



Event Four Meeting Note

The UN Development System Reform and Sustaining Peace: Realities and Opportunities

May 30th, 9:00 – 10:30am

Large Conference Room

3 Dag Hammarskjöld Plaza, 10th floor

Introduction

On May 30, 2019, the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation (DHF), the Global Network of Women Peacebuilders (GNWP), the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC), and the International Peace Institute (IPI), held the fourth meeting in a series of roundtable discussion to examine the operationalization of peacebuilding and sustaining peace. This discussion focused on the ongoing reform of the UN Development System and the implications of and opportunities from this process for the operationalization of the UN's Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace resolutions, understanding that these processes are intrinsically interlinked. The following note is a short summary of the discussion and the key themes raised for consideration going forward.

Overview and updates on the reforms

On January 1, 2019, the UN Development System (UNDS) reform, including the Implementation Plan for the Reinvigorated Resident Coordinator System, took effect. The reforms, mandated by the General Assembly in Resolution [A/RES/72/279](#) of 31 May 2018, aim to create a development system that is stronger and better unified, which can ultimately provide enhanced support to countries in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

At the country level, a central part of the UNDS change process is the establishment of a system of empowered and independent Resident Coordinators (RCs), clearer accountability lines, a new generation of UN Country Teams (UNCTs) and enhanced coordination meant to leverage the entire UN system. These reforms also coincide with the redesign of the UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF), now known as the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework, and its guidance.

At regional level, the restructuring of regional offices and their directors, is supposed to strengthen regional engagement that will support cross-border issues in areas like the Horn of Africa and the Sahel, and to advance regional cooperation. However, the reform, at the regional level, is less advanced and requires further discussions and negotiations.

At the headquarters level, the policy team in the new Development Coordination Office (DCO) has now been staffed, and a Chief of Policy has been appointed. The Chief of Policy will provide guidance on issues such as the peace-development-humanitarian nexus and advise on bridging the work of peace, development and humanitarian actors. This unit will not form policy itself but is intended to act as a force multiplier for existing policy, strengthening coherence between different policy processes.

How does Sustaining Peace fit in?

Much of the rationale for the reforms to both the RC role and UNDS as a whole lie in the 2018 Secretary-General's report on peacebuilding and sustaining peace, which strongly reaffirms the importance of leadership- both in headquarters and the field- to the sustaining peace agenda. As defined in this report, setting the direction for implementing the peacebuilding and sustaining peace resolutions is largely the onus of the senior leadership in a mission, specifically the RC and the RCO. RCs are "responsible for coordinating development strategies that are risk informed and help to build peaceful and inclusive societies."¹ The Secretary-General has advocated for empowered and impartial RCs to drive forward efforts aimed at sustaining peace in the field.²

Within this rationale, the Secretary-General introduced the reforms within the UNDS and repositioning of the RCs as a move to strengthen capacities to "conduct conflict and context analysis and to translate analysis into more conflict-sensitive programming."³ As a means of empowering RC's to work across the peace-humanitarian-development nexus and to advance engagement in prevention and political mandates, these reforms elevated the RCs within the UNCT and created a direct reporting line to the Secretary-General. The inclusion of more capacities within the RCOs has enhanced the ability of this office to engage in a diverse range of processes, including supporting economic development in the country as well as elevated the RCO to a position of coordinating all AFPs and the UNDAF process to ensure it aligns with national priorities; a central tenant of sustaining peace.

¹ UN General Assembly and Security Council, Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace: Report of the Secretary-General, p. 7.

² United Nations, "Presenting Reinvigorated Resident Coordinator System Plan, Secretary-General Urges Member States to Fully Support, Fund United Nations Development System Reforms," Press Release, UN Doc. SG/SM/19206-DEV/3349, September 11, 2018.

³ UN General Assembly and Security Council, Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace: Report of the Secretary-General, p. 9.

The Role of the Resident Coordinator

A central element of the UNDS reform is the expansion of the RC's role, which made him/her the "highest-ranking development representative of the UN system... [working]...to deliver collective responses to national needs and ensure system-wide accountability on the ground."⁴ This includes responsibility for strategic planning, integrated policy support, system-wide monitoring and evaluation, and strategic partnerships. The RC's role is to work across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus and to support the implementation of the core tenets of sustaining peace at the country level both within the UN and by national actors.⁵ In this sense, the UNDS reform creates a major opportunity for the effective implementation of the sustaining peace resolutions. However, in practice, playing this role is complex and requires individuals with a specific skill set and capacity as well as knowledge about the tools available to him or her for fulfilling their responsibilities.

In May 2019, a resident coordinators retreat was held that included focused discussions on prevention and what prevention means for the new RC function. With the reforms, RCs are expected to play a coordination role among the Agencies, Funds and Programs (AFPs) at country level and provide a political and prevention lens to all work of the UNCT. The challenge, however, is understanding what this means in practice. RCs are not intended to have a programmatic function and are not supposed to have dedicated funds for implementation. Rather, their role is designed to provide governance and oversight of country financing instruments for implementation by UNCT as a whole. However, more specific guidance is needed on the role as well as the tools and resources available for this work. Much of this is expected to be put in place during the coming weeks and months.

Questions have been asked about the accountability of RCs to the AFPs, host government and member states. At headquarters, the reforms clarify the reporting structure and relationship between the DCO and UNDP within the framework of the UN Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG). The UNSDG is the high-level interagency forum for joint policy formulation and decision making across the UN development system. It is chaired by the UN deputy secretary-general, while the UNDP administrator serves as vice chair, overseeing the coordination of development operations in 165 countries and territories. Under the collective ownership of the UNSDG—and reporting to the Deputy Secretary-General as its chair—the DCO oversees and manages the RC system. The DCO also provides advisory services to the UNCTs, drawing on inputs from all the members of the UNSDG. These new reporting structures, both at the country level and at headquarters, are expected to create more "robust lines of accountability, from UNCTs

4 The United Nations, "UN development system reform 101" website, available at <https://reform.un.org/content/un-development-system-reform-101>

5 ECOSOC, "The Reinvigorated Resident Coordinator System: Explanatory Note," February 2018, available at www.un.org/ecosoc/sites/www.un.org.ecosoc/files/files/en/qcpr/2_%20The%20reinvigorated%20Resident%20Coordinator%20system.pdf.

to host governments, from the Resident Coordinator (RC) to the Secretary-General, as well as between [the] RC and heads of UN entities at the country level.”⁶

At the country level, the reforms have established clear dual reporting lines from all country team members to their respective agencies (as well as periodically to the RC). In terms of reporting from country level to headquarters, the RC reports directly to the Secretary-General through the DCO, which is overseen by the UN Deputy Secretary-General. The resident representative, on the other hand, reports to UNDP headquarters through the department’s regional bureau directors. In addition, the RC is expected to report to the Secretary-General and to the host government on the implementation of the UNDAF.⁷

While the reforms being rolled out are intended to create a system of RCs that are empowered, independent and impartial, there are questions being raised about the extent to which this is happening or expected to be realised. RCs are now the official representative of the UN in country, not connected to any specific agency, meaning they should be able to act in a more independent manner. In terms of empowerment, with the delinking from UNDP the RCs have a direct reporting line to the Deputy Secretary-General, but the lack of financial resources at their disposal is considered a hindrance. Overall, the biggest challenge facing the RC is seen as maintaining the support of the host government while having the mandate to speak out on issues of human rights violations and to engage in political agendas, including in the service of sustaining peace.

The Strengthened RCO

In country, RCs are supported by strengthened RC Offices (RCOs) that serve as hubs for system-wide coordination, partnerships and information, along with capacity to host seconded staff and surge capacities as technical needs arise. Within this office is where the UN Peace and Development Advisors (PDAs) are located, jointly managed by UNDP and DPPA. The PDAs are to act as the key player in providing high quality political analysis and support to the RCs. The PDAs strive to enhance national capacities for conflict prevention as well as to provide strategic analyses and recommendations to the RC with the aim to mainstream conflict prevention and conflict sensitivity into UN and national development plans and programmes. As RCs are expected to play a strong good offices role, the PDAs become a prominent player in all engagement with the host government. However, the PDAs currently are not a feature of every UNCT and are still funded through voluntary funding. In order to ensure this capacity is held within every RCO, there is a need to institutionalize this role and to secure assessed contributions to fund these positions on a regular basis.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ United Nations Sustainable Development Group, “Management and Accountability Framework of the UN Development and Resident Coordinator System (v4)” (draft), February 18, 2019.

In addition to the PDA, all RCOs will have five positions - a strategic planner, a monitoring and evaluation expert, a partnerships and funding expert, communications support and an economist. With RCOs still in the process of being staffed, concerns are already being raised about whether this is enough capacity for complex environments and whether more staff are needed. On the other hand, in some smaller UNCTs, a five person RCO will be bigger than the presence of many AFPs in country and may challenge the support role that the RCO is supposed to play. Ultimately, roundtable participants agreed, it is not the quantity of staff that is critical but ensuring those with the required skill set and knowledge are selected for these roles to ensure quality support.

Finally, one of the biggest concerns raised is that RCOs have the responsibility to ensure that the UNCT engagement takes a political and preventive approach but are themselves not supposed to program and implement activities. The question asked was who within the UNCT is supposed to do political and prevention-based work if not the RCO. This is largely outside the remit of UNDP and other AFPs. Thus, there remains a lack of clarity on how RCs should fulfil their mandate.

The Next Generation UNCT

In implementing the vision of a repositioned UNDS that delivers on the 2030 Agenda, the Secretary-General has called for a new generation of UNCTs to be more responsive and able to lead the UN's integrated and impactful contributions at country level. This new generation of UNCTs would rely on the adoption of a modular approach to UNCT configurations, where country presence is demand-driven and tailored to national priorities, ensuring governments' access to the UN's expertise in a more consistent and efficient manner. These new UNCTs are to be efficient through greater use of common back offices, joint representation, co-hosting and co-location arrangements, for policy, programs and operations, and are to draw on strengthened regional economic commissions and regional UNDG teams for additional technical capacities to support national efforts.⁸

Funding for the UNDS system

With the UN development system reforms, UNDP is no longer the primary funder for the RC system; rather, the system is funded through a three-tiered formula outlined and agreed in General Assembly Resolution 72/279 and managed by DCO.⁹ The Secretary-General has estimated that \$281 million is needed to fund the RC system and had initially hoped that the majority of that money would come from assessed contributions. In the end, a hybrid model was agreed with

⁸ The United Nations, "Proposal for a new generation of UNCTs- explanatory note", February 2018, available online at https://www.un.org/ecosoc/sites/www.un.org.ecosoc/files/files/en/qcpr/1_%20A%20new%20generation%20of%20UN%20Country%20Teams.pdf

⁹ One-third is funded by voluntary contributions from member states; one-third by UN agencies through a cost-sharing formula that takes into account size and ability to pay; and one-third through a 1 percent levy on all third-party, non-core contributions to UN development-related activities earmarked to a single agency or project. Ibid

funding also coming from UN entity cost-sharing contributions and a 1% levy on tightly earmarked donor contributions. To date, twenty-eight member states and nineteen UN entities have contributed to the Special Purpose Trust Fund for the RC system and total resources amount to close to \$190 million in pledges, commitments, and contributions received, leaving a gap of almost \$90 million.¹⁰ During the 75th session of the General Assembly the Secretary-General is expected to submit a comprehensive review on the functioning of the RC system including the funding arrangements.

The partnership with the World Bank was identified as a key opportunity for RCs, not in terms of a donor but for opportunities to leverage existing funds and in strengthening coherence for a preventive approach to development. The World Bank Group is currently in the process of finalizing a strategy for addressing drivers of fragility, conflict and violence through its efforts and the relationship with RCs will be critical in fully realizing prevention at country level.

The Peacebuilding Fund and the SDG Fund are two tools available to the RC for financing work of the UNCT. However, tapping into these resources requires that an RC has knowledge of their availability. It also raises questions about who controls use of these funds as the RC is not supposed to be programmatic.

Conclusion

The most recent UNDS reforms initiated by Secretary-General Guterres were implemented to reposition the UN's Development System to be more "strategic, accountable, transparent, collaborative, efficient, effective and results-oriented"¹¹ with the ultimate goal of achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 SDGs. It is an ambitious agenda that involved broad scale changes and enhanced capacity, knowledge and skills. While these reforms have only been in place for a short time and some elements are still being rolled out, there are many questions being asked about the outcomes and anticipated impact, clarity on the role of the empowered RCs and RCOs, reporting structure, and adequacy of funding for this system. With the release of the guidance documents on the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (formerly the UNDAF), more information is being provided and structures put in place to support both member states and UNCTs in operationalizing the UNDS reform efforts. However, the biggest challenge facing this change process is the securing of long-term funding to support the empowered RCOs and RCs to act with a prevention mandate. Inability to adequately address this question soon is likely to doom the entire reform agenda to failure.

¹⁰ United Nations Open Data Portal for the Special Purpose Trust Fund, available at <https://soc.un.org/SPTF/> .

¹¹ The United Nations, "Implementation of the General Assembly's resolution 71/243 on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review on operational activities for development of the UN system, 2019", doc. Number A/74/73 – E/2019/4, 18 April 2019



Operationalizing Sustaining Peace: A Series of Expert Roundtables

Sustaining Peace, as defined in dual UN General Assembly and Security Council resolutions (A/70/262 and S/2016/2282) is “a goal and a process to build a common vision of a society, ensuring that the needs of all segments of the population are taken into account, which encompasses activities aimed at preventing the outbreak, escalation, continuation and recurrence of conflict, addressing root causes, assisting parties to conflict to end hostilities, ensuring national reconciliation, and moving towards recovery, reconstruction and development”. This definition contextualizes peacebuilding as a process that is relevant and necessary throughout the conflict cycle, rather than solely an action taken after conflict termination, and correspondingly shifts the starting point of analysis to understanding risk and resilience in a society, and preventative rather than reactive operations.

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

Despite all the endorsement for continued work on embracing the word and spirit of the parallel resolutions, there is still a gap in understanding what this means in practice and the implication of the changes that are called for at regional and country level. To support and inform preparations for the 2019 and 2020 reports, the International Peace Institute (IPI), the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC), the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation (DHF) and the Global Network of Women Peacebuilders (GNWP) are convening a series of roundtable discussion to examine the operationalization of Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace.

The overall objective of this series is to strengthen the implementation of the UN’s Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace agenda, at the country and regional levels. The discussion series will contribute to this objective through:

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

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

The Series

This series aims to convene experts in peacebuilding and sustaining peace to discuss key thematic areas that emerge in connection to the implementation of the Sustaining Peace resolutions. Participants will include experts from civil society, member states, UN Agencies, Funds and Programs and the UN secretariat. The roundtables will be by invitation only and will be held as off-the record discussions. A short non-attribution summary note will be developed based on the discussions held.

The aim will be to hold one roundtable per month focused on topics related to implementing the Sustaining Peace Resolutions in practice. The topics listed below are indicative and may be adapted based on what UN representatives, Member States and civil society partners deem to be timely and useful. As much as possible the discussions will be grounded in country cases with experiences of local, national and regional actors as well as international actors working at country and regional levels presented.

Events thus far:

Event One: How do we understand and what do we expect from the operationalization of sustaining peace?

December 6th, 8:45 – 10:30am

DHF Conference Room, 3 Dag Hammarskjold Plaza, 10th floor

The first event aims to examine what we mean by the operationalization of sustaining peace in countries, what changes we expect to see and how we will measure success in this regard. As we build up to the 2019 interim report on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace and 2020 Peacebuilding Architecture Review, have a discussion on of the changes we expect to see in country, who is seen as responsible and driving this discussion and the steps needed to take this forward.

Event Two: Pathways for Peace and Sustaining Peace: Aligning the two processes of implementation

January 30th, 9:00 – 10:30am

DHF Conference Room, 3 Dag Hammarskjold Plaza, 10th floor

Pathways for Peace, published in 2018, provides strong evidence in support of the argument that it is more cost effective to prevent than to react to conflicts, that exclusion is today the biggest driver of conflict, and that national and international actors need to shift the way in which risk is

identified, analyzed and managed. The report highlights, in particular, the risks to national stability when group exclusion is replicated across security, political and socio-economic arenas.

This second event offers an opportunity to consider how these two implementation processes can align and support one another as well as to unpack what tools and processes the UN has to address the challenges of exclusion and act in a more preventative manner.

Event Three: Young people as drivers of peace – the role of the Youth, Peace and Security agenda in implementing Sustaining Peace

March 1st , 9:00 – 10:30am

DHF Conference Room, 3 Dag Hammarskjold Plaza, 10th floor

The meeting focused on the role of youth as peacebuilders and leaders in sustaining peace, and the synergies between the implementation of the UN's Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace approach, and the Youth, Peace and Security (YPS) agenda. The roundtable explored the ways in which the Sustaining Peace approach can be used to strengthen and catalyze the implementation of the UN Security Council Resolutions (SCRs) 2250 and 2419 on YPS and the Independent [Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security](#). The event also focused on ways in which young people contribute to peacebuilding and sustaining peace in their communities and concrete recommendations to ensure that their work is recognized and adequately supported.