



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

27 – 29 May 2019

Rome, Italy

Session C2: Responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making

Date: 28 May 2019, 11:00 – 12:30

Description:

The 2030 Agenda calls for transparent, effective, inclusive and accountable institutions to advance poverty eradication and sustainable development. It aims to ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels. Its strong emphasis on ‘inclusive societies’ implies a stronger focus on political equality. SDG 16 is therefore more than simply a normative agenda, and it is equally more than just technical capacity building. It lays out the central role for institutions and decision-making and puts politics at the heart of institutions.

The ability to participate in public affairs, to have a say in the shaping of policies and to dissent without fear are essential to democracies and development. Political voice also provides a corrective to public policy: it can ensure the accountability of officials and public institutions, reveal what people need and value, and call attention to significant deprivations. Political voice also reduces the potential for conflicts and enhances the prospect of building consensus on key issues, with payoffs for economic efficiency, legitimacy of measures taken, social equity, and inclusiveness in public life.

The 2030 Agenda recognises youth as ‘critical agents of change’. This recognition should translate into bold actions that governments and other stakeholders take to respond to young people’s specific needs and to recognize, promote and support young people’s role as partners in the SDG implementation, monitoring and review - including those most likely to experience discrimination and exclusion. If made a reality, these commitments to listen to and act on young people’s demands, invest in young people and partner with young people will fulfil young people’s rights and ensure that governments develop strategies and plans that build on and learn from young people’s experiences, innovation, and expertise. Linked to Goal 16 are Security Council Resolutions 2250 (2015) - the first resolution which is entirely dedicated to youth and acknowledges the positive role young people play in peacebuilding- and Resolution 2419 (2018) which calls for an increase in the role of young people in decision-making processes related to security, conflict and peace, including peace agreements.

Gender equality and women’s political participation are important markers of inclusive peacebuilding and governance. This point has been recognised not just in the CEDAW but also with the adoption of UNSCR 1325, which urges the inclusion of women’s perspectives, priorities and capacities in peacebuilding and governance processes. UNSCR 1325 bridges SDGs 16 & 5 reinforcing UN member States commitments to ensure that women are included and represented in decision-making at all levels in society.

However, this call for more inclusive governance is happening in a context where civic space, fundamental freedoms and the conditions for meaningful participation are shrinking drastically in countries around the

world. This makes it harder for governments to identify challenges, enact solutions and build the trust, legitimacy and mutual understanding that are the basic building blocks of effective, equitable and inclusive governance and has a pervasive impact on the realization of SDG16+.

Objectives:

- To discuss challenges and opportunities for more inclusive governance and impacts on SDG progress;
- To identify new frontier issues including innovative pathways and successes for strengthening inclusive governance as part of SDG implementation;
- To discuss synergies between the 2030 Agenda and SDG 16 implementation and Youth Peace and Security (YPS) and Women Peace and Security (WPS) commitments through country experiences and approaches.

Key questions:

- 1) What are the key challenges and systemic issues preventing inclusive participation in development processes and decisions, and what is the role of different actors (UN institutions, governments and other public institutions such as parliaments, civil society actors, youth-led organisations, movements and networks) in addressing these challenges?
- 2) What are the government policies and mechanisms in place related to SDG 16, and related SDGs that support inclusive participation?
- 3) How can the women peace and security and youth peace security agendas be more effectively connected to efforts on SDG 16 implementation, and its interlinkages at country level?
- 4) What measures have been effective to increase the political participation of women and representation in decision making positions in public institutions (including the justice system, public service, parliament), and how has this impacted the effectiveness of responses?

UNDP, UNODC, Pathfinders, and OHCHR have been facilitating the organization of this session