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**PEACE AND POST – 2015
INTO THE HOME STRETCH**

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Introduction

The year 2015 offers a unique opportunity for global leaders and people to end poverty, transform the world to better meet human needs and the necessities of economic transformation, while protecting the environment, ensuring peace and realizing human rights. (para.1)

Reconciliation, peacebuilding and state-building are critical for countries to overcome fragility and develop cohesive societies and strong institutions. (para.79)

(Synthesis Report of the Secretary General, 'The Road to Dignity by 2030' [United Nations 2014b])

In September 2015, the Special Summit on Sustainable Development will take place at the United Nations, at which it is expected that world leaders will embrace a new and transformative vision for people and the planet by 2030, codified in a set of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs – the much-expanded successors to the Millennium Development Goals [MDGs] which have prioritized development action for the last decade and a half).¹

So far, this vision has included specific mention of promoting peaceful, just and inclusive societies, both as a goal (Goal 16 in the list of goal candidates drawn up by the Open Working Group [OWG], a member state body tasked by the General Assembly with preparing a proposal on the SDGs) and as a theme repeated through the precursor texts. However, as member state negotiations turn to questions of financing and implementation, Goal 16 and its companion topics are vulnerable to attack. Indeed, even if they survive this year's negotiations, Goal 16 issues are among those that will present the greatest challenges for monitoring, accountability and review, at both national and global levels, presenting governments and civil society with unique demands on capacity and coordination.

¹ This is an Accepted Manuscript of an article published by Taylor & Francis in the Journal of Peacebuilding & Development on April 02 2015, available online:
<http://www.tandfonline.com/eprint/s4yKKyC3gb9ZiD4uqAKI/full#.VTUjjPnF9EJ>."

The outcome of this debate is likely to impact on many of the ways in which peacebuilding work is prioritized, financed and measured for the next generation. If we are willing to widely apply what has already been learned about the impact of violence and fragility on development, we can seize the opportunity to improve the lives of millions of people by affirming the central role of peaceful, just and inclusive societies in effective and sustainable development.

Recent Milestones

Previous Policy Dialogue briefings in the *Journal of Peacebuilding & Development* have documented the three intense years of meetings, consultations, briefings, analyses and negotiations that have brought us to this point (Attree 2013; Brinkman 2013; Cox 2014; Woollard 2013). The new framework also offered practitioners, academics and policy-makers the opportunity to better reflect the many lessons learned from the successes and failures of development interventions in recent years. One of the most important areas where our understanding has progressed has been in the interconnections between peace and development. For example, the World Development Report of 2011 on Conflict, Security and Development summarised many of the insights gained over the prior decade, noting that the MDG approach has been largely unsuccessful in conflict-affected countries, and that the process of rebuilding for such societies could take generations (World Bank 2011).

Peace issues have been a consistent major thread in the SDG discussion. In 2012, the UN System Task Team Report identified ‘peace and security’ as one of four key dimensions of a more holistic development agenda (United Nations 2012). The High Level Panel Report in the summer of 2013 gave us two goal candidates, #10 (‘ensure good governance and effective institutions’) and #11 (‘enable stable and peaceful societies’), and identified ‘build peace’ as one of five transformative shifts to meet development goals (United Nations 2013).

The latter part of 2014 saw a number of significant developments. In July, the thirteenth and final session of the OWG took place, with the co-chairs submitting their report in August (United Nations 2014a). The OWG process had taken a long time to get off the ground due to procedural differences, resulting in a number of curious compromises (such as the seating arrangements, by which the 30 places were shared by sometimes unlikely combinations of member states). However, with the dedicated effort of the co-chairs a consensus outcome was achieved in the form of a proposed set of 17 goals and 169 targets (Box 1).

The peace goal was hotly debated, being a major topic in the final overnight negotiations. It emerged battered and bruised but still recognisable, as Goal 16, ‘Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels’ as a result of consistent efforts by many to promote the mainstreaming of peace and security issues. Related targets (such as eliminating violence against women and girls) appear in other goal areas. The list of targets that survived was not exhaustive (issues such as dispute resolution, and a more thorough treatment of external factors, failed to make the cut) but those that remain cover a meaningful sampling of the key issues.

Box 1: Goal 16. Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels

16.1 significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere

16.2 end abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence and torture against children

16.3 promote the rule of law at the national and international levels, and ensure equal access to justice for all

16.4 by 2030 significantly reduce illicit financial and arms flows, strengthen recovery and return of stolen assets, and combat all forms of organized crime

16.5 substantially reduce corruption and bribery in all its forms

16.6 develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels

16.7 ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels

16.8 broaden and strengthen the participation of developing countries in the institutions of global governance

16.9 by 2030 provide legal identity for all including birth registration

16.10 ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements

16.a strengthen relevant national institutions, including through international cooperation, for building capacities at all levels, in particular in developing countries, for preventing violence and combating terrorism and crime

16.B promote and enforce non-discriminatory laws and policies for sustainable development

Source: From United Nations, 'Report of the Open Working Group of the General Assembly on Sustainable Development Goals', A/RES/68/970: 22. q 2014 United Nations. Reprinted with the permission of the United Nations.

<https://docs.google.com/gview?url=http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/1579SDGs%20Proposal.pdf&embedded=true>

Another significant event at the end of 2014 was the release of the Synthesis Report of the Secretary-General on the Post-2015 Agenda, 'The Road to Dignity by 2030: Ending Poverty, Transforming All Lives and Protecting the Planet' (United Nations 2014b). Expectations for this report had not been particularly high, yet given the short time available for its writing and the political nature of the content, it exceeded expectations. The report clearly emphasized the evolution of the development goal debate, from the 'shopping list' of development priorities of the MDGs, to the transformative and universal vision for humanity proposed in the post-2015 discussion. The 17 proposed

goals and accompanying targets of the OWG were incorporated wholesale, reflecting the strong preference of many member states not to reopen the goal discussion, at least for the time being. To answer the call for a simplified and more easily communicated expression of the agenda, the report set out a list of six ‘essential elements for delivering on the SDGs’, including ‘Justice: to promote safe and peaceful societies, and strong institutions’ (Figure 1).

The report also included extensive discussion of financing issues and implementation, including measurement, monitoring, and evaluation and reporting. A number of key principles were stated – for example that ‘no goal or target be considered met unless met for all social and economic groups’. The report also went into some detail in its suggestions of accountability and review mechanisms – ‘the new accountability that we seek is not one of conditionality...but rather one of all actors...to the people themselves’. In particular, the review processes that are outlined imply the application of the principle of subsidiarity – that measurement and evaluation will take place at the national level by preference. Although this may allow interventions to be designed in light of local conditions, it raises troubling questions about comparability between countries and regions. Moreover, local and national monitoring will make significant demands on governments and civil society, and assistance from the international community may be required to help them build the appropriate capacity, particularly in fragile and conflict-affected environments.

Figure 1: Six Essential Elements for Delivering the SDGs



Source: From United Nations, ‘the Road to Dignity by 2030: Ending Poverty, Transforming All Lives and Protecting the Planet. Synthesis Report of the Secretary-General on the Post-2015 Agenda’, New York, December 2014: 20. © 2014 United Nations. Reprinted with the permission of the United Nations.

Moving Forward

The final formal rounds of member state negotiations will take place in New York from January to July 2015. There will also be a complementary series of thematic debates organized by the President of the General Assembly, including one in April on promoting tolerance and reconciliation. The Financing for Development track is separate, running up to the conference in Addis Ababa in July: the two discussions are meant to be mutually reinforcing. Then come the two big events of the year, the Special Summit on Sustainable Development at the UN in September, followed by the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change meetings in Paris in December.

There are two observations to be made here. First, the core processes are member state negotiations. The key actors are therefore governments, with as many or more decisions being made in national capitals as in New York. In addition there will be a strong regional flavor to negotiations, and the decisions on priorities and strategies made by regional blocks may prove to be determinative in the final rounds. Secondly, there are a number of separate but linked discussions coming to a head at the same time (development, climate change, financing for both) and it may be that bargains struck in one context will have connections to agreements in another.

There will also continue to be opportunities for input, although it will be important to track the changing centers of gravity of the discussion. For example, having spent three years focused on goals and targets, member states are now moving to financing and implementation: this will require different analysis and different approaches from those seeking to influence the process. At the same time, there will be an accompanying technical conversation related to indicators and data collection.

At the time of writing, it appears that there will be points of entry for non-state actors at several levels and in a number of contexts. At a technical level, the conversation on indicators and targets will continue to be critical for the peace agenda. The measurement framework that is put in place for peace and related topics as part of the SDG process will affect how peace and justice work is assessed and funded over the coming decades. In addition, demonstrating that the peace and justice targets are robust and that progress towards them can be effectively measured through an implementable set of indicators is key to supporting the political case for their inclusion.

There may also be opportunities to participate in the Financing for Development discussion. For example, the G7+ and donors have built up an important body of lessons learned around how to finance and implement development in fragile and conflict-affected environments that could be incorporated. Private sector investors also have an interest in peace and stability and there are still opportunities for discussions that can highlight restorative rather than securitized responses.

As this year progresses, there will be an increasing focus on how the new agenda can be implemented and progress monitored. It will be important for those interested in the peace agenda to engage with this process, particularly since the Goal 16 issues are among those that will present the greatest challenges for monitoring, accountability and review, at both national and global levels.

Why Is This Important?

The continuing post-2015 process is a once in a generation opportunity for those (whether in government, civil society or the private sector) with an interest in fostering peaceful, just and inclusive societies to engage with a broad range of development and humanitarian actors, and to affirm the centrality of these issues to the development enterprise as a whole

To begin with, at the most universal level, violence is a fundamental dimension of human suffering. No society on earth is free from the effects of violence, and any broader vision for humanity has to explicitly address violence in all its forms. Secondly, a key objective of the post-2015 agenda is the elimination of extreme poverty. As has been amply demonstrated, peace issues are central to attaining this objective. Violence is antithetical to human development in every context, and this is particularly the case in the most challenging environments, where the greatest and most intractable poverty lies.

To succeed, the effort to eliminate extreme poverty must of necessity tackle the issues of fragile and conflict-affected societies – the very places where the existing MDG-based approaches have failed. Through the work of the g7+ countries and their partners, it has become clear that new approaches are required. A focus on strengthening the social fabric, listening to local voices and getting to grips with issues of inclusion and fairness is essential to effective development in these environments, and this requires different approaches from states, civil society and funders alike. Additionally, these situations also require that we more effectively address the external stresses that can so easily destabilize developing societies, from the economic and security policies of the major powers to arms flows and trafficking. The new framework makes some mention of topics such as illicit flows and transnational crime, but is largely silent on addressing the impact of the economic and security policies of the major powers.

Thirdly, the peace issues are core to the discussion of resilience. Resilient societies are those where the social fabric is strong. They are just and inclusive societies, where the relationships between individuals, their communities and the state are effective and based on trust. These are the core issues of Goal 16. And resilience is a key concept in discussions around climate change adaptation, disaster and humanitarian action, and development.

Finally, and beyond the normative issues, it is not necessarily an exaggeration to suggest that the outcome of this debate will impact on the way in which peacebuilding work is prioritized, financed and measured for the next generation. Simply put, the new set of SDGs will likely become the baseline for development action for countries, donors and financial institutions. Within Goal 16, for example, some governments may choose a subset of targets to focus on rather than others, but their starting place is likely to be the ‘Official’ list from the SDG document: donors will likely set their priorities in a similar way. Furthermore, the indicators will become enshrined in national datasets, and will become the core measures against which Goal 16 (and related issues) will be evaluated by countries and donors alike.

Conclusion

The post-2015 negotiations have entered their final year with considerable momentum towards a transformative vision for humanity by 2030. The peace issues are still very much part of the conversation, and this presents a unique opportunity for those with an interest in fostering peaceful, just and inclusive societies to help both to contribute to the grand vision, and to shape the way in which issues of peace, justice and inclusion are prioritized, implemented and monitored for decades to come.

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