



Preventing and Ending Conflicts

Analytical Paper on WHS Self-Reporting on Agenda for Humanity Core Responsibility One and Transformation 5C

This paper was prepared by:¹



Executive Summary:

Core Responsibility One of the Agenda for Humanity on Preventing and Ending Conflicts parallels the ongoing efforts at the United Nations to prioritize prevention in the UN's work, particularly through the concept of sustaining peace.

In stakeholder reporting on implementation of WHS commitments, Member States stressed their efforts to bring about a more coherent and coordinated approach within their national governments, including by integrating conflict prevention.

They also reported on initiatives that they had undertaken at the global level, particularly within the UN fora in preventing and ending conflict. Non-government stakeholders and civil society actors also emphasized the need for inclusiveness and community engagement in peacebuilding. In particular, their reports highlighted the role that stakeholders can play as active advocates for the conflict prevention agenda, particularly in creating a supportive environment for domestic efforts, as well as in galvanizing action by international actors.

Challenges identified by the self-reports include the perennial concern over funding and ensuring adequate resources, the need for robust and timely data to inform analysis and recommendations, as well as the importance of translating soaring political rhetoric into action. A number of Member States reported the lack of sustainable financing for preventive action. Some Member States noted that funding for peacebuilding constitute a small percentage of total Official Development Assistance with political incentives to prevent violent conflict remaining low.

¹ This paper was drafted jointly by Yu Ping Chan, UNDP and Ayham Ahsan Al Maleh, Peacebuilding Support Office, using stakeholder reports on progress towards achieving WHS commitments available on the Platform for Action, Commitments and Transformations (PACT). The views expressed in this paper are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the United Nations Secretariat.

Overview of the current landscape

Core Responsibility One and the commitment it represents – to prevent and end conflict – is a cornerstone of international cooperation, particularly at the United Nations. UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has described prevention as a “golden thread” that runs through all the work of the United Nations. His focus is on avoiding large-scale human suffering, whether manmade or natural. This resonates deeply with the four Transformations that Core Responsibility One contains – on political leadership, acting early, staying and investing and being inclusive in decision-making. Member States and other stakeholders have also taken to heart the Secretary-General’s emphasis on the importance of prevention, embedded within the broader vision of “sustaining peace”, by “preventing the outbreak, escalation, continuation and recurrence of conflict”. This broad vision of prevention underlines both the importance of early engagement and continued attention to prevention across a conflict cycle. Moreover, the ongoing work being done by the United Nations Secretariat to reform and strengthen itself is seen by many as a critical step in improving the UN’s ability to better deliver on its mandates.

Reporting submitted this year on Core Responsibility One thus echoes the core principles embodied in the twin resolutions on the review of the peacebuilding architecture, adopted in April 2016, which embrace the concept of sustaining peace, and subsequently reinforced at the General Assembly’s High-level Meeting on peacebuilding and sustaining peace in April 2018. The resolutions stressed that while governments have primary responsibility for peacebuilding and sustaining peace, we can all do more to build peaceful and resilient societies.

Data Source

This paper is based on information submitted by stakeholders in their self-reports through the Platform for Action Commitments and Transformation (PACT) under Core Responsibility 1: “Prevent and End Conflicts.” 62 stakeholders reported on their commitments under one or more Transformations under Core Responsibility One, almost 50% (28) were Member States and 25% (16) were International Non-Profit Organizations. Twenty stakeholders reported on their commitments under Transformation 5C “Invest in Stability”, with 90% (18) being from Member States².

The number of stakeholders submitting reports on Core Responsibility One was slightly higher than last year where 58 stakeholders submitted reports. Moreover, similar to last year, Transformation 1: Demonstrate Timely, Coherent and Decisive Leadership drew the lowest number of self-reports (5) by far. International NGOs tended to focus their reporting on Transformations 1B: Act Early, and 1C: Remain Engaged and Invest in stability.

Positive trends emerging from self-reporting

Conflict Prevention as a Priority in Programming

There continues to be clear recognition of the *importance of prioritizing conflict prevention*, both as a normative concept, as well as in ensuring its incorporation in programming. Many stakeholders, both Member States and civil society organizations, emphasized the need to integrate conflict prevention into broader policies and approaches. For instance, the European Union highlighted the recent European Council’s Conclusions on the Strategic Approach to Resilience in the EU’s external actions, so as to ensure a “more structural, long-term, non-linear

² This data was extracted from the online data base as of 15 May 2018.

approach to vulnerabilities, with an emphasis on anticipation, prevention and preparedness”. New private-public partnership in this area were also reported, including one between FAO and Interpeace/International Peacebuilding Advisory Team (IPAT) to develop conflict sensitive programming tools that were now being piloted in FAO country offices.

Similarly, numerous stakeholders also stressed their recognition of the *interlinkage between humanitarian efforts as well as broader issues of conflict prevention and sustainable development*. The NGO Cordaid noted that one of the major themes for its strategic planning for 2018-2021 was the issue of “linking relief, rehabilitation and development”. Moreover, stakeholders adopted an integrated approach to conflict prevention, focusing on concrete efforts to address root causes of conflict. Mercy Corps reported on its development and use of an analytical tool with field teams to better identify root causes of conflict and thus support the development of programmes on the ground.

Enhanced Coordination and Coherence

The positive trend of Stakeholders *strengthening internal efforts to bring about greater coordination and coherence* also continued. This was seen as particularly pertinent, in terms of institutionalizing effective early warning and awareness of potential conflicts. Member States, e.g. Canada and Sweden, reported on strengthened “whole-of-government” approaches while at the regional level, the Council of the European Union adopted conclusions on an “integrated approach” to external conflicts and crises. The EU also reported on its Conflict Early Warning System and its creation of an EU Early Warning/Early Action Forum. France and Germany also highlighted their continuing work on developing early warning systems. UN entities and civil society organizations also mentioned their efforts to integrate monitoring and early warning into their work. FAO reported on their work to monitor food security in countries with conflict settings as well as on the Global Network Against Food Crisis, a global tracking system of FAO, WFP, EU and UNICEF reported its successful piloting of a multi-hazard approach – “Guidance on Risk-Informed Programming (GRIP)” in 4 country offices – Bosnia and Herzegovina, India, Malawi and Vietnam – as part of its commitment to “Act early”. Finally, INTERSOS reported on its consolidation of an Emergency Unit to improve capacity to analyze and monitor worldwide humanitarian crises, with the coming goal to put in place ad hoc emergency response structures.

Inclusiveness and Community-building in preventing conflict

Stakeholders also reported on strengthened efforts to engage *local communities and build grassroots capacities* to address the root causes of conflict. These “bottom-up” initiatives were described as conflict-sensitive and as investments in social stabilization and resilience. For instance, Japan’s efforts to train experts through its Global Peacebuilders Programme, as well as WFP’s use of food assistance to contribute towards peace in various settings, including in Afghanistan, Colombia, Kyrgyzstan and South Sudan. NGO stakeholders also stressed the importance of programmes and action plans tailored at the community level e.g. Healthworks’ programmes targeting hundreds of thousands of families in certain parts of Burundi and Colombia and Good Neighbors International’s (GNI) efforts to encourage inclusive participation through community-development committees.

Finally, there continued to be a positive trend of *ensuring “inclusiveness” in conflict-prevention efforts*, particularly in terms of prioritizing engagement and inclusion of those who might be frequently marginalized and excluded from decision-making processes. For instance, the important role played by women was repeatedly emphasized by stakeholders. Countries, such as Canada, Chile, Germany and New Zealand, reported on progress in their National Action Plans

on Women, Peace and Security (WPS), in line with Security Council Resolutions on the issue. Moreover, Norway emphasized its support for the Nordic Women's Mediation Network. Civil society organizations also reiterated the role of women, with Oxfam reporting on its creation of a baseline for work with women's rights organizations.

New, innovative or unique programmes or practices from the self-reports

- Several Member States reported on their work to explore the relationship between conflict prevention and specific thematic issues at the United Nations, highlighting the multi-faceted aspects of “conflict” in today's globalized world. Cyprus, for instance, noted its global efforts to protect cultural heritage, and address the trafficking and destruction of cultural property, as it relates to terrorism and organized crime while the Sovereign Order of Malta highlighted its initiatives in the area of human trafficking.
- UNRWA created an Agency-wide Student Parliament representing more than 526,000 students in UNRWA schools, as part of its Human Rights, Conflict Resolution and Tolerance Programme. This initiative, which they aim to further strengthen in the coming years is a unique model of youth engagement and education.
- Romania has created an expert position on gender equality in its civil service, setting the goal that by 2020, 70% of its national and local public institutions will have experts and technicians on gender equality.

Obstacles/impediments to collective progress

Ensuring Sustainable and Predictable Financing

Financing for conflict prevention and related initiatives remains a key challenge. While countries, such as Estonia, Japan and Portugal stressed their prioritization of fragile or conflict-affected countries in deciding their Official Development Assistance (ODA) allocation, prevention overall remains chronically underfunded, despite its importance. In their reporting under Transformation 5C: Invest in Stability, Member States and NGOs noted the fundamental importance of taking a more holistic and long-term view of financial assistance, particularly in terms of funding projects with longer-term impact and transformative potential. Some Member States noted that investing in stability unilaterally and in the absence of ubiquitous donor consensus was challenging. At the same time, stakeholders noted that the multilateral instruments for addressing prevention and sustaining peace remain underfunded with limited annualized resource flows, noting in particular, the funding challenges experienced by the Secretary-General's Peacebuilding Fund, UNDP and the Department for Political Affairs. This funding shortfall hinders investment in both short-term efforts on crisis response and in longer-term prevention work. Following the recommendation of the joint UN-World Bank *Pathways for Peace* study, the respondents noted the importance of addressing root causes, immediate causes and drivers of violent conflict.

Overall, respondents point to a fundamental lack of incentives for preventive action. Although financial instruments, compacts, and other innovative tools seek to address these issues bilaterally, the most substantial multilateral instruments that overcome these challenges remain underfunded. For instance, the financial forecasting for the Peacebuilding Fund, based on country-driven needs across several windows — including support for transitions, private sector engagement, cross-border and regional initiatives, and a gender and youth initiative — places the estimated total requirements for the Fund at US\$ 500 million annually. Consequently, the

Secretary-General's called for a "quantum leap" in unearmarked long-term contributions to the Fund.

Need for Concrete Action, not just Rhetoric

Separately, while numerous stakeholders, particularly Member States, reported on their political and diplomatic efforts at the UN to highlight conflict prevention, their self-reports point to the underlying challenge - the extent to which these efforts then translated into concrete actions. For instance, while current and previous Members of the UN Security Council reported on their efforts to use the Council as a platform to address conflict; the Council is currently divided. The difficulties experienced within the Council on issues such as Myanmar and Syria undermines its ability to play an effective role in addressing, let alone preventing, conflict and instability.

Robust Data to ensure sound policy recommendations

Stakeholders also highlighted the importance of ensuring quality and reliable data, on which sound political analysis and recommendations could be made. This is exacerbated by the challenges posed by field conditions, particularly issues of insecurity and access. Several stakeholders noted their own efforts to address this. World Vision, for example, noted its effort to better use its Conflict Sensitivity Community (CSC-Hub) as a data sharing platform to enhance conflict and context analysis tools, particularly in turbulent contexts.

Recommendations

Ensure continued, sustainable, multi-year funding. Following the recommendations of the Secretary-General in his report on peacebuilding and sustaining peace (A/72/707–S/2018/43), – in line with the analysis laid out by the UN and World Bank in *Pathways for Peace* – there is need for scaled-up support to multilateral instruments that focus on prevention and sustaining peace. Noting that the incentives for prevention remain weak, such instruments should foster the incentives for early preventive action. The Secretary-General has presented options for Member States' consideration to increase the allocations to peacebuilding through voluntary resources; assessed contributions; and innovative financing, including for the Peacebuilding Fund.

Implementing a people-centered approach to prevention. In many countries, prevention requires new coalitions that more accurately reflect the importance of young people, women and representatives from the private sector, civil society and community-based organizations. Preventive action should also focus beyond elites by understanding people and their communities. People's engagement, e.g. in development planning, social services monitoring, community-development programmes and local conflict resolution, should be standard practice, particularly regarding the inclusion of women and young people. Non-state actors should have opportunities to engage in platforms for peacebuilding and strengthen incentives for civic engagement.

Continue to promote integrated and "nexus"-type programmatic collaborations: Recognition of the multi-faceted dimensions of any issue, be they in the humanitarian or conflict context, is critical in ensuring effective and sustainable solutions. Greater emphasis on the "nexus" issues – among humanitarian, development and peacebuilding activities, should be encouraged, particularly by bilateral actors and in the work of the United Nations, international financial institutions and other multilateral bodies.

Monitor and address multidimensional risks by aligning political, security, development and humanitarian efforts: Preventive action should take place earlier, and based on identified key risks across the gamut of UN operations – development, humanitarian, human rights and peace and security activities – to ensure action is coherent and based on joined up analysis and planning. Conflict risks and responses should be identified and prioritized under a single framework aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals and bridging development, humanitarian and other planning processes. Humanitarian and political and security actors – tending to have a short-term focus – should be aligned with long-term development strategies defining policy, institutional and investment benchmarks for creating sustainable institutions, strengthened capacities, committed citizenship and reduced risks and vulnerabilities.

Sustaining prevention across levels of risks: Actions should move beyond crisis management and address situations at various levels of risk. To maintain relevance, prevention must stretch beyond time horizons of humanitarian needs, political attention and investment cycles. Effective prevention requires fiscal space, particularly to mitigate the impacts of shocks, which should be included in development planning and budgeting exercises. National capacities should be enhanced to finance preventive measures to ensure they are sustainable, nationally led and owned.

***The Peace Promise**³ is a set of commitments to more effective synergies among peace, humanitarian and development actions in complex humanitarian situations. The international community has in recent years been in a state of crisis management, reacting to events rather than proactively addressing root causes and supporting the long-term capacities and institutions that are required for sustainable peace and development. Several recent reports, agreements and resolutions¹ have emphasized the need to focus on preventing crises and addressing the drivers of conflict and subsequent human suffering. Prevention and peacebuilding is generally underfunded, initiated too late, not prioritized, or insufficiently sustained. The international community has a responsibility to address the root causes of violent conflict and implement measures aimed at peacebuilding and strengthening resilience, which can also support a shift from providing humanitarian assistance to those in need to reduce those needs sustainably.*

The five commitments in The Peace Promise are:

- 1. Focus on the alignment and coherence of collective short-, medium- and long-term objectives simultaneously;*
- 2. Conduct context, risk or conflict analysis regularly;*
- 3. Develop capacities, tools and partnerships, ensure institutional learning and innovation and share information;*
- 4. Do no harm and ensure conflict-sensitive programming; and*
- 5. Provide adequate, sustained and risk-tolerant financing.*

A number of stakeholders in their reporting on WHS commitments reported on their implementation of the commitments made in the peace promise. In addition, the UN and World Bank have launched jointly the humanitarian, development peace initiative in seven pilot countries – addressing core elements of commitments of the Peace Promise. The implementation of the UN-World Bank Pathways for Peace study is another vehicle that coalesces collaboration around the commitments of the Peace Promise – participation in the study was noted by some WHS stakeholders as their contribution to the realization the Peace Promise commitments. A range of NGOs also noted their ongoing policy frameworks for bridging the humanitarian planning with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Other actors highlight their work at the intersection of peace and reconciliation and dialogue as their primary contribution to realizing the Peace Promise.

³ This box is based on stakeholder reporting as well as inputs from the UN Peacebuilding Support Office

About this paper

All stakeholders who made commitments at the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) in support of advancing the Agenda for Humanity were invited to self-report on their progress in 2017 through the Platform for Action, Commitments and Transformation (PACT) (agendaforhumanity.org). The information provided through the self-reporting is publicly available and forms the basis, along with other relevant analysis, of the annual synthesis report. The annual synthesis report will be prepared by OCHA and will highlight trends in progress, achievements and gaps that need more attention as stakeholders collectively work toward advancing the 24 transformations in the Agenda for Humanity. In keeping with the multi-stakeholder spirit of the WHS, OCHA invited partners to prepare short analytical papers that analyze and assess self-reporting in the PACT, or provide an update on progress on initiatives launched at the World Humanitarian Summit. The views expressed in this paper are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the United Nations Secretariat.