SDG 16 High-Level Conference 2024
Trusteeship Council Chamber, UNHQ

PROGRAMME AND GUIDING QUESTIONS

<u>**Programme**</u>

10:30 a.m. – 11:10 a.m.	High-Level Opening
11:15 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.	First panel session: Promoting peaceful societies for sustainable development.
12:30 p.m. – 1:00 p.m.	Presentation of the updated Rome Civil Society Declaration on SDG 16+.
1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.	Lunch break
3:00 p.m. – 3:50 p.m.	Second panel session: Promoting the rule of law, equal access to justice, and the fight against corruption and organized crime.
3:50 p.m. – 4:40 p.m.	Third panel session: Developing effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels in support of the SDGs.
4:40 p.m. – 5:30 p.m.	Fourth panel session: Building more inclusive societies for all.
5:30 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.	Closing of the conference: SDG 16 and the road to the HLPF and the Summit of the Future.

Panel description and guiding questions

First panel session: Promoting peaceful societies for sustainable development

The dramatic rise of violent conflicts has become one of the most significant challenges to sustainable development. Marginalized and vulnerable groups, including women and children, are often the most impacted by violent conflict. Investment in SDG 16, prevention, the rule of law and inclusive institutions, can help build a future where violent conflicts are prevented rather than managed, and where resources are invested in development rather than destruction. Proactive investment in addressing the root causes of conflicts, such as inequality, injustice and exclusion is key. Inclusivity and a whole-of-society approach lie at the heart of effective conflict prevention, resolution and reconciliation at local, national, regional, and international levels. Multistakeholder partnerships that promote the meaningful participation of women, young people, Indigenous Peoples, persons with disabilities and other groups marginalized in peacebuilding processes are fundamental. By ensuring fair, equitable and accessible avenues for resolving disputes, people-centred justice systems can lay the groundwork for more peaceful societies.

This session aims to explore strategies for addressing the root causes of conflicts, preventing and reducing violence, with a focus on promoting inclusivity, strengthening multistakeholder partnerships, peacebuilding, to pave the way for more peaceful, just, inclusive and sustainable societies.

Guiding questions:

1. How can proactive investment in SDG 16 help address the root causes of conflicts and effectively drive peace and sustainable development?

2. Which measures are needed to better reduce and prevent all forms of violence, end abusive practices and build peaceful societies? Which best practices can be scaled-up?

3. In what ways can multistakeholder partnerships be strengthened to ensure the meaningful participation of marginalized groups, such as women, young people, Indigenous Peoples and persons with disabilities in peacebuilding processes at all levels?

Second panel session: Promoting the rule of law, equal access to justice, fight against corruption and organized crime

The compounding effects of intersecting global crises are closely correlated to a global decline in the rule of law, further exacerbating the situation of over 5 billion people worldwide who lack meaningful access to justice. Strengthening the rule of law and access to justice, which are at the core of SDG 16, can catalyse progress across the 2030 Agenda. Closing the justice gap, particularly for women and girls, will require transitioning to people-centred approaches that emphasize better use of data and evidence, innovating service delivery and utilizing diverse pathways to justice with a focus on improved outcomes for the end users. With their profound negative impact on the rule of law, good governance and human rights, corruption and organized crime threaten peace and security, undermine trust in public institutions, hamper the provision of public services and thwart inclusive economic development. Empowering people and communities to claim their rights and participate in policymaking can generate transformative actions, including in terms of preventing and combatting corruption and organized crime. The rule of law can

promote greater transparency, accountability and integrity at national and international levels. Building on existing instruments such as the United Nations Convention Against Corruption is critical to ensure that public resources are spent effectively.

The session aims to explore innovative approaches to strengthen the rule of law and access to justice, as well as prevent and combat corruption and organized crime while promoting transparency, accountability and integrity in governance.

Guiding questions:

1. What innovative rule of law-based approaches can be implemented to address the systemic barriers hindering access to justice? How can individuals and communities be further empowered to claim their rights and participate in decision-making processes?

2. How can investment in people-centred justice systems, emphasizing better data, utilizing diverse pathways to justice and service delivery innovation, effectively close the global justice gap and improve outcomes for justice seekers?

3. In what ways can the international community build upon existing instruments, such as the United Nations Convention Against Corruption, to strengthen the fight against corruption and organized crime?

Third panel session: Developing effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels in support of the SDGs

Building more effective, transparent and accountable institutions is integral to fostering sustainable development. Public institutions provide the legal frameworks, policies, processes and systems that support effective and fair interactions between people and their governments and effective and responsive public service delivery. Transparent and inclusive budget systems are critical to ensuring transparent and accountable use of public resources. Effective institutions play a crucial role in building mutual trust between people and governments, through upholding high integrity standards, including in electoral processes, preventing and fighting corruption and ensuring fair and efficient use of resources. Transparency and public access to information are key to building accountable institutions. A free, dynamic and diverse media further keeps people informed and empowers them to hold government to account for decisions and results. Ensuring responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels is a key condition for building effective, accountable and inclusive institutions.

This session aims to provide an overview of the trends, challenges and opportunities related to ongoing efforts to build effective, transparent and accountable institutions. The session will also discuss how to accelerate progress in this regard.

Guiding questions:

1. What are key trends, challenges and risks related to effective, transparent and accountable institutions? How can institutions better respond to shocks at all levels, based also on the most recent global challenges?

2. How have different countries and regions successfully enhanced the effectiveness, transparency, and accountability of their institutions? What strategies can be put in place to ensure effective and accountable use of public resources?

3. In what ways can Governments and stakeholders collaborate to strengthen institutions to accelerate the implementation of the SDGs? How can public trust be preserved and further strengthened?

Fourth panel session: Building more inclusive societies for all

Past the mid-point in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda, and in light of the ongoing global crises that have accentuated inequalities, there is a resounding call for building more inclusive and resilient societies in which people have voice and governments listen and respond, leaving no one behind. Critical building blocks of renewed social contracts encapsulated in SDG 16 targets include meaningful participation, the preservation of civic space, the elimination of discriminatory laws and policies, universal registration at birth, inclusive public institutions that respond to the need of all, including disadvantaged and marginalized groups of society, and more broadly the upholding of human rights. Given the rapid pace of digital transformation, there is also a need to focus on the implications, challenges and opportunities of the rapid development of digital technologies and digital government for human rights, human dignity and for more inclusive societies.

This session aims to highlight trends and challenges affecting participation and inclusion, as well as opportunities for building more inclusive societies that support trust among people and between people and their institutions.

Guiding questions:

1. What progress has been made in ensuring inclusive governance structures and decision-making processes? Which challenges still remain?

2. What are notable highlights in fighting discrimination and promoting inclusive and meaningful participation, upholding civic freedoms for all? Which challenges and obstacles still remain?

3. How can we effectively harness the digital transformation, including Artificial Intelligence, in the service of more inclusive societies, maximizing positive impacts and minimizing risks?