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“Peace, Justice and Inclusion: what will it take?”. Remarks at the third annual symposium on the role of religion and faith-based organizations in international affairs: “Just, Inclusive and Sustainable Peace”. New York, January 23, 2017

Introduction

I have been asked to address the question of what it will take to achieve the commitment to foster peaceful just and inclusive societies, the most transformative part of the 2030 Agenda.

I intend to address the following questions:

- What are Goal 16 and the peaceful, just and inclusive societies’ commitment, and why do they matter?
- Now the 2030 agenda is in place, what can we do now that we couldn’t do before? What’s different?
- How will the agenda become reality? What will implementation look like?

What are Goal 16 and the peaceful, just and inclusive societies’ commitment, and why do they matter?

Consider the following passages from the 2030 Agenda document:

- “Peace: we are determined to foster peaceful, just and inclusive societies which are free from violence” *Preamble*
- 34. “The new Agenda recognizes the need to build peaceful, just and inclusive societies that provide equal access to justice and that are based on respect for human rights, on effective rule of law and good governance at all levels and on transparent, effective and accountable institutions. Factors which give rise to violence, insecurity and injustice, such as inequality, corruption, poor governance and illicit financial and arms flows, are addressed..” *Declaration*
- 5.2: Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls
- 5.5 Ensure women’s full and effective participation
- 10.2: By 2030, empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all
- 10.3: Ensure equal opportunity... including by eliminating discriminatory laws, policies and practices..”

So that perhaps gives you a flavor – and that’s without even getting to Goal 16. And when we do look at the Goal 16 targets, the scope is surprisingly broad, emphasizing reducing violence and violent death, equal access to justice, good governance (including fostering accountable and transparent institutions), inclusive decision making, access to information and fundamental freedoms. It also addresses issues at the global level, including trafficking, illicit financial and arms flows, and more inclusive global governance.

Looking back, in the case of the Millennium Development Goals, while the Millennium Declaration of 2000 was put together as the result of a broad-based political process, the goals and targets were

drawn up completely separately by a small group of technocrats. In the case of the 2030 Agenda, the Declaration and the Goals and targets have all gone through the same exhaustive set of consultations and political negotiations. While this has led to goals and targets that may be less satisfactory from a technical perspective, what has been gained is a political legitimacy that the MDGs never had, and an agenda that is a single continuous document, which was designed to be read and implemented as a whole. Above all, this is a political document, not a technical one.

So the first point I'd like to make here is that the fostering of peaceful, just and inclusive societies within the 2030 Agenda is more than just Goal 16 (including in particular important parts of the preamble, declaration and goals 5 and 10, among others). The approach enshrined in the document, that we might call 'Goal 16+', is also much more than an 'enabler' of development, and it covers much more than just fragile and conflict affected environments, although it does of course encompass those.

Rather, it is a core aspirational goal in its own right, a universal vision of what society at its best can be. The Declaration states that "We envisage...a just, tolerant, open and socially inclusive world in which the needs of the most vulnerable are met", set out in a framework of "universal goals and targets which involve the entire world" and in which "no one will be left behind". And it is by looking at these ideas as a package, whether as Goal 16+ or as the 'peaceful, just and inclusive societies' agenda', that we can see why a number of the key actors in the process have described this as the most transformative part of Agenda 2030.

Now the agenda is in place, what can we do now that we couldn't do before? What's different?

Part of what is radical about this is inherent to the whole of the 2030 Agenda, which represents a significant paradigm shift from the Millennium Development Goals. The MDGs were a development log frame, a deliberately small list of traditional development objectives. They reflect some of the flavor of an already out-of-date aid approach that had to do with discrete external interventions carried out by rich, largely white countries, on behalf of poor, largely brown, ones. The new agenda reflects a different world, where national and local ownership is paramount, where holistic approaches to supporting the building of local capacity are the norm, and where global power is shared more broadly. The whole agenda is expressed in terms of partnership, of the countries of the world working together as peers to solve common problems.

This approach is particularly transformative when it comes to the peaceful, just and inclusive societies agenda: let me just mention a couple of examples.

The first example is the way in which the 2030 Agenda has affirmed the insights of the G7+ and the New Deal, and the World Development Report of 2011, that in fragile and conflict affected societies, to do development you need to pay attention to the social fabric, to issues like political inclusion, access to justice and institutions. But the 2030 Agenda goes further, saying that this is true for all societies, that issues like effective, inclusive and transparent governance and justice for all are key to achieving all sustainability and development objectives, everywhere.

Another very different example concerns the implications for the prevention of armed violence. One of the challenges that has bedeviled the prevention field is that it gets chopped up into lots of

different compartments. One set of actors focus on immediate, often militarized responses to outbreaks of armed violence or human rights violations, while another thinks about root causes. One group thinks about fragile and conflict affected states, while another focuses on urban violence in middle income societies, and another on issues of exclusion, access to justice and state violence in developed countries. What the peaceful, just and inclusive societies commitment provides is a universal framing that makes it possible for any and all countries to share their experience and lessons learned. This has the potential for the existence of spaces where, for the first time, we can imagine a conversation that would include violence in the Great Lakes region of Africa, urban violence in Central America, and “Black Lives Matter”. And it does so from a positive, not a negative, perspective. There’s a surprising amount of difference between knocking on a government’s door and saying “We’re the conflict prevention team, and we’re here to stop bad things from happening” as opposed to saying “We’re the peaceful, just and inclusive societies team and we’re here to help you make good things happen”.

It’s also a discussion that includes external as well as internal factors. That’s important, because there is a long-standing dialogue of the deaf between global North and South, with donor countries grumbling about poor governance in the ‘feckless South’, while developing countries point to global rules for trade that are rigged against them, and financial crises that are caused by the ‘irresponsible North’. The framing of the countries of the world working together in partnership to solve common problems is critical for addressing today’s challenges –and I could mention climate change, inequality and mass migration as just a few that come to mind.

How will this new mandate become reality?

There’s a lot of wording in the Agenda 2030 document about means of implementation, follow up and review. None of it gives much practical guidance as to how to achieve peaceful, just and inclusive societies – or any of the other goals and targets, for that matter. If you’re a government looking for a roadmap or a recipe book to work on a target like 16.7, “Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision making at all levels” you’re not going to find it in the 2030 Agenda document.

It also appears that the formal systems of review of the 2030 Agenda aren’t going to be very rigorous. Existing models, like the Universal Periodic Review of the Human Rights Council, were not followed, and it is likely to be up to civil society to make up the difference.

So to unpack this issue of what it will take, I’m going to outline 4 propositions:

- *normatively*, we need to focus on the core issues: to find the heart of sustainable peace;
- *at a local and national level*, we need to uphold inclusive national planning, implementation and reporting;
- *at a global level*, we need to foster external support for peace, justice and inclusion; and
- *at home and in our own organizations*, we need to reflect critically on our own processes and actions.

Focus: finding the heart of sustainable peace

The glory of the peaceful, just and inclusive societies mandate is its comprehensive nature, an approach that goes far deeper than ever before into the internal and external root causes of conflict and fragility. But this brings with it several big challenges.

The first is complexity – the list of topics just within Goal 16 is long enough, but by the time you include the related targets in the other goals (and CIC has done some excellent research in doing just that) the list is daunting – and let’s not forget that some key issues were omitted completely – for example, the word ‘reconciliation’ is not mentioned at all in the entire 2030 Agenda document.

A number of different strategies have emerged to address the challenge of a list of issues that is both lengthy and incomplete. One is simply to focus on one target – or even part of a target – and focus on that exclusively – as an example, consider the large amount of attention and resources going towards addressing violence against children, or local access to justice. These are clearly critical topics, but it’s going to be important that we avoid creating orphan targets - topics that are harder or more political and therefore get less attention – and that we don’t lose sight of the scope and power of the mandate as a whole.

Another noticeable strategy, particularly for some governments, is to ignore the richness of the mandate and to simply choose one target that serves short term political expedience – and here I would particularly cite the example of the focus on target 16a – “Strengthen relevant national institutions...to prevent violence and combat terrorism and crime”. We are already starting to see some states, including a number who know better, use 16a as an excuse to divert development resources to military and security uses, or worse, to justify direct suppression of civil and political rights.

So having defined a broad territory, a wide field of view, we now are seeing a need emerging to come to a better understanding of the core drivers of peaceful, just and inclusive societies – that is, of sustainable peace. This is very much a current issue. Some previous attempts – for example, the WDR 2011 focus on institution building – are felt by some to have fallen short, and we wait with some eagerness for the completion of processes such as the current UN World Bank study on development as prevention, which is due by the end of this year.

Of course, the traditional peacebuilding view is that the core issues have to do with building and rebuilding relationship between individuals, their communities and their government. Indeed, a recent World Bank study suggests that “addressing fragility means putting social cohesion at the center of development efforts”. Faith-based actors will not be surprised that issues like trust, dignity, mercy and justice remain at the heart of building sustainable peace.

Action and accompaniment at a local and national level

Every one of the 193 member states are currently putting into place national 2030 Agenda implementation plans, and will report on their progress once in every 4 year cycle at the High Level Political Forum through their voluntary national reviews.

Given the complexity and breadth of the whole agenda, this is a hugely challenging task, particularly for smaller and poorer countries. National governments also have a good deal of leeway in deciding

their own national priorities, which seems sensible on the face of it. The challenge is that it is all too easy for national governments to avoid addressing the more transformational parts of the agenda, particularly the peaceful, just and inclusive societies commitments. The role of local civil society actors in this process is critical, providing input into setting national priorities, implementing relevant projects, and encouraging forthright reporting and review. All national actors, including civil society, deserve the support and accompaniment of donors, international NGOs and the UN. In this context, it is good to see the development of a variety of tools for local civil society- for example, the Goal 16 toolkit produced by the Transparency, Accountability and Participation Network.

In this context I would like to emphasize that the existing mechanisms for reporting and review are simply inadequate, both at the national level and regionally and globally. So there is going to be a strong need for shadow mechanisms at every level. Ideally, there would be a preparatory process equivalent in scope and detail to the work that goes into the Universal Periodic Review process in the Human Rights Council. This is a huge task that is going to require significant capacity building and financial support – and that in a context where civil society space is shrinking worldwide.

I would add that this is also the case in respect of data. The official process on developing indicators for SDG progress has been disappointing on indicators relating to the peaceful, just and inclusive societies commitments. So here also, in order to get a meaningful idea of progress, it may be necessary for civil society to supplement the official reporting with shadow reports using a wider range of indicators, including those from non-governmental sources, that can present a more complete picture.

Coordination and responsibility at a global level

There need to be parallel approaches at a global level.

First, there needs to be a much more honest acknowledgement of the role of external drivers of fragility and violence – and not just the ones that everyone can agree on, like human trafficking and transnational crime, but those where powerful countries have some responsibility, like irresponsible arms flows, unfair trade agreements, and the economic and security agendas of rich countries. Recall that the Mbeki report noted that illicit financial flows from Africa were in excess of \$50 billion a year – that's double total ODA support - much of it from the actions of large corporations, such as inappropriate transfer pricing. Most of the focus of implementation of the 2030 Agenda to date has been at the national level – and this is simply not going to be enough. States need to include in their voluntary national reviews their contribution to addressing external and international drivers of conflict – and this will require a much more self disciplined and reflective approach than we have seen so far. External factors are named in many places in the 2030 Agenda – we need to ensure they continue to be part of the discussion.

Secondly, it is also important that international actors, such as the UN and aid agencies, governmental and independent, need to internalize the approaches of the 2030 Agenda. The lessons of the peaceful, just and inclusive societies mandate have direct relevance for all international humanitarian and development action. Some steps have been taken at the policy level, such as the Peace Promise commitments at the World Humanitarian Summit, but we are still a long way from reflecting this in our analysis or our program planning. If international partners, those accompanying

local civil society, don't implement the peace agenda in their own prioritization and programming, how can we expect local actors to do so? The UN in particular should lead the way.

Thirdly, there needs to be a much better alignment of international crisis response mechanisms with long term needs and trajectories. This is the case both in humanitarian response, in relation to natural disasters as well as those arising from violent conflict, and in peace and security responses, such as the tools available to the security council including good offices, sanctions and peacekeeping.

Reflection and integrity at home – for ourselves and our organizations

Most importantly, the peace commitments also requires of all of us that we critically reflect on our own countries, our own organizations, and indeed, ourselves.

The 2030 Agenda is a universal approach, that applies just as much to the United States and the EU as it does to Somalia or Haiti. Think about these questions- Would you describe the actions of your own local, state and national governments as fully peaceful, just and inclusive? Do our governments act in such a way as to foster peaceful, just and inclusive societies around the world as a core principle of their interactions with other countries? If not, what can we do to change that?

Beyond the government level, what about our own organizations? This mandate requires that we look at ourselves– are our own structures and processes peaceful, just and inclusive? Are our decision-making bodies inclusive of the voices of women and young people and minorities? Do our organizations always act transparently and justly?

This requirement for integrity also works at a personal level, and this seems particularly important for those of us in the faith-based community. *If we are to faithfully work for peace, justice and inclusion, then we must ourselves act peacefully, justly and inclusively.*

Because we all have responsibility for this ambitious agenda– and particularly a responsibility to the poorest, the weakest, those most impacted by violence, injustice and exclusion, so that when we look back on our actions today, we can truly say that we did our best to ensure that no-one was left behind.

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