2022 HLPF Side Event: Building Partnerships to Promote Security Sector Reform and Sustainable Development

Event Report

About this Event

The 2022 United Nations High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) gathered actors from around the globe to follow-up and review the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). The theme for the 2022 HLPF was: *Building back better from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) while advancing the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda*. Together with the Permanent Mission of the Slovak Republic to the United Nations, DCAF held a webinar to examine how the SDGs and Security Sector Reform (SSR) are mutually reinforcing frameworks and how partnerships between actors working on the security-development nexus contribute to SDGs 16 and 17 being realized.

About DCAF's Project on SDG 16

The event was delivered under DCAF's SDG 16 project, which seeks to position Security Sector Governance/Reform (SSG/R) as a key policy tool for the realization of SDG 16. The project focuses on three oversight actors, namely parliaments, civil society, and Ombuds Institutions. It develops SDG 16-specific guidance that supports SSG/R in the context of the 2030 Agenda and is funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands. More information can be found at www.dcaf.ch/SDG16.

Panelists

- **Collen Kelapile**, President of UN ECOSOC, Ambassador & Permanent Representative of Botswana to the UN
- **Ingrid Brocková**, State Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic
- **Luis Carrilho**, Police Advisor & Director of Police Division, Office of Rule of Law and Security Institutions, UNDPO
- **Walid Alem**, Senior Adviser to the Permanent Observer of the African Union to the UN
- **Mary Kimari**, Assistant Director & Advisor to the Chairperson of the Commission of Administrative Justice of Kenya
- **George Conway**, Deputy Director, UNDP Crisis Bureau
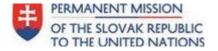- **Thomas Guerber**, Director, DCAF - Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance

Moderator

- **Michal Mlynár**, Ambassador & Permanent Representative of Slovakia to the UN

Date & Time

This event took place virtually on Thursday, 14 July 2022, from 13:00 to 14:30 (EST)

Good Security Sector Governance and SDG16

The link between SSG/R and SDG16 was the key theme of the discussion at the Side Event. The 2030 Agenda recognizes that sustainable development goes hand in hand with peace and security, and that it is undermined by conflict. Likewise, the absence of sustainable development is a key driver of inequality, fragility, and conflict. The nexus between security and development has been made explicit through the inclusion of SDG 16 in the 2030 Agenda. During the event, panelists noted how security actors can serve as a tool to achieve SDG16 targets if they work in accordance with the principles of good SSG, namely accountability, transparency, the rule of law, participation, responsiveness, effectiveness, and efficiency.

Nonetheless, speakers also emphasized that while security providers can be key in advancing development, they can also pose a threat to the realization of the 2030 Agenda in instances where these stakeholders chose to disrespect human rights, fall into corruption, or overstep their mandates, thereby creating more insecurity. In other words, security actors hold the tools that can pull societies back from the brink of conflict or push them over the edge. While the nexus between security and development is now widely recognized, much work remains to be done if we are to achieve SDG 16 by 2030. Furthermore, several speakers mentioned the cross-cutting nature of SDG16 in relation to other SDGs, such as SDG5 on gender equality and SDG17 on partnerships, as well as the importance of women and youth's participation as prerequisites in the achievement of SDG16. Both at the regional and national level, actors have tried to promote peace and security. More specifically, Walid Alem described the African Union's commitment to advancing progress on SDGs, particularly SDG16, as several mechanisms and projects have been launched in the African continent to this end. For example, the Silencing the Guns Initiative by the African Union aimed to end conflicts in the continent by 2030 and channel resources towards development. The objective is to identify areas of intervention to create a conducive environment for efficient and sustainable African-led solutions to conflicts. Moreover, the fundamental role of ombuds institutions and civil society organizations in contributing to the realization of the SDGs was pointed out.
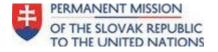
The Secretary General's New Report on SSR

In addition, the event stressed the relevance of the SSR framework to achieve development. Representatives of the Slovak Republic highlighted the efforts they have taken over the years to mainstream the opportunities that SSR brings to realize the 2030 Agenda. In this context, the Secretary General Antonio Guterres' new ambitious report "Strengthening security sector reform" emphasizes the link between SSR and development and was referred to as a main source of reference on several occasions. This report has advanced the understanding of SSR as a mechanism to pursue development. Not only does it recognize that the 2030 Agenda and SSR are mutually reinforcing frameworks, but it also acknowledges that the 2030 Agenda provides an important entry point for planning and implementing security sector reforms. As one of its four priorities, the report examines the role of SSR in sustaining peace and facilitating sustainable development.

About the HLPF:

The High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development is the global hub for the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda. Held annually, it brings together government representatives, international organizations, civil society, and private sector actors, thus representing an important platform to provide political leadership and to share lessons learnt, best practices and guidance for the realization of the SDGs. The focus of this year's HLPF was on the "Building back better from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) while advancing the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda".

DCAF's Director, Thomas Guerber, emphasized security sector reform's potential as a powerful policy tool for realizing SDG16 specifically. An analysis of over 150 Voluntary National Reviews from the first four-years of the HLPF found that 41% of reviews included reference to the importance of good governance of the security sector, albeit mostly in inexplicit terms. Within this reporting cycle, the analysis also found that 63 states highlighted various aspects of security sector reform when examining the implementation of SDG16.

For example:

- Training of police officers in Senegal on the prohibition of torture and ill-treatment in places of detention;
- Efforts by Norway to better integrate SSR into peacekeeping operations;
- Establishment of an independent police complaint mechanism in Mauritius;
- Adoption of a national security strategy in Lebanon;
- Implementation of a National Action Plan in Jordan to increase the participation of women in the security sector.

Partnerships Between Actors Working on the Security & Development Nexus

In the spirit of this year HLPF's focus on SDG17, the importance of strengthening partnerships was also highlighted at this event, especially in the context of the security and development nexus. The cross-cutting nature of partnerships allow for broad cooperation on several diverse issues. Many challenges the world is facing today point to an increasing potential for partnerships to achieve progress on development despite the obstacles.

For partnerships to work, panelists pointed out it is imperative to engage with all stakeholders, moving beyond the exclusive focus on the state while building capacity for engagement with the private sector, ombuds institutions, civil society organizations, and grassroots movements.

Additionally, actors should focus on areas in which they have comparative advantage and align their security interests with development interests to advance the 2030 Agenda. Focus on partnerships to advance development can promote SSR at the local, national, and international level. On a multilateral front, initiatives like the AU-UN-EU capacity building program as well as the UN Group of Friends of SSR could be strengthened and promoted.

Partnerships are also vital at the national level. Stakeholders should find new and diverse ways for partnerships to promote SSR through the implementation of the SDGs. The focus of SDG16 on accountability and inclusivity requires trust between the public and the government. It is well known, for instance, that the police struggle to provide security for local communities if those communities do not trust them. In the context of policing, enhanced trust creates opportunities for interactions between community members and police officers, both in the context of responding to crime and ensuring that the safety of local communities.

Collective engagement, dialogue, and negotiations to advance the implementation of the SDGs are crucial if the 2030 Agenda is to be achieved. For example, UNDP has joined efforts with multiple stakeholders to build evidence-based data for national governments to ensure the provision of security in Guatemala and El Salvador. This evidence-based approach is also used to monitor and evaluate the implementation of national justice and security reform plans. Finally, facilitation of dialogue and community cohesion is undertaken by actors via collective effort initiatives in Lebanon, Bangladesh, and Syria.

Further Resources

- *Dursun-Özkanca, O. (2021). The Nexus Between Security Sector Governance/Reform and Sustainable Development Goal-16: An Examination of Conceptual Linkages and Policy Recommendations. London: Ubiquity Press. DOI: https://doi.org/10.5334/bcm.i. License: CC-BY-NC. Available here.*
- *DACF (2021). Linking Security Sector Governance/ Reform to the Sustainable Development Goals: An Analysis of Voluntary National Reviews (2016– 2019). Geneva: DCAF – Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance. Available here.*
- *United Nations Security Council (2022). Strengthening security sector reform. Report of the Secretary-General (15 March 2022). UN Doc S/2022/280. Available here.*