



QUNO
Quaker United Nations Office

Delivering on Peace: *Panel remarks during a high-level side event to the 74th Session of the UN General Assembly, chaired by the Cabinet Secretary for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kenya: UNHQ, New York: 25th September, 2019.*

The concept note framed the meeting as follows:

“Organized on the sidelines of the 74th Session of the UN General Assembly, the High-Level side event will highlight country-specific approaches that target prevention, root causes of conflict, and current security and fragility challenges in order to build resilience and deliver on peace, within its borders and with its neighbors. Countries in various phases of the peace-conflict continuum will identify their own risk and preventive measures, and how the international community can meaningfully partner and support building implementable strategies around them.”

QUNO remarks (as delivered)

Good afternoon, and many thanks to the organizers and my fellow speakers for this very interesting discussion. My name is Andrew Tomlinson, and I’m the Director of the Quaker Office at the UN in New York – we partner widely with local and international peacebuilders and seek to bring their experience and perspectives to policymakers at the UN.

I’m going to focus my remarks on two issues that are highlighted in the concept note – resilience, and the role of the international community in delivering peace. These are also issues that were highlighted in the Peacebuilders’ Statement from the International Day of Peace last weekend, which has been signed by over 130 peacebuilding organizations from around the world.

How do we really foster resilient societies – and what is resilience anyway?

If we are to move beyond late-stage, reactive, expensive and often ineffective responses to complex crises, including those where climate change and migration are factors, governments need to fully embrace a commitment to preventive action by fostering resilience. But what is resilience? A peacebuilding lens suggests that resilient societies are just and inclusive, where the relationships between individuals, their communities and the state are based on trust and respect, and the protection and fulfillment of everyone’s human rights. And resilient societies are those where there are robust mechanisms for addressing inequality, difference and grievances – a set of issues which the recent United Nations/World Bank *Pathways for Peace* report highlighted so effectively as being essential to delivering effective peace and development.

A strong house needs a strong foundation, and a resilient society means national ownership that goes beyond capitals, that includes women and youth and minorities, and that is rooted in inclusion and trust.

How can we re-imagine the role of the international community as focused on the external drivers of peace, justice and inclusion?

As we look across the global landscape through a peace and security lens, too often we are seeing global and regional powers acting to further their own political and economic agendas in a way that increases fragility, destabilizes political transitions, and holds back sustainable development.

We can do better, and the 2030 Agenda provides an important framework to do this, if we are bold enough to seize the opportunity. The fact is that national implementation alone will not suffice to achieve the SDGs or to address the global challenges of climate change and inequality. And this is particularly the case with issues of peace, where *fostering the external drivers of peace, justice and inclusion* requires concerted action by states, as duty holders, to support responsible trade, reduce arms flows, promote constructive financial, tax and investment practices, and strengthen adherence to international humanitarian law. Member States should be looking to reinforce and reinvigorate a multilateral, rules-based system that includes a range of stakeholders beyond state actors, and creates a more effective enabling environment that privileges the long-term peace, development and human rights of all people and all communities.

And finally: **How do we focus on the actions that make a difference?**

Over the summer, we convened a group of diplomats at Quaker House – professionals with jobs that dealt with peacebuilding, and peace and security. And we asked them two questions. First, “from your own experience, what do you think really makes a difference in building sustainable peace?”- and this was important, because I think that we all hold those answers within ourselves. And then we asked: “What do you and your colleagues actually spend your time doing?”. Not surprisingly, it was clear that not a lot of time was being spent on the things that this group really felt made a difference.

So, I would like to leave you with the same questions: what do you really feel, from your own experience, can make a difference in building sustainable peace? And how can we make sure that we, our organizations, our governments, and our communities really spend our time on those things instead of the other items that typically fill our days?

Andrew Tomlinson

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