



Peace & Post 2015: What Next?

On the morning of Wednesday, January 15th, 2015, the Quaker United Nations Office hosted an informal civil society strategy session on Goal 16 and related peace issues. Civil Society representatives were joined by selected member state representatives and UN officials. The session took stock of the conversation to date, reviewed the synthesis report from a peace perspective and considered potential points of entry for the coming year.

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

Key Messages

1. The transition to a universal agenda requires multi-level engagement: national, regional and global, and from the normative discussion (the Declaration) to the details of measurement and implementation.
 2. Goal 16 and related issues remain central to achieving poverty goals, but are still vulnerable. The g7+ experience offers important insights and lessons learned.
 3. Peaceful, just and inclusive societies are key to developing resilience – a core concept for the climate change, humanitarian and development communities, and a link to the broader discussion
 4. There are interesting points of entry through the Financing for Development process, particularly by linking to the experience in fragile and conflict affected environments.
 5. The work on indicators and targets remains central for political and practical reasons
 6. The Goal 16 issues are among those that will present the most difficult challenges for monitoring, accountability and review, particularly at local and national levels
 7. Subsidiarity in implementation and review will place new demands on civil society capacity and coordination
 8. It is critical that Southern civil society voices be more strongly represented in New York, as well as regionally and in capital
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Summary of Points Raised

Universal Agenda: The SDG discussion represents a significant paradigm shift, from a list of development interventions for the South (the MDGs) to a transformative universal vision for humanity in 2030. For advocates, this demands a multi-level engagement, to work at the big picture level (e.g. the broader Declaration) as well as in the detail (e.g. indicators), to address global factors as well as national and local ones

Goal 16 and Poverty: For the poverty agenda, the goal 16 issues are central and critical, yet remain vulnerable. Ongoing research continues to confirm that the majority of those earning less than \$1.25 a day are in fragile and conflict affected environments, those where the MDG approach has been least successful. To address poverty in these most challenging of circumstances requires a new approach based on strengthening society as a whole. The g7+ countries have shown the way forward in articulating holistic approaches to development in these contexts.

Violence is Fundamental: Violence is a fundamental dimension of human suffering, as universal and devastating as hunger and lack of education. This is intuitive, and can help as a universal point of entry into discussion affirming the necessity for goal 16 and the peace issues.

Peace & Resilience: The peace issues are core to the discussion of resilience. Resilient societies are those where the social fabric is strong: societies that are just and inclusive, where the relationship between individuals, their communities and the state are effective and based on trust. These are the core issues of goal 16. And resilience is a key concept in discussions around climate change adaptation, disaster and humanitarian action, and development.

Financing for Development: There may be opportunities to engage in the Financing for Development discussion. For example, the g7+ and donors have built up an important body of lessons learned around how to finance and implement development in fragile and conflict affected environments that could be incorporated. Private sector investors also have an interest in peace and stability and there are still opportunities for discussions that can highlight restorative rather than securitized responses.

Indicators and Targets: The conversation on indicators and targets will continue to be critical for the peace agenda. The measurement framework that is put in place for peace and related topics as part of the SDG process will impact how peace and justice work is assessed and funded over the coming decades. In addition, demonstrating that the peace and justice targets are robust and that progress towards them can be effectively measured through an implementable set of indicators is key to supporting the political case for their inclusion.

Implementation and Goal 16: As this year progresses there will be an increasing focus on how the new agenda can be implemented and progress monitored. It will be important for civil society actors to engage with this process. The goal 16 issues are among those that will present the greatest challenges for monitoring, accountability and review, both at national and global levels, presenting civil society with unique demands.

Challenges for Civil Society: It is expected that the principle of subsidiarity will govern the processes of monitoring, evaluating and reporting. Subsidiarity raises significant issues for civil society capacity, coordination, locally, regionally and internationally – at a time when civil society space in many countries and regions is shrinking.

UN ‘Fit to Purpose’: A further, growing conversation that requires attention is the debate on what will be required to ensure a UN system that is ‘fit to purpose’ to implement this transformative agenda. This is the 70th anniversary of the UN, a summit year, one where there are other significant relevant processes taking place (such as the Peace Operations review) and where the UN community is looking ahead to the term of a new secretary general. Supporting peaceful, just and inclusive societies is a recipe not only for successful development, but also for the maintenance of international peace and security: what are the implications for the UN system as a whole?

Voices from the South: it is critical that Southern civil society voices be more strongly represented on this topic in New York, as well as regionally and in capital. It needs to be emphasized that the peace issues are central to the needs and aspirations of developing countries. Coordination needs to improve between civil society actors, and more funding identified to build capacity and to bring civil society resources to inform the policy discussion.

Declaration: The Declaration will be a focus for member states and will set the scene for subsequent negotiations on the goals and implementation issues: topics that are under-represented in the Declaration may become targets for attack in the goals discussion. There is a good opportunity for input into this area, as the discussions are just beginning and the synthesis report has established a good basis.

Indicator Process: Although priorities may need to be set locally, there remains a need for universal indicators, for comparability and to facilitate global assessments. To effectively measure progress, more than one indicator may be required: 3 to 4 indicators per target might be ideal. This needs to work hand in hand with ensuring that the language of the targets themselves is tweaked to allow better measurability. The UN Statistical Commission is charged with the oversight of the measurement process, but input from civil society and technical experts, particularly around the Goal 16 issues, is vital. UNDP is setting up a virtual network to come together around indicators in this area.

Essential Elements: In the discussion leading up to the Synthesis Report, some member states were keen to reduce the number of goals, or to cluster them. Others were insistent on not opening up the goal conversation in any way at this time. The six ‘essential elements’ in the report were not clusters of goals, but an aid to communicating the agenda as a whole. Grouping all the peace issues within the ‘justice’ element was controversial to some.

Review Mechanism: The synthesis report went some way in identifying a process for reviewing progress against the development goal framework. It appears that there will be a strong focus on review mechanisms at the local and regional level. Multilaterally, the High Level Political Forum provides a mechanism for a limited degree of peer review, but the modalities and working methods of the Forum do not allow for a detailed, country by country review process such as the Universal Periodic Review approach of the Human Rights Council. A strong review mechanism is important to the whole agenda.

Missing Elements: Although the latest goal formulation has retained many important issues related to peace, there are still areas that are not accurately represented in the agenda. Language on tolerance and the peaceful resolution of disputes might usefully be reinstated, and the treatment of external factors would benefit from stronger and more explicit language.

National Buy-In: As the conversation turns towards issues of measurement, implementation and review, civil society engagement at a national level becomes even more critical. If progress is to be made, then the national process of deciding priorities, planning and implementing programs, and monitoring and reviewing results, must be inclusive and include broad consultations.