2019 STOCKHOLM FORUM ON PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT

**From Crisis Response to Peacebuilding:
Achieving Synergies 14–16 May 2019, Stockholm**

What is the Stockholm Forum on Peace and Development?

Every year, senior policymakers, practitioners and researchers meet in Sweden at the annual Stockholm Forum on Peace and Development. The Forum is co-hosted by the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs and the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI). Its objective is to discuss pressing problems facing peacebuilders today, with a focus on building the networks and knowledge peacebuilders need to resolve problems they will face tomorrow.

Over time, the Forum has become an important venue for informed dialogue on cutting-edge issues and research at the nexus of peace and development. Reflecting developments in the international policy agenda, each year the Forum has had a different overarching theme, ranging from 'Freedom from Violence' in 2014, to the more provocative theme of 'What works?' in 2017.

As the reputation of the Forum has spread, demand for registered participation has grown. In 2018 an Open Day was added, which has attracted high-level speakers from across policy realms and become a place to launch new initiatives and instruments.

In 2019, partner organizations contributed to the delivery of 10 parallel sessions on the Open Day (14 May) and 43 round tables, workshops and group discussions on the Focus Days (15–16 May). Over 750 people attended the Open Day, while nearly 400 people joined by invitation over the two Focus Days.

This year, we innovated with 'instant reporting' for the sessions on key takeaways and recommendations, as well as any additional resources that would be helpful to the reader or were mentioned in the discussion. These session reports were produced onsite at the Forum to capture the essence of the session discussion. The titles of the sessions have been shortened where referred to in this report for ease of reference.

2019 Stockholm Forum on Peace and Development

The theme of the 2019 Stockholm Forum was **From Crisis Response to Peacebuilding: Achieving Synergies.** Recognizing the growing number and complexity of conflicts around the world, the focus of the discussion was on how to connect short-term stabilization to sustainable peace.

The theme was based on the recognition that sustaining peace requires a diversity of actors who must make decisions every day to build a pathway to recovery and sustainable development. These actors are national and international; they are humanitarian, development, security and diplomatic professionals; and they are women and men from a variety of backgrounds and ethnicities with a variety of languages, training and education. Yet, for peace to succeed, all have to pull or push together in the same direction at the same time. It is a daunting challenge.

Reflections on the main findings

This reflections piece is not a comprehensive report of the forum. It summarizes key conclusions, points the reader to relevant findings in the session reports and identifies actors who are working on these issues.[1] In some cases, this report identifies new questions that need to be answered.

The report is broken into three sections, although many of the sessions touched on topics in multiple areas.

1. **Key conclusions**

2. **Summary of session findings**

    a. How? How do we achieve synergies between crisis response and peacebuilding?

    b. Why? What are the underlying principles that guide action in this space? Do these principles need to be updated?

    c. Who? Who are the actors in this space and how do they work together, particularly when they work together well?

3. **Keynote address: The contribution of humanitarian action to peace**

While some of the main messages from sessions are captured here, full session reports on the 2019 Forum are available on SIPRI's website, **https://www.sipri.org/node/4814**

[1.] Wherever possible, we have noted the organization affiliated with a conversation, although since almost all of the Forum is conducted under the Chatham House Rule, we are careful to avoid attribution to individual participants or organizations

1. Key conclusions

Must we choose between saving lives today and building peace for tomorrow?

This was the overall question of the Stockholm Forum in 2019. Humanitarian assistance, security responses, development cooperation and peacebuilding are carried out by different communities, with different mandates. While focused on the delivery of their respective responsibilities in crisis response, these communities need to work together to build sustainable peace and development.

The 2019 Stockholm Forum reminded participants that peace is a system. It is defined and owned by those who are involved in the process, and as a result no single person or institution can have all the answers.

While additional resources are needed, targeted not only on crisis response, but also on ensuring sustainable peace, these resources need to be coupled with new ways of working. Development resources directed specifically towards peacebuilding objectives such as security and the rule of law or social cohesion are still limited, while political and security processes remain driven by short-term decision making. To address both dilemmas, the Forum made clear that a scaled-up approach to peacebuilding requires partnerships based on diversity of mandates, and

among national, regional and international actors, in which operational frameworks and coordination recognize comparative advantage.

Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16 on peace, justice and strong institutions highlights that the sustainable development goals in Agenda 2030 will not be achieved unless violence and fragility are addressed. Given the global nature of the challenge, there is a need for a comprehensive strategic vision that goes beyond national or sectoral approaches. All the SDGs are integrated and interdependent.

The Forum highlighted the importance of joint analysis and planning, and in particular of ensuring that analysis and planning for peacebuilding integrates the perceptions of security, stability and justice of affected populations, and that analysis and planning are used to create broad ownership of objectives. While there is broad agreement on the rhetoric around inclusivity, there is still a long way to go in practice, and state-based decision making remains both a de facto and a de jure norm. A process for addressing this gap, and to highlight meaningful examples of inclusive peace processes, could be an important contribution to continuing international efforts to promote long-term inclusive peace.

Are there sufficient mechanisms in place for bringing actors in crisis response together with peacebuilding and development actors? If not—what is needed? It was apparent during the Forum that mechanisms for joint approaches do exist, but are applied in an often ad hoc way. Planning, resource allocation and technical capacities are concentrated on organizational and mandate silos, while country managers and leadership often struggle to equip themselves with the knowledge and resources needed to mobilize integrated responses. Despite global successes on the SDGs, this has been met with relatively marginal efforts to invest in identifying overarching objectives that bring together different actors around shared peacebuilding targets at the country level.

As Peter Eriksson, Sweden's Minister for International Development Cooperation, underlined—and the discussions at the Forum confirmed—coming together is the only way of working if we are to take on the challenges of today and achieve Agenda 2030 for all.

Saving lives today and building peace for tomorrow is possible—if we do it together.

2. Summary of session findings

How? How do we achieve synergies between crisis response and peacebuilding?

Many of the sessions focused on how to support the transition from crisis response to peacebuilding. In complex environments, different paths from conflict to peace are possible. Forum participants emphasized, however, that for responses to build peace, how policies, programmes and reforms are designed and implemented is as critical as what investments are made. How matters.

This distinction came to the fore in the emphasis on the importance of using perceptions as the foundations for the planning and monitoring of peacebuilding responses.

This emphasis came across strongly in discussions on the need to improve understanding about how stabilization and security are implemented and for whom.

- Several sessions underscored the importance of understanding the needs and desires of populations in countries where stabilization missions are delivered. For example, one session focused on the difference between local and international perceptions of security (see the report **'What is legitimate stability?'**). Another session, organized by Interpeace, presented examples from Afghanistan and Mali that showed that if we do not design

stabilization programmes based on locally identified priorities, 'the likelihood of development and stabilization initiatives ... deepening local grievances will be increased' (see the report **'Two sides of the same coin?'**).

- The importance of locally defined security was also discussed during a session on the Sahel, where discussions focused on the importance of efforts to build peace producing positive social contracts between society and the state. The session report concluded that '... the international community tends to ... respect the choices that states make, even if it is not comfortable with them ... inclusivity is a key for the state's legitimacy' (see the report **'Stakeholders and local realities'**).

"Billions of dollars has been spent on stabilization, but with limited success. One reason is because stabilization missions are externally designed. Stabilization efforts and peacebuilders have a shared goal, so how can we better work together?"

- A session led by the Center for Civilians in Conflict focused on the 'specific approaches that the Nigerian military, civil society and conflict-affected communities are taking to improve protection and mitigate civilian harm in conflict areas'. This discussion highlighted 'the tangible impact of these efforts on civilians' lives and on the relations between armed actors and civilians' (see the report **'The role of security actors in protecting civilians'**).

Other sessions highlighted the importance of bringing populations into institutional reform processes. In order to proceed, institutional reform requires foundational agreements on common objectives. Bringing populations into the process of identifying these objectives can ensure that reforms are sustained over time.

- A session facilitated by the Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance highlighted that the success of security sector reform (SSR) processes results from 'brokering and building trust between conflict actors' including non-state actors so that SSR can address conflict drivers and contribute to the quality of the peace (see the report **'What role for security sector reform in peace processes?'**).

- In Mercy Corps's session on **'How to improve good governance in the midst of war'**, participants discussed how governance reform in conflict-affected environments can contribute to legitimate, effective and accountable institutions.

- Similarly, in a session on **'Linking security and development through good governance of SDG 16'**, also facilitated by the Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance, participants drilled down into the role of ombudsman and oversight institutions to see how they can promote transparency, accountability and access to services in fragile environments.

Many sessions questioned the narrative that there is a trade-off between human rights and stability. Indeed, evidence presented at the Forum suggested that respect for rights and obligations creates a virtuous circle in forging stability, and is often a foundation for a lasting peace.

- This was a major theme of the discussion in the session facilitated by the International Legal Assistance Consortium (ILAC) on finding a lasting and durable peace in Syria, where challenges linked to resolving housing, land and property rights issues are underpinning concerns around an unjust and unstable peace (see the report **'Preventing an unjust peace'**).

- A similar argument was made in the session on **'Human rights, peacebuilding and SDG 16.1'**, hosted by the Center on International Cooperation. Participants discussed how human rights and other global obligations can serve as a foundational entry point for policy dialogue on sensitive peacebuilding topics.

All these sessions highlighted that the political decisions of today cannot be made irrespective of future consequences. This was reinforced by a reminder from a panellist during the Interpeace discussion on the first day of the Forum that 'peace is a process' rather than a state or condition (see the report **'Towards a normative framework for inclusive and effective peace processes'**).

"The more unhappy the government is with the ombudsman institution, the better the job the institution is doing."

Many participants connected these strands together to highlight the relevance of systems thinking to peacebuilding (see e.g. the report

on the session facilitated by the Institute for Integrated Transitions, **'Leveraging crisis points to catalyse long-term social change'**).

- A session organized by the African Center for Strategic Studies drew attention to growing systemic risks to peace, such as urbanization, migration, climate change and population growth (see the report **'Security implications of megatrends in Africa'** and the one on the public panel discussion on the same topic).

- The most difficult environments are those where specific groups are victims of systemic disenfranchisement or marginalization—as evidenced by the session **'What next on the path to accountability for abuses including sexual and gender-based violence in Rakhine state?'** led by the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (HD). This session noted the importance of giving the Rohingya a voice and representation in defining what justice means for victims, including victims of sexual and gender-based violence, while exploring ways to address impunity for atrocities.

- Stabilization may even be unhelpful if it is understood as simply a '(re)distribution of power'. A highly practical example of applying this thinking came from the session on **'Corruption and peacebuilding'**, which reminded policymakers that the 'dirty deals' necessary for the immediate peace may become entrenched corruption long after stabilization and affect the stability of a lasting peace.

- In the session **'Revisiting post-conflict stabilization and early recovery'** led by the European Union Institute for Security Studies (EUISS), which focused on Mali and Somalia, policymakers were encouraged to be flexible and to ensure that stabilization operations respond to changing realities on the ground.

Putting together a number of these recommendations and key takeaways, participants and panellists converged on the observation that stabilization operations that exclude citizens' and regional stakeholders' priorities and rights from institutional reform or the provision of security risk becoming a holding state or entrenching interests that do not contribute to a lasting peace.

This raises significant questions, particularly related to the sequencing of interventions. It also highlights the importance of taking multiple perspectives into account in the design of responses to conflict and of understanding how or why some stakeholders may not be committed to the peacebuilding process.

Why? What are the underlying principles that guide action in this space? Do these principles need to be updated?

Based on the above observations, participants were asked whether new principles of peacebuilding were needed.

In order to design a systemic approach to peace, participants emphasized the importance of inclusive national ownership.

- The quality and sustainability of peace depend on who defines and negotiates it (see the report **'Inclusive peace agreement implementation'**, the discussion facilitated by the United Nations Development Programme Oslo Governance Centre). This session reminded participants that inclusivity is itself a process that cannot be assumed or imposed, but is built over time as stakeholders see the value of supporting peace.

- In the conversation led by the Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers, Mercy Corps and Crisis Management Centre Finland, participants stressed the importance of ownership by civil society (see the report **'Short-term, long-sighted'**). The discussion

identified ways in which this ownership can be promoted by local reconcilers and peacemakers promoting alignment of interests across local and international actors and planning.

- Similarly, local leaders may be able to contribute more and have more of an impact than national or international actors, as was noted in the European Institute of Peace session **'Is peacemaking too important to be left in the hands of peacemakers?'**. Participants stressed the importance of women, the private sector and local elites in producing a sustainable peace, drawing primarily on the case of Somaliland.

Where inclusive ownership is absent, peacebuilding efforts founder on core problems of legitimacy. This was developed further in a discussion on **'Comparative perspectives on military support to ruling parties'** facilitated by the Institute for Integrated Transitions, which considered legitimacy and the challenges created by the co-dependence between political parties, the military and elites during transition.

- Two sessions dove deep into the challenges of peacebuilding where there is no local ownership. The cases of South Sudan (see the United States Institute of Peace (USIP) session **'The political economy of humanitarian aid and implications for peace mediation'**) and Cameroon (see the session **'Sustaining Peace in Practice'** jointly led by the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation, the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict and the International Peace Institute) were juxtaposed with cases such as Liberia, which has seen both a willingness and a capacity to deliver on a peacebuilding vision shared by national and international actors.

"There's a disconnect between local efforts and international dialogue on the frameworks ... the real shift needs to be from local to global, not the other way around."

Moving beyond principles, several sessions focused on practical lessons on how to improve inclusivity.

• The Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation hosted a session on **'Inclusivity: The long and short of it'** that recommended: (*a*) applying an approach that recognizes the multiple reasons for marginalization and exclusion; (*b*) inviting those who are excluded to represent themselves rather than analyse their situation for them; (*c*) using language and terminology that are accessible to those concerned and do not perpetuate exclusion; and (*d*) understanding and trying to overcome practical barriers to inclusion.

• Participants were also reminded that deciding 'who should be at the table' presents an opportunity. Peacebuilders often have liberty to bring actors without a voice into difficult discussions (see the report on **'Dialogue in action'** convened by the International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding). Convening dialogues can not only promote inclusivity, but also contribute to ownership, and can be used to keep human rights and other principles to the fore (see the **ILAC report**, referenced above).

"Bringing actors into talks is not a reward, it is a necessity."

The focus on inclusivity was further explored in a number of sessions on gender.

• A session on the **'Gendered dimensions of conflict and gendered responses'** recommended that peacebuilders develop a bottom-up approach to achieving gender equality that can increase support for women-led organizations that work at the grassroots of society and are well placed to work bottom-up on identity issues and women's rights.

• The knock-on effects of promoting participation by women's groups and women can also include making progress on other marginalization issues beyond gender, such as ethnicity and language (see the report **'No room for marginalization'**).

"People who are not visible in your horizon will not be visible in your answers."

Who? Who are the actors in this space and how do they work together, particularly when they work together well?

The 2019 Forum saw an increase in the number of actors in attendance beyond the development and peacebuilding space, and in references to wider groups of international and national actors. The so-called triple nexus of humanitarian, security/peace and development action was explored in a plenary session, led by the Brookings Institution, on **'How to realize the security-development nexus',** which led to further similar discussions during the focus days.

• A session led by the World Food Programme focused on the role of food assistance in sustaining peace (see the report **'Food assistance and its contributions to improving the prospects for peace'**). This session highlighted that while the mandates and missions of

humanitarian actors are not connected to building security or peace, these actors play an important role in improving the prospects for peace. On a similar theme, a session led by SIPRI assessed the influence of nutrition and sustainable agriculture on the prospects for peace (see the report **'Food security and nutrition in conflict-affected states'**).

- A round table session led by the European Centre for Development Policy Management focused on how local delivery provides examples of working within a nexus approach in Somalia (see the report **'Implementing the humanitarian-development-peacebuilding nexus'**). A key finding of this session was that greater international coordination and collaboration will only be useful if it can increase financing, reduce bottlenecks or improve collaboration between national governments and local actors.

- The relevance of joint funding and modalities, including peace platforms, was the focus of the International Rescue Committee session on **'Operationalizing SDG 16 and the triple nexus'**.

The Forum was also a reminder that because almost all conflicts today are embedded in regional conflict systems, engaging regional actors is of growing importance across the peace and development nexus.

- Regional actors can have more leverage and more interest in a lasting peace, as identified particularly in the Colombia case in a session led by PRISM at the National Defense University. (see the report **'Colombia: from the brink to security exporter'**.)

- A session facilitated jointly by SIPRI and Mistra Geopolitics highlighted that major regional

leaders such as China could become more involved in the dialogue on peacebuilding and development (see the report **'China's rising role in sustainable development and peacebuilding contexts'**). China, for example, will be further developing its policies on aid and how it works with regional governments over the next decade.

- The session on **'Managing security and promoting stability in the Horn of Africa and the Red Sea'**, facilitated by the Crisis Management Initiative (CMI) and SIPRI, highlighted that, in the light of the region's complexity, dialogue will have to take place at the bilateral, regional and multilateral levels in order to make progress and promote the demilitarization of regional conflicts.

- The challenges of adapting to and mitigating the effects of climate change were discussed in a number of sessions (see e.g. the reports **'Climate change, peacebuilding and sustaining peace'** and **'Integrating climate-related security risks'**). Adelphi led a special focus on the Lake Chad Basin, which also discussed these issues (see the report **'Shoring up stability in the Lake Chad region'**).

A number of panels also raised questions around how global frameworks connect to local peacebuilding.

- In the session **'From global to local'** led by the Alliance for Peacebuilding, participants asked whether multilateral bodies such as the UN and the World Bank, which are subject to the political objectives of their member states, are able to fulfill their role as impartial peacebuilders that promote conflict prevention?

- Similarly, discussions led by the Center on International Cooperation on commitment

to global initiatives such as the SDGs (see the report **'Neglected, immeasurable and hyper complicated'**) highlighted that while the SDGs may drive attention and donor financing, they can be quite disconnected from local objectives and incentives.

Ultimately, many sessions on specific conflicts highlighted the role of global principles and action, but reiterated that without commitments by national leaders, civil society, elites and peacebuilders, such action could not deliver a sustainable peace.

- Partners shared experiences in sessions on the Horn of Africa (**CMI and SIPRI session** referenced above), the Maghreb (see the report **'Negotiating the stability of political institutions in the Maghreb region'** led by Laboratoire de Recherche en Droit International et Européen et Relations Maghreb Europe), the Sahel (see the report **'Innovative approaches to overcome security and development challenges in the Sahel region'** led by the World Bank), South Sudan (**USIP session** referenced above); Syria (**ILAC session** referenced above) and Myanmar (**Rakhine session** led by HD referenced above).

- In a session led by the Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium, behavioural science was applied to show how experience of conflict can affect understandings of peacebuilding efforts, and how such perceptions affect how conflict is resolved (see the report **'Culture eats strategy for breakfast'**). A recommendation for peacebuilding arising from this session was the need to build inclusive coalitions involving local, national, regional and international stakeholders, keeping in mind that no single actor has all of the solutions required to tackle complex challenges.

One critical area in this year's discussion was that of transitions, with a focus on how to manage evolving mandates, mission drawdowns and changing relationships in a peacebuilding context.

- This theme was central to a discussion on post-conflict stabilization led by the EUISS that compared the cases of Mali and Somalia (**see report** referenced above). Another session hosted by the Effectiveness of Peace Operations Network and the Challenges Forum explored the conditions that contribute to successful peacekeeping and recurrent challenges in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Mali (see the report **'Does peacekeeping work?'**). A key takeaway from this session was that a number of challenges remain for the UN, and more specifically the UN Security Council and its permanent members, in improving the efficiency of UN peacekeeping, and providing relevant and achievable mandates, adequate funding and long-term strategies, including exit strategies.

- A further deep dive on missions, mandates and roles compared police in peace operations in multiple contexts (see the report **'Policing in stabilization environments'**). This highlighted the importance of police as key agents of stabilization through their work to build trust with local communities and maintain public order, as well as the need to counter the growing militarization of the police.

A recurrent theme in many of the sessions was how to use strategic objectives to identify who should be involved in solutions. For example, if the objective is a lasting peace built on an inclusive participatory political process, then making time during transition moments to build representative electoral systems is essential, as was noted in the session on the **'Timing and sequencing of post-war elections: make haste slowly'** led by International IDEA.

3. Keynote address: The contribution of humanitarian action to peace

As delivered by Peter Maurer, President, International Committee of the Red Cross

Some of you may be asking why a representative of a humanitarian organization is offering introductory remarks to a conference in which the focus is on peace.

I hope I can convince at least some of you that in an increasingly interconnected world, it is important to take a fresh look at the specificities and the linkages between some key societal aspirations like peace, security, development and human rights on the one side and humanitarian crisis response on the other.

The connection of humanitarian action to broader objectives like peace, development and human rights is understandably complex, but it is also an area in which some fresh thinking is important.

The dilemma we are facing today is how to expand and uphold neutral, impartial and independent humanitarian action while designing and understanding such action as a bridge to broader and more ambitious transformative agendas.

No matter how we characterize this dilemma, above all we must anchor our discussions in the realities of people living under the shadow of conflict, insecurity and fragility. This is particularly important given that more than 80 per cent of people displaced by violence and conflict today originate from fewer than 20 particularly vulnerable contexts, most of them

privileged areas of humanitarian action—and that those contexts endanger achievement of the SDGs.

Working on the frontlines, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) bears witness to suffering in conflicts around the world; and we also observe how the new dynamics of violence are taking a heavy toll on the lives of everyday men, women and children.

In recent years we have seen how the gap is widening between the scale of humanitarian needs and the available humanitarian response. Despite all the efforts to grow the humanitarian sector and to respond through emergency operations to such contexts, we also recognize that gaps do not and will not be closed by traditional humanitarian action.

The dominant features of fragility that we see today include:

- High levels of violence, whether through military or counterterrorism operations, intercommunity violence or criminality;

- Underdevelopment, and a lack of reliable essential services;

- Failures of governance and endemic corruption;

- The impacts of climate change, exacerbating existing pressures and embedding new fragilities; and

- Enormous humanitarian needs, whether through displacement, pandemics, or the loss of education or livelihoods.

These factors are exacerbated by protracted, urbanized conflicts, which not only kill and maim, but also destroy systems, infrastructure and economies and thus compel humanitarian actors to take a fresh look at what people need in such environments.

I am reminded of the shells of destroyed cities we've seen in recent years—Mosul, Aleppo, Taiz and many more. The deep structural degradation of infrastructure and social systems in cities will be incredibly difficult to repair and will require high levels of investment over the long term.

But it is exactly in these places where we see a patent absence of development actors—because of security risks or political blockages to envisage broader development engagement.

In protracted, decade-old conflicts, people's needs go beyond emergency assistance. Even though battles are being fought, chronic diseases still need to be treated, children still need education, adults still need jobs.

People's needs are many-sided: they are short, medium and long term. They are individual and community oriented. They are material, but also psychosocial and psychological.

The realities on the ground are moving further away by the day from the classical bureaucracies, structures, processes and policy categories which the international community has created to deal with such issues of concern: human rights, peace-building, development, humanitarian action. Realities don't fit the boxes.

At the same time, with these deep needs, it is clear that no actor working alone will be able to meet the demands. Today's needs landscape has long surpassed any individual approach.

And there are no blanket solutions: instead, we must adapt to the particular needs of communities, to their skills and resilience capacities. Approaches will differ enormously, for example in low- or middle-income countries.

Approaches must be strongly localized as well as supported by neutral international actors. Complementarity of efforts centered on creating maximum impact for people will therefore be essential.

Dear colleagues,

Humanitarian actors are not peacebuilders: neutral, impartial, independent humanitarian action is distinct from political agendas and it must remain so.

Yet, I would argue that while others make peace, humanitarian action helps to make peace possible.

International humanitarian law has positive and multiplying impacts when it is respected. For example, when the principles of proportionality and distinction are applied, lives are saved, hospitals and schools remain open, markets can function and reconciliation after the conflict becomes easier.

Frontline humanitarian action too is a vital stabilizing factor in fragmented environments and a building block towards greater stabilization. Principled humanitarian action serves to protect against development reversals caused by the effects of war and division in societies.

For example, in recent years in Syria, as the war has shifted into new phases, the ICRC has adopted a two-track approach—providing emergency food, shelter to displaced populations; but also working in areas with greater stability to repair water, sanitation and electricity infrastructure.

We have also shifted to replace in-kind by cash assistance and thus prepare the ground for a return of regular economic life or to support market creations and income-generating activities.

And it is not only in Syria, but in many contexts millions of people survive and can go back to previously stable lives because of sustained humanitarian upkeep of infrastructure, health systems or investments in community-building and livelihood support.

Also, today the ICRC is fulfilling varying requests to act as a neutral intermediary in conflict. Each and every month, when my colleagues brief me on the engagement we entertain to establish links between belligerents, I wonder whether out of isolated humanitarian activities, we are able to build a more sustained engagement pointing beyond humanitarian action.

We are called on to prevent relations from deteriorating or to find mutual trust-building measures that would help to increase stability.

Here in Stockholm, the Yemeni parties agreed to make detention exchanges an important next step in peace negotiations and it is the ICRC's humanitarian experience, which has supported the negotiation of a draft agreement, which hopefully one day will also lead to something broader than a humanitarian result.

Our mode of working is distinct, drawing on our humanitarian experience and relying on the principles of neutrality, independence and impartiality but the effect of our action hopefully allows for more.

Through humanitarian disarmament initiatives, we are engaging bilaterally, mini-laterally and multilaterally to build consensus to limit the use of indiscriminate, harmful weapons.

Over the years, we have seen strong support from the international community on weapons treaties, including to ban chemical and biological weapons and landmines.

Now with conventional arms reaching record levels, we are also urging states of influence to lead by example and ensure no weapon is supplied where there is a clear risk it would be used to commit or facilitate serious violations of international humanitarian law.

We are also working with others to create greater impact. New financing models, such as the Humanitarian Impact Bond, the Famine Action Mechanism with the World Bank and the UN, are testing grounds to align complementary experience, data and finance and to bring states, the private sector and humanitarian actors together in finding new and more meaningful tools to address some of the big disruptions of our times.

Dear colleagues,

With humanitarian demands vast and complex, we must find a basis on which to work differently. It will take all of us—working together and through our distinct roles—to prevent and alleviate suffering, to build stability, and to take the first steps on the long path back to peace and development.

I am aware that some are afraid that principled humanitarianism risks losing its soul by trying to build pathways to peace and development. But I may remind them what the founding fathers of the ICRC in their foundational assembly of 1863 agreed: that humanitarian action could only escape the danger of prolonging war, if it were shaped in a way that it would contribute to the creation of peace in the long run.

As a four-time recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize, the ICRC hopes Norway and Sweden may have a clearer understanding than anybody else about the intrinsic link of principled humanitarianism with broader societal aspirations.

PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS