What's Peace Got To Do With It?

Advocating Peace in the Post-2015 Sustainable Development Agenda

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■ Formulating an agenda for the UN's Sustainable Development Goals after 2015 has been complicated by the politics surrounding the inclusion of a goal for peace and security. The goal was mainly championed by Northern Member States and a voluntary association of 20 conflict-affected countries (the ›G7+‹), and greeted with strong scepticism by Brazil and its BRICS and G77 allies.

■ The inclusion of a Peace Goal in the document to be submitted to the General Assembly in September 2014 represents a compromise. While the content of the Peace Goal covers key issues related to conflict prevention and peacebuilding, its language and targets need to be sharpened in order to make the Post-2015 Agenda effective in promoting peaceful societies. This is as much a technical as it is a political process.

■ Looking forward to the final UN resolution in 2015, peace advocates need to develop strategies that go beyond retaining the Peace Goal as it stands, for instance, by advocating for greater transparency and accountability in the arms industrial complex. However, this would require a change in engagement with current allies. Especially northern states are most likely to block these endeavours.

■ Beyond the Peace Goal in the Post-2015 Agenda, the peacebuilding community will have to refine and consolidate its parameters of ›building peace‹. Reactions to protests around the world illustrated the fine line between ensuring public safety and the deterioration of fundamental freedoms.

Dialogueon
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1. Introduction

The efforts to frame and articulate a new global development structure to follow the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) once they expire in 2015 are embedded in a broader political context of global discontent. The rise of popular movements across the globe from North Africa and the Middle East to North America, Europe and most recently Latin America opposing a world order based on a ›business-first‹ model of governance was impossible to ignore. Although the individual protests reflected their particular contexts – Tunisians wanted democracy, the revolutionaries in Cairo's *midan* demanded bread and regime change, the ›99 %‹ in Zuccotti Park questioned the values of capitalism, *Los Indignados* in Spain wanted work, the Gezi Park protestors demanded housing and planning rights and the poor of Brazil asserted their rights to the city and to education – a common cause of their outrage was the failure of existing economic policies and governance institutions.

To see these movements simply as a reaction to the global economic crisis that began in 2008 is to miss the broader picture. The crisis may have been the tipping point, but what drove millions of people all over the world to the precipice was the failure of the MDGs to ameliorate the negative impacts of the global economic system itself. The MDGs were operationalized in such a way that the rich northern countries for the most part did not have to take responsibility for their contribution to the problems that southern countries were being required to resolve alone, often by being coerced into implementing ready-made foreign solutions in exchange for aid – all in the name of meeting the MDGs. The cumulative impact of these shortcomings was uneven trade relations, a perpetually unstable environment and crippling poverty, particularly in inner-cities and borderlands. In turn, these are not just development failures, but also reflect the ›root causes‹ (or ›main drivers‹) of many conflicts and violent confrontations.

The links between conflict and development have long been debated among policy analysts and can be said to have been firmly put on ›the map‹ of the current development debates by the 2011 World Bank Development Report, »Conflict, Security and Development«.[1] The report is premised on the need to break cycles of violence as an im-

portant precursor to economic development. It goes on to suggest how programmatic interventions by development actors can contribute to this objective. Since then, numerous NGOs, such as World Vision, the Collaborative for Development Action (CDA), Saferworld, Igarapé Institute, to name but a few, as well as political processes such as ›The New Deal‹ between countries from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the self-identified group of conflict-affected states (the ›G7+‹), have developed a deeper understanding of the links between conflict and development. All of these actors have contributed to the conceptualization and elaboration of measures to tackle the contextual specificities of conflicts (adopting a ›root causes approach‹ to the resolution of violent conflicts) while also developing practical frameworks for international cooperation to meet these ends.

With all this expertise to draw upon, civil society and some Member States were ready to introduce ›peace and security‹ into the discussions on how to make development sustainable. However, as the following analysis shows, this development was highly contested. Throughout the article, special consideration will be given to the role of civil society organizations in setting the stage for a peace agenda to be included in the post-2015 process and the consequences of how this was finally achieved in the Outcome Document of July 2014.

2. Formulating a Post-2015 Sustainable Development Agenda

All international processes are informed by multiple strands of concern and activities that shape the terms of the debate. In the case of the Post-2015 Development Agenda this backdrop comprises the decades-long negotiations over climate change and the sustainable environmental movement (a UN-supported multilateral process with a history of civil society inclusion) coupled with the imminent expiration of the MDGs (a UN-led process which had historically excluded civil society). At the time, the decision was taken to merge these two processes, with the form that the process should take arguably posing an even greater challenge than its substance.

The Outcome Document of the 2010 MDGs Summit requested the UN Secretary-General to plan a process of Member State discussions on the future of the development agenda post 2015, while the 2012 outcome docu-

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1. World Bank Development Report, April 2011; http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTWDRS/Resources/WDR2011_Full_Text.pdf (last accessed on 11.8.2014).

ment of the Rio+20 Conference on Sustainable Development initiated an inclusive process to develop a set of sustainable development goals. In an attempt to marry both processes, three main initiatives were born:

1) An Open Working Group (OWG). Born out of the 2012 Rio +20 Outcome Document, »The Future We Want«,[2] the OWG was composed of 30 Member States which met under the auspices of the UN in New York between March 2013 and July 2014. The OWG was co-chaired by Ambassadors Macharia Kamau of Kenya and Csaba Korosi of Hungary. Civil society groups were permitted to attend the discussions but their official involvement was channelled through nine thematic ›Major Groups‹: Business and Industry, Children and Youth, Farmers, Indigenous Peoples, Local Authorities, NGOs, Scientific & Technological Community, Women, and Workers and Trade Unions.[3]

2) A High-Level-Panel (HLP). In July 2012, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon announced the establishment of a High-Level Panel, co-chaired by the Presidents of Indonesia and Liberia and the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, to advise on the priorities for the post-2015 agenda based on consultations with civil society and the private sector. Its report was launched in May 2013.[4]

3) A set of global consultations. Launched in 2013, global consultations with Member States and populations at large[5] were organized through the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs and a worldwide survey[6] targeting millions of people through simple online platforms and mobile phone technology. The objective was to get a sense of national and regional priorities broken down by socio-economic status, gender and age. The Global Compact (a product of the MDGs) also continued to serve as a platform for input from the private sector on the financing of the post-2015 agenda.

2. Rio+20 Outcome Document, »The Future We Want«, adopted by the UNGA in July 2012; http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/66/288&Lang=E (last accessed on 11.8.2014).

3. For more information on the OWG sessions and the contributions by Major Groups see http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/owg.html (last accessed on 11.8.2014).

4. High Level Panel Report, May 2013 – http://www.post2015hlp.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/UN-Report.pdf (last accessed on 11.8.2014).

5. For more information on national consultations, see http://www.worldwewant2015.org/sitemap (last accessed on 11.8.2014).

6. For the latest results of the ›My World‹ survey, see http://www.my-world2015.org/ (last accessed on 11.8.2014).

Of these initiatives, the OWG offered civil society the most concrete level of input and influence over the final outcome of the process, as it involved drafting concrete language and targets for the future Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The OWG Outcome Document will be presented at the 68th Session of the General Assembly from 24 September to 1 October 2014. If adopted, the Secretary-General will consider it as the consensus position of all Member States towards his final report that will launch official state negotiations throughout 2015. The results of these negotiations are expected to be announced and adopted at the 69th Session of the General Assembly in September 2015.

3. Setting the Stage for a Peace Goal

Many Members States refer to the 2012 Rio+20 Outcome Document as the core document with reference to which all SDGs should be discussed. It affirmed the importance of peaceful societies but did not include this in its three main organizing themes, often referred to as the three pillars: (i) poverty eradication (the social pillar); (ii) a greener economy (the environmental pillar); and (iii) an improved framework for sustainable development (the financing pillar). Paragraph 8 of the document affirms the importance of peace, but only in so far as it is part of a long list of principles that collectively enhance development. Paragraph 10 of the document homes in on specific elements that are essential for building peace, such as good governance, democracy and the rule of law, but again reduces them to mere enablers of development rather than recognizing them as a desirable outcome for development itself. Therefore, the document does not recognize the relevance of achieving peace as an outcome of sustainable development itself, and hence it does not recognise achieving peace as an objective to be included in the SDGs.

During the OWG sessions, countries that argued for the sanctity of the Rio+20 Outcome Document were in favour either of including references to peace as an enabling factor in the chapeaux (the opening paragraphs of the document) or, at most, of including some peace-related targets into other goals, such as education, access to food, access to livelihoods, natural resource management, etc. – the ›mainstreaming‹ approach.

By contrast, countries that based their interventions on the HLP report indicated a willingness to expand the terms of the debate beyond the three pillars of the Rio+20 document. The report recommended five transformative shifts for the new development agenda, one being building peace and effective, open and accountable institutions for all. It also recommended including peace and the rule of law as two standalone goals in the SDGs. It is noteworthy that the language of the recommended Peace Goal steered away from the term ›peace and security‹, favouring instead the term ›peace and stability‹, a point welcomed by the NGO community lobbying for the peace agenda as it avoided political fallout over a term associated with the work of the Security Council.

These two targets dovetail with findings from the UN's ›My World Survey‹. As of the beginning of August 2014, the survey had reached over 3 million people worldwide and showed that their global priorities to include ›an honest and responsive government‹ (ranked no. 4) and ›protection against crime and violence‹ (ranked no. 5). Countries referring to the Survey in their interventions during the OWG were supportive of the HLP's recommendations for two standalone goals, one for peace – which includes targets aimed at improving the protection against crime and violence – and another for governance issues – which includes targets for the freedom of information and accountability of officials.

Careful observation of the language and reference points used by Member States during the OWG sessions became a vital tool for strategizing around the peace agenda. The consensus among key promoters of the agenda, both Member States and civil society groups, was to push for two standalone goals to secure the prominence of peace within such a large and complex agenda, yet to settle for mainstreaming. For either approach to be successful, the enormous task of devising practical and measurable targets and indicators was paramount.

4. Negotiations over the OWG Outcome Document

The topic of ›peace and stable societies‹ was first placed on the agenda of the OWG in February 2014 under the title »Conflict prevention, post-conflict peacebuilding and the promotion of durable peace, rule of law and governance«. The debate was heated with a clear divide between the OECD and northern countries which fully supported two standalone goals as suggested by the HLP, and countries from the global South which opposed any deviation from the three pillars of the Rio+20 Document.

As the key sponsor of the Rio+20 process, Brazil was quite vocal in its opposition to a Peace Goal, however, it framed its objection in terms that went beyond preserving the sanctity of the Rio+20 Document. It challenged the coherence of including an outcome that needed contextual specificity within a universal agenda, pointed out the lack of the rule of law at the international level including in relation to sanctioning international interventions, and warned against the dangers of ›securitizing development‹. In subsequent OWG sessions, Brazil also included arguments for the ending of foreign occupations, the reduction of military spending and the greater inclusion of developing countries in international governance institutions. By persistently engaging in the debate over the Peace Goal, Brazil was inevitably both concretizing its opposition to the goal and strengthening its position for future negotiations over a compromise.

Another key position during the OWG was that of African states. In June 2014, the African Union launched a Common African Position (CAP) on the Post-2015 Development Agenda that committed states to pursuing development policies that are people-centred and geared towards the reduction of economic and social inequalities. It also committed them to strengthening regional cooperation in dispute resolution, post-conflict reconstruction and curbing illicit cross-border flows of arms. However, all in all, the CAP fell short of expectations, in particular as much of the evidence cited by the peace advocates and the ›G7+‹ was based on the continent's struggle to achieve any of the MDGs due to recurring conflict and violence. The CAP's limited ambitions with regard to the Peace Goal – as shown, for example, by the omission of national infrastructures for the peaceful resolution of conflicts from its set of objectives – reportedly resulted from pressure brought to bear on the Union by South Africa, which also aligns itself with the interests of the BRICS countries.

On the other hand, the collective voice of the self-identified conflict-affected states, many of them African, continued to push for a Peace Goal. Although their influ-

ence was compromised by their close relationship with OECD countries through the ›New Deal‹, they managed to find a powerful advocate in East Timor, which championed the group's position in all OWG sessions. By focusing on concrete examples of how its government led, planned and coordinated development assistance with the aim of achieving peace and prosperity, East Timor proved that following a peace agenda and safeguarding ›national sovereignty‹ vis-à-vis donor countries could go hand in hand.

By mid-2014, however, fractures over the Peace Goal versus No Peace Goal camps overwhelmingly reflected traditional divisions between the global political North and the global political South, led by the BRICS countries. This made access to bilateral lobbying with southern states more difficult for the peace advocates, leaving alliance-building with the Major Groups as the best way forward, as they could influence the process through official channels feeding into the work of the Co-Chairs.

The peace advocates first allied themselves with the ›NGOs Major Group‹, which includes the global coalition known as ›Beyond 2015‹, and managed to set peaceful and stable societies as one of the coalition›s core values. This in turn helped to spread the message among hundreds of NGOs worldwide that peace is relevant to development. Other Major Groups whose interests overlap with those of the peace community, such as Women, Children and Youth, Indigenous Peoples and Business and Industry, were also approached. Towards the end of the OWG, several of these groups highlighted their support for the Peace Goal during consultations with the Co-Chairs.

The widespread dissemination of the relevance of a Peace Goal in the Post-2015 Development Agenda generated so much momentum across a diversity of civil society organizations that Brazil felt obliged to reach out to these organizations and explain its position. During the June session of the OWG, Brazil hosted a briefing session attended by over 100 civil society delegates. Brazil explained its position on the Peace Goal (which by then had incorporated the rule of law and governance objectives) as being in favour of mainstreaming most of the peace targets across other goals as well as targets such as access to justice from the rule of law agenda. This indicated a softening of its original po-

sition. During the question and answers session, Brazil even suggested that it would accept a Peace Goal should its language be reformulated, for example, to remove reference to the ›rule of law‹ and ensure no interference with national sovereignty. Brazil argued that its position was in defence of a truly transformative development agenda. A Peace Goal, as it stood, would deflect the focus from more pressing issues such as the establishment of ›common but differentiated responsibilities‹ (CBDRs) and fairer means of financing the goals (euphemistically referred to as the ›Means of Implementation‹ (MoI) currently articulated for each individual goal as well as for the overall development agenda).

These three sticking points – (i) CBDRs, (ii) MoI and (iii) the Peace Goal – were the subject of extended and extensive negotiations during the last OWG session in July 2014. The Peace Goal in particular almost threatened to derail the entire process. On 17 July, Austria sent a letter to the Co-Chairs on behalf of the ›Group of Friends of the Rule of Law‹ requesting that they reinstate the rule of law as a separate standalone goal. The Group 77 and China on the other hand, insisted on adding a specific target on ending foreign occupation as a condition to accepting a Peace Goal. In response to this, northern countries said they would consider reopening all targets, implicitly threatening to reconsider targets on CBDR and MoI which had by then reached a basic consensus. Informal negotiations over the language and targets of the Peace Goal lasted for over two days (Thurs 17 – Friday 18 July) barely reaching consensus at 4am on Saturday morning. In light of the level of discord among the OWG, the Co-Chairs requested an extra plenary session on Saturday 19 July where they took the ›temperature‹ of the room to decide whether the Outcome Document would represent a consensus of Member State positions or be a ›non-paper‹. Delegates at the plenary argued that a non-paper would carry little to no weights during the General Assembly Debate in September 2014 and effectively do away with over a year's worth of diplomatic work. It is under this rationale that an OWG Outcome Document was adopted on 19 July 2014. Bearing in mind that the Outcome Document is not a consensus position between all UN Member States, but only between the 30 members of the OWG, this is a less-than-auspicious start for the official post-2015 negotiation process and the inclusion of a Peace Goal within that process.

5. Looking Forward: The Outcome Document and Beyond

While the set of suggested SDGs and targets in the OWG Outcome Document are far from ideal (in all respects) they do reflect the merging of conflicting visions into at least a grudging consensus, including one over the form and substance of a Peace Goal (see Box 1). Most of the targets proposed by the peace and rule of law advocates made it into the Outcome Document, indicating that the advocacy strategies adopted by these communities were on the whole successful. However, the current language of the Peace Goal is very weak and falls short of making peaceful societies and accountable institutions a deliverable development outcome. States only need to promote the delivery of targets under the Peace Goal, while leaving actionable measures open to interpretation and thus making it more difficult for civil society groups to hold their governments to account.

Moreover, the inclusion of certain language in the Outcome Document, such as that concerning international measures to combat terrorism, gives reason for concern over existence of hidden agendas and the so-called ›securitization of development‹. Paragraph 16 of the chapeaux speaks of meeting the needs of people living in ›areas affected by terrorism‹, while one of the MoI under the Peace Goal calls for greater international cooperation in ›combating terrorism and crime‹.

This language reflects the uneasiness expressed by many in the development sector that overseas development assistance will be funnelled off to help finance the global war on terror. It is unclear whether the peace advocates were aware of this hidden agenda during the negotiations.[7] Perhaps they preferred to remain agnostic about this possibility in the hope that the inclusion of a Peace Goal in the development agenda would at least generate much-needed funding for ›from-the-ground-up‹ peacebuilding activities, even if alongside more traditional approaches of ›securitizing the state‹.

In addition, the inclusion of ›peace and security‹ in the development agenda – albeit thinly disguised under an-

other name – reveals another backdrop leading up to the post-2015 process which is often obscured, namely that of a global insecurity crisis. After numerous ›security failures‹, from botched international interventions to a sharp increase in radical militias within and across borders (despite the unleashing of unfettered global surveillance mechanisms and counter-terrorism measures), the hegemony of foreign powers and the operational capacities of UN institutions are in a state of turmoil. In this context there is no clear boundary between the violent suppression of violence and non-violent peacebuilding. In fact, one of the major challenges facing the peacebuilding community is to define and consolidate what it means by peacebuilding: what kinds of actions, principles, approaches and discourse fall clearly within the boundaries of building peace, and what kinds clearly do not?

This definitional problem is reflected in the UN's current peacekeeping, peacemaking and peacebuilding efforts. Much soul-searching and reflection is expected in 2015: the Security Council will review the implementation of its ›Women, Peace and Security‹ resolutions, various agencies and departments are expected to consider peacebuilding strategies and the UN's peacebuilding architecture will come under a ›make-or-break‹ review.

In light of all this, it is perhaps no wonder that peace and some of its preventive elements, such as good governance and accountable institutions, have made it into the Post-2015 agenda thus far. In some ways, there is nothing to lose. The more these security challenges are brought to the surface for open discussion in different fora, the more likely it is that a workable way forward to addressing this multidimensional problem can be formulated.

The challenge for peace advocates now is to decide what must be preserved from the Outcome Document, that is, what must be improved and what must be removed or included. For example, there is no mention of holding private security firms accountable or of making the arms industrial complex more transparent as part of curbing illicit arms flows. Importantly, in order to make headway in these neglected areas, peace advocates must change their terms of engagement with their natural allies, the northern countries, as the latter are most likely to block such initiatives. Peace advocates must exert pressure on arms trade issues such as we have yet to see from those leading the charge for the Peace Goal. Unfortunately,

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7. Once this ›hidden agenda‹ was brought out into the open in the Outcome Document, peace advocates were openly critical of it. See for example, Saferworld's comments on 22.7.2014, available at: http://www.saferworld.org.uk/news-and-views/comment/140-peace-and-post-2015-the-momentum-gathers (last accessed on 13.8.2014).

OWG Outcome Document[*]

Proposed Goal 16. Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels

16.1 significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere

16.2 end abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence and torture against children

16.3 promote the rule of law at the national and international levels, and ensure equal access to justice for all

16.4 by 2030 significantly reduce illicit financial and arms flows, strengthen recovery and return of stolen assets, and combat all forms of organized crime

16.5 substantially reduce corruption and bribery in all its forms

16.6 develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels

16.7 ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels

16.8 broaden and strengthen the participation of developing countries in the institutions of global governance

16.9 by 2030 provide legal identity for all including birth registration

16.10 ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements

16.a [MoI] strengthen relevant national institutions, including through international cooperation, for building capacities at all levels, in particular in developing countries, for preventing violence and combating terrorism and crime

16.b [MoI] promote and enforce non-discriminatory laws and policies for sustainable development

* See: http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/ 4518SDGs_FINAL_Proposal%20of%20OWG_19%20July%20 at%201320hrsver3.pdf (last accessed 5.9.2014)

the disarmament community has not been central to the advocacy efforts for the Peace Goal thus far. Hence, there is room for much deeper collaboration between civil society groups in this regard.

Furthermore, if these shortcomings are not urgently addressed,[8] what guarantees are there that the new set of SDGs will significantly challenge the conditions that allow poverty, inequality and insecurity to be reproduced? If they fail to do so, what kind of ›transformative shift‹ are we really promoting, given that the agenda will be peppered with voluntary commitments, undermined by uncritical, non-substantive targets and propped up by public-private partnerships and privatization? Also, if this is the case, what then becomes of civil society groups and the general public as stakeholders in the future agenda for development?

At a bare minimum, the OWG Outcome Document can serve as a ›heads up‹ on what countries around the world will be basing their negotiations on throughout 2015. If the public at large is passionate about reducing the level of violence in society, then it can engage in the numerous country-wide consultations planned by the UN throughout 2015. But first there should be close analysis of a government's attitude towards two issues prior to the formulation of demands. One is the criminalization of poor communities. A shallow interpretation of the link between poverty and violence can be used to justify more intrusive surveillance and policing tactics, while ignoring the structural causes of violence, such as income inequality and state-sponsored violence. The second is the general direction in which a government is heading when it comes to public security. As we have seen during the recent protests around the world, there is a fine line between ensuring public safety and the deterioration of fundamental freedoms.

8. There is a narrow window of opportunity to influence the final text that will be put forward to all Member States as the basis for their negotiations throughout 2015. This text will be drafted by the Secretary-General and take into account the OWG Outcome Document, the results of global consultations, as well as two events that are yet to take place. One is a High-Level Stocktaking event held under the auspices of the General Assembly on 11.–12.9.2014 at which civil society delegates have been invited to speak; the other, the outcome of the General Debate at the 68th Session of the General Assembly, 24.9.–1.10.2014. Also, the G7+ countries are planning a Ministerial Breakfast ahead of the General Debate where these more critical issues could be addressed and, ideally, presented as a common position among several Member States during the Debate. Once the textual basis for negotiations is launched, civil society may still influence their national governments' positions through strong mobilization on the ground. However, it may be much more difficult for them to add language and targets to the basic text at that stage.

About the author

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Dialogue **on** Globalization

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