Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies: SDG 16 implementation and the path towards leaving no one behind

27 – 29 May 2019
Rome, Italy

Session A3: *Promoting dialogue and reducing insecurity*

Date: 28 May 2019, 14:00 – 15:45

Description:

Many of today's conflicts have mutated into complex, often unpredictable systems driven by an interplay of factors and multiple actors, some of whom are unknown to the international community. They can generate turbulence over extended periods of time; transverse over geographical and social landscapes; and some continue at multiple levels even after a limited peace/political deal is signed between some or all of the parties to the conflict.

Learning how to live together in a world of increasing diversity has emerged as one of the pressing challenges of our time. The challenge of the management of diversity does not just face countries with traditionally diverse or multi-cultural demographics, but also societies made more diverse because of the flow of ideas and people across borders due to an increasingly interconnected world, and successful campaigning by civic movements to secure legal recognition and protection of the rights of groups of people that were previously discriminated against.

Against this backdrop, the importance of reinforcing the values, institutions and skills which promote dialogue as a means of building the trust, understanding and respect needed to prevent and peacefully resolve inter-community conflict, is increasingly apparent. Central to SDG16 is strengthening social cohesion between citizens and the state as well as within and across individuals and social groups. Declining trust between citizens and government, and polarization of society along political, social, and economic lines, threatens peace. Strengthening social cohesion and conflict mitigation through dialogue and consensus building is crucial for achieving sustainable, peaceful societies. Achieving the SDGs in fragile contexts requires collaborative capacity and leadership across governance.

We know that without this, the potential of diversity as a source of innovation and dynamism for advancing inclusive and sustainable development is at risk, and the cost of violence – borne disproportionately by the world's poorest and most fragile countries – will continue to impede equitable progress.

The question, then, is what conditions are needed in creating an enabling environment to ensure that dialogue can be an effective instrument to address issues around conflict prevention, peacebuilding and advancing social cohesion and collaborative governance? Building on the results of UNESCO's recent Member State Survey on Intercultural Dialogue and decade long UNDP work on building national capacities for conflict prevention, dialogue and mediation, this session will explore this question by examining the variance in Member States' understanding of what dialogue is. It will also explore how it can be mobilized to effectively address the various elements of peacebuilding and conflict prevention. It will highlight concrete examples of Member States' action to mobilize dialogue to solve pressing challenges and look at how the UN is supporting these efforts on the ground. Some of the good practices from civil

society actors will also be highlighted as to provide a platform for learning and exchange of thought leadership. Finally, the session will explore the importance of improving data on dialogue in order to implement evidence-based action and highlighting results, building on lessons on the ground, including some of the work already being implemented by UNESCO, IEP and UNDP.

Objectives:

- Raise awareness of the UN, member states and civil society work on dialogue for conflict prevention, peace and sustainable development, highlighting efforts that cut across and connect the traditional 3 pillars of action - humanitarian, development and peace.
- Draw attention to specific SDG 16 initiatives undertaken by members states, civil society and the UN to advance dialogue and peace and measurement of these efforts. (e.g. UNESCO-IEP initiative to measure intercultural dialogue for cohesion and peace; UNDPs social cohesion Index).

Key questions:

1) What are the main challenges, key areas of progress, and areas of potential rapid acceleration?
2) How can we enhance data-driven monitoring and reporting processes to support evidence-based action?
3) What key interventions and policies can help us ensure that no one is left behind?
4) How can we understand and promote the many different conditions needed to enable dialogue as an instrument for peace?
5) Why is data on dialogue for peace important and how can it improve actions on the ground?

UNESCO and UNDP have been facilitating the organization of this session