



HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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Review of SDG implementation and interrelations among goals

Discussion on SDG 16 – Peace, justice and strong institutions

Friday, 12 July 2019, 3:00 PM–6:00 PM, Conference Room 4

Background Note¹

Introduction

Sustainable development cannot be without peace and security; and peace and security will be at risk without sustainable development. The 2030 Agenda recognizes the need to build peaceful, just and inclusive societies that provide equal access to justice and that are based on respect for human rights, on effective rule of law and good governance at all levels and on transparent, effective and accountable institutions. SDG 16 – promoting peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, providing access to justice for all, and building effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels – has been identified at the Conference on SDG 16 as a Goal that is both an outcome and an enabler of sustainable development. SDG 16 is closely interlinked with other SDGs. Without peace, justice and inclusion, achieving goals such as ending poverty, ensuring education, promoting economic growth can be difficult or impossible. At the same time, various SDGs can help or hinder the achievement of SDG 16, for instance climate change can act as a threat multiplier, aggravating additional social, environmental and political stressors, conditions that could possibly lead to violence.

¹ This background note has been prepared based on the SDG 16 Conference entitled “Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies: SDG 16 implementation and the path toward leaving no one behind” co-organized by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) and the International Law Development Organization (IDLO) with the Government of Italy - held in Rome, Italy from 27-29 May 2019.





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Progress towards SDG 16 is a universal challenge which requires action for implementation and follow up in both developing and developed countries, albeit in different ways. In many countries, capacity needs and gaps represent a critical barrier to meaningful SDG 16 implementation and follow-up. These capacity issues are often, though not exclusively, felt in countries that are post-conflict, transitioning out of conflict, fragile, or least developed. At the same time, in many developed and emerging countries (though again not exclusively so), violence against women and children continues to threaten their well-being and pose obstacles to realizing their full potential. Issues such as social cohesion, illicit financial flows, corruption and many forms of discrimination remain grave challenges.

Member States and the international community need to do more in preventing and eradicating conflict, even as they support to improve lives of those living in conflict affected regions by reducing the drivers of violent conflict and improving ways to reach marginalized populations affected by conflict and making progress on the SDGs.

As enshrined in SDG 16, the 2030 Agenda calls for transparent, effective, inclusive and accountable institutions to advance poverty eradication and sustainable development. It aims to ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels. SDG 16 emphasizes the central role of institutions and effective decision-making in reaching the SDGs.

As with the rest of the 2030 Agenda, while governments have a leading role to play, the achievement of SDG 16 depends on a whole-of-society approach. Civil society organizations are involved in multiple ways, as implementers and as advocates for underrepresented parts of the population such as women, youth and marginalized groups. For its part, the private sector can also make an important contribution to efforts towards peacebuilding, inclusion, advancing the rule of law and eliminating corruption as fundamental to creating an environment conducive to development where business can thrive. Local governments, parliamentarians and the academia are other critical stakeholders in the implementation of SDG 16 and the 2030 Agenda as a whole.





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Status and trends²

Throughout the world, advances in ending violence, promoting the rule of law, strengthening institutions, and increasing access to justice are uneven. Millions of people live in insecurity and continue to be deprived of, rights and opportunities. Specific indicators associated with individual targets support this picture.

- **Legal identity:** Globally, 73% of children under 5 had their births registered; the proportion is less than half (46%) in sub-Saharan Africa.
- **Homicides:** The number of intentional homicides per 100,000 population ticked up from 6.0 in 2015 to 6.1 in 2017, largely as a result of an increase in the homicide rate in Latin America and the Caribbean and in some countries in sub-Saharan Africa.
- **Violence against children:** Nearly 8 in 10 children aged 1 to 14 years were subjected to some forms of psychological aggression and/or physical punishment on a regular basis at home in 83 countries (mostly from developing regions).
- **Trafficking in persons:** There has been an overall increase in the detection of victims of trafficking in persons. The vast majority (70%) of detected victims of human trafficking are females, most of whom were trafficked for sexual exploitation.
- **Prisoners held in detention:** The share of unsentenced detainees in the overall prison population has remained largely constant at 30% in recent years.
- **Freedom of information:** Binding laws and policies giving individuals a right to access information held by public authorities have been adopted by 125 countries. Among the 123 countries for which data is available, 40 do not have a proper right

² Data on status and trends in this section is referenced from the Report of the Secretary-General on Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals 2019.





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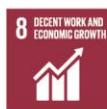
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to appeal to an independent administrative body, assessed as key for proper implementation of this right.

- **Human rights defenders, journalists and trade unionists:** Killings of human rights defenders, journalists and trade unionists are on the rise. From 2017 to 2018, the UN recorded and verified 431 additional killings across 41 countries.
- **National institutions:** In 2018, only 39% of all countries had in place a National Human Rights Institution (NHRI) compliant with internationally agreed standards (the Paris Principles).

Guiding questions

- What are the specific policy reforms, local actions and strategies adopted to support national and local processes to strengthen resilience of communities and institutions to best deliver on SDG16? These could include actions in the spheres of strengthening social cohesion, dialogue and reconciliation, access to basic services including justice and security and conflict/dispute resolution.
- How can SDG 16 targets and indicators leverage human rights norms, standards and analytical approaches to inform the measurement, monitoring and implementation of the 2030 Agenda?
- What are the key interventions and specific policies that can help reach the furthest behind first, especially those who are left behind due to violence, injustice, and exclusion?
- What are some of the primary and urgent capacity needs and gaps of governments and other stakeholder groups around SDG 16 and how can those gaps be filled? Do they differ from the longer-term capacity needs for the achievement of SDG 16?
- What innovative methodologies and partnerships, including the use of data, technology and expertise from the private sector, civil society and academia can





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be harnessed to strengthen national systems to track and report on progress related to targets under Goal 16? What tools and support do Member States require for strengthening disaggregated data availability?

