How Do We Understand the Operationalization of Sustaining Peace?
Glancing Backward before Moving Ahead

Meeting Note from Expert-Level Discussion

Introduction

On December 6, 2018, twenty-five peacebuilding experts from UN member states, the UN Secretariat, UN agencies, funds, and programs, and civil society gathered for a roundtable discussion to examine what is meant by the operationalization of "Sustaining Peace." It was the first in a series of such events that will be convened over the coming months to support implementation of the UN's Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace agenda (see annex for more details on the series). Convening a diverse range of actors, this event facilitated reflection on what has been achieved over the past year and stimulated discussion on what actions and adjustments in policy and practice can and should be expected in countries, regional organizations, and UN headquarters. This note is a short summary of the main points of discussion.

Progress on Operationalization

In speaking about implementation or operationalization of the recommendations within the UN General Assembly and Security Council's identical resolutions on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace (Resolutions 70/262 and 2282), it is important to start with a recognition of their key elements, including:"

1. The acknowledgement that the concept of Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace is not merely a post-conflict priority but also encompasses the prevention of violent conflict;
2. The need for a comprehensive and coherent approach between and among actors and all parts of the UN system in Sustaining Peace;
3. The imperative of inclusive national ownership; and
4. The importance of partnerships for Sustaining Peace.

To translate these elements into practice, the resolutions call for a shift in attitudes and approaches toward prevention, peacebuilding, and sustaining peace in a manner that is inclusive of all relevant stakeholders within the three UN pillars at all levels. This requires working together more consistently, more effectively, and earlier to and address conflict drivers. It also requires Sustaining Peace to be integrated into the strategic plans of UN agencies, funds, and programs as well as UN Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAFs).

Several positive developments on the implementation of the recommendations within the Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace resolutions since their adoption in 2016 can be identified. At the structural level, the original core UN team implementing these resolutions—the Department of Political and Peace Affairs (DPPA) and the UN Development Program (UNDP)—has been expanded to include the Department of Peace Operations (DPO), UN Women, and the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). This team has developed two matrices to track the implementation of Sustaining Peace across the UN system:

1. A strategic-results framework to track the impact of Sustaining Peace since the twin resolutions; and
2. A traditional matrix tracking the forty-two recommendations from the secretary-general's 2018 report on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace.

These two frameworks are being used to translate the recommendations into practical changes that are expected and to track progress in achieving them. The frameworks identify the actors responsible and timelines involved.

At the level of attitudes, the concept of Sustaining Peace is gradually taking root and being integrated into discussions and policy documents in different parts of the UN system. Fifteen agencies have incorporated references to Sustaining Peace into their strategic plans. Approximately 80 percent of UNDAFs include outcomes that relate to Sustaining Peace, and there has been a notable increase in civil society participation in the sessions and meetings of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC). Finally, voluntary contributions to the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) have increased. These are important developments and reflect progress in the socialization of Sustaining Peace. However, it is too early to tell if they reflect inclusion of the rhetoric of Sustaining Peace or its actual principles.

It is also important to underscore that the operationalization of Sustaining Peace does not require an entirely new way of working since much is already taking place, especially in the way civil society works at the local level. The resolutions should therefore be used to strengthen those existing efforts. However, there is a need for more risk analysis (including with a gender lens) and for common country analyses (CCAs) and UNDAFs to act as mechanisms for rallying UN country teams around a shared vision of what peace means in a particular context. To support this, UN

resident coordinators need to see Sustaining Peace as part of their mandate. While sustaining peace is particularly important in countries going through a transition from active conflict or a drawdown of a peacekeeping or special political mission, it should also be recognized as relevant in contexts that struggle with pockets of violence and fragility.

Expectations of Change at the Country Level

There is a need to ensure that efforts related to the implementation of the Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace resolutions are focused not on the UN headquarters in New York but on implementation at the country level. This implementation should include the following four elements:

1. **Joint risk analysis and planning:** Developing a shared understanding of risks across national and international partners and across the UN.
2. **Leadership and capacities**: Driving the political understanding that underpins the collective work of the system and actively using the programming of UN county teams and other partners to support peacebuilding priorities.
3. **Financing**: Supporting local efforts to build peace through more innovative financing options and providing financial support from UN headquarters and member states to support the programming changes needed to adopt a more preventive approach on the ground.
4. **Partnerships**: Strengthening collaboration between and among regional and sub-regional organizations, civil society (including local actors and women's and youth groups), the private sector, and international financial institutions.

The UN development system and management reforms, which have come into effect from January 1, 2019, offer an opportunity for change through a more empowered and independent resident coordinator's office and a stronger link between UN country teams and operations. With these reforms, country teams can adopt more integrated, strategic, and coherent approaches. As some country teams may already be doing this under different labels, efforts should be made not to put new labels on existing work but rather to connect existing efforts to the broader policy debates.

Highlights of Global Network of Women Peacebuilders' (GNWP) research on civil society perceptions of the meaning of Sustaining Peace for local populations Between April and October 2018, GNWP conducted research on civil society perceptions of Sustaining Peace. Key informant interviews and focus group discussions were held in fifteen countries, and a multilingual survey received nearly 1,000 responses from forty-three countries. In total, over 1,500 respondents were reached. Among other things, the research

has highlighted the work already being done by local civil society to sustain peace—even if it is not currently recognized or labeled as such.

The work of civil society and women's groups in Burundi was one example highlighted during the meeting. These groups have organized saving-and-loaning societies to enable other women to send their children to school—something recognized as reducing the risk of violent conflict. In Bangladesh, following the outbreak of violence in Chittagong in April 2017 during which hundreds of houses were burned down, local civil society, with support from UNDP, is working to establish solar-powered energy stations to defuse communal tensions by addressing the scarcity of resources. In Sierra Leone, women's civil society groups contributed to mitigating post-conflict violence through radio programs and women's situation rooms to monitor and prevent electoral violence.

Some of the recommendations stemming from the research included:

- **The UN and member states should create institutionalized but flexible platforms for women's civil society groups, especially at the local level**, to meaningfully participate in formal and informal peace negotiations.

- **The UN and civil society should monitor and hold governments accountable for the inclusive implementation of peace agreements as well as of other laws and policies related to gender equality and peace and security**, including the Security Council resolutions on women, peace, and security and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

- **Civil society from countries that have not recently experienced armed conflict should organize exchanges to share experiences with local and grassroots civil society groups in conflict-affected and post-conflict countries** to enhance solidarity, build capacity, and develop joint advocacy strategies for Sustaining Peace.

- **The donor community should increase funding for peacebuilding, conflict prevention, and Sustaining Peace**, especially for work led by women's civil society groups, and make sure this funding is long-term and predictable. Such funding should also be made flexible and accessible to local organizations and be available before, during, and after conflict.

More findings and recommendations are available in the summary report, available at http://gnwp.org/program/sustaining-peace/.

Expectations for the Secretary General's Interim Report

The secretary-general's interim report on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace (mandated by Resolutions 72/276 and 2413) and anticipated for April 2019, is expected to cover four

fundamental elements of Sustaining Peace that were discussed by the PBC in 2018: coherence, financing, leadership, and partnerships. In particular, the report will expand on options for financing peacebuilding and provide an update on the reforms proposed by the secretary-general related to the prioritization of Sustaining Peace. This report will provide clear evidence of progress on implementation of the Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace resolutions and options for predictable and adequate financing.

Member states would like to see the inclusion of an update on what is being done by the entire UN system—beyond efforts by the PBSO—to advance implementation of the Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace resolutions. Many also want information on how the agreed elements of the ongoing reforms initiated by the secretary-general—most critically those related to the UN development system and the peace and security pillar—will help facilitate their implementation.

Furthermore, member states are eager to see what progress has been made on expanding the PBF's work through a "quantum leap" in funding (e.g., more spent in existing countries, expansion to new countries or new activities?) and that this is presented as part of the broader need for financing for peacebuilding. In particular, the progress that has been made exploring options for increased financing for peacebuilding as outlined in the secretary-general's January 2018 report on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace should be presented. Discussions should be held between member states and the UN Secretariat on how to reinforce the point that they share ownership over implementation.

Given the absence of a predetermined mechanism for presenting and discussing the secretary-general's interim report, it will be important to determine and clearly communicate where this report will "land" and how to generate collective ownership for Sustaining Peace moving ahead. Options include an event organized by the PBC or the president of the General Assembly. Such an event is critical, especially to engage member states that remain skeptical of or continue to challenge the relevance and implications of the Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace resolutions.

With the restructuring of the UN peace and security architecture, which came into effect as of January 1, 2019, a strengthened PBSO in the new Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA) could strengthen the humanitarian-development-peace nexus by connecting relevant tools and approaches, including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, across the UN's three pillars and the spectrum of conflict. This could facilitate joint analysis and planning, drawing the UN system toward coherent action and strengthening partnerships within and beyond the United Nations. These reforms also provide opportunities to connect Sustaining Peace to the Action for Peacekeeping (A4P) initiative, which includes several commitments related to peacebuilding and sustaining peace. Efforts to join up different aspects of the UN Secretariat are needed to ensure a streamlined approach.

Follow-Up on the Pathways for Peace Study

Ongoing efforts to implement recommendations from the UN–World Bank study *Pathways for Peace* offer opportunities for advancing operationalization of the Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace resolutions. These have included a series of regional discussions between the UN, World Bank, regional intergovernmental organizations, and civil society organizations on how to contextualize and apply the findings. A new facility has been set up within the PBF to support joint UN–World Bank projects incorporating the findings of the study, and both organizations are set to report on implementation to date. The UN is well positioned to respond to certain conflict risks (especially those directly related to development issues) but not others (such as those related fiscal issues), where partnership with the World Bank and other actors is needed. Peace and development advisers can be instrumental in conducting holistic risk analysis but need more than project tools to be able to access political actors. Civil society also has a role to play in developing and participating in multi-stakeholder coalitions to advance preventive action.

A particular challenge to implementing the Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace resolutions, as well as the findings of *Pathways for Peace*, is the question of who has ownership over efforts to address risks to peace and security—as well as what these risks are. Lessons from the process of implementing the New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States can help overcome this challenge.

Conclusion

This roundtable provided an overview of progress made in the implementation of the Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace resolutions so far and expectations moving forward. Some of the key points highlighted included the need to strengthen multi-sectoral work, including by breaking the silos between the humanitarian and development worlds; the need to focus on implementation at the country and regional levels where engagement of civil society is critical, including at the grassroots level; and the potential of peace and development advisers to build partnerships and ensure locally driven implementation at the local, national, and regional levels.

The next discussion in the series will take place in early 2019.

Annex

Operationalizing Sustaining Peace: A Series of Expert Roundtables

Concept note

Sustaining Peace, as defined in the dual UN General Assembly and Security Council resolutions (70/262 and 2282) is "a goal and a process to build a common vision of a society, ensuring that the needs of all segments of the population are taken into account, which encompasses activities aimed at preventing the outbreak, escalation, continuation and recurrence of conflict, addressing root causes, assisting parties to conflict to end hostilities, ensuring national reconciliation, and moving towards recovery, reconstruction and development." This definition contextualizes peacebuilding as a process that is relevant and necessary throughout the conflict cycle, rather than solely an action taken after the termination of conflict. It therefore shifts the starting point of analysis to what is still working in a society—the positive aspects of resilience—and shifts the focus to preventive action.

In January 2018, the secretary-general released his report outlining ways in which the UN is implementing the Sustaining Peace approach and proposing how to further the process. In April 2018, another set of dual resolutions was passed endorsing the continued implementation of the recommendations on Sustaining Peace. These resolutions requested an interim report on peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace in 2019 and a second report following up on implementation in connection with the 2020 review of the UN's peacebuilding architecture.

Despite the spirit of the parallel resolutions and their endorsement of the term "Sustaining Peace," there is still a gap in understanding of what this means in practice and the implications of the changes called for at the regional and country levels. To support and inform preparations for the 2019 and 2020 reports, the International Peace Institute (IPI), the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC), the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation (DHF), and the Global Network of Women Peacebuilders (GNWP) are convening a series of roundtable discussions to examine the operationalization of Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace.

The overall objective of this series is to strengthen the implementation of the UN's peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace agenda at the country and regional levels. The discussion series will contribute to this objective by:

- Creating a space for key global policy- and decision makers to develop a shared practical understanding of the UN's Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace agenda, informed by the perspectives of practitioners, women's rights organizations, and other civil society groups working on the ground;

- Fostering discussions on how to advance efforts at Sustaining Peace in practice at the country level and identifying concrete steps that need to be taken for effective and locally driven implementation; and
- Contributing to the assessment of ongoing efforts to change the way peacebuilding is undertaken by the UN and other actors on the ground and highlighting examples and cases that demonstrate whether the UN is having a positive influence on the way peacebuilding is undertaken.

The series of roundtables aims to convene experts in peacebuilding and sustaining peace to discuss key thematic areas related to the implementation of the Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace resolutions. Participants will include experts from civil society, member states, UN agencies, Funds, and programs, and the UN Secretariat. The roundtables will be by invitation only and will be held as off-the-record discussions. A short, non-attributed summary note will be developed based on the discussions held.

The aim will be to hold one roundtable per month focused on topics related to implementing the Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace resolutions in practice. To the extent possible, the discussions will be grounded in country cases and reflect the experiences of local, national, and regional actors as well as international actors working at the country and regional levels. The following topics are indicative and may be adapted based on what UN representatives, member states, and civil society partners deem to be timely and useful.

1. How do we understand the operationalization of Sustaining Peace?
2. The peace, development, and humanitarian nexus vs. Sustaining Peace: Are we coordinating and breaking silos?
3. Sustaining Peace and SDG 16: How do these frameworks interact (in preparation for the 2019 High-Level Political Forum)?
4. Partnerships for Sustaining Peace: The role of civil society
5. Tools to implement Sustaining Peace: The role of the youth, peace, and security agenda
6. Looking at Sustaining Peace from a gender perspective
7. *Pathways to Peace* and Sustaining Peace: The UN–World Bank partnership at the country level
8. The new resident coordinator system and Sustaining Peace: Potential and reality