

Open letter to Members of the UN Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals: Effective targets to promote sustainable peace

2 April 2014 – We, the below endorsing organisations, welcome the Open Working Group's (OWG) inclusion of a focus on peace as part of its deliberations on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

As the Rio Declaration clearly states, "Peace, development and environmental protection are interdependent and indivisible." An extensive body of evidence exists which shows how conflict and violence have disrupted development progress in recent years.

Violence is a universal issue, affecting people in developing, middle-income and even well-developed countries. In each context, people affected by violence and conflict are more likely to be under-nourished, suffer from high infant mortality rates, lack regular access to clean water and services, and to be unable to send their children to school or receive adequate standards of education. Seven countries are unlikely to meet a single MDG by 2015 and all of these have been affected by high levels of violence. Current trends project that 75% of people living in extreme poverty will be living in countries at risk from high levels of violence by 2030.

Reducing violence is therefore essential. However, peace is not merely the absence of violence or conflict. It is a condition that enables society to prosper socially, economically and environmentally. Peace enables the fulfillment and strengthening of the social contract between our governments and our people.

We therefore congratulate the OWG on its consideration of measures designed both to reduce violence in its different forms *and* to address key drivers of violence and underdevelopment by strengthening governance, rule of law and capable institutions – which are, as the OWG has rightly said, "both outcome and enabler, advancing all three pillars of sustainable development".

Governments, people and experts from across the world have also called for peace and governance to be top priorities:

- The UN General Assembly unanimously agreed in September 2013 that any new development framework should promote peace, governance and the rule of law.
- Groups of member states have called for peace to be a priority: for example, the 54 member states of the African Union agreed that peace should be one of six core pillars for the new development framework, stating that it "is essential for the achievement of the continent's development aspirations".
- 1.5 million people, through the MyWorld survey, consistently placed protection against crime and violence and honest and responsive government among the top seven development priorities;
- The High Level Panel of Eminent Persons identified building peace and effective, open and accountable institutions as one of five transformative shifts – in fact all the major expert report inputs into the September 2013 Report of the UN Secretary-General called for a significant focus on issues of peace and governance.

The world has placed these issues at the very top of its list. That they have subsequently been identified for special attention by the OWG Co-Chairs as one of eight core clusters is a positive development.

To help answer the call of the world's poorest and most vulnerable people and the evidence provided by the world's experts, and to ensure that peaceful and non-violent societies, governance, the rule of law and capable institutions continue to be identified as top priority areas for sustainable development, **we are pleased to share with the OWG members a list of targets that we believe will be effective in promoting peace and sustainable development.** It is worth noting that, while this list shows a close relationship between peace on the one hand and governance and the rule of law on the other, these remain distinct areas. The OWG's clustering approach offers us a chance to explore this relationship while keeping them separate.

In addition to specific targets to support peace directly, we suggest some targets for other goal areas that will ensure coherent integration of peace across the framework. Our targets have been designed to promote outcome-orientated action at local, national and global level, to ensure that all states take responsibility for how their actions can impact on violence and conflict in other countries.

Finally, this group takes the opportunity to commend the OWG on the efficient, transparent and consultative manner in which it has carried out its work.

Effective targets to promote sustainable peace

We understand that a wide number of factors drive conflict and violence. These need to be addressed across the framework rather than only under a goal area on peaceful and non-violent societies. This is the only way to address effectively and meaningfully the full range of underlying drivers of violence. This is crucial if the framework is to support sustainable and positive peace – a broader vision of social justice that goes beyond the mere absence of violence.

Goal Area	Effective targets
Peaceful and non-violent societies	Reduce by x% the number of violent deaths per 100,000 and reduce the number of people from all social groups affected by all forms of violence
	People from all social groups feel safe and have confidence in security provision
	People from all social groups have effective remedies to injustice, and access to and confidence in effective, accountable and impartial justice provision
	Tensions, grievances and disputes within society are being resolved peacefully, inclusively and constructively
	Significantly reduce international stresses that drive conflict and violence, including irresponsible trade in arms and conflict commodities, and the violent impact of drugs trafficking
Governance, rule of law and capable institutions	Ensure that people from all social groups enjoy freedoms of speech, association, peaceful protest, civic engagement and access to information
	Ensure people from all social groups can participate in and affect political processes and decision making without fear, at national, sub-national and local levels
	Reduce by X% bribery and corruption and ensure that all those involved are held accountable
Gender equality and women's empowerment	Prevent and eliminate all forms of violence against women, girls and boys, and hold perpetrators to account
	Increase women's economic empowerment and women's political participation and influence on decision-making at all levels
Employment and decent work for all	People from all social groups, and especially youth, have opportunities for decent livelihoods, the ability to develop skills and accumulate economic assets, and an equitable share in economic growth
Environmental Sustainability	Ensure fair, transparent, and sustainable management of natural resources, including land, oil and minerals, and the equitable sharing of benefits from their use, at national, sub-national and local levels
	Ensure that people from all social groups have secure land tenure and decisions are taken through an open and accountable process
	Ensure, at local, national and regional levels, that environmental and natural disasters are effectively managed and mitigated
Social services	People from all social groups have fair access to social services and resources
Global Partnership	Reduce illicit financial flows, including money laundering, tax evasion, trade mispricing transnational corruption and bribery by x%, and recover at least y% of illicit financial flows, by 2030

How were these targets selected?

These targets were agreed upon by a group of civil society organisations that are directly or indirectly engaged in the fields of conflict prevention, violence reduction and peacebuilding in a range of countries. The group agreed on several criteria to inform their selection of targets:

1. Are the targets outcome focused?

The group agreed that if the framework is to drive meaningful change, targets need to look beyond institutions and processes and instead focus on outcomes for people.

2. Do the targets address the drivers of conflict?

The group agreed that if the new framework is to promote peace that is sustainable, targets need to focus beyond the symptoms of violent conflict and insecurity and address their underlying drivers. As peacebuilding is a multidimensional endeavour, it was agreed that peace cannot only be achieved through four or five specific targets, but rather should be integrated across the framework.

3. Are the targets measurable?

The group agreed that targets must be measurable. Therefore all targets have been included on the basis that relevant indicators either exist or could be developed. Where appropriate, they have been worded in quantifiable terms. However, data to indicate the baseline for each target should be established before an ambitious but achievable level of progress can be established in quantitative terms at national level. Non-quantified targets have provisionally been worded as 100% targets unless it is unrealistic to do so.

In order to prevent horizontal inequalities between social groups and regions – shown to be a key driver of conflict – all indicators in the framework should be disaggregated to the greatest extent possible, for example between gender, class, income, age, ethnicity, caste, region and religious groups.

4. Are the targets broad enough?

In relation to the above, it may be necessary to avoid overly simple peace-related targets. ‘Single-indicator’ targets that appear clear and easily measurable may in some cases contradict most available guidance on formulating peace-related targets and indicators. Often, the most appropriate way to measure peace-related targets is to use a basket of at least three indicators that together measure three key aspects of a target:

- capacity to address the issue at stake;
- the ‘objective’ situation in society; and most importantly,
- the perceptions of all social groups on security, justice and other key peace-related issues.

5. Are the targets appropriately contextual and nationally relevant/applicable?

Targets need to encourage positive progress across all contexts if they are to be conflict sensitive. With this in mind, it is envisioned that context-specific baselines and benchmarks for progress should be established and agreed at the national level. This will provide the flexibility required to make sure that targets are relevant to all contexts and conflict sensitive.

6. Are the targets ambitious but achievable?

The group decided to prioritise ambitious targets that go beyond business-as-usual to drive change. Targets should clearly set the direction of travel – but nationally-owned baselines and benchmarks will allow states to retain autonomy to plan and sequence their own development progress.

7. Is the target based on widely-accepted evidence?

The group agreed that its targets must be based on both evidence and widespread consensus that they are of universal importance to preventing conflict, reducing violence and fostering sustainable peace around the world.

8. Do the targets have a powerful message that is easy to understand?

It was agreed that targets should be accessibly and sensitively worded, in order to communicate effectively to all people and social groups and inspire action.

Endorsing organisations

ACTION for Conflict Transformation

Action for Sustainable Change

Action on Armed Violence

Afghan Health and Development Services

Alliance for Peacebuilding

CDA Collaborative Learning Projects

Centre for Sustainable Development and Education in Africa

Civil Society Platform for Peacebuilding and Statebuilding

Community Policing Partners for Justice, Security and Democratic

Conciliation Resources

Cordaid

Every Casualty Campaign

FemLINKPACIFIC

GADET-Pentagon

Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict

Global Alliance on Armed Violence

Global Witness

Human Rights First Rwanda Association

Igarapé Institute

International Alert

Integrity Action

Interpeace

Life and Peace Institute

Oxford Research Group

PAX

Peace Training and Research Organisation

Quakers United Nations Office

Saferworld

Southern African Liaison Office

War Child

West Africa Network for Peacebuilding

Women Peacemakers Program

World Vision