



► Interagency Roundtable – Geneva Peace Week – Final Report

Contributions to Sustaining Peace since 2016:
Evaluating Progress and Future Directions

October 2024

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► Introduction

On October 17th, 2024, in the context of the 2024 Geneva Peace Week, representatives from various UN agencies, funds and programmes gathered in a closed-door event to discuss the progress and challenges in implementing the sustaining peace agenda, with the aim of informing the 2025 Peacebuilding Architecture Review (PBAR).

Experts from the Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO) of the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA), International Labour Organization (ILO), Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), International Organization for Migration (IOM), Interpeace, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), World Food Programme (WFP), and World Health Organization (WHO) shared their insights on their agency's progress to date in implementing the sustaining peace agenda, highlighted the complex intersections between conflict drivers, and underscored the need for integrated approaches in programming and collaboration across sectors in order to sustain peace and prevent conflict.

To explore and discuss these important issues, the event gathered the following experts from various UN agencies:

- **Agnes Hurwitz** - Head of UN Peace and Development Team - UNHCR
- **Jennifer Miquel** - Head of the External Relations Unit at the Humanitarian Response Division - UNFPA
- **Julius Jackson** - Lead, Conflict and Peace Unit (CPU) - FAO
- **Mathilde Boddaert** - Technical Officer, Global Health and Peace Initiative (GHPI) - WHO
- **Nieves Thomet** - Chief Technical Advisor Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus - ILO
- **Roselyn Akombe** - Chief of the Peacebuilding Strategy and Partnerships Branch- PBSO
- **Sam Grundy** - Head of Peace and Recovery Division - IOM
- **Tanaz Khambatta** - Lead, Contributions to Peace - WFP
- **Vanessa Wyeth** - Global Lead, Conflict Prevention, Fragility and Peacebuilding Programme Group Leadership Team - UNICEF

► Detailed summary

The conversation was driven by the overarching consensus revolved that peace is not simply the absence of conflict, but the creation of environments in which people can thrive—economically, socially, and politically. A key takeaway, upon which experts strongly agreed, was the need for greater coordination between peace, humanitarian, and development actors. The ILO highlighted the role of decent work and social justice in conflict prevention, while the WFP and FAO stressed the links between food insecurity, climate change, and conflict. The IOM underscored the importance of localization, and the UNHCR, UNFPA, and UNICEF emphasized the inclusion of women, youth, and displaced populations in peacebuilding, while the WHO noted health interventions as key to building trust for peace efforts. Overall, each organization tied their respective areas of expertise and programmes to peacebuilding efforts, emphasizing the need for cross-sector coordination to sustain peace in conflict-affected areas.

► **UN Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO):** The Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO) highlighted that the upcoming Peacebuilding Architecture Review (PBAR) will not focus on generating new ideas but on creating synergies between existing themes, such as prevention and peacebuilding strategies. These strategies need to be owned and coordinated effectively. A recent session by the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) on forced displacement demonstrated the Humanitarian-Development-Peace (HDP) Nexus in action. There is a strong emphasis on momentum and energy toward transforming strategies, particularly around prevention, ownership, and dispelling ineffective strategies. PBSO underscored the importance of regular engagement with the PBC and translating collaboration into actionable initiatives, particularly addressing forced displacement through integrated peace, development, and humanitarian efforts.

PBSO emphasized that civil society plays a critical role in peacebuilding efforts. Inputs from civil society, the Global Partnership for Action on Gender-Based Violence (GPA), and others were well-organized and valuable. Advocacy from civil society is essential for conveying important issues to member states. A report is being finalized based on discussions, incorporating inputs from various stakeholders, including civil society and relevant agencies.

► **International Labour Organization (ILO):** The International Labour Organization (ILO), with over a century of experience promoting peace through social justice, has been integral in addressing labor issues as part of peacebuilding. The ILO's Nobel Peace Prize in 1969 underscores its global contributions. Recommendation 205 (R205) on Employment and Decent Work for Peace and Resilience provides a crucial framework guiding the ILO's work in conflict-affected areas, emphasizing employment, labor rights, social protection, and inclusive economic development as fundamental elements of peacebuilding. The ILO collaborates with various actors in the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus to promote decent livelihoods and improve working conditions. By addressing poverty, inequality, and labor rights deficits, the ILO contributes to sustainable peacebuilding. Social justice and decent work are not optional but essential for building resilience and stability; thus, integrating these

aspects into peacebuilding efforts is vital for long-term success. Therefore, the Peacebuilding Architecture Review should encompass social justice and decent work across its initiatives.

The ILO's work demonstrates that social dialogue—bringing together workers, employers, and governments—is crucial for building trust, resolving disputes, and preventing conflicts. It is a key component of post-conflict recovery, fostering social cohesion and economic recovery. Trade unions and employers' organizations must be integrated into peacebuilding processes to ensure labor rights are upheld.

The ILO shared evidence from its programs on the intersection between decent work and peacebuilding:

- **In Colombia:** Following the 2016 peace agreement, the ILO supported reintegration programs for ex-combatants and displaced groups, working with trade unions to uphold labor rights. These efforts helped rebuild the economy and strengthen social cohesion.
- **In Sri Lanka and Tunisia:** The ILO, with support from the UN Peacebuilding Fund (PBF), is working to prevent labor disputes from escalating into larger social conflicts. Focused initiatives on youth and women helped restore trust in institutions and created jobs.
- **PROSPECTS Partnership in Jordan and Lebanon:** In collaboration with other UN agencies and the Dutch government, ILO programs addressed the Syrian refugee crisis by creating decent work opportunities for refugees and host communities, reducing social tensions and fostering social cohesion.

Lasting peace requires more than just an end to conflict; it necessitates an environment where individuals can thrive, with access to decent jobs, social protection, and inclusion. The ILO's work illustrates that focusing on social justice and labor rights can effect long-lasting change in fragile settings. Integrating these principles into peacebuilding strategies ensures more meaningful and sustainable outcomes.

► **Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO):** FAO has provided evidence that climate change significantly undermines global food security and exacerbates conflict drivers by intensifying competition over natural resources and undermining livelihoods. Smallholder farmers, pastoralists, and fisherfolk are particularly vulnerable, relying heavily on natural resources affected by climate shifts. Climate change acts as a "threat multiplier," intensifying resource scarcity and competition, driving population displacement, and exacerbating existing tensions within and between communities. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) highlights the interaction between climate risks and conflict, noting that these factors amplify each other.

Conflict and climate change are the primary drivers of food insecurity for 65% of individuals facing acute food insecurity globally (IPC 3+). Half of the world's hungry population resides in conflict-affected regions, and nine of the ten countries most at risk of climate change also face severe food insecurity. FAO shared examples of previous collaborations on the interrelation between food security, climate security, and peace:

- **In the Liptako-Gourma region:** Tensions between pastoralists and farmers over resources are being addressed by FAO and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) through early warning systems and conflict resolution mechanisms. In 2022, 60% of identified conflicts were resolved through these interventions.

► **In the Central African Republic (CAR):** Climate-related resource competition from transhumance migration has heightened conflicts. FAO's dialogue facilitation between Chad and CAR contributes to conflict management.

► **On the Kyrgyz-Uzbek border:** FAO, in collaboration with UNFPA and local communities, is building artificial glaciers to alleviate water tensions and support agricultural irrigation.

FAO continues to integrate conflict sensitivity into its programs, ensuring a focus on peacebuilding while addressing climate challenges. Collaborations with partners like Interpeace have been crucial in designing interventions that promote sustainable peace and resilience. FAO also noted several initiatives by the international community addressing climate-related issues:

► The **Climate Security Mechanism**, a joint UN initiative, seeks to systematically address climate-related security risks and highlights the importance of specialized Climate Security Advisors now active in several UN missions.

► The **African Union's** development of a Common African Position on Climate Peace and Security is a promising policy framework.

► Cooperation on watershed management, transhumance, and natural resource governance is vital for peace and sustainability, exemplified by the IGAD Transhumance Protocol.

FAO provided recommendations for the peacebuilding architecture review process:

- Recommendations should focus on achievable changes, building on existing mechanisms and experiences.
- Engagement with COP initiatives and ensuring data-driven policies linking climate change, food insecurity, and conflict are essential for future actions.
- A new funding window under the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) for climate finance investments should be proposed.
- FAO and other agencies require increased recognition and resources to sustain local peace efforts amid climate challenges.
- Greater political commitment and funding are necessary to expand local impact, recognizing the evolving role of these actors since 2016.

► **United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF):** UNICEF addressed the impact of conflict and climate change on children and youth, emphasizing their vulnerability and the necessity of their inclusion in peacebuilding efforts. Children in conflict-affected areas face disruptions to education, healthcare, and protection, often becoming targets of violence, exploitation, and recruitment into armed groups. UNICEF underscored the need for investing in education and psychosocial support to ensure children can contribute to peacebuilding processes. Building resilience in youth is essential, as they can be powerful agents of change. Integrating child protection and education into peacebuilding strategies is vital for long-term stability.

UNICEF's specific contributions to peacebuilding include:

- Establishing child-friendly spaces in conflict zones to provide education and psychosocial support.
- Promoting social cohesion initiatives that bring together children from different backgrounds.

- Advocating for the rights of children affected by conflict and engaging them in decision-making processes.

To enhance the effectiveness of peacebuilding, UNICEF recommended:

- Prioritizing funding for programs aimed at children and youth in conflict settings.
- Strengthening partnerships with local organizations to leverage community insights and support.
- Advocating for inclusive policies that address the unique needs of children in peacebuilding frameworks.

► **World Health Organization (WHO):** The World Health Organization (WHO) provided an overview of the Global Health and Peace Initiative (GHPI).

Despite WHO's mandate not explicitly covering peacebuilding, the GHPI has reached a significant milestone this year.

- GHPI remains a highly political process, facing challenges while striving to create a roadmap for integrating peacebuilding into health efforts.
- WHO's role in facilitating peace has been notable in contexts like Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) and host communities, where local dialogue enabled vaccination campaigns and fostered trust.
- A key challenge remains integrating a "peace" lens into WHO's public health work amidst political tensions while advancing universal health coverage (UHC) in fragile and conflict-affected settings.

WHO shared internal and external challenges in integrating a peace lens within its work:

Internal Barriers: Lack of understanding of peacebuilding concepts and skills within WHO, limited evidence on the link between health and peace, and misperceptions about politicizing health efforts or turning healthcare workers into peacebuilders.

External Barriers: Challenges include fragmented health systems, humanitarian-access difficulties, and the need for effective coordination among multiple stakeholders.

WHO's strategies and recommendations for overcoming these barriers:

- Incorporating peacebuilding into public health strategy, particularly in fragile contexts, aligns with sustainable development goals (SDGs) and the health and peace nexus.
- WHO should develop frameworks and guidelines integrating peacebuilding, making it a routine aspect of public health planning and response.
- Investments in generating robust evidence linking health and peace are necessary to convince stakeholders and ensure health issues are recognized in peacebuilding.
- Establishing formal and informal partnerships with humanitarian and development agencies will facilitate collaborative efforts in fragile settings.

WHO's call to action for the peacebuilding architecture review emphasizes:

- The need for consensus on a health and peace framework reflecting WHO's perspectives on public health and peacebuilding.

- Advocating for increased resources to address health and peace issues while emphasizing the interdependence of health and peace as integral for conflict prevention.

► **International Organization for Migration (IOM):** IOM highlighted the critical role of migration in peacebuilding efforts. Displacement, whether forced or voluntary, has profound implications for peace and security. IOM's programs aim to ensure that migration is safe, orderly, and dignified while contributing to sustainable peace.

Key aspects of IOM's work include:

- Addressing the needs of displaced populations and host communities, emphasizing the importance of social cohesion and integration.
- Promoting the rights of migrants and displaced individuals, ensuring their voices are heard in peacebuilding processes.
- Collaborating with local actors to create pathways for reintegration and support for returnees.

IOM provided insights from its programs, illustrating the connection between migration and peace:

- **In Libya:** IOM's efforts to facilitate dialogue among displaced populations and local communities have improved relations and reduced tensions.
- **In Colombia:** IOM's support for the reintegration of former combatants has been crucial in fostering social cohesion and preventing conflict resurgence.

IOM emphasized the importance of data and evidence in shaping migration policies that support peacebuilding:

- Establishing migration data systems can inform policies that enhance resilience and contribute to social stability.
- Evidence-based approaches are essential for understanding the complexities of migration and its role in conflict dynamics.

IOM's recommendations for the peacebuilding architecture review included:

- Incorporating migration considerations into peacebuilding strategies and frameworks.
- Strengthening partnerships with other UN agencies and stakeholders to ensure a holistic approach to migration and peace.
- Promoting policies that address the root causes of migration, fostering conditions conducive to peace and stability.

► **United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR):** UNHCR emphasized the critical intersection between forced displacement, protection, and peacebuilding. As the global refugee agency, UNHCR highlighted that sustainable solutions for displaced populations are essential for fostering peace in conflict-affected areas. Their work focuses on ensuring the protection of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) while facilitating their inclusion in peace processes.

Key points from UNHCR included:

► **Protection Framework:** UNHCR's protection framework is crucial for peacebuilding. Providing legal protection, humanitarian assistance, and ensuring access to basic services helps to mitigate tensions in host communities.

► **Participation in Peace Processes:** UNHCR advocates for the inclusion of refugees and displaced populations in peace negotiations, ensuring their voices and needs are represented. This participation fosters ownership of the peace process and contributes to long-term stability.

► **Local Integration and Resettlement:** Promoting local integration and resettlement options for refugees is vital for community cohesion and social stability. UNHCR works with governments and partners to create inclusive policies that benefit both refugees and host communities.

UNHCR shared examples of its impact on peacebuilding:

► **In Uganda:** UNHCR's approach to refugee settlement has emphasized community-based solutions, resulting in positive relationships between refugees and local communities.

► **In South Sudan:** Engaging displaced populations in peace dialogue has contributed to localized conflict resolution and community resilience.

Recommendations from UNHCR for the peacebuilding architecture review included:

- Prioritizing durable solutions for refugees and IDPs in peacebuilding efforts.
- Strengthening partnerships with local and national actors to ensure effective integration of displacement issues into peace initiatives.
- Advocating for increased funding and resources to support protection and inclusion of displaced populations in peace processes.

► **United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA):** UNFPA highlighted the importance of addressing sexual and reproductive health (SRH) needs in conflict and post-conflict settings as a key component of peacebuilding. UNFPA's work focuses on protecting the rights of women and girls, ensuring access to essential health services, and fostering gender equality as crucial elements for sustainable peace.

Key contributions from UNFPA included:

► **Gender-Based Violence (GBV) Prevention:** UNFPA's programs aim to prevent and respond to GBV in conflict settings, recognizing that violence against women and girls undermines social cohesion and stability. Safe spaces and psychosocial support are critical components of their approach.

► **Reproductive Health Services:** Access to reproductive health services is vital in emergencies. UNFPA advocates for the integration of these services into humanitarian responses to address the needs of women and girls, reduce maternal mortality, and promote healthy families.

► **Youth Engagement:** Engaging young people in peacebuilding is essential for long-term stability. UNFPA emphasizes the importance of including youth perspectives in decision-making processes and providing them with the skills and opportunities to contribute to peace initiatives.

UNFPA shared examples of its impact on peacebuilding:

► **In Syria:** UNFPA has provided critical support to displaced women, offering reproductive health services and addressing GBV, contributing to community resilience.

► **In South Sudan:** UNFPA's programs aimed at empowering women and girls have fostered dialogue and collaboration between different community groups, strengthening social cohesion.

Recommendations from UNFPA for the peacebuilding architecture review included:

- Prioritizing gender-sensitive approaches in peacebuilding initiatives, ensuring the needs of women and girls are adequately addressed.
- Strengthening partnerships with health and humanitarian actors to ensure comprehensive service delivery in conflict-affected areas.
- Advocating for increased investment in sexual and reproductive health programs as a fundamental aspect of peacebuilding and stability.

► **World Food Programme (WFP):** WFP plays a crucial role in addressing food security as a component of peacebuilding. Their efforts focus on ensuring that communities have access to food, which is essential for stability and recovery in conflict-affected areas.

Key contributions from WFP included:

- **Food Assistance:** WFP provides emergency food assistance to populations affected by conflict and displacement, helping to prevent famine and malnutrition.
- **Resilience Building:** WFP emphasizes the importance of building resilience through programs that enhance livelihoods, agricultural productivity, and food systems. This approach helps communities recover from shocks and reduces the likelihood of conflict.
- **Nutrition Programs:** WFP implements targeted nutrition interventions, particularly for vulnerable groups such as children and pregnant or lactating women, recognizing that good nutrition is essential for health and stability.

Examples of WFP's impact on peacebuilding:

- **In Yemen:** WFP's food assistance programs have played a critical role in preventing widespread hunger and fostering community cohesion amidst conflict.
- **In Ethiopia:** WFP has worked to improve agricultural practices and food security, contributing to peacebuilding by reducing competition for resources.

WFP emphasized the need for a comprehensive approach to food security, including:

- Enhancing partnerships with local and international actors to improve food systems.
- Promoting resilience-building initiatives that address underlying vulnerabilities.
- Ensuring long-term funding for food security programs to achieve sustainable outcomes.

WFP called for a greater understanding of the links between food security and peacebuilding, urging the international community to prioritize these connections in their strategies and funding allocations.

► Recommendations for the upcoming UN peacebuilding architecture review

With the informal phase of the Peacebuilding Architecture Review (PBAR) underway, and the formal process concluding in 2025, several clear recommendations emerged for how the UN and its partners can build on progress and move forward. Ultimately, these recommendations provide a roadmap for advancing conflict prevention and the sustaining peace agenda through the work of the agencies, funds and programmes. By integrating these insights and actions into the PBAR, the UN and its partners can more effectively address the root causes of conflict and build more resilient, inclusive, and peaceful societies:

- 1. Center a social justice and rights-based approach to programming:** The PBAR should recognize social justice as a key component to sustainable peace and adopt a rights-based approach to programming. Ensure that peacebuilding initiatives prioritize human rights, framing them within the broader context of justice and equity. A rights-based approach is essential for sustainable peace.
- 2. Acknowledge the interconnectedness of conflict drivers:** The PBAR should acknowledge the links between hunger, decent work deficits, climate change, forced displacement, lack of social justice, lack of or inequitable access to basic services and resource scarcity as fragility generators and drivers of conflicts but also as results to these conflicts. Peacebuilding strategies must consider the compound effect of tension-inducing factors in their approach to better address the root and overarching causes of crises, emergencies, and conflicts. Peacebuilding strategies must address these interconnected issues holistically to address the root causes of crises and conflicts. Coordinating with other initiatives from the international community and ensuring data-driven policies that link climate change, food insecurity, forced displacement, health and conflict are essential for future actions. Special attention has to be drawn to the risks associated with the withdrawal of peacekeeping missions, where sudden absence could lead to increased displacement, protection concerns, and a loss of peacebuilding gains.
- 3. Ensure the inclusion of local actors in peacebuilding efforts:** Local engagement and ownership in peacebuilding initiatives is key to sustainability and long-term results. Local actors have the best understanding of underlying drivers of conflict, making their insight and participation essential to the development of effective solutions. Peacebuilding actors, for example, could learn from humanitarian approaches, particularly in areas where their work overlaps, such as localization. The PBA could take a stronger role in promoting and advancing localization and people-centered agendas, especially since inequality is a key driver of conflict. Moreover, it is important to include actors like trade unions and the private sector in peacebuilding strategies to ensure sustainability.
- 4. Work towards inclusive participation and representation in peacebuilding strategies:** The inclusion of Women, Youth, and Displaced populations' voices in peacebuilding initiatives is central to achieving sustainable peace due to the unique perspective they provide, ensuring an all-encompassing and well-rounded approach to conflict-resolution and long-term development. Placing a strong emphasis on investing in children is a core aspect of

sustainable peacebuilding. Empowering young generations is critical to fostering peaceful, inclusive societies in the long term.

5. **Enhanced cross-sector collaboration: the HDP Nexus:** The PBAR should leverage and enhance existing collaboration efforts between UN agencies, member states, civil society, and local communities to benefit from their respective comparative advantages in fostering and sustaining long-term peace. Recognizing UN agencies as key operational and policy contributors within the UN Peacebuilding Architecture is of utmost importance, building on their experiences in recent years. Fostering cross-sector partnerships allows for greater comparative advantage in sustaining long-term peace. A reformed PBA should better integrate priorities and mechanisms that provide clearer entry points for humanitarian contributions to peace outcomes and foster collaboration between humanitarian and peacebuilding efforts. The PBA could consider backing both existing and new coordination platforms that strengthen the connection between peacebuilding priorities, humanitarian work, and development efforts.
6. **Prioritize conflict sensitivity and flexible financing:** Member states should be held accountable for providing adequate and sustained funding for peacebuilding. Transparent mechanisms should be established to track contributions and ensure responsible use of funds. The PBAR must prioritize conflict-sensitive approaches as a pre-requisite to underpin peacebuilding efforts through contextual analyses providing insight on context-specific factors. Conflict sensitivity needs to be integrated into programming across all sectors. Additionally, financing must allow for flexibility in responding to changing conflict dynamics and evolving conflict contexts. Humanitarian, development and peacebuilding actors play a critical role in making sure that programming by international financial institutions (IFIs) and other stakeholders is in line with these principles. The PBA can further support these efforts through stronger policy development and advocacy around conflict sensitivity and peace responsiveness.



Figure 1: Photo of the panellists present at "Contributions to Sustaining Peace since 2016: Evaluating Progress and Future Directions" roundtable in Geneva, Switzerland, October 17, 2024