Accelerating SDG16+: Innovative Action & Partnerships to Deliver on the 2030 Agenda

Tuesday, 30 January 2024 | 8:15 AM - 9:30 AM EST | Virtual
An ECOSOC Partnership Forum Side Event

Focused on SDG16+ in practice and its interlinkages across the 2030 Agenda, this event brought together over 150 participants, as well as a variety of speakers (noted in detail below) in the context of the 2024 ECOSOC Partnership Forum. This event was organized by the Pathfinders for Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies, the TAP Network and International IDEA, with support from the Global SDG16+ Coalition. The following highlights both overarching messages from the event, as well as specific policy and partnerships takeaways and recommendations.

**Overarching messages:**

- **SDG16+ is universal.** There are critical learnings to be shared, used, and implemented across diverse regional and economic contexts.

- **Identification and leveraging of SDG16+ interlinkages across the 2030 Agenda** are critical for policy coherence and efficiency, from a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach. Concrete SDG16+ links to climate, education, land, gender, Indigenous rights, and overall accountability and transparency—as captured in policy, plans, and strategies—were highlighted in this event.

- **Multi-stakeholder partnerships**, with joint decision-making, are key to implementation across national and local governments, civil society, networks, and the United Nations (UN).

- Greater emphasis should be placed on **mainstreaming human rights throughout SDG16+** in policy, reporting and analysis, and advocacy.
Speaker policy and partnerships takeaways:

**Minister Kenyeh Barlay**, Minister of Economic Development and Planning, Government of Sierra Leone *(Keynote Message)*

- SDG16 is an accelerator Sustainable Development Goal (SDG), together with SDG4 on education. This can be seen in Sierra Leone’s new seven-year National Development Plan.

- Action on SDG16 is evidenced through various reforms, including as related to: the Legal Aid Board and digitizing the legal system; the establishment of a Human Rights Commission and a National Commission on Democracy and a National Youth Commission—all working to promote national cohesion, inclusion and peace. An Independent Commission on Peace and National Cohesion has also been established.

- Through partnerships with civil society, local actors, and an Interreligious Council, political candidates agreed to peace during the election period and utilized mediators when differences arose.

- Sierra Leone is now the third most peaceful country in Africa and the most peaceful in West Africa *(Global Peace Index)*, but the country is still vulnerable.

**Paula Fernadez-Wulff**, Director General for the 2030 Agenda, Government of Spain

- In implementing the SDGs, Spain is continuing to build partnerships with civil society and across levels of government through:
  
  - A Sustainable Development Council that allows civil society input and promotes the localization of the SDGs;
  
  - A Sectoral Council that facilitates discussions around SDG implementation at the local and municipal levels; and


- Other policies in line with SDG16 include a whistleblower protection law, laws promoting government accountability, and an overarching prioritization of violence prevention against youth and children.

- Despite this progress, challenges and opportunities remain in ensuring effective policy coherence in mainstreaming the SDGs throughout government institutions, localizing the SDGs, and ensuring transparency, accountability and participation.
Anne Romsaas, Chief SDG Adviser, Norwegian Association of Local Government (NALG)

- The NALG works to secure horizontal and vertical cooperation on the SDGs across municipalities, but VNRs often fail to reflect local realities.
- Five Nordic are collaborating to produce a subnational review of the SDGs with a focus on youth and Indigenous peoples.
- The SDGs create a common language for government, business, academia and civil society, but the SDGs and relevant indicators need to be further translated to local contexts.

Elizabeth Hume, Executive Director, Alliance for Peacebuilding

- There has been a rise in conflict globally, and the Global North is facing significant challenges, which highlights the universality of SDG16.
- A networked approach for civil society amplifies messaging, pools funding, and allows for greater action and outreach. This is the cornerstone of the Alliance for Peacebuilding's strategy (See: p. 9).
- Conflict prevention needs to be integrated into other sectors through an SDG16 lens.

Swati Mehta, Program Director, Pathfinders for Justice, NYU Center on International Cooperation

- Solutions and good practices are needed but examples show change is possible through a people-centered approach to justice.
- In Sierra Leone, recent legislation empowers communities to have a say over all industrial projects on their land. The laws also ensure women's effective participation in land use committees, highlighting the connection between SDG16, SDG5, SDG13, and SDG15.
- Kenya’s Alternative Justice Policy shows that access to justice can be strengthened when partnerships are forged between formal and informal justice systems.
- Multi-stakeholder partnerships are key to deliver results at global, regional, and local levels. Examples include:
  - The Justice Action Coalition successfully profiled the importance of people-centered justice resulting in the UN secretary-general's report on Our Common Agenda—recognizing justice as an essential dimension of the social contract.
  - The Ibero-American Alliance for Access to Justice is an action-oriented regional alliance accelerating the implementation of SDG16.3 in the region with special emphasis on data and innovation, the promotion of a regional normative
framework for access to justice, and regional actors’ efforts to leave no one behind—the overarching promise of the 2030 Agenda.

**John Romano**, Director, TAP Network

- The [SDG16 Now Campaign](#) is a way for like-minded organizations to come together around joint advocacy and action to implement SDG16.

- John led the participants through an interactive mentimeter, which gathered 93 responses on the following two questions:

  **What does “SDG16+” mean to you?**
  
  93 responses

  **In which areas can we strengthen partnerships around to further bolster action SDG16+?**
  
  80 responses

**Annika Silva-Leander, Head of North America and Permanent Observer to the UN, International IDEA (Moderator)**

- When institutions are fragile, weakened, or undermined, the ramifications extend beyond the confines of SDG16, permeating all facets of the 2030 Agenda.

- Advocating for a recognition of the enabling character of all dimensions in SDG16 in combination with inclusive partnerships to foster synergies, expertise and different perspectives, are crucial elements for the achievement of the SDGs.

**Discussants**

**Alessandro Ercolani**, UNDP

- Research demonstrates SDG16’s catalytic value for the 2030 Agenda. Better data collection and reporting is key to identifying these interlinkages, mainstreaming them in VNRs and mobilizing the commitment and resources needed to advance SDG16+ implementation.

- UNDP’s latest research shows how progress on SDG16 is positively associated with tackling poverty and inequalities, marine ecosystems protection, and societal well-being.
• **Mainstreaming human rights throughout VNRs** will also be key to increase efficiency and effectiveness of interrelated efforts.

**Natia Tsikaradze**, Government of Georgia

- Georgia has incorporated the SDGs into its National Development Plan, with a focus on institutions, governance, transparency and accountability (SDG16).
- Reforming the public administration and public service delivery reflects this focus.
- Georgia is mainstreaming the SDGs in all policy documents, especially SDG16.

**Jyotsna Mohan-Singh**, Asia Development Alliance

- We need to focus more on bottom-up approaches and localizing the SDGs.
- SDG16 is strongly linked to inequalities, and we need to look at redistributive economic justice, environmental justice and gender justice.
- The Summit of the Future should not detract focus from delivering the 2030 Agenda.
- Civil society plays a key role in SDG implementation, but civil society space is shrinking, making SDG delivery even more difficult.

**Dr. Mojisola Akinsanya**, Women for Peace & Gender Equality Initiative (WOPEGEE)

- In Nigeria, the rise in gender-based violence necessitates a multi-stakeholder approach, involving survivors, grassroots organizations, and philanthropists as partners in approaching SDG16.1 (significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates).
- Pressure from civil society in this regard has led to opportunities to engage with sub-national governments in participatory budgeting, citizen-based monitoring, self-regulation and co-planning.
- These multi-stakeholder efforts have led to more inclusive policies and resources because partners have the adequate knowledge, capacity, and power to articulate their needs and make their voices heard.

**Henk-Jan Brinkman**, International Development Law Organization

- There are aspects of SDG16 that need continued or increased engagement as related to the Pact for the Future, including: people-centered justice, pushback against military solutions and responses, and halving violent deaths globally.