

HUMAN RIGHTS, PEACEBUILDING AND SDG16.1: BREAKING SILOS AND BUILDING BRIDGES

INSTITUTIONAL LEAD

**Pathfinders for Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies Program at
the Center on International Cooperation, New York University**

MODERATOR

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OVERVIEW

This session explored the essential connections between peacebuilding, violence prevention and human rights, elaborating on how the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provide an essential framework for action. The session revealed both key areas of convergence and existing gaps between communities. It reinforced emerging efforts to engage different sets of tools in the interest of significantly reducing all forms of violence (SDG 16, target 16.1). The panel began by exploring the efforts of one community to pursue a human rights-based approach to violence prevention.

FOCUS AND OBJECTIVES

The session aimed to specify tools that can be more proactively used to address violence both through policy and in practice. By framing in the context of the SDGs, it reinforced the immediate and long-term priorities for action. It also aimed to engage those Forum participants with a human rights background or with an interest in engaging human rights tools in an ongoing, deliberate discussion on working more purposefully together.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Human rights and peacebuilding have strong connections and deal with similar issues. However, they often use very different language, which can expand gaps between the fields and result in weak communication. There are untapped opportunities to identify points of convergence, at which it is recognized that advancing human rights helps to reinforce peace and reduce violence. This can also aid in bringing discussions from the ground to high-level policy forums. As one panellist commented, ‘We should pepper our commentary and arguments with language from across human rights, peacebuilding and development’, thereby better translating challenges and tensions in the different spheres. Human rights and peacebuilding work in different ways to try to find solution for existing challenges. Sustainable Development Goal 16 provides an essential framework that brings together human rights defenders, peacebuilders, governments and local communities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Identify points of entry and convergence and make strategic use of this knowledge when mobilizing actors and resources.
- Increase strategic thinking about how to use frameworks such as the Universal Periodic Review and human rights conventions to advance working practice in the fields of prevention and peacebuilding.
- Conceive the relationship between governments and human rights defender organizations as an enabling partnership—not opposing actors—to advance peace and rights consolidation.

- Recognizing that violence tends to concentrate among people and in places that have typically been disenfranchised or lack power, use tools such as the 1969 Convention on Racial Discrimination to promote inclusion, reinforce the ambitions of the SDGs and advance peacebuilding.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Human rights and articulation of the SDGs are universal. How do we use each to promote a transformation to greater equality for all?
- On the ground, human rights actors and peacebuilding practitioners are concerned with the same things, but a separation has been created by the international community. How do we use our respective fields to advance our common goals without getting stuck in silos?
- Human rights language can be better used to reinforce a positivist approach to peace.

LINKS AND DOCUMENTS

Cahill-Ripley, A. and Hendrick, D., *Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and Sustaining Peace: An Introduction* (Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung: Geneva, 2018), <<https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/genf/14400.pdf>>.

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Quaker United Nations Office (QUNO), *Integrating Human Rights and Sustaining Peace* (QUNO: Geneva/New York, 2018), <http://www.quno.org/sites/default/files/resources/QUNO_Integrating_Human_Rights_and_Sustaining_Peace_FOR_WEB.pdf>.