



“Goodbye conflict, welcome Development”

IDLO’s Partnership Forum

***Sustaining Peace, Sustainable Development:
the contribution of the Rule of Law***

Rome, 29 November 2017

Your Excellencies

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure for me to meet with you all here today. I would like to start by thanking Ms. Irene Khan, Director-General of the International Development Law Organization, for inviting me to this Conference.

I want to acknowledge the presence of the distinguished Participants who since yesterday brought to the Assembly important insights on the issue of 'sustaining peace, sustainable development and the contribution of the Rule of Law.

Ladies and Gentlemen

I'm here representing a group of fragile, in or post-conflict countries, with the expectation that this Forum can really *"explore the challenges and opportunities, faced by international and national actors, to build peace and advance development"*.

This global commitment conveys the needs and aspirations of humankind, in a broad and thorough manner, in order to ensure that people are at the center of our actions, both in developed as well as developing countries.

I believe everyone here is familiar with the lessons we have learned from the past, including from the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals. Indeed, the new Global Agenda states that, by 2030, no one should be left behind.

Promoting the Rule of Law and ensuring equal access to justice for all, in fragile and conflict-affect States are extremely complex tasks that are often poorly understood by international assistance.

The justice sector is unequivocally a key sector for development. A fragile sector of justice may jeopardize the very State, as well as the economic and social development of the Nation.

While it is important that we provide the institutions of justice the appropriate and necessary support, we have to agree that this is an issue that must be addressed with the urgency and seriousness, that the humane and humanitarian demands of justice requires from us, lest we risk a justice system that is inflexible or even, without intention, one that neglects respect for the rights and guarantees of victims and witnesses as well as, importantly, the accused.

Although Timor-Leste has relied on international assistance for these past fifteen years, or maybe because of the way in which this international assistance was led, we must now invest more so that we may have an efficient justice system, where cases are processed in a prompt, balanced, independent and efficient manner.

A thorough reform of the justice sector is still to be undertaken in Timor-Leste. This task will surely take years, in view of its complexity and starting position. I believe that this reform is very important. Indeed, while acknowledging the meritorious effort made by the Timorese magistracy to improve its operation, the fact is that there is a long way ahead of us in order to prevent

perceptions of injustice, which might undermine the very rule of law and the trust of citizens and investors. International cooperation, through a process that is responsible, humane and inclusive... and owned by national decision-makers, will surely be part of the solution to this challenge.

Ladies and Gentlemen

It should be noted that the process, for setting the ambitious 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), included inputs from fragile and conflict-affected States. This has allowed a more considered and effective approach to the various aspects of sustainable development and its challenges at a global level, as well as to the vital role that peace and stability play in achieving this development vision.

The g7+ and the New Deal, which have been advocating the need for adopting proper Peacebuilding and Statebuilding processes, have enabled more collaborative actions to create a new development paradigm, as well as new forms of engagement in fragile and conflict-affected States.

The difficulties experienced in these countries, which often include widespread and extreme poverty, require cautious international intervention, in which all parties are both students and teachers, as we know that all situations and contexts are unique and, therefore, do not allow for a one-size-fits-all approach.

We, the members of the g7+ group, are aware that our countries present very particular development challenges. As such,

we have assumed the political commitment to adopt the 2030 Agenda, in which we advocated the inclusion of Goal 16 “**Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions**”, since we know that without peace, justice and sound and efficient institutions, it would be very hard for us to implement any of the other 16 SDGs.

We must acknowledge that our Agenda will fail to achieve its goals, if it does not start by improving the living conditions of the people, in countries plagued by wars and conflict, particularly as we expect extreme poverty in 2030 to be concentrated in those countries. Giving back hope to men, women and children who have been left behind in the progress of humanity, is more than a moral duty – it is also a global responsibility and a matter of justice!

Poverty and conflict are man-made. As such, I believe they can be stopped by all of us who share the values of freedom and human dignity.

Excellencies

Ladies and Gentlemen

Most of these conflicts have been going on for decades. The causes of most of them are well known. Most make us question ourselves about the values of humanity and civilization, in a world that is supposed to be developed and technologically advanced.

Today, we are so globally interconnected that an event in one part of the world may soon affect the lives of common citizens, institutions and States in any other part of the world. The physical

distance separating local from global events is often minimized by technology. Because of this, the wealth of a few clashes shamefully with the extreme poverty of many, leading to generalized feelings of revolt and intolerance.

We cannot remain indifferent to the tragedy, faced by some of the peoples of the world, unless human solidarity is on the wane and we all are becoming inured to the suffering of others. Such problems are the responsibility of us all, even if some of us are mired in our own internal problems. We cannot interfere in international matters, only when we have national interests and strategies to defend.

Ultimately, peace depends on every one of us, through small decisions, actions and initiatives that we can make and adopt in order to change the world. It is urgent that we understand that peace inside each of us depends upon peace between all of us, regardless of ethnicity, religion, ideology or culture. We must work together as a community in order to find solutions to our common problems and to prevent tragedies and suffering now as well as in the future.

We have endured two World Wars and a period of Cold War. If we can learn something from our recent history and from the tragic consequences of these conflicts, it is that: We cannot put an end to war by waging war! We cannot stop violence with further violence! We cannot wash off blood with blood!

We cannot repeat the errors of the past. We must face the causes of problems, read their signs and anticipate and foresee the future. Everyone should refuse to accept that one can talk about war, from a perspective of defense or attack, while mechanisms of

dialogue and diplomacy are still available to us, which might build tolerance and trust between countries... which might build Peace!

We already know the results of interventions that use force – they end up leading to even bloodier conflicts. We see tensions continue to rise until they even become nuclear threats. We witness ethnic rivalries, religious rivalries and various types of extremism. We witness an increasing number of acts of terrorism and an increase in the number of refugees who, instead of being celebrated for their sacrifice and for the courage they display in surviving, are instead shunned! And still, we continue to be unable to find proper international solutions to problems that plague humankind?

We are living in a world disorder that requires the rebuilding of the international system – a system that establishes long term partnerships between countries, without hidden agendas and without taking advantages of the small and weak just to defend their business and profits, but towards common goals of development and human dignity, as the foundation for stability.

The key questions in today's world are... knowing how much longer major powers will continue promoting and funding wars and conflicts, and how much longer international organizations will continue to react to problems instead of trying to prevent them.

Ladies and Gentlemen

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was unanimously approved by the 193 UN member States. Are these

World Leaders truly committed to goals seeking to make the world a better place?

I am speaking of fragile and conflict-affected States which, by advocating the inclusion of the promotion of peace in this global agenda, have the moral obligation to do all they can so that peace and stability are realities in their own countries, so that their various institutions can manage development assistance effectively and transparently and so that wealth is distributed fairly and equitably among their citizens!

I am also speaking of rich and developed countries, that must make sure that the commitments that they make are more than short term displays for public relations purposes, within an intricate juggling of meetings and negotiations, where unconditional support to peace and sustainable development is declared in the morning and billion-dollar weapon sales deals are made in the afternoon!

Nothing is impossible as long as the promotion of democracy and human rights replaces the rhetoric espoused by the great powers, those proud pioneers of freedom and democracy, with pragmatic actions towards peace and the protection of collective interests... instead of the interests of a mighty few who pretend, because it is to their benefit or to their business' profits, to be oblivious to the true causes of inequalities and injustice throughout the world.

Thus I say that there will not be sustainable development for all unless we all make a sustainable change in the way we engage fragile and conflict-affected States!

In order to do this, we must start by putting human dignity above any other political, economic or strategic interest or consideration. We also must not impose patronizing values and presumptions as if seeking to civilize countries. In other words, we must replace an engagement model that is corrupted by interests with a true model of justice that promotes inclusive and sustainable development for all.

If we want justice for all, we must free all peoples living in conflict. These countries did not achieve even a single Millennium Development Goal. They face insurmountable obstacles when trying to escape from a situation of fragility without the effective support of the international community.

International assistance is essential to the sustainability of these nations. However, the approach adopted by development partners must be suitable to the real needs of these countries and the engagement must be restricted to the specific circumstances and challenges of each nation. On the other hand, one cannot make the mistake of trying to solve the problems of these peoples, much less trying to impose solutions, without their direct involvement.

The experience in transitioning from conflict into stability in Timor-Leste taught us that the only path, even if it is a painful one, is to search for the root causes of our problems within our own societies. If we are part of the problem, we must necessarily be an even bigger part of the solution.

Your Excellencies

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The g7+ member countries are united by a common cause of Peacebuilding and Statebuilding, sharing their experiences with each other. We are monitoring closely the challenges faced by countries such as the Central African Republic, South Sudan and Guinea-Bissau, and we want to promote a culture of solidarity under the banner of "Fragile to Fragile Cooperation".

As a group, we congratulate the UN Secretary-General for launching the agenda on "Sustaining Peace" and pledge all our support to the promotion of this important initiative. Although the g7+ is overall a relatively small group, each of its members has direct experience in handling conflicts and violence.

Unfortunately, some of these countries continue to live in these same troubled situations of conflict and violence, which is why we must have direct participation and added responsibility in contributing to build and maintain peace in each of these countries.

Being home to around 400 million people, most of us have become a playground for regional and global politics, an experimental lab for peacekeeping, humanitarian and development approaches, and a breeding ground for multi-billion dollar corporations seeking to exploit our resources.

Some of us have been taking steps to escape the trap of permanent instability and conflict by making use of national mechanisms, with wisdom and courage. We believe that our experience enables us to contribute so that the community of Nations may achieve sustainable and lasting peace.

This requires national leadership and ownership of decisions, programs and mechanisms, supported by flexible and efficient international intervention.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Our commitment to promoting the g7+ is also based on our strong desire to share experiences, strengthen fragile to fragile cooperation, implement the SDGs and, naturally, strive to live up to the motto: “leave no one behind and reach the furthest behind first”.

It is firmly agreed by the g7+ that consolidating the sector of justice is of paramount importance for peacebuilding and Statebuilding. It is also vital for conveying trust and attracting the necessary investment for developing the economy. We face several common challenges that including legal frameworks that are weak or inadequate to our realities, poor and limited infrastructure and, of course, difficulties in capacity building and training of human resources. These are vital requirements for enabling access to justice for all.

The justice sector is unequivocally a key sector for development. A fragile sector of justice may jeopardise the very State, as well as the economic and social development of the Nation. No one will invest in the economy if there is not a legal system ensuring that the law is upheld.

And without investment there is no employment, and without employment there is no peace.

This requires both sound cooperation with our developed partners and a careful and inclusive internal process that involves not only Governments and public agencies but also civil society and the community.

Consequently, SDG 17, seeking to strengthen the means of implementation and to breathe new life into the global partnership for sustainable development, splits up into several important goals that are valid instruments for the transformation we seek to achieve.

In order to be successful, we must maintain a critical view of the process and make monitoring a key part for to ensure we remain on the right track.

In short, we want to see an actual impact on the lives of the people, instead of mere statistical results. Consequently we must at all times place people at the center of our actions. This is as valid for the partner that receives assistance as it is for the partner that provides it! Humanizing partnerships is a vital precondition for everyone's success.

Development partners on the ground must step out from their comfort zone. One cannot have their "homework" already prepared by copying what was done in other countries over the years. We need more creativity, more sensitivity to the specific intricacies of each mission, more consultation and even more evidence based decision making, so that we may identify constraints and propose partnership solutions.

Last but not the least, we need time. Sustainable reforms, good practices and strong institutions cannot be built in a day!

Thank you very much.

Kay Rala Xanana Gusmão