



THE FIRST CSO-UN DIALOGUE ON PEACEBUILDING

OUTCOME REPORT

**UN HEADQUARTERS
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We would like to thank the generous support of:



We would also extend our gratitude to the continuous support of our CSO-UN Dialogue Initiative on Peacebuilding Core Group:



The First CSO-UN Dialogue on Peacebuilding – Outcome Report

Overview

The inaugural two-day Civil Society Organisation-UN Dialogue on Peacebuilding held at the UN Headquarters in New York from November 30 to December 1, 2023, aimed to provide an inclusive and comprehensive platform for UN entities working on peacebuilding and civil society actors to engage in substantive discussions on global peacebuilding efforts. The event strived to establish and energise an ongoing dialogue on peacebuilding efforts, set the stage for continued, expanded, and diversified engagement, and build upon the insights garnered for subsequent dialogues and continued strengthening of the CSO-UN partnership.

Opening remarks by H.E. Amb. Elina Kalkku, Permanent Representative of Finland to the UN, Elizabeth Spehar, UN Assistant Secretary-General for Peacebuilding Support, and Maria Eugenia Mosquera, Legal Representative of Communities Building Peace in Colombia (CONPAZCOL) underscored the importance of collaboration between the UN and civil society, and the unique roles of CSOs in promoting inclusivity, fostering dialogue, and facilitating better collaboration and mutual understanding, especially for marginalised groups like women and youth.

The first session provided a **global overview and regional perspectives on peacebuilding**, examining geopolitical trends and challenges in financing peace initiatives. Itonde Kakoma, President of Interpeace, delivered a keynote speech, followed by insights from civil society leaders, international and representing various geographic regions worldwide, outlining the existing resources, obstacles, and perceptions of the UN's role in peacebuilding within their respective contexts. Discussions emphasised the discrepancy between the UN's founding visions and present geopolitical realities, stressing the need for structured, consistent, and institutionalised collaboration with local, regional, and international civil society, holding states and regional and international leaders, including the UN, accountable, and moving away from elite-centric approaches. Examples from Latin America and Rwanda highlighted the importance of trauma healing, structural changes, and integrating peacebuilders within communities, reflecting both global and localised peacebuilding challenges.

Subsequent sessions fostered dynamic discussions and collaborative exchanges among participants focused on **the current state of the CSO-UN partnerships, strengthening collaboration for local peacebuilding**, and **upcoming opportunities for engagement and collaboration**. One theme revolved around current partnership modalities between various UN entities and civil society organisations, highlighting the importance of working towards more equal relationships, based on mutual respect, continuous engagement, and structured exchanges and regular dialogue to ensure equal partnerships. The dialogue also provided a forum for the exchange of best practices. Another focus of the discussions was on the importance of strengthening mechanisms for downward accountability of international actors in local peacebuilding initiatives. A third theme related to identifying entry points for civil society engagement within ongoing UN peacebuilding initiatives. Participants brought their diverse insights to identify effective strategies for advancing shared goals, amplifying the impact of peacebuilding efforts, and fortifying community-driven initiatives for sustainable peace. Participants spoke honestly and sometimes candidly. The exchanges also gave participants the opportunity to share creative and innovative approaches in their diverse contexts.

Side sessions further enriched the dialogue by focusing on themes such as connecting CSOs with the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF), exploring entry points for CSO engagement in human rights and peacebuilding and women, peace, and security, unpacking the potential of a network-based approach to peacebuilding to deliver more impactful peacebuilding, and exploring approaches to quality financing for peacebuilding. Below are some of the highlights:

Trilingual side sessions with the Peacebuilding Fund highlighted the crucial roles of prevention-based approaches to sustainable peace; gender equality and gender-sensitive approaches to peacebuilding; wrestling with CSO eligibility and challenges in accessing PBF funds; and CSO empowerment in all these areas. **The side session on quality financing** explored innovative financing models beyond Official Development Assistance (ODA). It underscored the importance of the meaningful involvement of local actors and called for a shift towards long-term perspectives rather than the current project-based approach favoured by the majority of the donor community in peacebuilding efforts. It cautioned against merely replacing traditional donor commitments and recommended 'smarter' investments and creative and accountable approaches to private sector engagement. **The side session on human rights, gender and peacebuilding** addressed CSO safety and protection concerns and the need for collaborative engagement across the peacebuilding and human rights nexus and on women, peace, and security issues. It also stressed the need to integrate peacebuilding, human rights, and gender agendas within the UN system, as well as the significance for the UN to learn from innovative collaborative practices of local civil society actors working at the nexus of peacebuilding, gender, and justice/human rights. **The side session on network-building for peacebuilding** highlighted the role of regional and other networks as collaborative platforms and drew attention to challenges for their sustainability as well as global visibility. Recommendations aimed at shifting from wariness and distrust to fostering a collaborative mindset, emphasising the importance of regular dialogue with networks. Additionally, the international community should ensure the participation of civil society in the design of programmatic approaches and financing mechanisms. Lastly, participants met and exchanged with **the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) at an expert-level meeting**. The meeting underscored civil society's indispensable role in advancing peacebuilding, the importance of civil society-member state exchange that go beyond conventional one-way briefings to inclusive, structured, and continuous two-way conversations, the need for new strategies for emerging challenges, and equitable funding for sustainable peacebuilding.

The event culminated in a **closing consultation session**, where participants reflected on key takeaways and articulated visions for the future of the CSO-UN Dialogue Initiative. The concluding discussions pointed to the importance of ensuring the sustainability of, broadening, and institutionalising the dialogue platform to foster continuous exchange and collaboration including effective feedback loops.

Throughout the sessions, diverse voices and perspectives contributed to a rich and comprehensive dialogue, reflecting the imperative of collaborative efforts between civil society and the UN in advancing peacebuilding agendas worldwide. The dialogue served as a good first step towards establishing a mechanism for generating actionable recommendations, forging strategic CSO-UN partnerships at the global and field levels, and setting forth a collective vision for fostering sustainable peace and resilience globally.

Summary of Key Messages from the Dialogue

This section highlights some of the key issues and debates that emerged, attempting to capture the richness and complexity of the various participants' contributions and insights throughout the dialogue. The CSO-UN Dialogue on Peacebuilding offered a platform to foster comprehensive discussions, collaboration, and exchange of insights on how to enhance peacebuilding efforts. Central themes were **the imperative for collaborative approaches, a more strategic partnership, sustainable funding mechanisms, more effective feedback loops, and inclusive practices to build sustainable peace and prevent violent conflict.**

Advocacy for peace emerged as an important priority, despite the challenges in many environments rife with violence and shrinking civic space. Participants stressed the need for **continuous peacebuilding efforts** before, during, and after conflicts – in every phase of the peace and conflict continuum. Significant emphasis was placed on **horizontal learning exchanges between diverse country contexts** as essential, contrary to the prevalent top-down, elite-centric, Western-driven, and vertical paradigms and approaches. The prevailing discourse at the dialogue accentuated the importance of adopting a more inclusive and 'intersectional' approach to peacebuilding.

Throughout the dialogue, there was a consistent emphasis on recognising and highlighting **the pivotal role played by CSOs in fostering constructive dialogue, promoting inclusivity, and facilitating reconciliation within conflict-affected societies.** CSOs improve peace-positive relationships between communities and governments as well as among communities. Dismantling existing intersectoral silos, fostering meaningful partnerships, and prioritising the engagement, ownership, and leadership of local peacebuilding organisations emerged as essential strategies for improving collaboration and impact. Therefore, the UN, member states, and international NGOs should empower and tap into the capacity of local-level CSOs in building sustainable peace in their communities.

Inclusivity took centre stage as a theme, emphasising the crucial role of diverse voices, especially those of women and youth, in inclusive peace processes so that collective action and more impactful approaches can be unlocked. Understanding and defining peace within local contexts while involving the participation and leadership of local stakeholders, was viewed as essential for tailored, context-specific peacebuilding efforts. The discussions highlighted the imperative of incorporating diverse voices into peace processes. Specifically, participants highlighted the effectiveness of bottom-up approaches as exemplified by locally led initiatives dedicated to advancing the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) and Youth, Peace, and Security (YPS) agendas. Participants showcased how inclusive participation and the elevation of diverse voices led to more effective and impactful outcomes in peacebuilding. Inclusivity in this sense, especially the meaningful involvement of women, youth, and indigenous people in peace processes, has served as a guiding principle for fostering collective action and devising more comprehensive approaches to peacebuilding. It was also acknowledged that the consultation forum was not fully representative of CSOs globally due to participation restrictions and barriers facing CSOs travel to New York. There was consensus that existing platforms and mechanisms for civil society consultation need to be expanded wherever possible to be more inclusive.

Another thread across the discussions centred on **the urgent need to fortify partnerships and foster systematic and institutionalised engagement between the United Nations and civil society** for optimally effective, inclusive, and sustainable peacebuilding efforts. Participants encouraged the engagement with networks to make them effective partners for systematic and institutionalised CSO-UN partnerships because they offer mechanisms for regular consultation and structured collaboration.

Further, the importance of cultivating trust, encouraging shared ownership, and co-creation between UN entities and CSOs was emphasised. Particularly, the necessity for a collaborative framework not only between CSOs and the UN but also between international and local CSOs, surfaced as a key component in generating innovative solutions in peacebuilding endeavours. Attention was also directed towards concerns of retaliation, intimidation, and security faced by CSOs engaging with the UN. These concerns demand improved protection mechanisms to safeguard CSOs and their staff and sufficient acknowledgement of the potential risks and challenges they encounter while participating in peacebuilding initiatives in conflict-affected societies. Moreover, in the side session conducted by the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), the discussions accentuated the pressing need for the **continual evolution of dialogue structures** cultivating and empowering grassroots engagement, fostering a participatory environment, and harnessing the leadership potential of local actors in delineating peacebuilding strategies. Participants stressed the need to involve diverse local stakeholders, such as the private sector and local authorities, enabling engagement across diverse communities.

The dialogue also highlighted the importance of **transparent and flexible funding mechanisms** as a pivotal factor in advancing peacebuilding and averting competition between the UN and CSOs for resources on the ground. The discussions stressed the importance of innovative financing methods, the involvement of the private sector, and advocated for transparency in funding processes. Participants emphasised the urgency of adopting non-traditional impact assessment methods by donors and noted the importance of adapting projects in response to real-time changes on the ground. Additionally, participants pointed out that local peacebuilders should proactively guide donors rather than merely being driven by them, to create coherent methodologies, and to hold investors accountable for effective and fair distribution of funds. Specifically, there were calls to ensure transparency in the selection processes for funding and introduce greater flexibility in the prerequisites for accessing funds so that more direct access to funding for grassroots organisations can be enabled. This need for transparent and adaptable funding mechanisms stood out as a cornerstone for enhancing the effectiveness of peacebuilding initiatives. Emphasis was also placed on the need to transform funding relationships into more collaborative partnerships, including reinforcing the important role of international financial institutions and the private sector in financing effective and innovative peace initiatives. Moreover, several participants stressed the importance of transparent funding, longer-term approaches, and the empowerment of local actors to confront the intricate challenges of global conflicts and pave the way for enduring peace.

The issues of current funding mechanisms also pointed to a prominent concern that surfaced regarding **the precarious sustainability of peacebuilding efforts** primarily due to financial constraints. Participants articulated the need for longer project funding timelines, and the fact that sustainable peace cannot be achieved within short-term frameworks. Participants also stressed the pressing need for longer project timelines, on the basis that sustainable peace cannot be achieved without aligning strategic short-term interventions with overarching, long-term strategies. This approach recognised the need to not only address immediate conflicts, but also lay the groundwork for enduring peace and the prevention of violent conflict, by acknowledging and actively address root causes of instability.

Addressing root causes such as weak government service provision capacities, structural lack of economic opportunities, child recruitment into armed groups, climate change, and cyclical incentives for violence, among others, was deemed critical.

Addressing conflict-related trauma emerged as a vital aspect of moving towards broad-based reconciliation and peacebuilding. Integrating peacebuilders within communities for immersive collabor-

ration and steering away from ‘seasonal peacebuilding’ dictated by donor timelines were highlighted as effective practices. Participants acknowledged that contemporary conflicts tend to transcend national borders and necessitate cross-border, regional, and global collaborations, and adaptability. The discussions called for peacebuilding strategies that address these complexities and take global interdependencies into account while designing localised interventions and prevention strategies.

The dialogue was a testament to the intrinsic importance of **tailoring peacebuilding endeavours to specific contexts, whether local or country-specific**, recognising the indispensable role of involving all stakeholders in the formulation and execution of peacebuilding strategies. Participants placed particular emphasis on the alignment of global agendas — such as Our Common Agenda, the Youth, Peace and Security Agenda, and the Women, Peace, and Security Agenda — with the intricate tapestry of local realities, acknowledging the imperative of harmonising these broader directives with the diverse needs and dynamics of local communities.

Actionable Pathways: Empowering Inclusive Peacebuilding Initiatives

This section delves into the actionable recommendations that arose from the CSO-UN Dialogue on Peacebuilding. The recommendations cover a variety of aspects of peacebuilding practice, such as the need to: advance the localisation and inclusivity of peacebuilding, fortify systematic and institutionalised partnerships between the UN and civil society for peacebuilding, enhance the sustainability and impact of peacebuilding endeavours, integrate CSO inputs into the development of national processes and UN policies and decision-making processes, and ensure more transparent, equitable, systematic, and accessible peacebuilding financing. Moreover, these proposals need to be integrated with diverse local understandings of peace and distilled from global to local dialogues.

Strengthen the CSO-UN Partnership

An essential outcome of the dialogue is a series of proposals for **fortifying systematic and institutionalised partnerships between the UN and civil society for peacebuilding**, including institutionalising the Dialogue Initiative to create a sustainable platform that can serve as the catalyst to implement all other recommendations arising from the Dialogue. The recommendations focused on formalising processes for more consistent, regular, and reciprocal collaboration between UN entities and civil society. Foundational to the approach proposed is the acknowledgement of parity between UN entities and CSOs as equal partners in dialogues as well as in practice. Structural engagement should involve more regular (in person and remote) meetings, institutionalised for joint decision-making, insight-sharing, evaluation exercises, and co-creation of peacebuilding initiatives, as well as in evaluation exercises. Collaborative endeavours should nurture mutual respect. UN-civil society partnerships should transcend local, national, and regional, as well as international levels, and should be built through both working-level and strategic level collaborations.

Institutionalising engagement entails the existence of processes for implementation that ensure ongoing and diversified forms of collaboration. Practical suggestions to consolidate these forms of engagement include having mandatory focal points for CSOs in UN country offices; establishing standardising and reciprocal reporting structures; having regular, decentralised CSO-UN dialogues that capture, conflict dynamics and innovate solutions at various levels; and building communication channels for constant feedback loops and exchange. Participants also advocated for enhanced protection mechanisms addressing intimidation and reprisals faced by CSOs and their personnel working with the UN. Above all, CSO-UN partnerships must be genuine, authentic, and secure.

Consequently, for this initiative, it was proposed that more resources and investment be put into institutionalising annual dialogues into a sustainable and funded mechanism for continuous engagement between CSOs and UN entities on peacebuilding. Additionally, establishing regional and multi-level consultations should be part of the dialogue to broaden participation and enhance inclusivity. Another recommendation was to strengthen communication channels between UN headquarters and field operations, to establish some consistency in UN HQ and field missions’/ country offices’ approaches to CSO consultation. Digital tools to support this process should be explored. UN entities, including the Secretariat, should provide efficient support and coordination to forge meaningful UN-civil society relationships on the ground.

Localisation in Peacebuilding

Direct engagement with local stakeholders and leaders should be broadened so that peacebuilding interventions reflect their specific challenges and needs. This approach underscores the central importance of locally and nationally driven programmes that address issues that are the most relevant for directly impacted communities, and how international CSOs and civil society networks can lower the access barrier between international policymakers and local voices.

It was also noted that to facilitate more effective collaboration, it was necessary wherever feasible to translate key documents and reports into local languages. This was seen as essential for broader accessibility and understanding among diverse stakeholders, including local and national civil society actors.

Enhancing Inclusivity

Advancing inclusivity of peacebuilding is a key recommendation from the dialogue. Participants emphasised **the importance of inclusive dialogues that encompass a diverse range of voices**, especially those of women, youth, and marginalised groups. These dialogues should serve to amplify voices often excluded from peace processes and facilitate their meaningful engagement in peacebuilding initiatives. Moreover, participants recommended establishing safe spaces and specialised training programmes to empower women leaders and promote gender-inclusive initiatives and equitable opportunities. Additionally, proposals were made for further investment in educational initiatives, training, and mentorship programmes for local actors, particularly youth. This recommendation seeks to ensure the provision of the necessary resources and platforms for skills enhancement and leadership development.

Enhancing the Sustainability and Impact of Peacebuilding

Another set of recommendations revolves around utilising collaboration, dialogue, and reciprocal learning between UN and CSOs to **enhance the sustainability and impact of peacebuilding endeavours**. The dialogue revealed that dialogues and consultations with civil society should not just be seen as a rubber stamp or source of legitimacy for peacebuilding endeavours, but as a means to review strategies and methodologies of peacebuilding, and ultimately to enhance the overall impact of peacebuilding initiatives. This necessitates reconceiving and restructuring top-down and UN-centric approaches, aligning timelines and goals realistically and in a way that is responsive to CSOs’ priorities and constraints, and crafting frameworks that prioritise the enduring needs of conflict-affected regions over short-term donor-driven objectives. These require more collaborative partnerships with research and scholarly institutions, as well as pertinent civil society experts and diverse locally connected stakeholders, for conducting longitudinal studies and comprehensive assessments that capture the multifaceted impact of peacebuilding initiatives. Additionally, there was a notable emphasis

on developing methodologies that synchronise peacebuilding strategies with long-term necessities, transcending the short-term objectives often driven by donor predilections rather than sound and informed evaluative analysis.

The overall strategic approach to peacebuilding needs to be recalibrated to establish more sustainable and impactful frameworks for collaborative peacebuilding efforts, based on solid analysis and reflective learning. By redirecting the focus towards long-term goals and engaging in thorough assessments, the aim is to create strategies that better address the diverse and persistent needs of regions and countries affected by conflict.

Integration of CSOs' Input into National Processes and UN Policies

Another pivotal action point highlighted the ambitious **imperative to integrate CSO inputs into the development of national processes and UN policies and decision-making processes**. To enhance this effective policy integration, recommendations include having more regular and targeted consultations; establishing formal advisory roles for CSOs and scholarly institutions; and cultivating and investing in dedicated platforms for CSO, as well as women, youth, and marginalised groups' representation. In particular, meaningful participation of civil society actors in political dialogues is crucial for inclusive policy formulation. Therefore, structural changes are needed in policymaking processes for peace to integrate and harness the valuable knowledge contributed by civil society.

Moreover, structural changes within these processes require breaking down the silos and better integrating various UN pillars through coordinated efforts, shared resources, and collaborative strategies. It was argued that this approach could support the creation and development of a more comprehensive peacebuilding framework. It was also argued that CSOs that work across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus can bring added value, impetus, and innovative practices to this endeavour.

The goal of these recommendations is to ensure that the insights and expertise of civil society are effectively integrated into national processes and UN policies- and decision-making. By establishing avenues for continuous engagement, encouraging meaningful participation, and advocating for comprehensive integration, these actions aim to enhance the relevance and effectiveness of both policy development and practice in peacebuilding initiatives.

Rethinking Peacebuilding Financing

Participants underscored **the necessity of more transparent, equitable, systematic, and accessible peacebuilding financing**. Specific recommendations include creating clear funding guidelines and transparent grant application processes, prioritising the financing and access to financing of local civil society organisations, and offering transparent feedback loops on funding allocation decisions. The emphasis on prioritising local organisations and grassroots initiatives in funding allocation was seen as a means to channel resources directly to the communities and societies most affected by conflict. To achieve this, it was argued that funding mechanisms need to be developed while being mindful of the power imbalances and inequities in funding processes that may be reinforced rather than countered. Furthermore, funding and project accountability mechanisms should be more flexible and adaptable for grassroots organisations that sometimes lack the financial and administrative infrastructure to satisfy stringent donor requirements. This included sensitivities to both the dilemmas and potential associated with funding these organisations and can be done through indirect funding channelled through networks and international organisations that may more easily comply with donor requirements.

Participants also proposed exploring innovative financing models beyond traditional means of aid that can better respond to address the long-term nature of peacebuilding, such as funding a network approach, increased direct funding to local/grassroots CSOs, pooled funding mechanisms, donors directing their embassies to provide funding to local networks/initiatives/organisations working on peacebuilding. It is key that funding models support community-led approaches where communities play a leading role in determining peacebuilding priorities and strategies. Additionally, participants suggest more robust capacity-building support to local organisations to enhance their grant-writing and project management capacities. Offering technical assistance and guidance throughout the application and implementation processes are necessary components to ensure grassroots organisations comprehend and fulfil the criteria while effectively utilising allocated funds. These proposed measures were seen to ensure equitable distribution and effective utilisation of funding, particularly within local contexts affected by conflict.

The Roadmap Ahead: Sequence for Implementation

The outcomes of the first inaugural CSO-UN Dialogue on Peacebuilding underscore the imperative to embrace localised and inclusive approaches. The recommendations woven through these discussions emphasise the significance of engaging diverse voices, fortifying more strategic and equal partnerships, reassessing strategies for sustainability, integrating civil society inputs into policy and decision making, and establishing transparent funding criteria. Together, these insights form base for working towards more effective, inclusive, and sustainable peacebuilding endeavours, emphasising the collaborative effort required to pave the way for enduring peace in conflict-affected regions.

To build on the success of the inaugural CSO-UN Dialogue on peacebuilding, the Core Group aims to:

- **Broaden the dialogue and enhance the effectiveness of global peacebuilding processes by establishing strategic preliminary regional consultations.** These consultations should focus on priority issues identified in previous dialogues. By involving diverse stakeholders, including civil society and local peacebuilding actors, we can ensure a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and potential solutions. Moreover, these regional consultations should serve as a platform for advancing actionable solutions and elevating them to decision-makers during subsequent dialogues.
- **Expand UN engagement in the Dialogue Initiative by involving UN decision-makers meaningfully.** Their participation and active involvement would strengthen the efforts to implement changes based on dialogue outcomes. This would contribute to ensuring that the dialogues lead to tangible actions and not merely expressions of concerns and one-way briefings.
- **Collectively work towards providing strategic policy input in relevant peacebuilding processes,** including at the UN-Civil Society Conference in Nairobi, the Summit of the Future, and the Peacebuilding Architecture Review 2025.
- **Strive for regular and consistent interaction between the UN and civil society** through collaborative and partnership efforts built on trust and shared objectives. This strategic partnership, predicated on mutual trust and sustained dialogue, not only consolidates shared aspirations but also amplifies the sustainability of peacebuilding pursuits, leading to a greater impact on the collective agenda.

Annex 1

Unpacking a Network Approach: The Role of Networks, Movements and Coalitions in Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace

Informal Learning Session for the Civil Society-UN Dialogue Initiative

Summary Note

12:30pm-2:00pm, 1 December 2023

On Friday, December 1st, the representatives of Member States, the UN and civil society gathered as part of the CSO-UN Dialogue on Peacebuilding in an informal discussion entitled: “Unpacking a Network Approach: The Role of Networks, Movements and Coalitions in Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace”. This discussion tackled two questions: 1) what are the benefits offered by the peacebuilding networks and 2) how donors and policymakers can support them to strengthen efforts to build and sustain peace. Participants highlighted that **the networks offer a unique ‘one-stop shop’ for inclusive and diverse expertise from various local partners**, which grants them the opportunity to be effective partners for the international stakeholders achieving meaningful and sustainable change at the field level. In the current peacebuilding architecture, with existing mechanisms for partnership (networks), political commitments ([S/RES/2282](#), [S/RES/2558](#), [A/RES/76/305](#)) and guidance for building effective partnerships, only action is missing.

Differently from other civil society modalities, **networks are not just one group of actors aligned around a specific strategy, they are a one-stop shop for diverse priorities and expertise of its members**. Networks host a rich array of coordinated diverse partners with broad expertise (networks of women, youth, regions, among others, each working across the Peace-Development-Humanitarian Nexus). Civil society organisations, for example, organised themselves into networks to advance policy development on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) and Youth, Peace and Security, as well as subsequent National Action Plans (NAPs) for their implementation. Networks continuously grow and expand as more networks are joined together to benefit from collective learning and shared access. With a lot of networks being cross-border, they are able to more easily work on borderless conflicts. Networks offer a multiplier effect for building peace constituencies at the country level and more consolidated action for policy change.

Networks have the trust of and legitimacy within the communities. Local communities trust networks, and many local governments rely on their expertise. The basis of networks are trust and solidarity that often extends national borders to bring together local partners with similar experience and strengthen their capacity through learning. For example, the Global Network of Women Peacebuilders’ “Peace Exchanges”¹ facilitate cross-regional sharing of best practices and lessons learned among critical leaders in the WPS process. This initiative strengthens partnership and solidarity between key stakeholders across different regions, countries and communities. Networks gather individuals around a shared goal. However, diversity and trust often bring high expectations which may be hard for networks to meet.

There are certainly challenges faced by networks and local peacebuilders in achieving their sustainability. First and foremost, it is the absence of long-term, flexible, and sustainable funding for the network approach. Money often does not go to networks, but directly to individual organisations based on existing financial structures. At the same time, networks offer a unique opportunity for organisations who would not otherwise be eligible for funding (i.e., new organisations and those located in the periphery). Networks connect local peacebuilders to experts and give out small grants for an extra push at the beginning. For example, GPPAC provided a grant through its participatory Youth-by-Youth grant to convene young peacebuilders in Nigeria to prepare them for the consultations on the YPS National Action Plan. It was stated that a small help coming from networks at the beginning is worth more than big project grants due to the flexibility of such funding.

¹ Leclerc K. & Farion S. (2022). *Exchanging Ideas, Shaping Peace: A Guide for Intergenerational and Intercommunal Peace Exchanges*. Global Network of Women Peacebuilders. <https://gnwp.org/peace-exchange-guide/>.

Further, institutionalising core costs is also the issue at hand. To ensure the sustainability of networks and smaller organizations, it is essential to cover their core costs first. Another challenge is the continuous absence of network visibility in policy discussions. It was highlighted that peacebuilding networks do not benefit from attention at the global level due to the specifics of its structure that is made up of individual organisations. Further, within networks, there needs to be procedures that allow smaller organisations not to be crowded out by bigger organisations and networks.

Recommendations for policymakers and donors:

- **Policymakers need to change from wariness and distrust to a collaborative mindset with networks.** Regular dialogue is key. The CS-UN Dialogue on Peacebuilding can be the foundation of such relationships.
- **The international community should ensure the participation of civil society in the design of programmatic approaches and financing mechanisms.** When it comes to the network approach, funding and political support must be prioritised.
- **Donor strategies need to be reconsidered.** Donorship is not ready for the interconnected and complex environment of networks. Legal considerations need to be explored to allow funding for networks, rather than individual organisations. For this, networks should work towards making their approach more transparent vis-a-vis other modalities by for example making the difference between networks and intermediary organisations clearer. Further, donors should prioritise funding convenings and dialogues, in addition to the current focus on funding peacebuilding projects.
- **Networks should make sure that smaller and diverse organisations’ voices are heard and strengthened.** With diversity comes some challenges as the interest of youth networks may not be the same as the ones from women.
- **Regional networks should better bridge the needs on the ground to global networks installed in New York City.** There is a need to utilise networks that already exist, especially in New York City, because they depend on the information provided by regional networks.

Annex 2

Towards Quality Financing for Peacebuilding: Community-Focused Accountability and Locally-Led Determination

Informal Learning Session for the Civil Society-UN Dialogue Initiative

Summary Note

On Thursday, 30 November 2023, representatives of the UN, its Member States, local peacebuilders, and experts in financing for peacebuilding gathered as part of the CSO-UN Dialogue on Peacebuilding in an informal discussion entitled: “Towards Quality Financing for Peacebuilding: Community-Focused Accountability and Locally-Led Determination”. This discussion tackled the question of innovative financing approaches, moving beyond ODAs and grants, to enable locally-led determination of impact and quality financing. Participants reflected on how to strengthen a shared understanding of the impact of peacebuilding, as well as how to shift the mindset of governments, donors, the private sector, and civil society for more impactful peacebuilding financing. Overall, despite the many suggestions and examples showcased, participants have agreed that we are all only at the very beginning of the journey and look forward to hearing about the progress in next year’s discussion.

The main takeaway from the discussion is the need to ensure that donors can contribute to **peacebuilding by ensuring that peacebuilding is based on community knowledge**. Local actors are best placed to lead peacebuilding processes, which is why donors should support a locally-led determination of impact. There is a need for participatory design (local peacebuilders should be helping to set the outcomes and structure), and oversight and accountability. This also requires capacity-building investments for both diverse civil society and investors and governments. Steering Committees within PBSO can offer some learning for more inclusive processes.

Participants were reminded and agreed that peacebuilding is a long-term process, which does not fit **the current projectised approach** of the donor community. Additionally, participants highlighted a growing acknowledgment within the UN that funding local peacebuilding should not be viewed merely as transactional but rather as a collaborative partnership of influence, which includes regular feedback loops. A point was raised that short-term grants can be useful to try new methodologies or for short-term activities that can rapidly respond to changes. They, however, cannot be the foundation of peacebuilding. As flexible as a grant may be, the issue of continuity will always come back after a few years. Recognising the limitations faced by the donors, it is important to combine transparency and flexibility. Flexibility will enable new information and a new understanding of the process, as well as allow for the local determination of impact.

Several innovative approaches were mentioned to generate **more quality financing for peacebuilding**. Innovative finance is a very broad toolkit. This includes anything beyond Official Development Assistance (ODA). For example, Interpeace, through its Finance for Peace initiative, has recently signed an MoU with the African Development Bank to leverage development finance for peace, including by mainstreaming peace considerations into the bank’s business model. Additionally, outcomes-based finance, such as impact bonds (where returns are paid based on outcomes being achieved rather than on profits and interest), were highlighted. These can build up the evidence base on what works beyond traditional methodologies and link together programs on climate education, livelihoods and peace outcomes, which are currently disjointed. There is also a growing field of work that is developing frameworks investors can use to verify that their investments contribute to peace outcomes. Finance for Peace’s mission to create a trusted market ecosystem for peace finance led to the creation of a benchmark for defining and guiding peace impact called the Peace Finance Impact Framework, as well as the Peace Finance Standard, including the peace bond and peace equity standards. The UN also does more work to strengthen partnerships with international financial institutions that develop innovative modalities for peace-positive investments rooted in conflict analysis. IFIs can do more on moni-

toring and evaluation. Other modalities of merging traditional funding and entrepreneurship were mentioned.

Innovative financing, however, **should not replace the responsibilities for donor financing the commitments for which were made as part of the evolution of peacebuilding and sustaining peace** (i.e., S/RES/2282, S/RES/2558, A/76/305). Innovative approaches and donor funding should go hand-in-hand as they work on two different aspects. Innovative financing can take place in the form of outcome-based finance (for example impact bonds), investment frameworks, and SMEs. All of these innovative financing mechanisms are useful for investors to see the outcomes of their investments better.

More donors need to move from rhetoric to practice and start investing in a smart and effective way, supporting locally-determined peace outcomes at the local level. There is a space for learning from both fields to finally move the progress beyond discussions toward a practical change. It was reiterated that a lot of proposals have been made to better integrate local realities in financing; however, the practice is lacking.

Discussing the availability of resources, the point was raised: “What is frustrating is that in the context of **an endless loop of insufficiently financing peacebuilding, donors continuously question its impact.**”

Recommendations:

- **Donors should encourage story-telling and other non-traditional indicator-based methods of conveying impact and data collection.**
- **Donors should adjust projects as needed based on changes on the ground and fund innovations in locally-led resourcing more systematically.** Areas that need to be more systematically funded include research and development that disrupt the current grant-funded model of financing.
- **Local peacebuilders should create coherent methodologies that donors can put money behind.** Local peacebuilders should stop passively asking for more flexible funds, and start actively guiding donors to the gaps that need to be filled. It is their role to hold investors accountable and ensure that funding is correctly distributed.
- **The donor community should push for civil societies’ seat at the table in the design of financing mechanisms, with appropriate feedback loops in place.** Local peacebuilder should capture more systematically their efforts in innovative financing to guide donors as to where they should place their funding. However, for that to happen, they need their voices to be heard. It is the public sector’s responsibility to make sure that happens.
- **The role of the private sector in innovative financing must be further explored, as well as its combination with the locally-led development sector.**
- **Local peacebuilders and IFIs need to find ways to engage with each other more effectively** as IFIs are agents of peace.

Regional Level Report – Latin America

It's an honor to be here representing Latin America and the Caribbean in this final session. This is a powerful and diverse region but also faces common challenges that unite us here today.

We all know that we cannot achieve and sustain peace alone.

We have shifted from a state-centric approach to an understanding of the complex network in which multiple actors can play a significant role. Civil society must be at the heart of this process.

And why is that?

- Civil society can reach and engage groups that are made invisible and marginalized from public policies, services, and international agencies.
- We have a deeper understanding of the context, local grievances, and needs that are crucial for the success of any initiative.
- Civil society plays a crucial role in the democratic system, ensuring participation, social control, and representation across different channels of dialogue, when, of course, they exist.
- Finally, civil society is in a good position to innovate, test, and produce new approaches that can be used to amplify the impact for sustainable development and peace.

But the question that we must answer is not why or what, but how.

How can we do better to build real and constructive partnerships between civil society and the United Nations?

So, as Latin American and Caribbean civil society, we have had the opportunity to reflect together in some recommendations that we would like to share with you:

1. Active Engagement

As we discussed yesterday, this means not only consulting or informing but systematically engaging civil society in analysis, planning, programming, monitoring, and evaluation.

We no longer want to be consulted without feedback or play the role of implementation partners. We want to co-create.

2. Protected and Meaningful Participation

As we know, conflict and violence do not affect people or places in a uniform manner.

There is an urgency to recognize and understand the diversity of actors and how they can affect and be affected by conflict and violence, especially women and young people.

More than recognizing, it is time to make inclusivity happen by increasing funding for locally based organizations led by community leaders, young people, and women—people who actually live, feel, and struggle daily with the consequences of violence and exclusion.

It is also important to promote strategies to enable the safe and full participation of representatives, such as risk mapping, applying protection policies and protocols, having resources for mobility and language accessibility, including Portuguese, of course.

Attacks on human rights defenders and peacebuilders have been rising. In this matter, we believe that the UN could play a more significant role in close accompaniment, reporting, and implementing protection plans for those at risk.

3. Strengthening Local Organizations

We have observed the reduction of civic participation spaces and increasing distrust in institutions in many places. The contraction of civil society has direct implications for social cohesion. Where there is no dialogue, the use of violence may represent the only alternative.

That is why strengthening local organizations is so important. This involves providing resources, fostering multi-sectoral trust-building, leadership development, capacity building, and knowledge exchange. Also demands supportive strategies with a focus on mental health.

A regional learning community on peacebuilding with local civil society partners could provide a space to share practices, foster collaborations and connections among diverse organizations.

Also, the UN could facilitate dialogues among social organizations and the private sector so that we can unite forces, leverage resources and explore sustainability models.

4. Flexible and Innovative Funding

On this matter, there is a lot to discuss. While we recognize the importance of civil society, there are limited alternatives to ensure funding.

Funding opportunities depend on the government's willingness and resources are centralized by UN agencies. When governments are not aligned with the UN, there is no entry point for civil society. And we must not forget the situation of civil society in countries with authoritarian governments that restrict the access to UN funding and other civic spaces.

So it is imperative to adopt flexible funding policies with modalities directed to civil society organizations and adjusted to different capacity levels.

Creating umbrella mechanisms among third-level organizations and local ones or forming regional alliances to support local initiatives could be solutions to explore.

Equally crucial is considering funding core costs to make inclusive implementation possible, including provisions for security measures, technological and psychological support to peacebuilders.

Adopting a multi-year strategy is also important for achieving systemic changes. Peacebuilding is a long and continuous process.

Reflecting about a non-competitive relationship between organizations and UN, it is important to reconsider and review intellectual property clauses, moving towards shared property or open source in order to promote effective collaboration.

Finally, we would like to suggest that access to the Peacebuilding Fund should be connected to the creation of a local committee responsible for setting priorities, monitoring, and ensuring social control, with equal representation from the government, civil society and UN agency.

I would like to conclude by thanking for this opportunity to be a part of this movement.

Also it's important to highlight the work and inputs of my fellow Latin American and Caribbean civil society organizations present. I am sure they have a lot more to say. So we look forward for new spaces of dialogue and action like this.

There is a lot to do. A lot to learn. And we must do it together.

Thank you.