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Quaker United Nations Office

Aligning crisis response with long-term plans for peace and development through a focus on peace, justice and inclusion. *Contribution to the Joint Meeting of the Economic and Social Council and the Peacebuilding Commission on “Fostering global solidarity and conflict sensitive responses to the COVID-19 pandemic and its socio-economic impacts”, 19 November 2020, New York.*

Five years ago, in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the world committed to a radical new vision, to anchor development action for people and planet in a global partnership of all stakeholders to foster peaceful, just and inclusive societies. Subsequent experience has clearly demonstrated the centrality of this vision to achieving solid development gains. With peace, justice, and inclusion, development can flourish: with conflict, injustice, and exclusion, development efforts will fail.

Indeed, these joint meetings of the Economic and Social Council and the Peacebuilding Commission stand at the heart of these efforts, and demonstrate the commitment of the membership to this vision. We welcome the attention given to these issues by member states, in their current deliberations and on the basis (inter alia) of the 2030 Agenda, the 2016 General Assembly and Security Council Resolutions on the review of the peacebuilding architecture, and the UN75 Declaration, furthering their joint commitment to development, peace and security, human rights and humanitarian action.

Now, in the face of the pandemic, it has become clear that **the focus on peace, justice and inclusion is not only the route to lasting gains in development, but must be embraced as the foundation of an effective humanitarian response in times of crisis.**

How, then, can we bring to bear the important lessons learned in our development efforts to benefit the way we approach crisis response, both in the immediate context of the pandemic, and as we look ahead to a world increasingly impacted by the disruption arising from climate change and environmental degradation and growing inequalities and exclusion?

We see the heart of this discussion as being about finding effective ways to align the humanitarian response of governments and their partners with longer-term peace and development goals, including the 2030 Agenda commitment to fostering peaceful, just and inclusive societies.

One immediate point of entry is to **mainstream peace in the response to COVID-19.** We were recently privileged to coordinate a [call to action](#) from over 170 peacebuilding organizations for the International Day of Peace, which recommended that national governments, donors, multilaterals and humanitarian agencies apply conflict-sensitive and risk-informed approaches in the planning and monitoring of all activities taken to address COVID-19, and align these efforts with the relevant longer-term plans for peace and development.

To implement this, the statement called for member states to **support allocating 5% of the funding for the COVID-19 response to ensure that conflict sensitive approaches are mainstreamed.** This allocation would be used: first, to ensure that all COVID-19 response projects are made conflict sensitive in their design, in their monitoring, and in their evaluation; and second, to fund projects that more directly address issues of resilience through strengthening social cohesion

and mechanisms and processes for addressing division and grievance, such as mediation and reconciliation. This way, as communities build back, they will emerge stronger and better able to prosper in years to come.

Another key point of entry is the need to **prioritize inclusion in analysis and action**. Ensuring the meaningful inclusion and public participation of all groups, including women and girls, youth, and local communities, is vital to our peace and development efforts and to our crisis response. Recent months have starkly demonstrated the disproportionate impact of entrenched and systemic patterns of exclusion at times of crisis. Additionally, civic space must be protected and guaranteed. Inclusion is just as important in the midst of crisis as in longer-term efforts, and critical to developing more effective approaches that can have a lasting impact.

Friends, our hearts go out to those suffering today. But looking into the future, even if effective vaccines are made available to everyone, and even if we find in a year or two that we begin to emerge from the immediate crisis, there are more and even greater challenges yet to come in a world increasingly impacted by climate change and inequality. We need to continue to find ways to support the extraordinary efforts of communities and humanitarians around the world by ensuring that our actions, as we accompany them, not only do no harm, but support their tireless work to relieve suffering not only today, but to prevent it in the future. **If we are to meet the challenges of tomorrow, we must recommit to peace today.**

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