CORE RESPONSIBILITY ONE

PREVENT AND END CONFLICTS

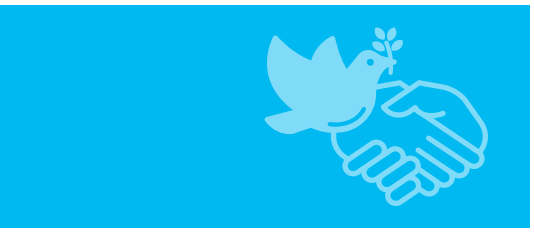

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Photo on previous page:

Iraqi IDPs displaced by fighting in the village of Shora, 25km south of Mosul, reach an Iraqi army checkpoint on the northern outskirts of Qayyarah.

UNHCR/Ivor Prickett

The global community has repeatedly reaffirmed its commitment to preventing violent conflict and curbing human suffering, through the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development, the twin United Nations Security Council and General Assembly resolutions on Sustaining Peace, and other agreements. At the World Humanitarian Summit in May 2016, leaders from Member States, civil society and humanitarian organizations rallied around the Agenda for Humanity's call for sustained leadership to prevent and end conflicts and invest in peaceful and inclusive societies. This call stems from the Charter of the United Nations (UN), and UN Secretary-General Guterres has made preventing crises a top priority that is fundamental to reform of the UN system.

The four transformations of Core Responsibility One of the Agenda for Humanity are farsighted and in lockstep with broader conflict prevention efforts, aiming to ensure that:

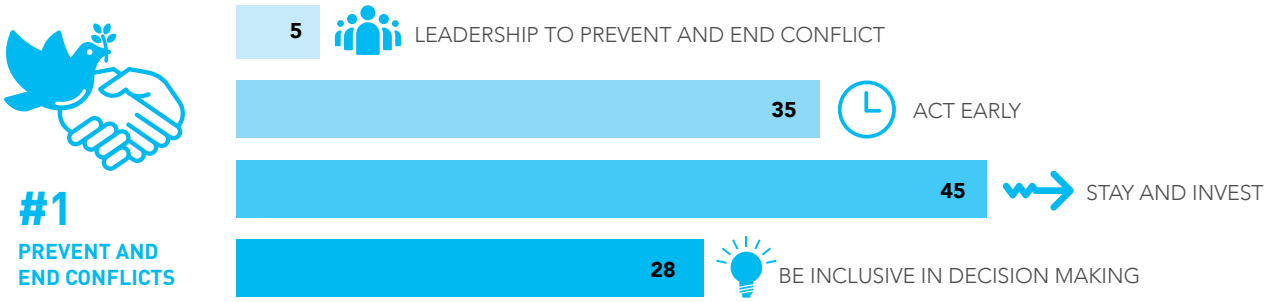
1A. Human suffering is reduced because world leaders act quickly and decisively on behalf of humanity to prevent and end violent conflict.

1B. Looming crises are detected and averted because governments and their partners act upon improved early warning and risk analysis.

1C. Resilience is strengthened because the international community sustains engagement before, during and after a crisis and is able to strengthen institutions and capacities while working on more than one crisis at a time.

1D. Political solutions are sustainable, because all of civil society, in particular women, young people, faith-based groups, and the private sector, participate in developing them.

STAKEHOLDERS REPORTS BY TRANSFORMATION



Despite overwhelming recognition at the Summit that humanitarian needs could only be reduced through more political leadership to prevent and end conflict, Core Responsibility One received the lowest number of commitments at the Summit and therefore also received the lowest number of self-reports of the five core responsibilities. Reporting reflected new efforts to work across pillars or through whole-of-government approaches to address the root causes of violent conflict, and to increase national and international capacities for conflict prevention and resolution. However, political engagement, organizational capacity, and financial investment remains overwhelmingly geared to crisis response.

As the UN Secretary-General reiterated in his January 2017 address to the UN Security Council, only through all stakeholders making prevention not merely a priority, but the priority, and living up to their responsibilities, will lives be saved, suffering reduced and millions of people in conflict and fragile situations begin to have hope.[8]

Progress so far

Fifty-eight stakeholders reported on activities to improve early warning and conflict analysis, and to promote more holistic and inclusive approaches to sustaining peace and stability. Self-reports illustrate a trend of Member States improving their capacity to work across pillars or through whole-of-government approaches to address the root causes of violent conflict. Many noted efforts to build or strengthen early warning systems, conduct joint conflict analysis, and increase conflict prevention and resolution capacities, especially those of the UN. Many stakeholders cited long-term partnerships with national peacebuilding groups, including disempowered groups such as women and youth. While fewer than 40 per cent of the 56 non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and faith-based organizations (FBOs) that reported addressed Core Responsibility One, those who did highlighted their advocacy to raise the profile of conflict prevention domestically and internationally. Reports also mentioned developing or supporting specialized financing instruments for high-risk, fluid contexts, which are discussed in greater detail in Transformation 5C (Invest in Stability).

Stakeholders most commonly reported progress in:

Addressing root causes and improving coherence: Member States, including Sweden, Germany, Ireland, and the European Union, reported on work under the New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States to make development cooperation more "preventive" by addressing root causes of conflict and fragility. Member States also reported efforts to improve coherence across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus, with Ireland, for example, taking a coherent, whole-of-government approach to conflict and fragility in the occupied Palestinian territory, Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Uganda. While outside

[8] UN Secretary-General António Guterres, *Remarks to the Security Council Open Debate on "Maintenance of International Peace and Security: Conflict Prevention and Sustaining Peace"*, 10 January 2017.

the reporting period, the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Initiative of the World Bank and the UN, launched in March 2017, encourages these pillars to work together in distinct but complementary ways to deliver comprehensive, integrated responses to at-risk countries in protracted and post-crisis situations.

Bolstering conflict prevention and crisis resolution capacities: A number of Member States reported efforts to reinforce UN and other international or national capacities for conflict prevention and resolution. Spain designated an Ambassador-at-Large for Preventive Diplomacy and hosted the first Conference on Preventive Diplomacy in the Mediterranean. The European Union strengthened the prevention role of its Special Representatives and Envoys, and now holds annual meetings with the UN on conflict prevention, while the Ministry of Temporarily Occupied Territories and Internally Displaced People of Ukraine (MTOT) held staff trainings on conflict prevention and resolution. The United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office provides conflict analysis training and support to UN Country Teams. NGOs reported advocacy efforts, such as Humanitarian Aid International's new NGO coalition in South Asia to advocate for solutions to conflicts.

Early warning systems and conflict analysis capacities: Several stakeholders report building or strengthening early warning systems and improving conflict analysis, as called for in Transformation 1B. The European Union reported increasing the capacities of its staff worldwide, as well as improving its Conflict Early Warning System and supporting the early warning capacities of regional organizations. Germany used its Early Warning and Scenario Planning Unit to produce forward-leaning analyses for its Federal Office, and held regular high-level inter-ministerial exchanges on early warning signs. World Vision International carried out five inter-agency conflict analysis exercises with local and international NGO partners, sharing its analysis and tools. UN Habitat supports mayors of cities in countries affected by conflict or hosting refugees to enhance their abilities in conflict prevention.

Use of the UN Security Council: A handful of Member States reported on efforts to improve the UN Security Council's engagement on crisis prevention, as called for in the Agenda for Humanity. One recent non-permanent member, New Zealand, led an initiative with the UN Secretariat and five other UN Security Council members to establish a monthly situational awareness briefing on emerging crises, beginning in September 2016. New Zealand also advocated for the UN Security Council to continue to visit situations on its agenda, leading to five missions in 2016. New Zealand, Luxembourg and Spain also supported the UN Charter's Article 99, by which the UN Secretary-General may bring to the attention of the Security Council any matter which in his opinion may threaten the maintenance of international peace and security.

Solutions with and for people: Under Transformation 1D, stakeholders reported on efforts to empower and include women and youth in conflict resolution efforts, promote inter-faith dialogues, and reach out to national civil society as part of their promotion of inclusive decision-making. Spain held a Summit of Religious Leaders for Peace in the Middle East with 24 Jewish, Muslim and Christian leaders. World Vision International reported its plan to partner with other faith-based and secular NGOs in 2017 to convene a forum to document local interventions by faith actors to respond to, or prevent conflict-driven crises and to support inter-faith partnerships. The NGO Peace Direct reported on partnerships with 11 local peacebuilding organizations around the world to build their capacity to assess and address drivers of conflict in their communities. The International Labour Organization (ILO), through its Jobs for Peace and Resilience programme, focuses on generating employment for vulnerable women and men in fragile contexts, with a focus on youth.

Women, peace and security: Many stakeholders reported on implementation of the UN Security Council resolutions on Women, Peace and Security (WPS), or helping others to do the same. Many of these, including Ireland, Sweden, Finland, Canada, Japan and Germany, updated on plans to adopt and implement National Action Plans. Ireland, for instance, reported financing initiatives promoting women's participation and empowerment, and hosting the first meeting of gender advisors of regional peacekeeping organizations to share best practices on implementing the WPS agenda.

A young Syrian refugee in Bekaa, Lebanon, looks on while his mother is interviewed. He lost his father during the war. His mother had to find a job on her own in order to feed her children and help them survive.

OCHA/ Hadi Bou Ayash

Achieving the transformation

The self-reports submitted under Core Responsibility One reflect the efforts by a core group of committed stakeholders to advance the conflict prevention agenda. Many of these initiatives preceded the World Humanitarian Summit, but serve as a useful starting point for understanding current efforts. At the same time, the limited number of reports under this Core Responsibility is disheartening. The limited number of commitments and self-reports may reflect a feeling of disempowerment by stakeholders who feel unable to prevent and resolve the major crises of the day. In other cases, a reluctance to engage in this area may be evidence of Member States' sensitivity to conflict prevention efforts that "internationalize" an internal problem. It could also reflect that conflict prevention and resolution efforts are often conducted through 'quiet diplomacy' and may not be publicly reported. The self-reporting also reflects a broader trend, in which conflict prevention tools, programmes and initiatives are disproportionately funded by a small group of "traditional" donors. Stakeholders also noted challenges such as a "lack of vision by some decision-makers who prefer not to invest today in prevention and spend later only once the conflict has broken out," internal or bureaucratic obstacles that make joint conflict analysis difficult, and the lack of cross-cutting conflict experts in field offices.

Without a significant "surge in diplomacy for peace" as called for by the UN Secretary-General,[9] matched with adequate and sustained resources, the enormous human and economic cost of conflicts will go unabated. The UN Charter placed the primary responsibility for conflict prevention with each and every Member State. Experience shows that successful conflict prevention efforts are nationally driven and owned, with regional organizations and international actors playing a supporting role. To ensure that prevention is not a priority, but the priority, all stakeholders must step up and play their role in preventing and ending conflict:

[9] UN Secretary-General, António Guterres, *Remarks to the Security Council Open Debate on "Maintenance of International Peace and Security: Conflict Prevention and Sustaining Peace"*, 10 January 2017

- **Support the UN Secretary-General's reforms:** All stakeholders should lend political and financial support to the UN Secretary General's initiative to reposition the UN development system and to reform the management and the peace and security pillar.
- **Demonstrate political leadership:** World leaders must be more determined and bold in their support for prevention efforts. Member States, the UN, regional and sub-regional organizations, and all others with a stake must be willing to have difficult conversations, especially with close allies, when early warning signals are present, while ensuring that institutions protect and reward officials who do address highly sensitive topics such as good governance, human rights and the rule of law.
- **Act early:** The development of early warning systems and conflict analysis tools are important, but are of limited value without action. National and regional leaders must accept information and analysis, seek assistance when needed, and act before situations deteriorate and may be referred to the UN Security Council, heightening their profile and narrowing options. When situations are referred to the Council, more unified action is needed. The Council should continue and build on the monthly situational awareness briefings, while urging restraint and opening up space for dialogue before positions harden. The UN Peacebuilding Commission can also take a more active role in early prevention.

Darfur, Sudan: A woman returns home after seven years in a camp for internally displaced persons.

UNAMID/Albert Gonzalez Farran

> "We spend far more time and resources responding to crises rather than preventing them. People are paying too high a price."
>
> - UN Secretary-General António Guterres, Remarks to the Security Council Open Debate, 10 January 2017.

- **Stay engaged:** Sustaining peace cannot be a time-bound intervention defined by funding cycles or the mandates of peace operations. Member States, national and local actors, regional organizations and the UN must be sustainably capacitated and resourced to work as robustly before and after a conflict as they are while it unfolds, and to handle more than one crisis at a time.
- **Continue to engage people and civil society:** National ownership that is inclusive of all key stakeholders is a cornerstone of successful efforts to build sustainable peace. Stakeholders should actively and consistently engage with women, youth and civil society organizations in efforts to prevent conflict and sustain peace, including through capacity-building, information sharing, and partnerships on conflict analysis and early warning. Faith-based leaders should continue to use their influence with constituencies and government leaders to promote stability, reconciliation and social cohesion.
- **Back-up political will with financial investment:** Resources for crisis response overwhelmingly outpace those for prevention. As elaborated under Transformation 5C (Invest in Stability), Member States and financial institutions must significantly increase internal capacity and external resources for conflict prevention and sustaining peace.