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*Remarks as discussant during the public consultation on the discussion paper on “**Social Inclusion, Political Participation and Effective Governance in Challenging Environments**” held by the International Commission on Multilateralism at the International Peace Institute in New York on November 18th, 2015.*

I understand the discussant role as being about getting the conversation going, putting some questions and issues on the table to stimulate thought and discussion. So with that in mind, there are two issues that I would like to raise this morning.

The Centrality of Social Inclusion, Political Participation and Effective Governance

The world has been wrestling for decades with the problem of how to support the most challenged societies, particularly those often categorized as fragile and conflict-affected, to move towards peace, to achieve development goals, and to be more robust in the face of disasters and external stresses.

The insights of these countries themselves, as expressed by the G7+, is that traditional, silo'd interventions just don't work, and that progress in these environments is only possible when you focus on strengthening society itself, by working on issues such as legitimate politics, citizen security and justice for everyone. And this insight has been reflected over time in the New Deal document, in the World Development Report of 2011, and most recently in the three peace reviews, on Peace Operations, Peacebuilding and 1325, and in the 2030 Agenda, particularly in Goals 16 (and 10), emphasizing the core challenge of fostering peaceful, just and inclusive societies.

It was remarkable during the opening days of the 70th UN General Assembly 6 weeks ago how much Goal 16 was cited as a core part of the needed response to a wide range of current issues, such as the humanitarian and refugee crisis, preventing violent extremism, and effective peace operations and peacebuilding. Although some of this felt overdone, I think it emphasizes that these issues of social inclusion, political participation and effective governance, are core to the concept of *resilience*, the process of supporting societies in challenging environments to become more robust in the face of stress.

In this context, the formulation of fostering peaceful, just and inclusive societies is a positive articulation of the idea of preventing violent conflict, one that benefits from a universal application and a wider acceptability.

So I would suggest that this group consider the proposition that these issues are not only the key to addressing the needs of people in challenging environments, but that they are in many ways one of the core challenges of multilateralism going forward – how to foster peaceful, just and inclusive societies, by supporting change *within* countries on difficult issues such as inclusion and governance (while respecting local ownership), and by providing an *external* environment, including everything from small arms flows to trade policies, that is supportive of the needs of the least powerful countries, rather than the most powerful.

Inclusive national ownership in practice

The Advisory Group of Experts report highlighted the concept of ‘*inclusive national ownership*’, “whereby the national responsibility to drive and direct efforts is broadly shared by the national government across all key social strata and divides, across a spectrum of political opinions and domestic actors, including minorities.”

For an example of what this looks like, we need look no further than the winners of this year’s Nobel Peace Prize, the Tunisia National Dialogue Quartet. In the words of the Nobel committee,

“The Quartet was formed in the summer of 2013 when the democratization process was in danger of collapsing ... It established an alternative, peaceful political process at a time when the country was on the brink of civil war.”

Now, that alone is rather extraordinary, but let us consider what is required, what has to be in place, for such civil society groups to be able to contribute in the first place. Look at the different communities represented in the Quartet – business, organized labor, human rights advocates and a lawyer’s organization. For such groups to be in a position to make a difference, whether in crisis or in everyday situations, requires a body politic where, for example: a voice for business independent of the government is possible, where trade unions are tolerated, where human rights organizations are able to operate and where lawyers can speak out. And for such groups to be effective they also need to have access to public information, to the mechanism of an independent press and to social networks.

The lesson here is that the resilience that is exemplified by the ability of the civil society groups that made up the Quartet to contribute in such an important way, requires that there be in place *the building blocks of a shared society*. One of the major challenges for the international community going forward, and for the UN in particular, is how to foster these building blocks, how to build national ownership beyond the government, and how to strengthen the institutions of civil society in parallel with the institutions of the state.

In closing

To finish, I would like to make the additional point that the multilateral system, including the UN, at headquarters and in country, can go much further itself in modelling best practices in inclusion, participation, and indeed effective governance. From conflict analysis in specific country situations, to the deliberations of high level bodies such as the Security Council and the Peacebuilding Commission, inclusion of a wide range of perspectives, including those of the people most affected, leads to better understanding and more legitimate decisions.

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