

PEACE AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: A TWO-WAY RELATIONSHIP

Summary of the panel for OWG website

The Journalists and Writers Foundation (JWF) co-organized a panel on the relationship between peace and sustainable development with the Permanent Mission of El Salvador to the UN and Peace Islands Institute. The panelists discussed how peace is essential for sustainable development and how economic, social and environmental development is necessary for durable peace. Because these two concepts are interconnected, the United Nations agencies and member states need to closely work on both concepts simultaneously and discuss how international or regional organizations can enforce peace agreements which is the first step in implementing policies to achieve sustainable development goals.

Mr. Huseyin Hurmali, Vice-President of the JWF emphasized and explained how civil initiatives inspired by scholar Fethullah Gulen have been contributing to both durable peace and sustainable development in about 160 countries around the world. Schools, universities and other educational institutions have been providing high quality science and mathematics education and also contributing to peace through becoming entities of “social mediation” in the regions of conflict.

H.E. Ruben Armando Escalante Hasbun, Ambassador and Deputy Permanent Representative of El Salvador to the UN, discussed the case of El Salvador and how structural adjustment programs of international institutions have been unsuccessful because of irrelevant policies. He stressed that UN entities such as the Peacebuilding Commission can be very implemental in sustaining peace through working in countries on case-by-case basis.

Professor Alastair Smith of New York University’s Department of Politics presented findings of his research on foreign aid and development. He suggested that domestic institutions in recipient countries play a major role in transforming aid to development. In nations with more efficient and inclusive institutions, aid provided by countries or international organizations significantly increased economic growth while foreign aid to nations with unrepresentative institutions did not have any impact on growth.

Assistant Professor Séverine Autesserre of Barnard College, Columbia University, explained why the massive international efforts have failed to help the Congo achieve lasting peace and promote sustainable development. She suggested that the primary cause of the failure was the persistence of local conflicts which were neglected by international peacebuilding actors. A top-down approach to durable peace and sustainable development failed to consider local causes and therefore she argued that a mix of top-down and bottom-up approaches must be adopted to be able to achieve both lasting peace and sustainable development.

Assistant Professor Johannes Urpelainen from Columbia University has discussed implications of his research on how significant the environmental impact of industrialized countries is on the conflict onsets in African continent. Even though researches conducted in the past years have been inconclusive, findings of new studies that use new data and methodologies suggest that the climate change is one of the factors affecting peace and triggering conflicts in many parts of the world.

Galymzhan Kirbassov, moderator, UN Representative of the JWF and Adjunct Lecturer at Columbia University, argued that the contributions of JWF and its affiliated institutions were the cases of bottom-up approach to both peace and development. Without underestimating international and national efforts, NGOs must be considered as an essential part of the implementation and monitoring of the UN development goals due to their ability to work with the locals. Allocation of resources needs to be implemented efficiently without failing to include all essential stakeholders.

Policy recommendations:

- In addition to any top-down intervention, conflicts must be resolved from the bottom, up.
- Grassroots organizations, as well as local authorities and civil-society representatives, should be the main actors in the bottom-up process.
- International donors should expand the funding available for local conflict resolution, and they should do so either by shifting their priorities away from

counter-productive foci (such as an insistence of organizing rapid elections after the end of a civil war) or by increasing their aid budgets.

- Since climate change and other global environmental changes contribute to conflict, we can prevent violence by reducing our environmental impact.
- Given the rate of global environmental change today, localized adaptation is also important for preventing conflict.
- As different countries to grow economically, their ability to deal with environmental stress improves. However, we need to find ways to promote sustainable growth to avoid further environmental problems down the road.