



Peace & Post 2015: What Now?

On the morning of Wednesday, August 19th, 2015, the Quaker United Nations Office hosted an informal civil society strategy session on Goal 16 and related peace issues within the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Civil society representatives were joined by selected member state representatives and UN officials. The session took stock of the next steps on peace related issues in terms of implementation, measurement, and communication.

The discussion was conducted on the basis of non-attribution.

Key Messages

1. The *transformative goal of peaceful, just and inclusive societies* is now enshrined as the centerpiece of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in the form of Goal 16 and related goals and targets (G16+), such as Goal 10. This is a remarkable achievement and opens up a new way forward for development, humanitarian action and peacebuilding.
2. Nevertheless, the G16+ agenda faces significant *challenges in implementation*, in measurement, accountability and review, at local, national and international levels. In particular, the process of designing and selecting effective indicators continues to require attention.
3. Although there is much to do at an international policy level, the *key measure of success* for G16+ will be the extent to which it makes a difference to the lives of those impacted by violence, injustice and exclusion.
4. The *communications* challenge that faces the 2030 Agenda as a whole (how to convey its novel scope and universal applicability, and to generate broad-based buy-in) is particularly important for G16+, given its cross-cutting nature, sensitive subject matter and potential to be co-opted.
5. There is a *danger that the G16+ agenda gets co-opted* by counter-terrorism, stabilization, and crime prevention approaches that are narrowly based on increasing short term security. Engaging with these approaches by upholding the longer term imperative of addressing the root causes of violence and increasing inclusion and accountability will be an enduring challenge.
6. To maintain momentum it will be necessary to *galvanize communities of interest* around the G16+ agenda. These will need to be able to move beyond single thematic issues and targets to encompass a broader view of the G16+ issues as a whole, including critical issues such as reconciliation that remain underemphasized in the framework.
7. Additionally, there is a critical need to *make the vertical connections* between policy makers at an international and national level and the perspectives and aspirations of those impacted by violence, injustice and exclusion. Faith-based organizations have an important role to play in this regard.
8. At the UN, the focus on peaceful, just and inclusive societies within the 2030 Agenda is part of a growing *consensus on the need to better integrate the three UN pillars* of peace and security, development and human rights, as evidenced by the ideas emerging from the three peace reviews and related processes in financing for development, climate change, humanitarian action and beyond.

Summary of Points Raised

Implementation: The focus must now shift towards the implementation stage, as it is here that the agenda will become more than fancy words on paper. Member states have the driving seat in terms of higher level process and political will, but civil society will have a key role in prioritization, local implementation and ensuring accountability. The significance of the 2030 Agenda is its universality and its new paradigm of partnership, of shared responsibility and agency. How do we make sure, as we move into implementation, that the impact of this is positive, that the new attention does actually lead to more inclusive, just and peaceful societies?

Action: How can we best organize our community, to maintain momentum and collect lessons learned? How can we better galvanize the wider audience around this cross-cutting set of perspectives? Universally incentivizing both government and non-government actors to view the G16+ agenda as a positive aspect of the new framework will be crucial. Ensuring strong and appropriate links with the Addis Ababa Action Agenda (AAAA) and other forms of financing from the private sector and business community, will be another important factor in the implementation puzzle.

Friends of Goal 16: As the SDGs are ultimately a political agreement, how can the community of actors working on Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies ensure that the G16+ approach is embraced by all 193 member states? Can a “Friends of Goal 16” group be formed, that could include both government and non-government actors, to ensure that the world can deliver on its promise?

Local Connections and Communication: With each target appropriate for all segments of society, we need to ensure communication strategies are comprehensive, to deliver on the ambition of the agenda. This must mean all economic and social classes, and in many ways Goal 16 may be one of the most challenging areas to achieve this. Communication to the local civil society level can result in strong advocacy at the national level. This will be vital if the ambition and transformation is to make it into the political psyche of domestic politicians. Coordination needs to improve between civil society actors, and more funding identified to build capacity and to bring civil society resources from the Global South to New York to inform the policy discussion.

Indicators and Measurement: The uncompleted work on indicators is at the forefront of key next steps. There is positive potential, and a wealth of civil society actors are doing good work. Nevertheless, ambition must be maintained on indicators, as there is real danger the entire agenda could be undermined if the indicator process becomes overly-politicized or loses touch with the technical work that has been done. Civil society has a crucial role in actively applying pressure to the various elements of the UN system dealing with the indicators for the 2030 Agenda. Additionally, civil society will also need to work to advocate for appropriate national level indicators.

Participation: As with the rest of the 2030 Agenda, Goal 16 is weak in terms of participation. Those impacted by violence, injustice and exclusion, those affected by extreme poverty, should not be minimized as just ‘recipients’ but should be embraced as full partners. How can we support the full range of voices, enshrining access and participation for civil society at all levels, in order to ensure that no-one is ‘left behind’?

Links with wider reviews and processes: There is a substantial amount of cross-fertilization between peace issues in the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, and the other peace-related reviews happening at the UN. The Advisory Group of Experts Report on the Peacebuilding Architecture (PBA) Review refers to Goal 16 in several places, as does the Report of the High Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations. As these reviews, as well as the review of the Implementation of Security Council Resolution 1325, the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016, and the UN Plan of Action on Preventing Violent Extremism, get finalized, the linkages with the G16+ issues should become more apparent. Indeed, the focus on peaceful, just and inclusive societies within the 2030 Agenda can be seen as part of a growing consensus on the need to better integrate the three UN pillars of peace and security, development and human rights.

Dangers of being co-opted: The broad linkages with other processes should be encouraged, but caution needs to be taken to ensure that the good intentions of the G16+ issues do not lead to bad consequences. The important and crucial aspects of Goal 16 can usefully inform conversations on counter-terrorism, stabilization, and crime prevention, but must not be co-opted to become a tool or method of achieving security objectives by governments. The challenge will be to maintain a constructive dialogue while avoiding being instrumentalized.

What is Missing: The final goals and targets include many important issues related to peace, but there are still areas that are not accurately represented in the framework. Language on tolerance and the peaceful resolution of disputes still need to find a place in our approach, and the treatment of external factors is also incomplete in its scope and clarity. Reconciliation, a concept that the UN as a whole struggles with, is noticeably absent. Part of the implementation will require continuing to uphold key issues such as these that were left out of the final outcome document.

Connecting with the faith community: What can the faith community do to assist with the implementation of Goal 16? Can religions and religious organizations take a lead on communicating the G16+ agenda, and can they assist in the vertical integration between policy makers and affected communities that will be so critical? Faith communities around world are substantially engaged in development and humanitarian issues, and have in many cases an intuitive connection with the peaceful, just and inclusive societies issues.

Implications for the Peacebuilding Community: From the point of view of the peacebuilding community and partners, we need to assume that G16+ is going to increasingly form the framing for our work, both in terms of national and donor priorities, funding, and measurement. At the same time, with more attention and resources being devoted to these issues as a result of their prominence within the 2030 Agenda, there will also be a significant new need to engage with adjacent policy and implementation communities, not only in the development space, but in relation to financing, humanitarian action, migration, and so on.

Build horizontal and vertical networks: the significant challenges of implementation require that we galvanize communities of interest around the G16+ agenda. These will need to be able to move beyond single thematic issues and targets to encompass a broader view of the G16+ issues as a whole. Additionally, there is a critical need to make the vertical connections between policy makers at an international and national level and the perspectives and aspirations of those impacted by violence, injustice and exclusion.