



# Democracy and Peacebuilding in the Framework of SDG 16+

Policy Recommendations from an Interregional and  
Multistakeholder Approach

**International IDEA Discussion Paper 1/2020**



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Multistakeholder Approach

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# 1. Introduction

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The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted in 2015, consists of four sections: (1) a political declaration; (2) a set of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 targets; (3) means of implementation; and (4) a framework for following up and reviewing the agenda.

There is a global discussion around the linkages between democracy and sustainable development—the most evident of which is framed within the SDG 16 framework, which seeks to achieve peace, justice and inclusive institutions. The Foundation for Democracy and Sustainable Development (FDSD 2015) highlights four characteristics of democratic institutions and systems:

- *inclusiveness*: all members of a political community have the right to participate and should have their voices heard;
- *popular control*: decisions rest with the political community as a whole;
- *considered judgement*: individual and collective decisions should be based on people being adequately informed and understanding the positions of others; and
- *transparency*: decision-making should be open and accountable.

In its State of Democracy (SoD) Assessment Framework of 2008, the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA) defines democracy as a political system that is based on popular control and political equality (International IDEA 2008). Democracy and sustainable development are an instrumental combination for success.

The scale, ambition and approach of the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development, and its SDG framework, are unprecedented. The SDGs are global in nature and universally applicable; they consider national contexts, capacities, and levels of development and challenges. All countries have a shared responsibility to achieve the SDGs, and all have a role to play locally, nationally and globally. The agenda integrates the three dimensions of sustainable development (economic, social and environmental). It is designed to be implemented in an integrated way, recognizing that the different goals and targets are interlinked.

SDG 16 was developed from the need to ensure proper actions towards achieving peace, justice and strong institutions to support and guarantee the sustainability of

the entire development structure; the national contexts are the basis for its advancement.

SDG 16 is both an outcome and enabler of sustainable development. Its overarching objectives are to promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all, and to build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels. While the goal's targets touch on distinct issues, they are closely linked across the whole set of SDGs; there is an opportunity for increased recognition of its contribution to advancing other SDGs and the 2030 Agenda as a whole.

As with the rest of the agenda, while governments have a leading role to play, the achievement of SDG 16 requires a whole-of-society approach. Civil society organizations (CSOs) are involved in multiple ways, as implementers and advocates of underrepresented parts of the population such as women, youth, and marginalized groups and watchdogs. The private sector can also make an important contribution to peacebuilding, inclusion, advancing the rule of law and eliminating corruption, which are fundamental for creating an environment conducive to development where business can thrive. Local governments, parliamentarians, CSOs and academia are also critical stakeholders in the implementation of SDG 16 and the 2030 Agenda.

Global and regional organizations have an important role to play in achieving SDG 16. They can provide support, expertise and knowledge products, and bring together best practices and lessons learned to the operational levels, to better inform all stakeholders for a better, effective, collaborative and coordinated decision-making process.

This Discussion Paper was developed with input gathered from official key partner organizations that attended several gatherings to discuss the role of global and regional organizations in the advancement of SDG 16, held using the platform provided by the Inter-Regional Dialogue on Democracy (IRDD) at International IDEA.

It is based on discussions at the 8th High-Level Meeting of the IRDD (Washington, DC, September 2019), the International Conference on 'Achieving Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions: The Role of Global and Regional Intergovernmental Organizations and Civil Society Actors' (Washington, DC, September 2019), the Inter-Regional Experts Meeting on Democracy and Peacebuilding in the framework of SDG 16+ (Bogota, Colombia, June 2019), the IRDD Workshop (Geneva, March 2018) and the High-Level Meeting on SDG 16+ (New York City, September 2018), as well as the democracy forums organized by the Community of Democracies (CoD) in Busan (2018) and Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia (2019). These meetings involved global and international organizations, representatives from governments, civil society and academia, as well as experts and practitioners in the field.

The IRDD was created in 2010 to provide a platform for global and regional organizations to meet on a yearly basis, at the technical and political levels, to discuss and exchange best practices on priority areas related to democracy and good governance. Its key partners are the African Union (AU), the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the Council of Europe (CoE), the European Union (EU), the League of Arab States (LAS), the Organization of American States

(OAS) and the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF), as well as the United Nations (UN), the CoD, the International Development Law Organization (IDLO) and the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU).



## 2. Progress in achieving SDG 16+

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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 the global, regional and national/local levels to advance peacebuilding, development, security, conflict resolution, conflict prevention, good governance and strengthening democracy.

The resurgence of violent conflict in recent years has caused immense human suffering, at enormous social and economic cost (UN and World Bank 2018). Violent conflicts have become complex and protracted, involving more non-state groups and regional and international actors, often linked to global challenges ranging from climate change to transnational organized crime, which are increasingly recognized as obstacles to achieving the SDGs by 2030—particularly SDG 16+, which is considered the enabler of the SDG framework, and instrumental to consolidating peace, justice and strong institutions.

Regional organizations—including ASEAN, AU, CoE, EU, OAS and PIF, as well as LAS—have undertaken a substantial amount of work to define legal and policy frameworks that will help achieve SDG 16+, but there is still much more to do.

- The Latin American peace and conflict landscape looks very different from other regions. The region has proven highly successful at preventing and peacefully resolving wars. However, there are still ongoing security threats, for instance in Colombia, which has five latent armed conflicts (ICRC 2019) (four between the Colombian government and other armed groups, and one with the Ejército de Liberación Nacional - ELN). Latin America's multi-layered architecture for resolving disputes and promoting democracy includes a wide gamut of bilateral arrangements, as well as a variety of regional organizations that range from the OAS to Mercosur and the Union of South American States, alongside more ad hoc arrangements for conflict resolution, such as the use of guarantor states in peace processes.
- Europe has enjoyed sustained peace, the consolidation of democratic institutions and the sharing of best practices at the global level, mostly supported by the supranational EU structure, which has provided significant support worldwide for the advancement of peace and justice. The union's

expansion has proven to be a challenge, as it requires raising the new members to higher standards, but this is projected to help achieve long-term sustainability in the wider Europe region.

- Peace, security, stability and good governance are prerequisites 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. These efforts have helped decrease the number of conflicts. The African Union Commission (AUC) has also been actively involved in post-conflict reconstruction and development, but fragility remains high in many post-conflict countries. It is still far too easy and frequent for violence and conflict to return; many protracted conflicts have defied political solutions for years.
- In Asia, increasing GDP levels, widespread poverty reduction and growing trade integration have created optimism about the region's future and given states every incentive to avoid conflict (Asia Society Policy Institute 2017). However, the region's security environment has become increasingly complex, amplifying the risk that nations may stumble into conflict. Now more than ever, there is a need to examine mechanisms to prevent future crises from emerging and to combat against threats to strategic stability.
- The Middle East/North Africa (MENA) region has experienced continuing violence and instability since the Arab uprisings of 2010–2011. The uprisings sparked in Tunisia spread to Algeria, Egypt and Morocco. The Syrian civil war that began in 2011 is still ongoing, and had produced the most refugees of any conflict in the world as of 2015—around 7.6 million internally displaced persons and 3.8 million seeking refuge in other countries (UNHCR 2015). The Syrian war was followed by the outbreak of conflicts in Libya, Yemen and Iraq. The MENA region also serves as a corridor for people seeking refuge in Europe by sea, which has facilitated an increase in smuggling and trafficking under extremely harsh travel conditions. As poverty, inequality and the struggle to control the region's power and resources grows, there has been a significant rise of extremist and fundamentalist groups seeking to spread instability, fear and violence. Their influence has weakened safeguards for citizens, which has reduced the capacity to consolidate peace and justice, and to maintain strong and inclusive societies.

In conflicts 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 significantly undervalues their potential contribution. When women participate in a peace process, the likelihood of peace lasting more than two years increases by 20 percent (UN Women 2018).

Gender equality and women's empowerment are thus prerequisites for preventing conflict, and a powerful tool for sustaining peace. They are also essential to the achievement of the SDGs, particularly Goals 5 and 16 (UN Security Council 2017). UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (2000) and

the implementation of National Action Plans in this framework recognized women's importance in these contexts. While significant policy attention has been paid to women in the context of the global peace and security agenda, their meaningful participation still needs to be strengthened.

Countries have taken very different approaches to achieving sustainable development through the consolidation of peace, justice and strong institutions. Since globalization makes it more likely that the effects from one crisis will spill over into other regions, global and regional organizations must share their experiences and identify synergies and cooperation platforms that enable a concerted road map to achieve common goals, in consultation with key stakeholders.

### **3. Global and regional organizations: establishing legal and political frameworks towards peaceful, just and inclusive societies**

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SDG 16, which is dedicated to the promotion of peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, the provision of access to justice for all, and building effective, accountable institutions at all levels, is considered the enabler of the SDG framework as it seeks to address key structural issues preventing the world from reaching the optimum levels of stability and welfare for all.

Linkages among targets may also be addressed by integrating policies to achieve the overarching objectives of the 2030 Agenda, such as ‘leaving no one behind’; gender equality and women’s empowerment; the integration of policies across the social, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainable development; and ensuring the mutual reinforcement of efforts to build peace, uphold human rights and support sustainable development (UNDESA and IDLO 2019).

However, efficiency, effectiveness, and close collaboration and coordination are needed to achieve the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda and the SDGs framework. Governments, citizens, and global and regional organizations must therefore work together and learn from each other to create specific actions to support and advance the task of building a more sustainable, safer and equitable world.

More collaboration and understanding are needed to achieve SDG 16. Exchanges of best practices and successful experiences among governments, global and regional organizations, civil society and grassroots organizations, practitioners in the field and ordinary citizens should be strengthened through platforms and regular consultations to harmonize operational and concrete action plans at all levels.

It is also relevant to consider the political contexts that are affecting the implementation of these action plans, which reflect on democratic sustainability as an instrumental element of advancing the Sustainable Development Framework, and to expedite the achievement of SDG 16. Sustainable democracy and SDG 16 are intertwined as they seek to consolidate transparent, just, equitable and healthy societies for all.

The 2030 Agenda encourages member states to ‘conduct regular and inclusive reviews of progress at the national and sub-national levels, which are country-led and country-driven’. Global and regional organizations should closely review and support

follow states' national-level processes (e.g. as presented in the voluntary national reviews) to implement the SDGs.

This Discussion Paper briefly describes examples of the work that global and regional organizations are undertaking to foster the development of peaceful, just and inclusive societies. These multilateral efforts go beyond the adoption of the 2030 SDGs.

## **Global multilateral actions to achieve SDG 16+**

This section highlights the efforts that global organizations are undertaking to support the advancement of the 2030 Agenda, with a focus on SDG 16+. The regional organizations included in this section are key partners of, and are actively engaged with, the IRDD at International IDEA.

### **United Nations**

The UN has different outlets for advancing the 2030 Agenda and the SDG Framework. One of these outlets is the Department of Political Affairs, which has a clear mandate to engage with key stakeholders to create a more peaceful and inclusive society. In the margins of advancing SDG 16, the UN is working to consolidate stronger relations and cooperation between the UN and regional and subregional/local actors.

The UN Department of Political Affairs has a strong interest in building lasting relationships between the UN and regional organizations, ensuring women's peace and security, and responding to national and transnational regional threats. In addition, the department is undergoing reforms targeting UN development and increasing support to member states to achieve the 2030 Agenda. Input from regional organizations and other key stakeholders will help advance such reforms.

Another key outlet is the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), which engages stakeholders around the world in the implementation, evaluation and monitoring processes of the SDGs, and helps countries translate global goals into national policies and actions on the ground. UNDESA oversees the UN High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, which reviews the advancement of all SDGs and makes annual progress evaluations based on the voluntary national reviews presented by UN member states.

UN structural reform and interregional cooperation will bring more efficient processes and decision-making, which will facilitate regional integration. In turn, progress in peace, inclusion, access to justice and strong institutions as advocated by SDG 16 will help advance work on climate change, security, the economy and new technology demands.

### **Inter-Parliamentary Union**

The IPU is comprised of national parliaments from around the world. Its sole mandate is to protect and build global democracy through political dialogue and concrete action. It currently has 179 member parliaments and 12 associate members.

The IPU focuses on inputting to the SDG process and encouraging progress on SDG 16+ to all local and state-level officials by mainstreaming strategies, informing

parliamentarians about SDGs, promoting a regional approach, supporting parliaments and holding regional seminars that focus on governance and health. It strongly encourages women's participation in politics and has published maps on women and youth participation.

The IPU suggests parliaments need to better understand their responsibilities as leaders to enforce democracy. It recommends improvements in accountability and methodology measures, as well as implementing special indicators for democratic parliaments to monitor their performance against democratic standards.

### International Development Law Organization

The IDLO is the only intergovernmental organization exclusively devoted to promoting the rule of law. The principles of the rule of law—equality, equity, inclusion, rights, laws and institutions—are embedded throughout the 2030 Agenda and are well articulated in SDG 16. Governments, multilateral organizations, private foundations and the private sector support the IDLO's work on justice delivery worldwide.

Justice is vital to securing rights and dignity for all. Yet many individuals, groups and communities around the world—women, children and youths, migrants, ethnic and sexual minorities—often struggle to access it. Accessing justice is a matter of supply and demand: it involves empowering people to seek it and securing the mechanisms to deliver it. Rights, in other words, are granted to those in a position to claim them. For this reason, in addition to building capacity in the judicial sector, grassroots legal empowerment forms the core of the IDLO's engagement.

The IDLO runs programmes to tackle the main challenges associated with issues including legal empowerment, human rights, human trafficking, sexual identity, and the well-being of and access to justice for all, including women, children, refugees and migrants.

The IDLO is part of the high-level group that, along with UN Women, the Task Team for Justice and the World Bank, issued the *Justice for Women High-Level Group Report* in 2019. The report measures the justice gap for women and girls and highlights critical concerns for women and girls and the transformational potential of equitable justice outcomes.

### The Community of Democracies

The Community of Democracies (CoD) is an intergovernmental coalition of states established in 2000 to bring together governments, civil society and the private sector to support democratic rules, expand political participation, advance and protect democratic freedoms, and strengthen democratic norms and institutions around the world.

SDG 16 created a visible frame for the community to contribute to strengthening democracy worldwide. Given the goal's centrality and its role as an enabler of all SDGs, in 2017 the CoD created a set of voluntary global supplemental indicators for progress towards achieving its 12 targets. It convened a Group of Experts that provided key input and assisted the technical lead of the Peace Research Institute in Oslo in developing the indicators. The consultative process drew on a range of international legal frameworks, academic studies and policy research, and placed

special emphasis on the Warsaw Declaration. The CoD continues to actively engage in discussions to provide key policy recommendations that enable the goal's achievement through high-level gatherings, which constitute unique opportunities to convene representatives different sectors to discuss how they could work together to make progress on the SDGs at the national, regional and global levels.

### International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance

International IDEA is an intergovernmental organization that supports sustainable democracy worldwide. It is the only intergovernmental organization with a global mandate solely focused on democracy and elections, and is committed to being a global agenda setter in the field of democracy-building. With 32 member states from all continents, International IDEA supports the development of stronger democratic institutions and processes, and fosters sustainable, effective and legitimate democracy through the provision of comparative knowledge resources, dialogues and partnerships at the global, regional and country levels.

International IDEA's vision is firmly anchored in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, endorsed unanimously by 193 UN member states in September 2015. International IDEA believes that democratic principles are core to and important enablers of the realization of the entire 2030 Agenda. Rule of law; access to justice; accountable and transparent institutions; responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making; and fundamental freedoms are fundamental cornerstones for achieving all of the SDGs.

A key tool developed by International IDEA, which serves to fill the gap in the collection of data to measure progress on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and its SDG Framework, is the Global State of Democracy (GSoD) report. Monitoring progress is essential to achieving the 2030 Agenda (International IDEA 2019). Effective implementation of the SDGs requires the local, national and international levels to own the process and track the action.

Data from the GSoD Indices show that SDG16+ is facing significant challenges, especially in terms of public access to information and the protection of fundamental freedoms, which are diminishing in all regions of the world. The underlying causes of this decline involve the curtailment of civic space, democratic backsliding and erosion, and encroaching authoritarian tendencies by governments, all of which represent an attack on fundamental rights.

This people-centred monitoring of the SDGs is as empowering as it is ambitious. At the national level, the GSoD Indices may contribute to monitoring and reporting on SDGs through, for example, the voluntary national reviews. As implementation is the responsibility of UN member states, and national ownership is crucially important to achieving the SDGs, the data gathered through the GSoD Indices may help countries track their progress towards the SDGs and their targets. Likewise, since the GSoD Indices also capture democratic trends at the regional and global levels, this data may be used to monitor and report on SDG progress beyond national borders. The GSoD Indices often make data available that would otherwise be missed, thus supplementing officially approved indicators.

The GSoD Indices provide valuable insights into country-, regional- and global-level progress on SDG 16+. Goal 16 builds on the premise that democratic

governance matters: it states that peaceful and inclusive societies are central to achieving all other development goals. SDG 16 reflects a commonly accepted understanding that democracy, peace and development are inherently intertwined, and that reducing violence, delivering justice and combating corruption are essential to achieving sustainable development.

## **Regional organizations' approaches to advancing SDG 16+**

This section highlights the efforts that regional organizations are undertaking to advance the 2030 Agenda, with a focus on SDG 16+. These organizations are key partners of, and are actively engaged with, the IRDD at International IDEA. They cover the regions of Africa and West Asia, Asia and the Pacific, Europe, and Latin America and the Caribbean.

### **The African Union**

The African Agenda 2063 framework was created to guide the continent's development over the next 50 years. The AU is focusing on development on a broad front, and significant efforts have been made to align Agenda 2063 with the 2030 Agenda, especially through coordinating with national governments and regional organizations.

The AU leads policymaking and the implementation of decisions to 'a peaceful and secure Africa' using mechanisms that promote a dialogue-centred approach to conflict prevention and resolution and stimulating a culture of peace and tolerance among children and young people. The Agenda 2063 flagship initiative 'Silencing the Guns by 2020' is at the core of activities designed to ensure Africa is a more peaceful and stable continent. The AUC's Department of Peace and Security supports the Peace and Security Council (PSC) in carrying out its responsibilities under the PSC Protocol and leads the AUC activities related to peace, security and stability across the continent.

The AU works with member states to develop and implement policies to build strong, well-governed institutions and enact laws to ensure Africa's citizens are fully engaged and involved in policymaking and development initiatives. The AU has put in place various treaties and policies to ensure good governance, the protection of civil liberties and the preservation of citizens' rights. AU treaties on the right of persons include the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, African Youth Charter, and the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa. The AU's Department of Political Affairs is responsible for promoting, facilitating, coordinating and encouraging democratic principles and the rule of law, respect for human rights, the participation of civil society in the continent's development process and finding durable solutions for addressing humanitarian crises.



### Association of Southeast Asian Nations

Building on the gains of more than 50 years of peace in the region, ASEAN adopted the Declaration on the Culture of Prevention for a Peaceful, Inclusive, Resilient, Healthy and Harmonious Society at its 31st summit in November 2017. The declaration embodies the association's strategy to proactively address the root causes of conflicts by promoting a culture of peace and intercultural understanding, respect for all, good governance at all levels, resilience and care for the environment, healthy lifestyles and supporting the value of moderation.

ASEAN has also recognized and highlighted the role of women in building and sustaining peace in the region. It adopted the Statement on Promoting Women, Peace and Security in ASEAN during the 31st summit. The statement affirms the critical role of women in peace building and commits ASEAN to engaging women and women's organizations at the regional, national and community levels in peace building, mediation and conflict resolution. The organization also continues to step up cooperation in eliminating violence against women and girls through the implementation of the Regional Plan of Action on the Elimination of Violence Against Women and Violence Against Children.

### The Pacific Islands Forum

The goal of the 19 members of the PIF is to have and maintain peace, justice and sustainable democracy. The forum focuses on its blue-Pacific narrative and delivering on its vision of inclusive and peaceful societies. It has taken a regional approach with the participation of CSOs in reframing the region from small, isolated and fragile to large, connected and strategically important. The PIF has proposed three initiatives for the region:

1. A proactive approach to addressing the challenges associated with efforts to accomplish the SDGs, including climate and ocean changes, security and marginalization during elections.
2. Global and regional commitments to lessen burdens at the regional level. Historically, the region has cooperated in providing security as well as combatting security challenges.
3. Creating a yearly report to assess empowerment and inclusiveness in the region, and how (and where) to improve it. The region faces serious violence concerns (for instance, it has the highest global rate of violence against women), unfair governance, unequal elections, transnational crime, climate change and a lack of humanitarian assistance.

In 2018, PIF members adopted the Boe Declaration on Regional Security, which recognizes and reaffirms the endorsement of the 2000 Biketawa Declaration and recalls the principles underpinning the declaration such as commitment to good governance, belief in the liberty of the individual under the law, upholding democratic processes and institutions and recognizing the vulnerability of member countries to threats to their security.

This declaration also recognized the impact that expanded security issues in the region, such as human security, including humanitarian assistance, to protect the rights, health and prosperity of Pacific people; environmental and resource security; transnational crime; and cybersecurity, to maximize protections and opportunities for Pacific infrastructure and peoples in the digital age, have in achieving peaceful societies and consolidating just and inclusive societies.

### League of Arab States

The League of Arab States (LAS) has been working with different partners to accomplish Goal 16. The most pressing challenges it faces are combatting terrorism in the Middle East, funding and data collection. The organization's implementation of SDG 16 is observed in countries like Saudi Arabia and the Emirates.

The LAS has worked with the World Bank, International Monetary Fund and other financial institutions to explore ways to balance financial issues. It also convened an Arab-African summit to share ideas on how to benefit from their experience. It recognizes its struggle with collecting data and statistics because data collection varies within each organization. It has joined a UN initiative on improving data collection.

### Council of Europe

The CoE is a 47-member state intergovernmental organization that promotes democracy, human rights and the rule of law. Its philosophy is that all its governance bodies must implement an SDG-based framework. The CoE's 2018 budget and activities for 2018–2019 were aligned with the 2030 Agenda in order to ensure they are achieved. It has also enhanced its focus on targeting SDGs, such as by improving justice, anti-corruption measures, the social reintegration of offenders, human rights, and promoting sports as a means of building peaceful and inclusive societies.

The CoE is focusing on global outreach partnerships including the participation of all non-member states. It has also created channels of opportunity between the council and the UN by participating in Agenda 2030 initiatives, having direct contact with UN regional offices and creating a website in support of the SDGs. Reporting and data analysis are still a big challenge.

The CoE has developed channels of collaboration with the UN at both the high/political and technical/working levels in an effort to develop further synergies in the Agenda 2030 framework. At the political level, the CoE Secretary General has discussed Agenda 2030 with the UN Secretary-General. The CoE's participation in Agenda 2030 has also been examined and supported by the Committee of Ministers. At the technical level, the CoE has maintained regular contact with the relevant Secretariats of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UN-ECE) and United Nations Office in Geneva (UNOG), and has been represented in events such as the Regional Forum for the UN-ECE region in Geneva and the high-level political forum in New York.

The CoE has created a website that provides key information for each SDG. Member states can use this information to illustrate that their participation in the CoE's work also contributes to their national implementation of the relevant SDG, and this can be referred to in the voluntary national reviews. This approach is based

on the concept that member states are primarily responsible for implementing the SDGs; the role of international organizations is to assist, facilitate and contribute.

### European Union

Within the EU, the Charter of Fundamental Rights brings together rights and freedoms under six dimensions: dignity, freedoms, equality, solidarity, citizens' rights and justice. The EU Cohesion Policy reinforces inclusive societies by building non-segregated infrastructure and community-based services. To ensure an effective EU response to terrorism and security threats, the European Agenda on Security sets out the main actions envisaged over the period 2015–2020.

Beyond its borders, the EU contributes to achieving peaceful and inclusive societies, the rule of law, and effective and capable institutions—in particular independent and effective justice systems—through the EU Enlargement Policy, the European Neighbourhood Policy and the European development policy. EU actions include political dialogue, support for justice sector reforms, mainstreaming of human rights values and principles, and dedicated financial and technical assistance programmes, such as the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights.

The EU's work on achieving SDG 16 is anchored in three key principles:

- Safety is a crucial aspect of people's lives.
- EU member states base their sustainable growth and social stability policies on well-functioning justice systems.
- Effective justice systems are a prerequisite for the fight against corruption.

The EU has been one of the most successful peace projects in the world; it has facilitated 60 years of peace, democracy and solidarity. In 2012, the EU was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for advancing the causes of peace, reconciliation, democracy and human rights in Europe. Effective justice systems play a crucial role in upholding the rule of law and the EU's fundamental values. The European Commission uses several instruments and mechanisms to promote and uphold the union's fundamental values and the rule of law. Nevertheless, crime remains a threat to European citizens, businesses, state institutions and society. One of the most serious challenges for European societies is corruption, which compromises trust in democratic institutions and weakens the accountability of the political leadership. The European Commission has a political mandate to monitor the fight against corruption and to develop a comprehensive EU anti-corruption policy.

### Organization of American States

The OAS has four interrelated pillars associated with SDGs—democracy, human rights, integral development and security. Its main focus is democracy and human rights, which are strongly connected to Goal 16.

The OAS' biggest challenges are the Venezuelan and Nicaraguan multi-crisis and fighting corruption. In the Latin American and Caribbean region, the OAS believes democracy is mandatory and is actively collaborating with governments to find solutions to the crisis. The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights and the

OAS are collaborating with the Nicaraguan Government to investigate human rights violations, enact electoral reforms and strengthen institutions. In Honduras, the OAS is leading missions to fight corruption. Lastly, the OAS has deployed electoral observations in Brazil, Mexico and, for the first time, in US elections.

Another successful model of multilateral support to peacebuilding and strengthening of institutions is the OAS Mission to Support the Peace Process in Colombia (MAPP/OAS), which was created in 2004 at the request of the Colombian Government to support the peace process and verify the ceasefire, demobilization, disarmament and reinsertion initiatives of the Auto-Defensas Unidas de Colombia. Through the work and presence of the MAPP/OAS, relevant knowledge continues to be developed on the peacebuilding process, and on the management of interactions and understandings of key social actors to build trust.

The MAPP/OAS has continuously operated in the areas most affected by the armed conflict, violence and crime, mainly in rural and isolated areas. It has allowed the mission to become closer to the victims, communities and institutions. Its contribution focuses on creating bridges between communities and institutions; delivering proven analyses and concrete recommendations to local, regional and national governments; and maintaining a permanent presence in the territories to deter violence. The mission has been characterized by independent and respectful work that takes into account the different dynamics of the territories. It also has a reputation for fostering joint work and maintaining a fluid interaction with all the key actors in building peace. It has the potential to be replicated in other contexts around the world.

The most recent Summit of the Americas took place in April 2018 in Lima, Peru. These summits are institutionalized gatherings of Western hemisphere heads of state and government, where leaders discuss common policy issues, affirm shared values, and commit to concerted actions at the national and regional levels to address continuing and new challenges faced in the Americas. During the last summit, the heads of state agreed on 57 agreements; 45 of these mandates are directly linked to SDG 16. These include:

1. strengthening democratic institutions to prevent and fight against corruption in the hemisphere;
2. strengthening judicial autonomy and independence, following applicable inter-American and universal standards;
3. promoting public awareness and citizen participation campaigns to prevent and combat corruption and impunity;
4. promoting gender equity and equality and women's empowerment as a cross-cutting goal of anti-corruption policies;
5. including different vulnerable groups when defining measures to strengthen governance and combat corruption;
6. promoting and/or strengthening the implementation of national policies and plans (and, as appropriate, subnational plans) in the areas of open government,

digital government, open data, fiscal transparency, open budgeting, digital procurement systems, public contracting and a public registry of state suppliers;

7. implementing and/or strengthening the bodies responsible for transparency and access to public information;
8. developing statistics and indicators for assessing the impact of transparency and anti-corruption policies and advancing government capacity in this field;
9. protecting whistleblowers, witnesses, and informants of acts of corruption from intimidation and retaliatory actions; and
10. protecting the work of journalists and persons who investigate corruption cases in a manner consistent with international obligations and commitments on human rights, including freedom of expression.

## 4. Engagement in sustainability at the global, regional, national and local levels

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### The role of civil society organizations

Civil society actors continue to strengthen their value and their contributions as facilitators, conveners and innovators as well as service providers and advocates (World Economic Forum 2013). They play an important role in promoting and working on issues related to peace, justice and inclusion—especially those on key matters related to the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs.

The SDG 16 Conference held in Rome in May 2019 issued a Civil Society Declaration. The declaration states that civil society plays a key role in holding governments and other key actors accountable. Such actors offer important capacities and knowledge to collectively accelerate and increase efforts across all SDG goals and targets to address structural inequalities; gendered, racial and other forms of discrimination; and violence; and recognized forms of exclusion and marginalization that constitute structural obstacles to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda that must be addressed for its realization (TAP Network 2019).

The overall perception of civil society representation during the consultation process for the development of this Discussion Paper was that participation spaces for civil society are shrinking, and that more efforts are needed to protect the few platforms that enable citizens to present their points of view to influence decision-makers and drive efforts to create more inclusive policies and stronger institutions. There are additional concerns associated with the channels of engagement and the availability of resources to fulfil objectives that contribute to the advancement of SDG 16+.

According to ILGA-Europe, human rights organizations, pro-democracy actors and wider civil society movements in many countries have faced increased restrictions when trying to carry out their work over the last 10 years. Governments in every region are erecting legal and administrative barriers that make it more difficult for CSOs that receive foreign support and funding to operate. In many countries, human rights non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are restricted when they attempt to hold public gatherings, express their views or set up new organizations. In addition, individual human rights defenders are often intimidated and harassed.

However, governments and multilateral governmental organizations recognize the need to work closely with civil society in order to understand the local contexts that guide policymaking, and as the only successful mechanism to ensure the sustainability of actions implemented to achieve peace and maintain democracy. An example of successful collaboration between regional organizations, governmental institutions and CSOs is the OAS Mission to Support the Peace Process in Colombia. The mission's methodology has facilitated the emergence and independent strengthening of CSOs, and social, popular, ethnic minority, *campesino* and labour platforms are invigorating democratic dialogue, and fostering processes of local dialogue and committees for discussion. This process has helped to increase access to goods and services for communities that have historically been neglected due to their geographic location or the significant impacts of the armed conflict (MAPP/OAS 2015–2018).

In 2012, the European Council committed to fostering a dynamic, independent environment in which civil society could grow. It also pledged to engage with civil society in a meaningful and structured way (European Council 2012). It further committed to 'promote stronger partnerships between authorities and local CSOs' and 'address threats to NGOs' space' in the 2015–2019 Action Plan on Human rights and Democracy (European Commission 2015). In its Enlargement Policy 2014–2020, the EU adopted guidelines to support civil society in enlargement countries, which state that a country needs 'a CSO-conducive environment' before it can join the EU (European Commission n.d.).

The Community of Democracies have integrated civil society into their governing bodies through their Civil Society Pillar. Member states recognize that civil society is an integral part of democracy; the community has long prioritized support for non-governmental actors who represent citizens' interests. Civil society is represented at the Governing Council by the International Steering Committee, an independent representative body elected by the Civil Society Assembly to provide advice to the Community of Democracies.

Since 1999, the OAS has created space for CSOs to participate in its activities. Resolution CP/RES. 759, 'Guidelines for the Participation of Civil Society Organizations in OAS Activities', institutionalizes and provides a framework for civil society participation in the political bodies of the OAS. Article 6 of the Inter-American Democratic Charter states that 'it is the right and responsibility of all citizens to participate in decisions relating to their own development. This is also a necessary condition for the full and effective exercise of democracy. Promoting and fostering diverse forms of participation strengthens democracy'. Likewise, Article 26 explains that 'the OAS will continue to carry out programs and activities designed to promote democratic principles and practices and strengthen a democratic culture in the hemisphere, bearing in mind that democracy is a way of life based on liberty and enhancement of economic, social, and cultural conditions for the peoples of the Americas. The OAS will consult and cooperate on an ongoing basis with member states and consider the contributions of CSOs working in those fields'.

The Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict highlights the importance of civil society and its engagement with global and regional organizations, as well as with governments. It is a global network led by CSOs working to prevent

violent conflict and build more peaceful societies. The network consists of 15 regional networks, with priorities and agendas specific to their environment. The partnership aims to work with and influence all conflict stakeholders, including affected communities, state and non-state actors, and intergovernmental organizations. It seeks to improve and implement locally grounded, inclusive mechanisms that create systemic and structural change to prevent violent conflict.

## **Multi-stakeholder data and knowledge resources**

Civil society is becoming a key implementing partner and a source of experience, knowledge and data that complements the official resources prepared by national agencies. This section briefly describes four good examples of this role.

### **Pathfinders for Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies**

This group includes UN member states, international organizations, global partnerships, civil society and the private sector. It is convened by the governments of Brazil, Sierra Leone and Switzerland, with the Center on International Cooperation at New York University.

The Roadmap for Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies was launched in 2017 and revised for the High-level Political Forum and SDG Summit in 2019. It covers all SDG16 targets. The roadmap will help realize the social, economic and environmental ambitions of the 2030 Agenda, while recognizing the contribution that sustainable development makes to peace, justice and inclusion. The roadmap maps out a collective journey, which serves as a guide for decision-makers, funders and campaigners. It focuses on what can be done ahead of the second SDG Summit in 2023 to increase ambition and accelerate delivery. It will inform national and local sustainable development strategies, while helping regional and global actors work together more effectively.

### **SDG16 Data Initiative**

The SDG16 Data Initiative is a consortium of 14 partner organizations that seeks to support the open and holistic tracking of the commitments made by UN member states captured in this goal (SDG16 Data Initiative 2019). The members of the initiative have a diverse range of organizational focuses, covering the issues and topics included within the 12 targets of SDG 16.

The SDG16 Data Initiative aims to collect and curate SDG 16 data, communicate what the data shows about global progress toward SDG16 and catalyse action through open data. This effort involves both global and complementary indicators, presented with official and unofficial data. This process also works to identify potential challenges in data quality, availability and coverage that need to be addressed.

The initiative complements current efforts to develop an official indicator framework for monitoring the SDGs. The Inter-Agency Expert Group on SDG Indicators has identified 23 global indicators within the goal's 12 targets. The goal is for national statistical systems to eventually produce the majority of the data for these indicators. The UN Statistical System and other global organizations will then collate



this official data at the global level. However, official data availability and coverage is currently limited; it may take years to develop capacities and collect data for official monitoring through official statistical systems. The initiative seeks to draw on available data to help countries begin to monitor progress on SDG 16 during this interim stage.

Partners involved in establishing the SDG16 Data Initiative include the Global Forum for Media Development, Governance Data Alliance, Institute for Economics and Peace, International IDEA, Namati, Open Society Foundations, Peace Research Institute Oslo, Results for Development Institute, Saferworld, Small Arms Survey, Sustainable Development Solutions Network, TAP Network, Transparency International and World Justice Project.

### **The Transparency, Accountability and Participation (TAP) Network**

The TAP Network is a broad group of CSOs that work to ensure that open, inclusive, accountable, effective governance and peaceful societies are at the heart of the 2030 Agenda, and that CSOs are recognized and mobilized as indispensable partners in the design, implementation of and accountability for sustainable development policies at all levels. The network engages some of the foremost expert organizations on issues related to SDG 16 to ‘promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels’. This work is underpinned by a recognition that when many stakeholders speak with a unified voice, this maximizes the reach and influence of the message.

### **The World Justice Project**

The World Justice Project is an independent, multidisciplinary organization working to advance the rule of law around the world. Effective rule of law reduces corruption, combats poverty and disease, and protects people from injustices. It is the foundation for communities of justice, opportunity and peace—underpinning development, accountable government and respect for fundamental rights.

The project is helping to define challenges and collect relevant data through its Rule of Law Index 2019, which measures rule of law adherence in 126 countries and jurisdictions based on more than 120,000 household and 3,800 expert surveys. Featuring primary data, the index measures countries’ rule of law performance across eight factors: constraints on government powers, absence of corruption, open government, fundamental rights, order and security, regulatory enforcement, civil justice and criminal justice.

### **Approaches to the role of the private sector**

The idea of business involvement with the SDG is strengthening, but so far there has been insufficient systematic engagement (Abshagen et al. 2018). The overall perception of private organizations engaging in the development field is that they are brought into partnerships and collaboration with traditional stakeholders in the field to invest, but that they lack sufficient understanding of the expected outcome.

Global and regional organizations are engaging with private sector organizations that have a proven capacity to implement projects designed to advance the SDGs, and significant amounts of funding for development are channelled through these organizations. The way in which partnerships are developed among the public and private sectors, and with civil society actors, is setting the tone for more effective and efficient engagement on achieving the 2030 Agenda.

In 2014, the UN-Business Action Hub was developed by the UN Global Compact, the Hong Kong-based non-profit organization Global Hand and 20 UN agencies. In this forum, the UN and companies can engage in dialogue, share information and take action to advance the SDGs. The SDG Fund was created as an international multi-donor, multi-agency development mechanism to support sustainable development activities through multidimensional joint programmes. The SDG Fund has established a Private Sector Advisory Group, formed by business leaders of major companies from industries worldwide.

The UN Private Sector Forum, an annual summit hosted by the UN Secretary-General and organized by the UN Global Compact since 2008, has focused on the SDGs since their adoption, including pledges from multinational companies to support the SDGs with concrete measures such as pilot projects, gender quota or investments in sustainable infrastructure. Since 2016 the annual High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development has included an SDG Business Forum, co-hosted by the International Chamber of Commerce, UNDESA and the UN Global Compact. Its goal is to foster dialogue between governments and the private sector.

## 5. Conclusions and policy recommendations

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The 2030 Agenda is based on a vision of ‘a just, equitable, tolerant, open and socially inclusive world in which the needs of the most vulnerable are met’ (Task Force on Justice 2019). By adopting the agenda, all countries have committed to building peaceful, just and inclusive democratic societies that provide equal access to justice for all and that are based on respect for democratic principles and fundamental human rights (Task Force on Justice 2019).

These commitments require continuous engagement with key stakeholders, including global and regional organizations and CSOs, for the purpose of deploying coordinated, well-informed, and sustainable actions that facilitate and enable the achievement of the SDG framework.

This Discussion Paper is designed to gather the findings that resulted from several consultations, expert meetings and forums held around the world to document progress on the advancement of SDG 16+, and what needs to be taken into consideration on the way forward. It incorporates evidence and input from the AU, ASEAN, CoE, the European Commission, LAS, OAS, PIF, IDLO, the Community of Democracies, and the UN and its agencies, including efforts from CSOs representing women and youth and other traditionally excluded groups, as well as universities and the private sector. The common findings regarding the efforts deployed at all levels are summarized below:

- At the global and regional levels there is an impressive number of policy and legal frameworks enabling the advancement of peace and justice, as well as the consolidation of democratic and inclusive institutions.
- Each regional and national context is moving at a different pace, even considering that comprehensive development plans are being put in place by governments.
- There is still a significant disconnect between the planning and developing of action plans and their implementation on the ground.
- There is weak coordination among the global, regional, national and local levels.

- There is a lack of disaggregated data that facilitate the identification of gaps around key issues of corruption, violence against women and youth, and promotion of the rule of law.

In order to tackle these relevant issues on the way forward, which seek to inform decision-making and the processes that dictate the steps towards the advancement of SDG 16+ as an enabler of the 2030 Agenda, key recommendations are presented below from the experiences of key stakeholders working in the fields of peacebuilding, justice and institutional strengthening:

- Increase political will at the global, regional and national levels to enable the effectiveness and efficiency of the initiatives that exist worldwide for building strong institutions governed by the principles of accountability and good governance.
- Regional organizations are to be kept informed of and involved in national implementation and monitoring efforts; likewise, global and regional organizations should exchange regional experiences. Sub-regional approaches can promote positive competition.
- Develop mechanisms oriented towards the organization of information at the national, regional and global levels that would allow the development of reliable data to measure the advancement of SDG 16+.
- To advance SDG 16+, it is key to increase the commitment to advance and guarantee basic rights such as nationality, registration and identification of citizens, and the elimination of violence against women and other vulnerable groups such as youth and people with disabilities.
- Concrete action plans to eradicate trafficking in persons and terrorism need to be developed and strengthened; these should include social and legal frameworks as preventive measures.
- Recognize that conflict is one of the major elements affecting governments' capacity to achieve peaceful and just societies, and establish mechanisms that prevent the exacerbation of conflicts and promote stronger institutions.
- Reinforce the role of parliaments in the process of nationalizing regional and international legal frameworks for the advancement of sustainable development, and entrust them with the development and adoption of national legislation to complement and support global and regional actions to achieve SDG 16+.
- Civil society needs to continue growing and strengthening in order to serve as watchdogs to processes that are inherently related to accountability, transparency, rule of law and inclusiveness, among others, which form the essence of SDG 16+.
- Resources should be consistently mobilized at all levels in order to maintain and sustain the advancement of SDG 16+.

The consultations highlighted the vulnerability of women and youth, who continue to be affected by increased violence and abuse, a lack of access to justice and legal guarantees, discrimination and exclusion, poor development and engagement opportunities for political participation, access to resources and capacity building, and insufficient protection of basic human rights. Specific recommendations are proposed below:

- Enable more women and young people to reach management and decision-making positions at the global, regional, national and local levels.
- Identify and deploy comprehensive capacity-building mechanisms/resources for both men and women of all ages, to consolidate a real sense of equality, especially in the most patriarchal contexts.
- Promote access to equal opportunities starting from the earliest stages of life for girls and boys.
- Strengthen the political and legal frameworks that protect and promote the economic and political empowerment of women, and help prevent the risk of violence, oppression and violations of human rights against women.
- Formally recognize that girls and women have a key role to play in the consolidation of more peaceful, just and inclusive societies, and that without the full participation of women and youth in economic and political life, it will be impossible to guarantee real sustainable development.

These policy recommendations are developed from the common trends identified from consultations and exchanges at the global and regional levels. They are by no means proposed as a comprehensive and definite pathway forward. However, this paper addresses relevant deficiencies that affect how countries and other key stakeholders work to achieve SDG 16+ as a crosscutting enabler of the 2030 Agenda.

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## About International IDEA

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The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA) is an intergovernmental organization with the mission to advance democracy worldwide, as a universal human aspiration and enabler of sustainable development. We do this by supporting the building, strengthening and safeguarding of democratic political institutions and processes at all levels. Our vision is a world in which democratic processes, actors and institutions are inclusive and accountable and deliver sustainable development to all.

### What do we do?

In our work we focus on three main impact areas: electoral processes; constitution-building processes; and political participation and representation. The themes of gender and inclusion, conflict sensitivity and sustainable development are mainstreamed across all our areas of work.

International IDEA provides analyses of global and regional democratic trends; produces comparative knowledge on good international democratic practices; offers technical assistance and capacity-building on democratic reform to actors engaged in democratic processes; and convenes dialogue on issues relevant to the public debate on democracy and democracy building.

### Where do we work?

Our headquarters is located in Stockholm, and we have regional and country offices in Africa, the Asia-Pacific, Europe and Latin America and the Caribbean. International IDEA is a Permanent Observer to the United Nations and is accredited to European Union institutions.

<<http://www.idea.int>>

**The scale, ambition and approach of the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development, and its SDG framework, are unprecedented. The SDGs are global in nature and universally applicable; they consider national contexts, capacities, and levels of development and challenges.**

SDG 16 was developed from the need to ensure proper actions towards achieving peace, justice and strong institutions to support and guarantee the sustainability of the entire development structure; the national contexts are the basis for its advancement. Global and regional organizations have an important role to play in achieving SDG 16. They can provide support, expertise and knowledge products, and bring together best practices and lessons learned to the operational levels, to better inform all stakeholders for a better, effective, collaborative and coordinated decision-making process.

This Discussion Paper was developed with input gathered from official key partner organizations that attended several gatherings to discuss the role of global and regional organizations in the advancement of SDG 16, held using the platform provided by the Inter-Regional Dialogue on Democracy at International IDEA.



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