

CIVIL SOCIETY – UN PREVENTION PLATFORM

The New Agenda for Peace

An Opportunity to Advance Prevention
Through Civil Society - United Nations Partnerships

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The Civil Society-UN Prevention Platform is co-facilitated by the Quaker United Nations Office and The Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict in conjunction with the UN - Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, and a coordinating group of the following organizations: African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes, Center on International Cooperation - New York University, Conciliation Resources, Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, Social Science Research Council, and The Network of Religious and Traditional Peacemakers. The Platform also relies on an extensive network of global expert CSOs.

INTRODUCTION

The United Nations (UN) Charter¹ underscores the centrality of conflict prevention as a responsibility of the whole UN system – which employs a diverse range of arrangements, approaches, and actions for this purpose.²

In 1992, the *Agenda for Peace*³ outlined UN action for preventive diplomacy and post-conflict peacebuilding. Building on the *Agenda for Peace*, the 2016 twin resolutions of the UN General Assembly (UNGA) and Security Council (UNSC) on *peacebuilding and sustaining peace*⁴ expanded the definition of peacebuilding beyond post-conflict reconstruction to include “activities aimed at preventing the outbreak, escalation, continuation, and recurrence of conflict, addressing root causes, assisting parties in conflict to end hostilities, ensuring national reconciliation, and moving towards recovery, reconstruction and development.”⁵

Since taking office in 2017, UN Secretary-General António Guterres continues to uphold a “strategic commitment to a culture of prevention” through long-term commitment to sustainable development and peace, partnerships, and preventive diplomacy.⁶ To this goal, the UN has made sweeping changes to the peace and security architecture.⁷ Recent *UN Reforms* require enhanced prevention and mediation posture, strengthened support for national and regional capacity building for both, as well as deeper partnerships, more effective engagement by peace operations, and more robust and predictable funding.⁸ The 2018 UN-World Bank *Pathways for Peace* report⁹ further elevated the links between development and prevention, and the need for inclusive and people-centered policies, while stressing the urgent need to scale up investment in prevention.

At the same time, prevention remains a sensitive topic within the multilateral system as actors continue to show reluctance around the financial and political aspects of prevention, inspiring diverging views and fragmentation across the UN membership. In such a context, concerns persist around the UN's ability to encourage political will and build regional and national prevention and peacebuilding capacities.

In recent decades, technological, political, social, and economic shifts, and the COVID-19 pandemic, combined with transnational issues such as climate change, human mobility, and global demographic shifts, have exacerbated threats to peace on an unprecedented scale and challenged the capacity of the international community to prevent violence and maintain international peace. These realities have required the UN to become more creative in its efforts to support its Member States in managing risks, building resilience, and averting the outbreak of conflict. These realities have also led to a number of transformative changes on prevention in the past few decades (See Table 1).

The Secretary-General's *Our Common Agenda (OCA)* report further sets forward a vision for the “UN 2.0” – a renewed organization that is able to offer relevant and system-wide solutions to the challenges of the twenty-first century.¹⁰ The proposals outlined in the OCA present an opportunity

¹ United Nations, “*United Nations Charter*”, 1945.

² United Nations Secretary-General, “*Priorities: Prevention*”.

³ United Nations, “*An Agenda for Peace*”, 1992.

⁴ United Nations, Resolution on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace, S/RES/2282.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ United Nations Secretary-General, “*Challenges and opportunities for the United Nations*”, Address to the United Nations General Assembly, Lisbon, Portugal, April 2016.

⁷ United Nations, “*United to Reform: Peace and Security Reform*,” 2019.

⁸ United Nations, “*Restructuring of the United Nations Peace and Security Pillar*”, 2017.

⁹ UN-World Bank Report, “*Pathways for Peace: Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict*, March 2018.

¹⁰ Report of the Secretary General, “*Our Common Agenda*”, 2021, p. 76.

to act towards ensuring that global governance systems are fit for purpose to deliver on these promises and are relevant at the field level.

Table 1: The key shifts in prevention since the 1992 Agenda for Peace:

- from linear to comprehensive conflict prevention: Increased geographic diversity in peace and security work (beyond just countries with the highest fragility) changed the focus of prevention from preventive diplomacy and crisis prevention toward prioritizing operational, structural, and systemic prevention in all contexts.
- from allocated to cross-cutting programming: Senior UN leadership have expressed a commitment to pursue a cross-pillar and whole-of-system approach to prevention.
- from limited to expanded prevention capacities: Numerous UN initiatives have expanded prevention expertise at the headquarters, as well as the sub-regional and field levels.
- from national support to community engagement: Over the years, the UN has made explicit commitments to engage with civil society, providing political and operational support, and to develop and implement effective global policies and strategies on prevention.

The *New Agenda for Peace* (NA4P) could provide a path forward on collective action across all three pillars of the UN to meaningfully mitigate emerging risks and address root causes, external shocks, and other factors undermining peace. A strong NA4P should unite actors around a common prevention goal and clearly outline the responsibilities of various actors. This must be done through a meaningful reflection and analysis of the UN's work at the field level and the development of a clear action plan that capitalizes on good practices and strategically addresses persistent challenges in the capacity of the multilateral system. This also illustrates crucially how mobility must be part of peaceful solutions, and the need for access to resources for borderland communities should be prioritized.

Against this background, the Civil Society - UN Prevention Platform facilitated a 2020-2022 series of discussions that brought together Member States, UN agencies, and international and local civil society to assess ongoing prevention efforts and foster candid discussions to advance prevention. These discussions began in the early months of the COVID-19 crisis, encouraging the participants to reflect on how the pandemic challenged ongoing prevention efforts. The discussions then continued following the launch of the OCA report in 2021 and the start of the Secretary-General's second term, focusing on lessons learned from prevention efforts and innovative thinking to mainstream and strengthen prevention in the future.

On the basis of these discussions, **this submission reflects upon overarching principles to be strengthened in the NA4P, responds to the six key proposals for the NA4P outlined in the OCA, and highlights elements that were missing as additional proposals to be incorporated in the NA4P.** It specifically underscores the importance of dialogue and engagement between civil society and the UN. Civil society contributes to the UN's prevention efforts by convening frank dialogue, providing analysis, facilitating coordination, and sharing information at all levels and across the system. This partnership is also critical to the realization of the Secretary-General's vision for the NA4P to operationalize “the links between many forms of vulnerability, human rights, state fragility and the outbreak of conflict” and “to change course.” Strengthened partnerships with civil society will

enhance joint action to respond to the growing challenges to peace, and ensure holistic new UN policies and practices, like the NA4P, reflect diverse experiences, knowledge, and support.

OVERARCHING PRINCIPLES

The OCA report is grounded in the following key principles and values:

- our shared humanity;
- the importance of the UN's action in promoting and ensuring the dignity of all;
- building trust, including between states and their people as a means of re-establishing or strengthening the social contract;
- centering the UN action on the needs and knowledge of people;
- the urgency of addressing inequalities; and
- embracing the role of the UN as a convener and facilitator.

These values must be amplified in the NA4P and serve as the guidepost for the UN's actions as it seeks to meet the needs and challenges of the future. These values and principles become more pressing in today's fractured global environment and are the foundation of a strong and resilient multilateral system.

The NA4P can begin to live into these principles through an inclusive and consultative process, with meaningful civil society engagement throughout the drafting process. The process of developing NA4P, as well as the outcome of the *Summit of the Future*, should integrate inclusive ownership and be grounded in and reflective of the experiences of local communities.

Diversity and inclusion, including the experiences of women, youth, and marginalized groups are also central aspects to meeting communities' needs in the NA4P and ensuring informed and well-rounded conflict prevention strategies. It is imperative that the drafting process for the NA4P seeks out, includes, and is well-informed by these diverse voices to ensure that it develops well-rounded conflict prevention strategies.

History shows that homegrown and local conflict prevention solutions are more effective and long-lasting than general solutions developed at the highest levels. When local peacebuilders are meaningfully involved and develop a strong sense of ownership their commitment will ensure that progress is sustained in the long term. Meaningful engagement with local actors must also include their input and participation in decision-making; this includes considering their perspectives when making programmatic and financial decisions that will impact their communities.

The leadership of the UN and its Member States is critical to fostering an international climate that values the inputs of local knowledge, insights, and concerns for peacebuilding and social cohesion. The drafting process must take this into account and emphasize the importance of leadership.

The NA4P must accelerate the implementation of the UN's existing frameworks including the 2030 Agenda, Paris Agreement on Climate Change, Addis Ababa Action Agenda, and the Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace Resolutions, among others. It should propel continued and coordinated advancement of these agreements while providing innovative thinking on the threats, needs, and opportunities for peace in the future. It can serve as a tool in upcoming processes, such as the 2025 Peacebuilding Architecture Review, as well as strengthen the linkages between peace and sustainable development, human rights, climate change, and other issues. Clarity on how the NA4P could or will feed into other processes and build upon existing norms and frameworks is necessary moving forward. For example, the discussions surrounding the NA4P process could provide a learning space to understand the impact of current UN action on prevention and develop a resource that provides guidance towards a more impactful action to continue the fulfillment of the UN mandate.

The NA4P must provide an opportunity for a renewed social contract. A renewed social contract requires safe and protected civic space. Peaceful and inclusive societies require access to justice for all, and effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions at all levels. As the CIVICUS monitor notes, today only 3.1% of the world's population lives in a country with open civic space. The UN System has a role to play in promoting, protecting, and expanding civic space. The UN Secretary-General has recently issued the UN Community Engagement Guidelines for Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace,¹¹ the Civic Space Initiative¹², and the Call to Action for Human Rights¹³ to support UN field presences in developing strategies to engage communities in sustaining peace. The NA4P must articulate these principles in its renewed social contract and encourage and, where relevant, champion the implementation of these initiatives.

Delivering on a renewed social contract requires increased local capacity and a smaller UN footprint. The work of the UN at the country level should be directed at the progressive transfer of responsibilities, including on peacebuilding and conflict prevention, to diverse national actors. The UN should ensure that diverse national stakeholders can develop their own capacities, skills, and resources to determine and advance relevant national priorities. This could include the provision of conflict-sensitive guidance, tools, and capacity-building opportunities for all national partners, including diverse women and young peace actors. Joint programs, where possible, should include the government and/or local peace actors as equal partners.

We must embrace the role of the UN as a convenor and facilitator as it is best suited to coordinate multi-stakeholder dialogue. The UN should capitalize on its role as a convenor to facilitate regular (i.e., annual) space for all prevention stakeholders to coordinate analysis and strategies, building each other's capacities, and ensuring strategic collaboration. This could also help clarify roles and relationships between the UN and other stakeholders.

¹¹ United Nations, *“Community Engagement Guidelines on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace”*, 30 September 2020.

¹² United Nations, *“Protection and Promotion of Civic Space”*, September 2020.

¹³ United Nations, *“The Highest Aspiration: A Call to Action for Human Rights”*, 2020.

NA4P KEY PROPOSALS: REFLECTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

KEY PROPOSAL 1: REDUCE STRATEGIC RISKS

Risk reduction requires political will and leadership to invest in the research, policies, and operational tools needed to build or strengthen prevention mechanisms. This includes destigmatizing prevention, recognizing local experiences and expertise, investing in sources of resilience, and investing in bottom-up approaches, with a view towards strong holistic and context-specific violence prevention strategies.

Prevention policy and programming must be destigmatized. There is clear value in prevention. Scaled-up-preventative action could save between \$5 billion and \$70 billion per year, and every \$1 invested in prevention could be \$15 saved in crisis response.¹⁴ The UN can promote the benefits of violence prevention, thereby progressively increasing political will and destigmatizing this topic to its Member States. Establishing important and relevant partnerships between UN agencies, Member States, and key stakeholders will help to shift the narrative surrounding prevention, resulting in inclusive and holistic processes. Further, enhancing technical prevention expertise, and building on the UN Development Programme (UNDP) – Department of Peacekeeping and Political Affairs (DPPA) Joint Programme for Building National Capacities for Conflict Prevention,¹⁵ would ensure adequate support to Member States. This includes increasing the number of human rights, peace and development, protection, and gender advisors in UN Country Team (UNCT) settings, and ensuring sustained funding for their positions. At the global level, cooperation across the UN's pillars of peace and security, human rights, and development would support an integrated framing for leveraging joint approaches. The UNSC, Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), Human Rights Council (HRC), and Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) should strengthen prevention within the scope of their mandate and ensure cooperation among them.

Leveraging sources of resilience must lead to transformative change. Communities are sources of resilience themselves. Grassroots and local actors are important contributors to resilience. The UN acknowledging their contributions, lived experience, and expertise supports their inclusion, visibility, and recognition within a broader universe of peace and development partners. Additionally, integrating mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) into peacebuilding and prevention recognizes the far-reaching impacts of violence and long-term support needed at the community level for sustainable peace.¹⁶ Long-term results require an investment in reconciliation. Thematic reporting and discussions on reconciliation and addressing trauma and psychosocial needs as a means for peacebuilding and sustaining peace would allow for further understanding of system-wide efforts, impact at the country level, and prioritization for future needs. The UN must find actionable ways forward at the country level, including through Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) projects, and through peer learning and exchange at the global level on institutional structures and initiatives to invest in reconciliation.

¹⁴ United Nations & World Bank Group, *“Pathways for Peace: Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict”*, 2018.

¹⁵ United Nations Development Program, *“Joint UNDP-DPPA Programme on Building National Capacities for Conflict Prevention: Annual Report 2018,”* July 11, 2019.

¹⁶ Michael Wessells, PhD and Raksha Sule, Consultants *“Integrating MHPSS & Peacebuilding: A Mapping And Preliminary Recommendations For Practitioners”*, May 11, 2022 p.57.

National violence prevention strategies must be well implemented and context-specific.¹⁷ National plans that focus on social cohesion, development priorities, crime prevention, and other areas often contain elements of prevention under different names. Putting prevention at the center of national planning, combined with the political will needed to succeed, would increase effectiveness and support for national actors. The benefits of such strategies apply equally to countries in the Global North and South. Successful examples include Malawi establishing a National Peace Architecture through UN-supported dialogues,¹⁸ and the United Kingdom's 2018 Serious Violence Strategy that has demonstrated 3:1 savings to cost through its implementation.¹⁹ As support and demand for nationally led prevention strategies grows, the UN should play a role in setting norms and standards, and providing guidance. To further destigmatize prevention and support national action, the UN could provide technical and financial support as well as developing evidence-based guidelines. Guidelines would support national strategy development to “strengthen the social contract based on diagnoses of risk and resilience factors, with the support—when needed—of the UN to build capacity.”²⁰

KEY PROPOSAL 2: STRENGTHEN INTERNATIONAL FORESIGHT

International foresight requires increasing and improving coordination at the local, national, regional, and international levels. This will involve investing in data and monitoring and ensuring long-term peacebuilding, prevention, and mediation programming, supported by dedicated resources and capacities.

Systemized and holistic data collection and reporting on prevention and peacebuilding must be mandated throughout the UN system and within national structures. Diagnostics should identify diverse and holistic risk and resilience factors at local, national, and regional levels.²¹ The UN system, both at the headquarters and field levels, gathers context-specific data based on development, human rights, climate, peace, gender, and other relevant indicators, which it then analyzes to inform action. The UN's Regional Monthly Reviews (RMRs), for example, systematize the information flow from UNCTs to senior leadership at UN headquarters and in the Secretariat, which then informs responses to rapidly evolving situations. The UN should encourage and support the capacity of national and local actors to conduct their own context-specific diagnosis and research on the factors that lead to violence and strengthen resilience (that can be historical, political, economic, psychosocial, legal, social, psychological, etc.) and from context-specific knowledge (i.e., local actors). Both the UN and national governments should update the diagnostics frequently, as situations change rapidly. When possible, the UN and national governments should make use of differentiated diagnostics that consider the distinct realities of diverse groups (defined by ethnic identity, gender identity, socio-economic situations, etc., or by their potential roles as victims or perpetrators of violence) and to develop strategies based on their needs. UN staff and local actors should be trained to better understand the risk and resilience factors for violence and in the use of diagnostic tools.

Institutionalized prevention mechanisms must complement short-term programming.²² We should move away from projects that are segregated between prevention and peacebuilding approaches towards more integrated long-term, structural strategies that address multiple root causes and

¹⁷ Céline Monnier, “Four reasons why the New Agenda for Peace should focus on nationally led violence prevention strategies”, September 9, 2022.

¹⁸ United Nations University, Laurie Nathan, “UN Preventive Diplomacy and Facilitation of Dialogue in Malawi 2011-12” April 2018.

¹⁹ United Kingdom Home Office, “Violence Reduction Unit Year Ending March 2021 Evaluation Report,” April 1, 2022.

²⁰ United Nations, “Community Engagement Guidelines on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace”, 30 September 2020, p.6.

²¹ GPPAC, “In the Spirit of Partnership: Operationalisation of Sustaining Peace at the Regional Level”, 19 February 2020.

²² High Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations “Uniting our strengths for peace - politics, partnerships, and people” , 2015, p. 35.

strengthen resilience. Additionally, the UNGA and UNSC noted that peacebuilding “requires short and long-term actions.”²³ The Pathways for Peace report also highlighted that “prevention is a long-term process [...] that requires sustained, inclusive, and attention and action.”²⁴ Prevention includes ensuring favorable structural conditions, where possible, fostering institution building, and energizing global coalitions to tackle systemic risks and take advantage of the opportunities posed by today's global trends.

Multilateral Early Warning and Early Response Systems (EWERS) that balance national and international policies and interests with local knowledge must be adequately supported. EWERS create a strategy that allows state and local actors to identify and address conflict trends by identifying the causes of a conflict, anticipating their outbreak, mitigating their impact and, where possible, preventing them altogether.²⁵ The UN should create platforms so EWERS actors can learn from each other and build up their resources. The UN should also provide technical and operational support for institutionalizing multilateral EWERS partnerships for strengthening international foresight. Sufficient capacity of regional peacebuilding networks is also required to adequately support EWERS components like data collection and analysis.²⁶

Peacebuilding and mediation networks must be supported. Networks engage broader groups of diverse stakeholders in peacebuilding, bringing in various perspectives and expertise around agreed-upon and inclusive priorities for joint action. Therefore, managing relationships with a wide group of actors is easier through coordinated networks.²⁷ The Sida Helpdesk Study found network modalities to be most conducive to local leadership in global spaces, as this modality prioritizes the equal standing of all network members (INGO and CSO alike) in organizational activities. The UN should update its partnership modalities to engage with experts through networks, consortia, and coalitions to engage diverse experts and provide specific convening and conference opportunities to support stakeholders' access to a greater diversity of knowledge and experience (i.e., of varied local contexts), expertise (i.e., in human rights, gender, the environment, economic development, law), and constituencies (i.e., different ethnic and religious groups, youth, women).

Clear peacebuilding leadership at the country level will increase the UN's impact at the country level. The UN peacebuilding operational mandate must be accompanied by high-level political engagement. Peacebuilding leadership positions should be held by a permanent and high-level UN actor at the country level, such as the Resident Coordinator (RC) or head of a UN agency that has a long-standing reputation for leadership in peacebuilding. Where peacebuilding leadership is in the hands of a peace and development advisor, this role needs to be adequately supported by the RC at the political level. Peacebuilding leadership must be clearly outlined in the Cooperation Framework or a dedicated peacebuilding strategy. Trustworthy relationships with national stakeholders will provide for constructive engagement on peacebuilding. The UN activities at the country level should not only aim at supporting national priorities but also work with the government to reflect on the benefits of peacebuilding and prevention action and support integrating peacebuilding, prevention, and conflict analysis in national action.

The UNCT and the UN ‘satellite’ offices across the country must have adequate peacebuilding capacities. Dedicated peacebuilding experts or a peace and development advisor (PDA) should be a standard position at every RC Office to support political leadership and the UN offices across the country. This actor should participate in the planning, implementation, and assessment phases of relevant strategic frameworks to ensure they are informed by a robust and action-oriented conflict

²³Statement by the President of the Security Council, 20 February 2001.

²⁴ UN - World Bank “Pathways for Peace : Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict”, p. XXV.

²⁵ GPPAC, “Building up Prevention at the National Level: A Case for an Expansion of Early Warning System”, 2022.

²⁶ GPPAC, “Expanding Prevention: Capitalising on the Power of Early Warning and Early Response Systems”, 2022, p. 3.

²⁷ GPPAC, “Building up Prevention at the National Level: A Case for an Expansion of Early Warning Systems”, 2022.

analysis. Gaps in peacebuilding capacities within UN entities can be overcome by encouraging joint programming and joint planning. The UN's joint programming for mid or long-term large projects is an effective tool to incentivize collective peacebuilding action, reduce transaction costs, and maximize impact. Such projects require clarity on the roles and responsibilities of each implementing partner and mutual accountability for the delivery of peacebuilding results.²⁸ The UN should also develop a roster of prevention experts to be deployed when needed as well as partnerships with outside organizations that have expertise in prevention and can advise the UN and national actors when requested.

Multilateral coordination for peace and prevention must be improved. The UN should develop a system-wide action plan on peace and prevention. This must include the guidance, processes, and tools needed for data collection and measurement aimed at establishing or streamlining coordination and breaking down silos within the system without impacting or altering current mandates. The UN System-wide Action Plan (UN-SWAP) on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (GEEW)²⁹ launched in 2012 provides a model that could be replicated for peace and prevention. This would contribute to better coherence throughout the UN system, support coordination at the country level, as well as serve to socialize the connection and impacts of all, including civil society and other stakeholders, who work on peace and prevention.

KEY PROPOSAL 3: RESHAPE RESPONSES TO ALL FORMS OF VIOLENCE

Violence manifests in many ways and requires different strategies to tackle its impacts from the individual level up to the international level. Violence disproportionately impacts certain populations which must be specifically considered alongside efforts to address root causes, and the sources and tools supporting violence.

All actors supporting peace processes should prioritize multi-track and multi-stage processes that ensure the inclusion of key actors from all levels. Local-level mediation is well placed to build buy-in and local ownership for national processes and bolster resilient and sustainable peace agreements. As national-level processes often stall, grassroots mediation provides avenues for negotiations, security arrangements, de-escalation processes, sharing resources, and opportunities to co-exist after conflict. Based on the example of FemWise, a network of grassroots African women mediators, it is clear that regional and sub-regional partnerships can meaningfully enhance mediation efforts where appropriate for the context. All actors involved in peace processes should make quantifiable, time-sensitive commitments to ensure direct and meaningful participation of diverse civil society and bring together disjointed mediation efforts driven by external and internal actors.

Growing access to technology opens digital mediation frontiers for inclusive participation. DPPA's Digital Technologies and Mediation Toolkit³⁰ and the Secretary-General's Roadmap for Digital Cooperation³¹ outline key challenges and opportunities. The Group of Friends of Mediation³² should work with UN actors to draft guidelines for how national stakeholders could use online spaces for positive messaging, reduce violent rhetoric online and mobilize supporters during peace and mediation processes.

²⁸ GPPAC, "Implementing Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace at the Country Level: What could Efficient and Impactful UN Leadership look like", October 2022 [Unpublished report].

²⁹ UN -Swap 2.0 Framework and Technical Guidance, 22 November 2022.

³⁰ United Nations Peacemaker, Introduction Digital Toolkit.

³¹ United Nations Secretary-General's Roadmap for Digital Cooperation.

³² United Nations Group of Friends of Mediation, "New Technologies for Peace and Mediation as Tools for Inclusion: Celebrating the 10th Ministerial Meeting and Looking Ahead", 2019.

Comprehensively addressing violence requires effective disarmament and arms control, the reduction of global military spending and militarism, and the investigation of gendered aspects of the impact of weapons and of disarmament processes. The relationship between armed violence and destructive conflict, and the drivers of such violence including the availability of weapons and socio-economic conditions, must be better understood. Firearms in circulation, whether legal or illegal, pose a threat to every single human right. This understanding is critical, as more violent deaths are caused by criminal violence and interpersonal violence than by large-scale conflict.³³ In addressing such violence, it is important to appreciate the gendered drivers and their impacts, and ensure young people are specifically considered, in the context of arms violence³⁴. The World Health Organization (WHO) also stresses that youth violence “has a serious, often lifelong, impact on a person's physical, psychological and social functioning.”³⁵ Women and young people should be included as leaders in peace-building and decision-making processes that affect their lives.³⁶

KEY PROPOSAL 4: INVEST IN PREVENTION AND PEACEBUILDING

Investing in the quality and quantity of peacebuilding and prevention action is the responsibility of all, not just a select group of donors. Long-term predictable and quality support, available to an inclusive group of national peace and development actors is necessary to achieve sustainable results. Coordination among donors would further support the awareness of impactful donorship methodologies, subsequently improving donor practice.

Every stakeholder should be incentivized to support prevention and peacebuilding. A range of challenges exists around financing needs for prevention and peacebuilding. These include the multiplicity of separate funding mechanisms and instruments across sectors and pillars and the dependence on voluntary contributions from a limited number of donors. All stakeholders have a role to play in strengthening financing. The responsibility of financing prevention and peacebuilding extends beyond a small group of donors. It is everyone's responsibility. The inclusion of prevention and peacebuilding priorities in national development plans may help ensure financial support for action and effective coordination among all key stakeholders. Such an approach would invite both national and international resources, particularly in the current global climate, where the UN is trying to align cooperation frameworks to the national development plans. While the donor community can re-envision their priorities to invest towards prevention; national governments can use their own budget allocations to prioritize prevention. Investing in prevention is not just a financial commitment. Committing to prevention also includes improving political commitment at all levels, growing technical expertise in practical prevention action, and spending time increasing capacities and research.

Quality and quantity of financing for prevention by local actors are critical for realizing existing peacebuilding commitments. The UNGA recognized “the need for peacebuilding efforts to have adequate, predictable and sustained financing in order to effectively assist countries to build and sustain peace.”³⁷ Current funding systems need to ensure that they offer “more flexible funding to local-level organizations, with modalities adjusted to different capacity levels from context to context.”³⁸ Eligibility, application, and reporting requirements make it impossible for local

³³ Our Common Agenda, Report of the Secretary General, 2021, p. 60.

³⁴ Submission to the OCHCR for the report of civilian acquisition, possession and use of firearms mandated by the Human Rights Council resolution 45/13, 19 October 2021.

³⁵ World Health Organization, “Fact sheet: Youth Violence”, 8 June 2020.

³⁶ Submission to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights for the report on civilian acquisition, possession and use of firearms by children and youth mandated by Human Rights Council resolution 45/13. Women's International League for Peace & Freedom, 19 October 2021.

³⁷ United Nations, Resolution on Financing for Peacebuilding, A/76/305, 8 September 2022.

³⁸ Thematic Review on Local Peacebuilding, May 2022.

peacebuilders to apply for funds.³⁹ Current funding modalities are restricted to short-term interventions, with unrealistic donor expectations on impact.⁴⁰ This requires a rethinking of siloed funding streams to allow greater focus on prevention and peacebuilding across the board, including as part of the development and humanitarian interventions. Working with partners across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus is also an opportunity to ensure better use of the aid budget, leveraging other partners and delivering long-term transformation rather than short-term fixes focusing only on symptoms.

Funding instruments must prioritize participatory funding approaches to establish long-term partnerships that continually build trust. Long-term partnerships address the lack of trust and collaboration between donors, intermediaries, and local peace actors inherent to short-term and one-off processes. As a result, the previous purely financial partnership where local peace actors function as little more than service deliverers would be replaced by a shared sense of ownership and a feeling of equality in decision-making processes.⁴¹

Financial instruments should consider realistic and transparent approaches to risk. Pooled funds are increasingly recognized as a mechanism for donors to pool risks inherent to financing peacebuilding action and supporting multi-stakeholder partnerships across the UN system and with local actors. Generally, current pooled funds tend to be medium- to long-term and outcome-oriented rather than output-oriented. Increasing pooled funding mechanisms at the country level, including multi-partner trust funds, can improve local peace actors' access to quality financing and serve to pool risk and resources.⁴²

Measuring impact – not outputs – of action must be at the core of strategic thinking. The prevalent focus on short-term outputs over long-term transformation leads to the “projectization” of prevention work and creates unreasonably high expectations for short-term results. It is critical to consider the following two principles when designing monitoring and evaluation processes. First, locally-led determination of impact should drive expectations from the projects, with an opportunity for continuous assessment and adjustment, where needed, of initiatives. Second, adaptive approaches to peacebuilding and prevention in which peace actors and their communities use a repeating process of learning and adaptation to sustain peace.

Improved coordination among peacebuilding and prevention donors, including at the country level, is required to maximize synergies, minimize potential duplication, and ensure policy coherence. Strengthened coordination among donors could be achieved by creating a dedicated platform for donor dialogue on peacebuilding and/or prevention. At the country level, such a platform could be hosted by the RC Office, whereas at the global level, the Executive Office of the Secretary-General can make a determination on the best impartial actor to take forward coordination among peacebuilding donors. Through such a platform, donors could come together around a peacebuilding and/or prevention strategy. They could also agree on peacebuilding priorities in a country-specific context, to avoid duplication and the misuse of funds. Such a platform could be supported by a risk management mechanism to provide guidance on possible investment risks. It could also help optimize diverse coordination mechanisms.

Funding deficits to the human rights pillar must be meaningfully addressed. The PBF has encouraged the integration of human rights in peacebuilding programming, including by funding civil

³⁹ United Nations, “*Informal PBSO outcome summaries of the High-Level roundtable discussions on peacebuilding and sustaining peace*”, 25 April 2022.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ GPPAC, DHF & LPI, *Principles for Quality Financing for Peacebuilding and Conflict Prevention Practical Avenues to Improve Support for Local Peace Actors*, 2022.

⁴² Ibid.

society, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), and other UN entities, in areas such as transitional justice and reconciliation, gender equality and combating gender-based violence, support to victims of violations, countering hate speech, protection, and promotion of civic space and support for National Human Rights Institutes. There is, however, further scope to broaden PBF support to human rights-related projects by strengthening UN's capacity to translate human rights analyses and approaches, integrating the recommendations of the human rights mechanisms into concrete programs and projects.

KEY PROPOSAL 5: SUPPORT REGIONAL PREVENTION

Regional actors, including (sub-)regional organizations, are critical to addressing current and future crises, and they are uniquely positioned to address transnational situations. Beyond the engagement of particular actors, mechanisms must be in place to ensure regional coordination and coordinated action.

Regional prevention must be globally enhanced. Existing good practices of regional prevention action and increased commitments by regional organizations and regional economic commissions (RECs) can help strengthen regional prevention efforts in all regions of the world⁴³. At the headquarter level, UN Reforms that activated the DPPA single regional structure with three Assistant Secretaries-Generals⁴⁴ must be further operationalized. Strengthening institutionalized mechanisms for coordination between institutions, relying on regional organizations like the AU to bring Member States, CSOs, and broader network actors together. This requires sustainable funding, defined roles, and local ownership. Recommendations could include supporting the institutionalized capacity of regional actors via the PBF and ongoing operational support from the UN DPPA for building national and regional commitment, developing specific and flexible methods for programming and engaging in partnerships; increasing regular engagement of the PBC and DPPA's regional offices with regional organizations and local peacebuilders, including on cross-border issues. Additionally, DPPA can support annual regional convenings for the UN, regional organizations, and local peacebuilders to assess and take stock of regional peacebuilding progress and processes while enabling better adjustment of the processes in line with existing gaps and sharing good practices from relevant contexts.

The approach to transnational peacebuilding and response must be reconsidered. The cross-border nature of conflict and crisis, which is exacerbated by factors such as climate change, food insecurity, and responses to human mobility, is only going to continue. As the UN's PBF notes, "cross-border areas remain the most vulnerable as State authority, and presence is limited or nonexistent, the population lacks access to basic service delivery, often leading to higher poverty and unemployment rates, higher gender inequalities and resentment at being left behind."⁴⁵ Borderland communities affected by transnational issues are often left behind, but as evidenced in the UNDP 2021 African Borderlands Centre annual report,⁴⁶ empowering borderlands communities is essential for prevention and building sustainable peace. The current approaches of the UN system are not prepared for developing, financing, and implementing the types of programming that are needed to address such cross-border needs. The UN must create new guidance and adjust its working modalities to meet these needs. This can include drawing on good practices of the UN PBF which has increasingly funded cross-border projects as well as the recent establishment of the UNDP Africa Borderlands Centre. Central to this rethinking must be a consideration and inclusion of the

⁴³ African Union, "Silencing the Guns in Africa," 2020.

⁴⁴ United Nations Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, "Appeal 2019."

⁴⁵ The Secretary-General's Peacebuilding Fund, "The Sahel", October 2020.

⁴⁶ UNDP Africa Borderlands Centre, "Annual Report 2021".

knowledge and experiences of borderland communities themselves, with the UN drawing on existing endogenous capacities for peace and resilience.

KEY PROPOSAL 6: PUT WOMEN AND GIRLS AT THE CENTER OF SECURITY POLICY

While gender has been acknowledged and uplifted as a priority in peace and security policy, more work is needed to meet long-held goals, including in providing necessary resources and in political will to ensure meaningful participation and integrate gender analysis across all aspects of peace and security action.

Transformative gender approaches build the foundation of prevention action rooted in human security and de-securitization. Articulated through the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) resolutions of the UNSC⁴⁷ and the work of the feminist movement,⁴⁸ a transformative approach to prevention calls for a decisive contextualized action to address political, economic, and social root causes of violence embedded in power disparities. Prioritizing the role of women in peace and security efforts, while ensuring gendered analysis, can uplift prevention and sustain peace in the long term. The UN Secretary-General works to ensure all his reports, statements, and briefings include gender analysis and sex-disaggregated data. UN actors should consider the extent to which existing data collection incorporates the experiences of diverse women. All UN entities, as well as Member States, should ensure that this data meaningfully informs decision-making. An increase in the number of women's advisory boards⁴⁹ to advise on specific peace processes is another point for consideration.

Providing adequate funding for local women-led organizations is a key investment in prevention. The Women's Peace & Humanitarian Fund (WPHF) is designed to increase women's participation and leadership in conflict contexts by pooling and channeling flexible funding to local women's groups and civil society organizations working in conflict situations. Such funding structures, especially with civil society present on their board, must be enhanced and developed not only to support women-specific issues, but also the role of women in other spheres where they are not necessarily well represented. This can include providing multi-year and core funding rather than project-restricted funds. Directing funding to local and national-level efforts is critical to ensuring impactful action at the country level. One effective way of dispersing funding is through national embassies as it can promote the creation of trust between local organizations and embassies and strengthen local organizations, increasing their subsequent access to other donors.

ADDITIONAL PROPOSAL 1: SUPPORT YOUTH-LED PREVENTION EFFORTS

Young people are important actors in achieving sustainable peace. They must be treated as partners in the long-term work of peacebuilding, in creating a culture of prevention, including through acknowledging their lived experiences, leadership, and expertise, and in the provision of resources such as funding and training.

The rhetoric of the importance of youth leadership must be translated into concrete action, including systematized and institutionalized mechanisms for engagement. The adoption, implementation, and sustainability of human and financial capacities to deliver on national action plans are critical to advancing the Youth Peace and Security (YPS) agenda and ensuring youth inclusion across the peace continuum. This practice increases systematic collaboration and partnership in which youth are considered essential and equal actors not only by governments but by

⁴⁷ WILPF, The WPS Resolutions.

⁴⁸ WILPF, Mobilising Movements for Feminist Peace: Co-Creating Gender Power Analysis Through Meaningful Participation.

⁴⁹ Examples include Women's Advisory Group on Reconciliation in Politics in Iraq, the Syrian Women's Advisory Board, and Yemeni Women's Technical Advisory Group.

all actors that work on prevention in a specific context. Young peacebuilders engage effectively with decision-makers on equal footing. Grassroots organizations in Liberia, for example, have worked to educate youth on the YPS Agenda to effectively connect with and contribute to international and national dialogues and initiatives.⁵⁰ Member States, UN actors, and other stakeholders should identify and operationalize synergies between YPS and other UN agendas. For instance, each Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) is undeniably a youth SDG, and actors at all levels should embed the YPS agenda within actions toward the 2030 Agenda.

Adequate and sustainable financing for youth initiatives must support the capacity of young actors to engage in peace beyond voluntarism. The UN Secretary-General's PBF Youth Promotion Initiative provides catalytic funding for innovative projects focused on both gender and youth empowerment in peacebuilding initiatives.⁵¹ Such mechanisms should be supported and expanded, especially, at the country level. For this, the donor community should bolster and explore new innovative funding tools, funding streams, and pooled funds to allow for the distribution of small grants to young peacebuilders at the grassroots level. The UN should also invest in capacity development, including targeted training and platforms that strengthen youth involvement with the donors directly.

ADDITIONAL PROPOSAL 2: INTEGRATE CLIMATE-SENSITIVE RISK ANALYSIS IN PREVENTION AND PEACEBUILDING

Climate change is both a threat multiplier and an existential threat to peace and security. Addressing the myriad of impacts climate change poses to peacebuilding and prevention requires comprehensive and coordinated action at all levels. This includes the development of robust analytical tools to better understand climate security and build climate resilience.

Prevention requires the integration of climate-sensitive analysis rooted in local experiences across sectors through, but not limited to, the operationalization of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).⁵² At the local level, civil society is best positioned to identify climate risks early. Civil society also plays a significant role in engaging policymakers with vulnerable communities most affected by the devastating impact of climate change in joint planning and action. Existing examples of engagement of local communities across other thematic areas should be documented and utilized to ensure meaningful and inclusive engagement of local actors in addressing the threats of climate change.

Inter-agency coordination and cooperation on climate and security must be strengthened. While the number of actors working on climate security issues has increased, there remains a lack of coordination among climate experts. To date, information sharing and discussions on climate security are done in an ad-hoc manner, with no dedicated forum for multi-stakeholder dialogue. Interagency partnerships have harnessed the new and abundant workstreams on climate security emerging throughout the UN system. The UNDP-DPPA-UNEP Climate Security Mechanism is an interagency initiative aiming to leverage the unique capabilities of different agencies. It provides a conceptual approach and a tool for climate-related security risk assessment by building up evidence to support climate security.⁵³ It is essential to build an inclusive community of practice around climate security to accelerate prevention action on climate change. Finally, there is a need to leverage human rights infrastructures and apply rights-based approaches to climate security.

Member States' leadership is critical to advance early action on climate change. There remain varying levels of hesitancy to elevate and discuss themes related to climate security by some

⁵⁰ Camp for Peace, About Us.

⁵¹ UN Peacebuilding Fund, *Past GYPI Projects*.

⁵² United Nations, *Framework Convention on Climate Change*, 1992.

⁵³ United Nations, *Climate Security Mechanism Toolbox*, 2022.

Member States, often because of concerns related to securitization, sovereignty, national ownership, and viewing the issue as outside of the mandate for relevant bodies. Member States formed the UN Security Council Informal Expert Group of Climate Security.⁵⁴ Through the Group of Friends on Climate and Security, Member States have also created a community of practice around climate security to accelerate the implementation of the Paris Agreement by raising ambition and engaging with public and private actors.⁵⁵ The normative developments have been visible in concrete national actions. Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Colombia, for example, have integrated approaches to peacebuilding and climate economics to mitigate continued deforestation.

The spaces for dialogue on the impact of climate change on security must be created at different levels within the UN system. Multiple intergovernmental bodies should bring stronger climate security considerations to relevant intergovernmental bodies, such as the PBC and UNSC. In order for progress to be made on a global threat such as climate change, the dialogue needs to be more action-oriented and rooted in robust analytical data informed by local experiences. Discussions in political spaces should frame climate change through a positive prevention lens rather than a mitigation lens. An evidence base for good practice in mitigating the effects of climate change at all levels needs to be collected to inform a collective climate change prevention strategy.

ADDITIONAL PROPOSAL 3: TACKLING CORPORATE GOVERNANCE GAPS

Political will is required to ensure a legislative and regulatory framework that comprehends all the relevant stakeholders, supports access to justice for all, and remedies for the victims of armed violence. Ultimately, gaps in corporate governance must be addressed.

The private sector, specifically the arms industry, has a role and responsibility in the supply of the tools of violence. The 2030 Agenda calls on the private sector to consider its role in achieving sustainable development and peace, and this approach was further outlined by the 2020 report on business and conflict by the Business and Human Rights Working Group⁵⁶. Despite the often inherently dangerous nature of its business and products, the arms sector and companies throughout the arms transfer life cycle, have not been subject to the same level of scrutiny as other industries on their human rights responsibilities under the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights⁵⁷ (UNGPs) and related frameworks. While the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), as an international treaty that regulates the international trade in conventional arms, focuses on the role of Member States in addressing the human rights impacts of arms transfers, questions remain about the way in which the private sector in the arms industry put in practice their own responsibilities and ensure that they have engaged in processes to prevent, mitigate, and address the adverse impacts of their business models and trade. The Working Group on Business and Human Rights outlined key recommendations⁵⁸ for states and companies, including the need for States to grant ‘legal standing to victims of human rights violations originating in the arms sector to join legal actions against arms companies, including as *partie civile* in criminal proceedings’; and to ‘expand definitions of “affected persons” beyond only direct victims of armed attacks’. Furthermore, they called for Member States to amend ‘legislation governing the arms sector to include reference to the standalone responsibility

⁵⁴ Permanent Mission of France, “*Joint Statement by 10 members of the United Nations Security Council and Three Incoming Members of the Security Council*,” July 24, 2020.

⁵⁵ Permanent Mission of France, “*Meeting of the Group of Friends of Climate Statement by Mr. Francois Delattre, Permanent Representative of France to the United Nations*,” April 22, 2019.

⁵⁶ UN-OHCHR, “*Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights: Implementing the United Nations “protect, respect and remedy” Framework*,” 2011.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ UN Working Group on Business and Human Rights, “*Responsible business conduct in the arms sector: Ensuring business practice in line with the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights*,” 2022.

of all businesses in the sector to conduct human rights due diligence (HRDD) in line with the Guiding Principles'. The UN must provide support for its Member States in fulfilling these recommendations.

Businesses, including small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) operating in complex situations, must have the tools and resources to navigate violence and conflict while upholding human rights.

It has been acknowledged that, more than ever, businesses face complex challenges when trying to avoid involvement in human rights abuses or relations with actors in conflict environments. A better understanding of the practical measures that all actors should take is still needed⁵⁹. The Working Group on Business and Human Rights recommended that Member States should use their key policy tools and levers to ensure that business engages in conflict-sensitive heightened due diligence when operating in conflict-affected areas.⁶⁰ This may include linking access to export credit, investment approvals, and access to investment finance, to demonstrable heightened human rights due diligence.

Conflict sensitivity is key. A sustainable business engagement must include a conflict-sensitive approach. This requires a sound understanding of context-specific intergroup tensions, gender constructions, and potentially divisive issues, which often include environmental challenges, and the two-way interaction between activities and context. Conflict sensitivity requires actors, including businesses, to act upon that understanding to avoid negative impacts on social relations and to avoid fueling further division.⁶¹ This could be practically facilitated by ensuring companies operating in violent or conflict-affected contexts undergo heightened HRDD incorporating tools from atrocity prevention and conflict prevention to augment their existing due diligence frameworks.

Conclusion

The NA4P provides an opportunity to galvanize collective action across all three pillars of the UN to meaningfully mitigate emerging risks and address root causes, external shocks, and other factors undermining peace. A strong NA4P should unite actors around a common prevention goal and clearly outline the responsibilities of various actors. This must be done with the meaningful participation of civil society through inclusive and consultative participation throughout the drafting process and in the lead-up to the *Summit of the Future* in 2024. The NA4P should reaffirm our shared values and principles with a view to strengthening the role of the UN as a facilitator. Providing a framework around not only the six key proposals outlined in the OCA but additional intersectional issues that are critical to achieving and sustaining peace in the future.

⁵⁹UN Working Group on Business & Human Rights, "*Business, human rights and conflict affected regions: towards heightened action*".

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Brian Ganson, "*Advancing International Action for Peace Positive Private Sector Development, State of Play and Directions Forward*", Stellenbosch Business School, 11 November 2022. And: QUNO, Swedwatch, FriEnt, "*Ecosystem for Peace, a White Paper and Compendium on the Future of Environmental Peacebuilding*".