantively with a larger number of situations, demands and mandates.

DPPA regional divisions are expected to regularly apply a set of prioritization criteria to determine analytical and operational priorities. These will include, but are not limited to, the Secretary-General's priorities; Security Council mandates and collective Member State priorities; situations which, according to DPPA's analysis, pose short or medium-term risks of violent conflict that are not likely to be addressed through other channels; the planning cycles of CCAs and SDCFs, where the Department's analysis could add value; and areas in which DPPA's work could offer a unique comparative advantage and return on investment, particularly in light of resource constraints.

Innovation, data and digital transformation

In line with the Secretary-General's "Quintet of Change", the Department will expand efforts to advance innovation, including through digital transformation and the leveraging of data, improving foresight, and strengthening impact measuring through behavioural science, in partnership with DPO, as applicable. In 2020, the Department established a dedicated Innovation Cell to explore new methods and practices in support of conflict prevention, mediation and peacebuilding efforts.

Utilizing the catalytic role of the Innovation Cell but drawing on the capacities of all staff members, DPPA will promote a mindset that constantly scouts new methods, harvests imagination, advances analytics and transformation of process, and explores opportunities for change to create greater impact, incorporating both digital and non-digital approaches as appropriate.

DPPA will continue to increase its work to strengthen data-driven foresight and decision-making in line with its early warning role and in support of UN-wide mechanisms. Consistent with the Secretary-General's Data Strategy and Guidance on Behavioural Science, the Department will emphasize data-related skills while integrating existing digital tools more thoroughly across the workforce and investing in the development of new digital applications and methods.

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Cross-Pillar

DPPA draws upon capacities and expertise across the peace and security pillar, including, above all, the regional divisions shared with DPO. Across the Secretariat, DPPA works with entities such as the Office of Counter-Terrorism (OCT) and the Office for Disarmament Affairs (ODA) – both of which, in addition to DPO, are collaborating with DPPA to elaborate the Secretary-General's *New Agenda for Peace* – in addition to its ongoing partnerships with other actors across the development and human rights pillars and among the humanitarian community. In this respect, its close working relationship with the Resident Coordinator system through the Development Coordination Office (DCO) and UNCTs on the ground is critical to ensure cohesive analysis, approaches and politically informed and sensitive strategies. DPPA also increasingly seeks to work with non-traditional parts of the international system that may become more central to its work in the evolving global context.

DPPA's convening role in the UN system, as well as its participation in the Integration Working Group, are crucial in this regard, bringing together entities across pillars to enhance the individual and collective impact of the United Nations response, with focus on those activities required for sustaining peace. DPPA will also work to further strengthen conflict sensitivity and the incorporation of a strong peacebuilding approach in policy and programming of Agencies, Funds and Programmes across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus and the partnerships with the World Bank, IMF and other international and regional financial institutions. This work is advanced through DPPA's participation in the UN Transitions Project, a collaborative partnership with DCO, UNDP and DPO, offering support to field missions and UNCTs in aligning around shared peacebuilding objectives, and initiating proactive and integrated transition planning. Ultimately, our aspiration is to advance from the deployment of field mission towards UN approaches focused on longer-term sustaining peace and the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

As the climate crisis accelerates, its cascading effects on lives and livelihoods around the world risk undermining DPPA's efforts at prevention, peacebuilding, and peacemaking. Through its role in the inter-agency Climate Security Mechanism (jointly run by DPPA, UNDP, UNEP and DPO), DPPA therefore leverages extensive networks with partners across and beyond the UN system to analyze climate-related security risks and support comprehensive and gender-sensitive prevention and response strategies, while also advocating to ensure that climate-related investments are conflict-sensitive.

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Inclusion

The WPS agenda remains a core priority for the Department. DPPA will accelerate efforts to ensure that a gender perspective and women's participation, protection, and rights are centrally reflected in all of its work. This will include identifying and implementing targeted measures to advance women's direct and meaningful participation, leveraging gender expertise to ensure gender-responsive peacemaking, and meaningfully engaging women's groups and civil society to inform conflict prevention and peacemaking work.

The integration of gender in a wide variety of initiatives ranging from peace process design to constitutions and ceasefires, and from electoral assistance to preventing acts of sexual violence in conflicts, will help to advance women's political participation, and build more sustainable and inclusive political settlements. The Department's growing work on climate, peace and security will also increasingly address gender-sensitive climate security efforts, including on natural resource conflicts. DPPA will continue – and, where funding is available, strengthen – the financing of activities in these and related areas through the Peacebuilding Fund and the Multi-Year Appeal.

The inclusion of young people in promoting and maintaining peace and security processes is also a growing priority for DPPA, pursuant to the Security Council resolutions adopted in recent years. DPPA, as a global co-lead on the YPS agenda together with UNFPA, will work to further incorporate understandings of the roles of youth in conflict prevention and sustaining peace into its analyses and recommendations. DPPA will continue to build and roll out its technical expertise on strategies to meaningfully include young women and men in formal and informal peace processes.

In line with the UN Disability Inclusion Strategy, DPPA will also raise its standards for the incorporation of strategies for the empowerment of persons with disabilities and their human rights into its analysis, early warning and strategy formulation processes.

Internally, in line with the UN Values and Behaviours Framework, DPPA will continue to take action to create an environment of dignity and respect for all staff regardless of any aspect of their identity, including but not limited to age, disability, gender, nationality, racial identity, and sexual orientation.

Monitoring and evaluation

The Results Framework accompanying the four-year Strategic Plan has three main purposes: to stimulate improved performance; to facilitate decision-making; and to strengthen accountability for DPPA's work.

As the key monitoring tool for the Plan, the Results Framework breaks down the overarching Goals and Objectives into 21 Outcomes articulating what the Department – in partnership with others – will be working to achieve over the four-year period (2023-2026).

To track progress towards achieving these Outcomes, quantitative indicators have been developed for the Department to report against on a six-monthly basis. These indicators both measure desired changes and provide a management tool to assess where there might be issues and challenges in achieving the Outcomes. Targets for the indicators will be updated on an annual basis.

Noting that indicators are necessarily indicative and cannot capture everything the Department does, in biannual reporting, the Results Framework also has a qualitative dimension. Each Objective includes a question that will be part of the division work plan reporting. Answering these seven questions will allow DPPA to supplement the Key Performance Indicators/ quantitative data with qualitative narrative reflections, resulting in more comprehensive storytelling about its work.

For the first time, the Department has also developed more operational-level theories of change for each Objective. These causal pathways that link DPPA's outputs to Outcomes and Objectives help reach common agreement on how the Department contributes to the reduction in violent conflict and sustain peace.

In addition, DPPA will also conduct a mid-term review and a final evaluation of its Plan. As part of its learning and accountability commitment, the Department will continue to undertake a range of evaluative exercises such as after-action reviews, lessons learned studies and self-evaluations. Findings and recommendations from these exercises will be used to enhance the relevance and impact of the Department.

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Conclusion

The four-year period 2023-2026 will be a challenging one with respect to global peace and security – and a demanding one for DPPA and the work the Department carries out with respect to conflict resolution, prevention, management, peacebuilding and sustaining peace.

DPPA's Strategic Plan sets out a framework to guide the work the Department does, to facilitate focus and prioritization, and to enable impact on the ground, where it matters. The Strategic Plan is accompanied by a Results Framework that allows DPPA to measure the work it carries out and the impact it achieves. Both documents are not meant to be static: they are meant to be dynamic, 'living' documents that can and should be adjusted as realities evolve. But they also set the tone and guide the Department as it embarks on the four years that lie ahead. DPPA stands ready to face the challenges of 2023-2026.

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2023 FACTSHEET WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY

At the heart of UN peacemaking and preventive action, the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA) is accelerating its efforts to advance women's meaningful participation across all its work. Recognizing that success is measured by impact on the ground, DPPA works to support multi-track efforts to help fast-track women's participation, integrate gender equality considerations into analysis and actions, and shape strategies based on the priorities of women's rights constituencies.

The 2023-2026 Multi-Year Appeal (MYA) calls for **$170 million** for the next four years, including **$30 million** specifically to support DPPA's dedicated Women, Peace and Security (WPS) funding window. The funding will support DPPA programmatic initiatives in the field and headquarters, as well as the Gender, Peace and Security unit in the Policy and Mediation Division, which leads DPPA efforts in this regard. The Department aims to program at least 18 percent of the annual MYA budget towards activities in support of the WPS agenda.

What we do

DPPA's WPS work focuses on four priorities:

1. Gender-sensitive political and conflict analysis
2. Promoting inclusion and women's meaningful participation in all peacemaking, and peacebuilding.
3. Promoting women's participation in electoral and political processes
4. Preventing and addressing conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) as a priority for peace

DPPA's Gender Marker helps ensure the mainstreaming of WPS considerations throughout MYA project design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.



Why it matters

- Gender equality is the number one predictor of peace.
- Inclusion and meaningful participation of women in conflict prevention, mediation and peacebuilding processes is fundamental to the full realization of their human rights.
- Peacemaking strategies that include women and civil society are more likely to generate ownership and last longer.
- The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development enshrines the participation of women in electoral and political process as a vital contributor to more stable and prosperous societies.
- Conflict-related sexual violence, triggers violence that – beyond having serious consequences for survivors – can undermine peace efforts.

2022 Highlights

100 per cent of all UN led and co-led peace processes received gender support; all UN mediation support teams had women members

62 per cent (8 out of 13) of conflict party delegations in the above UN-led and co-led peace processes included senior women members, and DPPA continued to promote inclusion of women in party delegations

46 per cent (16 out of 35) of DPPA Heads and Deputy Heads of Missions, Special Envoys and Personal Representatives of Special Political Missions were women

100 per cent of UN mission transition strategies included gender/WPS perspectives

Expanding our knowledge, and helping others to learn

Some key initiatives, supported by the MYA:

- To ensure DPPA's engagements are built on the foundation of gender-sensitive conflict analysis, DPPA conducted a **self-evaluation in 2022** of gender mainstreaming in its analysis. Over 3,000 analytical products were assessed through a semi-supervised machine learning/natural language processing approach led by two external evaluators. The results highlighted improvements during the period evaluated (2019-2021), and identified pathways to further progress, which DPPA is currently implementing.
- As part of DPPA's commitment to understanding and expanding knowledge on linkages between gender and peace and other agendas, such as climate security, DPPA published a new practice note in 2022 that highlights how the management of scarce natural resources and environmental dialogues can be critical entry points for women's more meaningful participation in decision-making and peacemaking.
- DPPA's searchable online repository of peace agreements, **Language of Peace**, was updated in 2022 to support **new search categories,** including inclusion of women and civil society.

How we track results

- Senior Leadership Compacts
- 2023-2026 Results Framework
- Mid-Year and Annual MYA reports
- MYA Project Gender Marker (which also allows us to track MYA resource allocation)

Global



We fund political work across the world

Flexible



70% of our funding is unearmarked

Fast



We can allocate funding within 72 hours of a crisis

Innovative and Inclusive



We use innovative approaches to peace and security with emerging technologies

PEACE IS PRICELESS AND POSSIBLE.

Multi-Year Appeal 2023-2026

For further information on the Multi-Year Appeal, please contact the Donor Relations Team.

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