

International Peace and Security – how human rights can help

What advantages would it bring for UN work on peace and security to draw on existing human rights resources to increase effectiveness in peacebuilding and prevention of violent conflict?

The UN peace reviews in 2015 - of peace operations, the peacebuilding architecture and the implementation of SC resolution 1325 on women, peace and security - underlined:

- a) the necessity of engaging all three pillars of the UN – development, peace and human rights
- b) the need to overcome the fragmented nature of the UN system’s processes and institutions
- c) the need to deliver on the commitment prevention of violent conflict in UN work

These concerns are also mirrored in the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. Goal 16 on peaceful and inclusive societies most clearly articulates that *human rights, peace and development, are indivisible and interrelated; one cannot be achieved without the others*. Despite the Human rights Up Front campaign there are still concerns about bringing human rights into the peace and security domain – pretext for interference, mission creep, duplication of effort, etc.

What have been the consequences of the failure to work on the links between human rights and sustaining peace?

- failure to make use of expertise available in the UN system that could deepen analysis leading to more relevant strategy on prevention and peacebuilding
- increased fragility in peace agreements as root causes related to economic, social and cultural rights not addressed
- loss of opportunities for technical assistance and capacity building on the part of states that could support peacebuilding efforts
- duplication of work within the UN system reducing space for cross cutting discussions in human rights and peacebuilding that would enhance the effectiveness of work in both areas
- lack of cooperation and coordination in field missions opening possibility of contradictions in approach
- reduced effectiveness of early warning as human rights indicators – civil and political as well as economic and social – are not tracked as indicators

What are the pragmatic steps that could be taken within existing resources in UN institutions that would increase effectiveness, particularly of prevention of violent conflict?

Share Knowledge and information at an institutional level

- Use the informal briefing model of the Human Rights Council (HRC) to increase knowledge and awareness in both directions - from Geneva to New York and vice versa, e.g. the Chair of PBC briefs HRC and President of HRC briefs PBC helping to sensitise States and secretariat to the issues
- Make use of the analytical research produced by the Human Rights Council (OHCHR reports, Commission of Inquiry (COI) Reports, Special Procedures’ Reports) for peace and security purposes
- increase capacity building in assessment of human rights situations for conflict prevention e.g. due diligence assessments in implementation of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT)
- check Universal Periodic Review (UPR) reports for relevant references on drivers of conflict
- Involve the Committee on the Elimination of discrimination against women (CEDAW) more thoroughly in conversations on peacebuilding and prevention for their input on women in conflict prevention, conflict and post conflict situations.
- Use information from human rights defenders to feed into early warning of conflict

Recognise the interrelated nature of Human Rights and Peacebuilding when reporting

- ensure that human rights dimensions are included in discussions on agenda item peacebuilding and sustaining peace at GA 71 and in the Secretary General's report and subsequent discussions at GA72
- States under review report on peacebuilding efforts (understood as pre-, during and post conflict) in the framework of the Universal Periodic Review.
- States use review to pose questions and make recommendations specific to peacebuilding and prevention of violent conflict
- the compilation of UN information as background could include information from relevant peace and security bodies including, where relevant, the Peacebuilding Commission

Take advantage of the Special Procedures¹ of the Human Rights Council

- Better integrate knowledge of Special Procedures in UN discussions in New York beyond the Third Committee, for example in the work of the Peace Building Commission, especially relating to economic, social and cultural rights.
- Encourage (and welcome) Special Procedures mandate holders to brief UN peace and security institutions in New York
- Promote the exchange of information and expertise between UN Operations and Special Procedures mandate holders.
- Make use of Special Procedures and Commissions of Inquiry also for peacebuilding and prevention purposes as these are relatively quick interventions that can provide valuable information and analysis
- Encourage joint Special Procedures activities that could be relevant to peacebuilding and prevention

Enabling approaches

- finding a common language to discuss these issues with positive connotations for both the human rights and peace and security communities
- addressing the compartmentalising of funding in order to facilitate the integration of human rights and peacebuilding and prevention
- Increasing attention to economic, social and cultural rights in the HR Up Front initiative

This document is based on the results of expert discussion organised by the Quaker United Nations Office (QUNO) and the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung FES) in Geneva in February 2016 on integrating human rights, peacebuilding and prevention of violent conflict within the United Nations systems as a contribution to the preparation for the UN High Level Debate on International Peace and Security in May 2016

¹ Special procedures are individual independent human rights experts, or groups of such experts, who report and advise on human rights issues. They are called by many names, including Special Rapporteurs, Special Representatives, Working Groups, and Independent Experts. Special procedures have either thematic or country-specific mandates. The combined work of the special rapporteurs is broad enough to encompass civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights.