

Advancing the Nexus of Human Rights and Peacebuilding **Meeting Note from an Expert-Level Discussion**

Introduction

On 5 December 2019, the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation, the Global Network of Women Peacebuilders (GNWP), the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC), and the International Peace Institute (IPI) co-organized the seventh meeting in a series of roundtable discussions exploring the operationalization of peacebuilding and sustaining peace. The specific focus of the December roundtable was on the linkages between peacebuilding and human rights. Experts from across sectors came together to examine opportunities for further aligning perspectives and advancing the nexus of human rights and peacebuilding with a particular emphasis on human rights mechanisms that have been utilized to push for the operationalization of the sustaining peace resolutions within human rights spaces and opportunities presented in the 2020 Peacebuilding Architecture (PBA) Review.

There is a growing acceptance and understanding among Member States and practitioners that human rights contribute to sustainable peace and that human rights, sustaining peace and sustainable development share many foundational concepts and values.¹ The resolutions on sustaining peace (A/RES/70/262-S/RES/2282) reaffirm that “development, peace and security, and human rights are interlinked and mutually reinforcing,” and emphasize the importance of a comprehensive approach to sustaining peace, wherein “respect for, and protection of, human rights and fundamental freedoms” are an integral component. Importantly, in operational paragraph (OP)11 the resolutions encourage the “United Nations Member States participating in the Universal Periodic Review process of the Human Rights Council to consider the human rights dimensions of peacebuilding.”² In his 2018 report on peacebuilding and sustaining peace (A/72/707-S/2018/43), the Secretary-General stated that “the international human rights framework provides a critical foundation for sustaining peace.” However, in practice, many obstacles to strengthening synergies between these two fundamental legal frameworks persist, and human rights and peacebuilding work tends to happen in silos. The 2020 Review presents a pivotal opportunity to examine ways in which the linkages between human rights and peacebuilding can be better operationalized and advanced.

The discussion began with an emphasis that true and sustainable peace cannot be achieved without full access to and protection of human rights. Human rights, sustainable peace and sustainable development are intrinsically interlinked. From a peacebuilding perspective, peace is a pre-requisite for the guarantee of human rights and development. Conversely, advancing

¹ For a useful academic discussion of peacebuilding and human rights see: Journal of Human Rights Practice, Special Issue, Breaking the Silos: Linking Human Rights and Peacebuilding. Parlevliet, M. (Ed.) 2017. 9(3). Oxford Press: Oxford, UK: <https://academic.oup.com/jhrp/issue/9/3>

² A/RES/70/262 and S/RES/2282. Available at: <https://www.un.org/press/en/2016/sc12340.doc.htm>

human rights means creating an environment conducive to peace and development. Some would go even further to argue that human rights are an essential element for peace processes.

The following key themes emerged from the discussion:

Human rights and peacebuilding: Working towards addressing silos

Participants agreed that in light of the 2020 PBA review, it is essential to discuss concrete strategies to address the silos between human rights and peacebuilding.

Human rights violations are both a root cause and a consequence of conflict. Therefore, it should be a cross-pillar priority for the UN (and CSOs?) to make use of existing human rights mechanisms, such as special procedures, treaty bodies, the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process and its recommendations to inform the work on development and peace; and to integrate human rights considerations into deliberations on peace and security, and planning on peacebuilding. The 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals are underpinned by Human Rights – or as UNDP has described it, they are two sides of the same coin.³

Participants noted that advances have been made during the past five years. The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), for example, has made progress since 2015 in terms of integrating sustaining peace in its work. This has included 1) establishing a partnership with PBSO to create institutional entry points for coordination and 2) identifying opportunities for consideration of human rights mechanisms within the peacebuilding architecture (including special procedures, UPR and HRC resolutions). The Office has placed the prevention of conflict, violence and insecurity at the core of its current strategic plan⁴. OHCHR's increasing focus on conflict prevention and peacebuilding was also made possible thanks to the 2016 resolutions' cross-pillar approach to sustaining peace and the SG's prevention focus.

In July 2018, HRC adopted resolution 38/18 in which it tasked three rapporteurs appointed by the President of the HRC to “present proposals on how the Council could effectively contribute in the future to the prevention of human rights violations”. This marks a positive development in the integration of a peacebuilding lens into the work of human rights mechanisms.” In OP 4 (b), the resolution specifically asks that the report “give due consideration to how the HRC can work effectively with all pillars of the UN system on the prevention of human rights violations with a view to strengthening system-wide coherence and contributing to sustaining peace and the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals”. The references to the SDGs and sustaining peace, both in the preamble of the resolution and in its operative paragraphs, provide an opportunity for the rapporteurs to consider how to best use HRC tools and mechanisms to sustain peace, and to see how to work in a coherent fashion with the peace and security and development pillars of the UN. The report will be presented at the HRC session in March 2020; policymakers and practitioners in NY should make sure to have it on their radar.

Among Member States there is a Human Rights-Conflict Prevention Caucus (co-chaired by Switzerland and Germany) that aims to be practical in providing a space for dialogue on these issues and engages a cross-regional group of states in NY committed to placing HR at the heart of conflict prevention and peacebuilding. The role of the Caucus is to be more strategic on identifying opportunities for integrating HR issues, and connecting better to colleagues in Geneva.

³ <https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/blog/2019/human-rights-and-the-sdgs---two-sides-of-the-same-coin.html>

⁴ https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/OMP_II.pdf

Members of the Caucus indicated that one of the priorities for the group has been to find ways to better frame the narrative of HR as a useful tool in support to peacebuilding and sustainable development, providing an alternative to the more negative focus on risks and human rights violations that typically brings these issues together.

Recognizing efforts to break the silos

The strengthening of the synergies between the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda is another example of progress in breaking down the silos between human rights and peace and security. The adoption of the CEDAW Committee's landmark General Recommendation 30, explicitly examining human rights of women in conflict, post-conflict and conflict-affected settings is perhaps the clearest sign of the progress. Other steps have also been taken, such as the publication of a UN Women "Guidebook on CEDAW General Recommendation No. 30 and the UN Security Council Resolutions On Women, Peace and Security"; and the Arria Formula meeting on the linkages between UNSCR 1325 and CEDAW GR 30. A recent positive example of a synergy between the CEDAW Committee and entities responsible for WPS implementation, is the signing of a Framework of Cooperation agreement between the CEDAW Committee and the Special Representative of the Secretary General on Sexual Violence in Conflict. The Framework of Cooperation allows for regular information exchange between the two bodies, and aims to foster coordination, coherence and concerted effort to promote and protect the human rights of women and girls, particularly those affected by conflict-related sexual violence.¹

From Policy to Practice: Learning from Local Peacebuilders

Participants noted that human rights mechanisms provide many tools to advance sustaining peace, including the use of reporting systems and early-warning measures, and that normative support for integrating human rights into peacebuilding is quite extensive. However, what is lacking is effective operationalization of international policies and norms at the local level. The expectations tend to be for local actors to adjust their activities to fit into existing programming and typically these efforts are separated into human rights and peace and security spheres.

In international and multilateral spaces, human rights and peacebuilding actors do not actively engage with one another and this limits opportunities for developing coherent and comprehensive responses and prevention strategies. At the same time, grassroots actors including local peacebuilders are not constrained by silos between human rights and peacebuilding and typically take a more holistic and integrated approach to their work. Local peacebuilders and human rights actors are recognized as being quite tactical, astute and pragmatic, offering lessons from which the international community can learn. The issue of policy coherence requires further normative and policy commitments to be made at the international level; there was general agreement that without policy language, significant changes at the country level are unlikely to happen. It was also recognized that profound policy changes take time to create the necessary cultural shift within the UN organization, such as was the case in relation to the integration of human rights in peacekeeping operations.

Persistently moving forward: A Case-Study of Human Rights Work in Yemen

During the discussion the example of Yemen was used to contextualize the issues being raised and to highlight efforts and challenges in linking human rights and peacebuilding. In December 2017 a Group of Eminent International and Regional Experts for Yemen was established after significant civil society-led advocacy to cooperate with the National Commission of Inquiry with the hope that civil society would have a meaningful role in these processes. CSOs supported the Commission, arranged meetings with women coming from conflict-affected communities in Yemen, including Taiz.

However, several concrete challenges were identified to implementing a sustaining peace approach:

- *Sharing Information:* It was noted that there is a need for more systemic information-sharing and coordination among UN agencies. For example, data that UNFPA collects on GBV is not shared, so human rights reports don't accurately reflect the scale of the problem. This is also true in relation to other human rights violations, such as land mines.
- *Participation across the board:* Participation in various processes remains ad-hoc. For example, there has been no consultative process with local women peacebuilders on considerations for developing a National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security.
- *Responsibilities of non-state actors:* There is a need to consider the role of and violations by non-state actors and armed groups. The failure to name perpetrators of violations and to address grievances contributes to the escalation of conflict and war.

Conclusion and recommendations

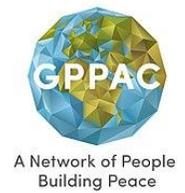
Participants agreed that the 2020 Peacebuilding Architecture Review is an opportunity to create more synergies between human rights and peacebuilding efforts, building on the increasing acknowledgment within the international community that human rights, peace, security and the Sustainable Development Goals are mutually reinforcing. However, the question of how to operationalize this understanding is one that urgently needs to be answered.

In order for the PBA Review to effectively contribute to strengthening a cross-pillar approach to human rights work, the following recommendations were identified:

- **UN agencies, Member States and other actors working on development, peacebuilding and human rights** need to clearly articulate the interlinkages between these three areas in their needs analyses, program design, planning and implementation and create specific guidance on how to work to strengthen these interlinkages;
- **UN leadership and Member States** should provide strong leadership and political support and recognition to the role of national human rights institutions and human rights defenders in peacebuilding, both at political and operational levels. There could be learning from good practices of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU): the IPU works in close partnership with OHCHR and fosters strong parliamentary input and follow-up to UPR and the periodic review of country situations by CEDAW and encourages parliaments to ratify and implement specific UN human rights treaties. Equally, the IPU adopted a resolution on sustaining peace as a vehicle for achieving sustainable development, adopted at the 138th Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, which calls on all parliaments to contribute to sustaining peace and the SDGs.

- **Peacebuilding and human rights actors (including civil society)** should work more proactively to connect the processes and work done in New York and Geneva. One consideration in furthering this momentum could be to develop a policy paper that highlights the intersections between the policy frameworks of human rights and sustaining peace.
- **UN leadership** should leverage the role of Resident Coordinators at the national level, including demonstrating stronger political will to support the implementation of and to promote human rights norms in peacebuilding. There should be more systematic efforts to recognize and strengthen good practices in integrated approaches and to measure change at country level (e.g. how HR promotes peace).
- The **2020 PBA Review** should be utilized to identify and create a catalogue of positive examples of collaboration and exchange between human rights and peacebuilding actors and mechanisms at country level in a variety of contexts. The review should contribute to generating the political will needed to create additional entry points for linking HR and sustaining peace (beyond the UPR, to include all human rights mechanisms). It should also examine how the bifurcation of funding for HR and PB programming undermines coherence and integration. Opportunities and entry points beyond the review also should be identified that can provide space to continue effort to advance the linkages and positive interface between peacebuilding and sustaining peace, and human rights. This could include resolutions and other policy processes focused on other specific thematic issues, with an example being the GA resolution on protection and assistance of IDPs⁵ which includes specific references that link human rights, peacebuilding and humanitarian issues.

⁵ <https://undocs.org/A/C.3/74/L.48/Rev.1>.



Concept note: Operationalizing Sustaining Peace - A Series of Expert Roundtables

Sustaining Peace, as defined in dual UN General Assembly and Security Council resolutions (A/70/262 and S/2016/2282) is “a goal and a process to build a common vision of a society, ensuring that the needs of all segments of the population are taken into account, which encompasses activities aimed at preventing 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”. This definition contextualizes peacebuilding as a process that is relevant and necessary throughout the conflict cycle, rather than solely an action taken after conflict termination, and correspondingly shifts the starting point of analysis to understanding risk and resilience in a society, and preventative rather than reactive operations.

In January 2018, the Secretary-General released his report outlining ways in which the UN is implementing the Sustaining Peace approach and proposing ways to further the process. And, in April 2018, another set of dual resolutions were passed endorsing the continued implementation of the recommendations on Sustaining Peace. These resolutions requested an interim report on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace in 2019 and a second report following up on the implementation in connection with the 2020 review of the UN’s peacebuilding architecture.

Despite all the endorsement for continued work on embracing the word and spirit of the parallel resolutions, there is still a gap in understanding what this means in practice and the implication of the changes that are called for at regional and country level. To support and inform preparations for the 2020 report and the 2020 PBA review, the International Peace Institute (IPI), the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC), the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation (DHF) and the Global Network of Women Peacebuilders (GNWP) are convening a series of roundtable discussion to examine the operationalization of Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace.

The overall objective of this series is to strengthen the implementation of the UN’s Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace agenda, at the country and regional levels. The discussion series aims to contribute to this objective through:

- Creating a space for key global policy- and decision-makers to develop a shared understanding of the UN’s Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace agenda at the practical level, informed by the perspectives of the practitioners, women’s rights organizations and other civil society groups working on the ground.

- Fostering discussions on how to advance efforts at Sustaining Peace in practice at the country level and identifying concrete steps that need to be taken for effective and locally- driven implementation.
- Contributing to the assessment of the ongoing efforts to change the way peacebuilding is undertaken, by the UN and other actors on the ground and highlighting examples and cases that demonstrate whether the UN is having positive influence on the way peacebuilding is undertaken.

The Series

This series aims to convene experts in peacebuilding and sustaining peace to discuss key thematic areas that emerge in connection to the implementation of the Sustaining Peace resolutions. Participants will include experts from civil society, member states, UN Agencies, Funds and Programs and the UN secretariat. The roundtables will be by invitation only and will be held as off- the record discussions. A short non-attribution summary note is developed based on the discussions held and is made available at

<https://www.daghammarskjold.se/peacebuilding-and-sustaining-peace>.

The aim is to hold one roundtable per month focused on topics related to implementing the Sustaining Peace Resolutions in practice. The topics are identified based on what UN representatives, Member States and civil society partners deem to be timely and useful. As much as possible the discussions are grounded in country cases with experiences of local, national and regional actors as well as international actors working at country and regional levels presented.

Topics covered:

- 1) How do we understand the operationalization of Sustaining Peace? - glancing backwards before moving ahead (December 2018)
- 2) Pathways to Peace and Sustaining Peace: the UN-World Bank partnership at country level (January 2019)
- 3) Tools to implement Sustaining Peace: The role of the Youth, Peace and Security Agenda (March 2019)
- 4) The UN Development System Reform and Sustaining Peace: Realities and Opportunities (April 2019)
- 5) Building Strategic Partnerships for Sustaining Peace at the Regional Level (September 2019)
- 6) Women as the pioneers in conflict prevention and peacebuilding: The linkages between Sustaining Peace and the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda (October 2019)