



Organization of  
American States



Community  
of Democracies

## CONCEPT NOTE

### INTER-REGIONAL EXPERTS MEETING ON DEMOCRACY AND PEACEBUILDING IN THE FRAMEWORK OF SDG 16+: AN INTERREGIONAL AND MUTISTAKEHOLDER DISCUSSION

HOTEL SOFITEL BOGOTA VICTORIA REGIA  
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#### BACKGROUND

There is a global need for greater coordination among governments, global and regional organizations, civil society, experts and practitioners on matters of international peace and security, and for concrete interventions at global, regional and national/local levels to advance peace building, development, security, conflict resolution, conflict prevention, good governance and strengthening democracy.

The latest report by the United Nations and the World Bank, *“The Pathways for Peace: Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict”*<sup>1</sup> highlights that the resurgence of violent conflict in recent years has caused immense human suffering, at enormous social and economic cost. Violent conflicts today have become complex and protracted, involving more non-state groups and regional and international actors, often linked to global challenges from climate change to transnational organized crime. It is increasingly recognized as an obstacle to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030, particularly SDG 16+, which is considered the enabler of the SDG framework, and instrumental in consolidating peace, justice and strong institutions.

The regional organizations, including the Organization of American States, the African Union, the European Union and Council of Europe, the ASEAN, SAARC and the Pacific Island Forum, as well as the League of Arab States, are already advancing a substantive amount of work in defining legal and policy frameworks that will contribute to achieve the overall scope of SDG 16+, but there is much more to do at this point of the race.

The Latin American peace and conflict landscape looks dramatically different from other regions. Although the risk of open conflict in Latin America is far from non-existent, the region has proven highly successful in the prevention and peaceful resolution of wars. The last open conflict, according to the definition provided by the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP), ended when the Colombian government signed peace agreements with the FARC guerrilla, in December 2016. Latin America’s multi-layered architecture for resolution of disputes and promotion of democracy includes a wide gamut of bilateral arrangements, as well as a variety of regional organizations that range from the Organization of American States (OAE) to Mercosur and the Union of South American States (UNASUR), alongside more ad hoc arrangements for conflict resolution, such as the use of guarantor states in peace processes.

The European context has been marked by sustained peace, the consolidation of democratic institutions and the sharing of best practices at the global level, mostly supported by the supranational structure provided by the European Union, which has also provided significant support worldwide for the advancement of peace and justice. In terms of challenges the expansion of the Union has proven to be a challenge as it requires raising the new members to higher standards, but this is projected to be a positive step in the long term from the scope of achieving sustainability in the Wider Europe region.

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<sup>1</sup> Pathways for Peace : Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict. 2018 International Bank for Reconstruction and Development / The World Bank. Washington, DC. 2018

Peace, security, stability and good governance are pre-requisites for development and social cohesion. Resolving Africa's many conflicts has been a top priority for the African Commission and its partners over the last decade. The pay-off from these efforts is that Africa has witnessed a dramatic decline in the number of conflicts. The AUC has also been actively involved in post conflict reconstruction and development—but ratings on the fragility of respective African countries show that although conflicts have subsided, fragility remains high in many post-conflict countries. As recent events show, it is still far too easy and frequent for violence and conflict to return, and there are still many long-drawn and protracted conflicts that have for years defied political solutions.

According to the report "Preserving the Long Peace in Asia<sup>2</sup>", this region is at an inflection point in which, on one hand, increasing GDP levels, widespread poverty reduction, and growing trade integration have created optimism for the region's future and given states every incentive to avoid conflict. On the other hand, the Asia-Pacific region's security environment has become increasingly complex, amplifying the risk that nations may stumble into conflict. Amid these changes, it cannot be taken for granted that Asia's 'long peace' will continue indefinitely. Now more than ever, we must examine mechanisms that can help prevent future crises from emerging and prepare against threats to strategic stability.

The MENA region has experienced continuing violence and instability since the outbreak of the various uprisings in the Arab world in late 2010. The uprisings sparked in Tunisia spread out in Egypt, Algeria and Morocco. The conflict in Syria which began in 2011 is ongoing; it was followed by the outbreak of conflict in Libya, Yemen and Iraq, where violence also continues today. According to the UNHCR, in 2015 the number of refugees resulting from the Syrian crisis was the biggest worldwide, with around 7.6 million Syrians displaced internally and another 3.8 million Syrians seeking refuge in other countries. MENA is also a passage region for people seeking refuge in Europe by sea, resulting in an increase in smuggling and trafficking under extremely harsh travel conditions. As poverty, inequality and the struggle for control of power and resources in the region – and globally – grows, there has been a dramatic rise of extremist and fundamentalist groups whose modus operandi is to spread instability, fear and violence, weakening safeguards for citizens, reducing the capacity to consolidate peace and justice, and maintain a strong and inclusive society.

In conflict situations from Colombia to Libya and Sri Lanka, women play critical roles during and after conflict, as security agents, victims of security operations, citizens with a stake in the results of these operations, human rights defenders and peacebuilders. Viewing women's strengths solely through their traditional roles as wives and mothers is to significantly undervalue their potential contribution. According to UN Women, when women participate in a peace process, the likelihood of peace lasting more than two years, increases by 20%. One of the most recent report of the UN Secretary-General on Women and Peace and Security (2017), highlights that gender equality and women's empowerment are prerequisites for preventing conflict, a powerful tool for sustaining peace and essential to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly Goals 5 and 16. The importance of the role of women in these contexts was also recognized by passing UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (2000), and in the implementation of National Action Plans in this framework. While significant policy attention has been paid to women in the context of the global peace and security agenda, women's meaningful participation still needs to be strengthened.

In a world of great contrasts in the race towards achieving sustainable development through the consolidation of peace, justice and strong institutions; with many challenges and with globalization

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<sup>2</sup> Preserving the Long Peace in Asia: The Institutional Building Blocks of Long-Term Regional Security. Independent Commission on Regional Security Architecture. Asia Society Policy Institute. New York, 2017

enabling spillover effects from crises taking place in one region into another, it is timely that global and regional organizations share their experiences and identify synergies and cooperation platforms that enable a concerted road map to achieve common goals, in consultation with key stakeholders.

#### **PURPOSE OF THE INTER-REGIONAL EXPERTS MEETING**

The purpose of the Experts Meeting is to bring together representatives from global and regional organizations, governments, civil society, experts and practitioners working on the advancement of democracy and development, specifically towards the achievement of SDG 16+, to discuss and take stock of their work, as well as to continue to develop policy recommendations on the way forward.

The Experts Meeting will have an international approach to discussing SDG 16+ with a specific focus on democratic sustainability and peacebuilding, touching on key issues such as women in peacebuilding, the role of global and regional organizations in advancing the sustainable development in transitioning countries and tracking progress through high quality disaggregated data.

International IDEA, the Community of Democracies, the Organization of American States, and partner organizations agree that holding such a meeting in Colombia, in the margins of the 49<sup>th</sup> General Assembly of the Organization of American States (OAS), will enrich the discussion considering the progress made by the host country in its work towards peacebuilding and development. The event will allow for governments, global and regional organizations and civil society to have an open discussion to develop policy recommendations aimed at strengthening the implementation of SDG16+ with a specific focus on peace.

#### **OBJECTIVES AND EXPECTED OUTCOMES**

The Inter-Regional Experts Meeting on “Democracy and Peacebuilding in the Framework of SDG 16+” is an initiative of the Inter-Regional Dialogue for Democracy (IRDD) at **International IDEA**, in collaboration with the **Permanent Secretariat of the Community of Democracies**, the **General Secretariat of the Organization of American States** and the **Mission to Support the Peace Process in Colombia of the Organization of American States (MAPP/OAS)**, and will seek to:

- Provide a platform to discuss good practices and lessons learned, as well as challenges faced by governments, international and regional organizations for the achievement of Goal 16+, as well as on the role of civil society in guaranteeing sustainability.
- Formulate concrete policy recommendations based on national, regional and global experiences to achieve Goal 16, with a specific focus on democratic sustainability and peacebuilding, touching on key issues such as women in the prevention of conflict and peacebuilding, the role of global and regional organizations in advancing sustainable development in transitioning countries and tracking progress through high quality disaggregated data.
- Explore and discuss how global and regional organizations could further collaborate with the UN and civil society to strengthen democracy and peacebuilding efforts to achieving Goal 16+.

The expected outputs of the workshop/consultation are:

- The Inter-Regional Experts Meeting’s Outcome Synthesis Document.
- Presentation of the results of the policy recommendations at the 2019 UN High Level Political Forum on “Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality”.

- Contribution to the Inter-Regional Report on Regional Organizations and SDG 16+, developed by the IRDD and to be published in late 2019.

## METHODOLOGY

The Inter-Regional Experts Meeting will count with representatives of governments, global and regional organizations, civil society organizations, universities, as well as contributions as the role of the private sector. The meeting will take place in both Spanish and English (interpretation will be provided). Each session will have a series of presentations from diverse stakeholders, followed by interventions, in roundtable format, from participants attending the discussion.

The outcomes of the Inter-Regional Experts Meeting will be consolidated in an Outcome Synthesis Document that will become available in the following weeks after the event and will also be incorporated into a broader report. The report will be distributed to all participants and will also be uploaded to the main virtual platforms, including International IDEA's Website ([www.idea.int](http://www.idea.int)).

## DATES AND VENUE

The Inter-Regional Experts Meeting will be co-organized by International IDEA, the Permanent Secretariat of the Community of Democracies, and the Organization of American States. The event will take place at the **Hotel Sofitel Victoria Regia** in **Bogotá, Colombia**, on **Thursday, 20 June 2019**, in the margins of the 49<sup>th</sup> General Assembly of the Organization of American States (OAS).