

GENEVA PEACE WEEK – November 9th 2018
JOBS FOR PEACE AND RESILIENCE Panel Discussion
REPORT

UN Special Envoy on Syria, Mr Staffan de Mistura, opened the “**Jobs for Peace and Resilience**” side event held on November 9th at the Palais des Nations in the context of the [Geneva Peace Week](#) 2018. The event, which took the form of a panel discussion, was organized by the ILO in collaboration with the [International Committee of the Red Cross \(ICRC\)](#), the [Graduate Institute's Centre on Conflict, Development and Peacebuilding \(CCDP\)](#), the [UN Peace Building Support Office \(PBSO\)](#) and the [Permanent Mission of Switzerland](#), and with the support of the [Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs](#).

Mr de Mistura thanked the generosity of the City of Geneva in promoting peace also by hosting the Geneva Peace Week and the Peace talks on Syria. He then highlighted the critical importance of employment in the peacebuilding process. Having been involved in 23 conflict situations during his 40-year long career, he shared that he often saw himself as an emergency doctor, but always felt that *“once the patient is stabilized, we leave. Sometimes we go to the next emergency or we try to stop the next bleeding but the war is not really over. We often forget resilience and that war can start again. And it does often start again, in a different way, in a low intensity and more complicated way without the CNN effect”*.

Mr de Mistura went on to affirm that *“in Syria, the issue now is how to move from the humanitarian phase, which is still taking place, into resilience, rehabilitation and eventually reconstruction”*. He then concluded his intervention by underlining, through examples from Lebanon, Bosnia and Iraq, the importance of giving affected populations access to job opportunities as a way to protect livelihoods and to engage communities in their own reconstruction.

The debate, which involved high-level experts from ICRC, CCDP and the ILO, started with a reflection on how immediate and long-term decent work and employment creation can reinforce social cohesion, build peace and ensure resilience to future shocks in countries facing social and political tensions.

In his introductory remarks the facilitator of the event, **Mr Donato Kiniger-Passigli, ILO Coordinator of the Fragile States and Disaster Response Group**, introduced the landmark ILO [Recommendation on Employment and Decent Work for Peace and Resilience \(N. 205\)](#), adopted in 2017, and the ILO [Jobs for Peace and Resilience \(JPR\) flagship programme](#), which applies a comprehensive, but modular, local resource based approach focusing on women and youth in:

- ⇒ Providing **direct job creation and income security** through employment intensive public investments
- ⇒ Enhancing **skills for employability**

- ⇒ Supporting **self-employment, enterprises and cooperatives**
- ⇒ **Bridging labour supply and demand** through employment and business development services aiming for economic, social and environmental impact.

These key objectives are achieved through strengthening institutions, addressing fundamental principles and rights at work, and social dialogue.

Key points highlighted by the panellists:

Question 1: *How does decent employment contribute to peace? Which kind of jobs can make the difference to rebuild a country and decrease social tensions? How can we make sure these immediate post-conflict jobs are bridging the humanitarian-development nexus?*

Ms Charlotte Bennborn, ICRC Head of Economic Security, highlighted the fact that the panel was composed of humanitarian, academic and development actors which are key actors to be involved in reinforcing livelihoods in conflict and post conflict situations. **Resilience building is a continuum where livelihoods, jobs or employment should be considered from the very outset of any conflict.** The ICRC Economic Security Unit builds resilience through the provision of new capacities, assets and skills. Ms Bennborn emphasized that livelihoods and employment give dignity and restore self-confidence, which is crucial, particularly to the most excluded such as women and people with disabilities.

Dr Oliver Jütersonke, CCDP Head of Research, highlighted that today **sustainable peace** is key, particularly in the framework of UN Resolution 2282 (2016). Building peace needs to go from prevention to immediate responses, including long term employment and recovery. In a world increasingly confronted by complex protracted crisis, conflict prevention is intimately linked to disaster risk reduction. Dr Jütersonke also highlighted the predominant role of ILO and its Recommendation 205 that addresses both conflict and disaster prevention and the entire lifecycle of jobs, not only in the post-disaster phase.

Indeed, fragility, unemployment and decent work deficits are often the triggers of violent conflicts, especially in overly populated urban contexts and chronically impoverished rural areas of the world. Over many years, protracted conflicts halt and reverse economic growth and erode development gains.

Ms Aminata Maiga, ILO Country Director for Angola, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Democratic Republic of Congo and Gabon also stressed the importance of having a long term vision in responding to emergencies while preparing for immediate action. Emergency employment can be created through employment intensive infrastructure reconstruction and rehabilitation, for example while addressing local needs and strengthening national employment and social dialogue structures to reduce the crisis intensity. Decent work gives dignity and hope. The social partners (employers and workers organizations) safeguard the sustainability of employment and social peace.

The ILO plays a key role in the **humanitarian-development-peace building nexus** through its Decent Work Agenda. It delivers immediate results in terms of job opportunities, rebuilding needed assets and services to ensure a real impact in the short term, while putting in place, through social dialogue, the foundations and conditions for longer-term employment and sustainable solutions. The role of the private sector is key.

Question 2: *The growing urbanization of societies means that many conflicts and violence are urban today. What kind of coping mechanisms should be put in place for both urban and rural employment?*

The panellists agreed that urbanisation can lead to more violence while noting that it is not always the case. It is also the place to find innovative solutions and share new ideas. Many members of rural communities flee to cities looking for economic security. As highlighted by **Ms Maiga**, urbanisation also brings new opportunities, better jobs and access to vocational training programmes. In Bangui for example, two antagonistic communities started to work together and collaborate under an employment intensive programme implemented by the ILO. Nevertheless, when projects give new economic opportunities it is key to have carefully identified beneficiaries. New crisis could emerge from a feeling of inequality of access to the new opportunities. Therefore, both communities worked together in a training site (*chantier-école*) to develop local material for infrastructure rehabilitation. Joint cooperatives were developed to ensure long term sustainability of the project. In this framework, economic opportunities were created while simultaneously promoting contact and reducing grievance among previously antagonistic groups. Peace is therefore reinforced while livelihood and employment are created.

In the same line of thought, **Ms Bennborn** gave an example of joint actions in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, where the red-palm weevil pest attacked palm trees in Gaza. This common nuisance managed to bring together opposing factions from the Palestinian side and the Israeli side to resolve the issue which was threatening livelihoods on both sides of the conflict. Employment and livelihood activities can be key in bringing together people, communities and state level actors around mutual challenges. While humanitarians and development actors can create the opportunities for collaboration, it is crucial for communities to jointly find their own solutions, creating their own networks and coping mechanisms.

Question 3: *Sustaining a decent quality of education and creating transferable certification systems, particularly through vocational training, during protracted conflict is essential if a generation affected by conflict stands any chance of joining a recovering economy and finding decent work. How to promote quality education and peaceful coexistence?*

Ms Maiga argued that education and training should be a life-long process. Resilience is built with the private sector. In most fragile States, the informal economy is very important and offers mainly precarious jobs, while qualified workers often leave the country. Therefore it is key to develop vocational training programmes linking the supply (workers) with the demand (private sector), particularly in critical sectors such

as infrastructure. Furthermore, vocational training often reinforces a sense of dignity of young people. It is often the first time of their life they receive a diploma.

Dr Jütersonke said that Recommendation 205 gives a new perspective to the role of employment in the peacebuilding process. Several chapters are dedicated to migrants and refugees, who do not always have the necessary skills in their host community. Furthermore, it is important to work on stigma of internally displaced persons (IDP), refugees and migrants, which in some cases are former rebels. **Ms Bennborn** gave the example of Medellín, Colombia where ICRC works with youths in neighbourhoods affected by urban violence. Vocational training is key but cannot be an end to itself. Skills training imperatively needs to be linked to job opportunities in the end. It's important to avoid further stigmatization of specific target groups by ensuring opportunities are available more broadly within the community. For example, **Ms Maiga** gave the example of ex-combatants in Democratic Republic of the Congo who were becoming wealthier than local communities because of the different international organizations programmes targeting them exclusively. Therefore it is key to conduct a stakeholders, beneficiaries and conflict analysis before developing any employment and livelihood projects in a post-crisis environment.

Unpaid care work and specific violence against women in the workplace during conflict also need to be better included in peace-building programmes.

Conclusion and key points:

Mr Oliver Hoehne, Deputy Head of the Multilateral Division of the Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the United Nations Office and to the other international organisations in Geneva shared concluding remarks. Switzerland supports both the ILO and the Peace Building Support Office (PBSO) to foster development through employment creation in conflict-affected situations. International Geneva plays a key role in fostering a fruitful debate on peace.

The PBSO highlighted the importance of its partnership with ILO. Employment can also play a key role to reduce extremism and sustain peace. Vocational training is one of the means but has to come with jobs.

The ILO thanks Switzerland and Geneva for its continuous support. The need for further **inter-agency coordination and the humanitarian, development and peacebuilding nexus** was highlighted by all the participants, as well as **the role of social partners** (workers' and employers' organizations) and social dialogue in promoting a peaceful society, particularly in the long term.

In short, the debate contributed to underline that employment, decent work and access to livelihoods can be key contributing factors to peacebuilding through:

- ⇒ Increasing **contact and relations** across different social groups;
- ⇒ Reducing **grievance** over inequality and exclusion; and
- ⇒ Creating **opportunity** such as economic and social empowerment.