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Quaker United Nations Office

Remarks for the Eighth session of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals, in the co-chairs discussion on 'Conflict prevention, post-conflict peacebuilding and the promotion of durable peace, rule of law and governance'.

Excellences, Friends and Colleagues

The world is asking itself – “What kind of society do we want to live in?” And almost universally, the answer is – “a peaceful one”. But what does that mean, in practice, and how do we address a universal yearning for peace, in a dry, chopped-up framework of goals and targets and indicators?

I have three comments and a conclusion:

First, *violence is a fundamental dimension of human suffering*. Violence is a part of everyday life for hundreds of millions of children, women and men on a daily basis, as integral a part of the human experience as hunger and sickness. Violence is universal, and darkens lives in rich societies as well as poor ones. And we have learned that violence cannot be addressed without engaging with its roots in the fabric of our societies and in the ways in which we order our international affairs.

Secondly, *we cannot eradicate extreme poverty without addressing violence and instability*. Overwhelmingly, the evidence from countries affected by chronic violence and instability, the countries that now form the heart of the development enterprise, is that we cannot achieve conventional development objectives without addressing the fabric of society, without fostering stronger institutions, better governance, inclusion and people's safety and justice, as well as providing livelihoods and dignity. In many of these societies, the conventional aid process has been like pouring water into a bucket with holes in: the water just pours out of the holes. We have to help fix the bucket, to find ways of helping societies build the capacity to become more resistant to violence and instability.

Thirdly, *peace and stability are the road to resilience*. In so many of the topics that are being looked at within sustainable development, a key goal is to help build stronger societies, societies that can better manage internal and external stresses, that can be more robust in the face of climate change and disaster, that can better address the needs of the vulnerable and provide jobs and justice. Better, and more inclusive governance and decision making, stronger institutions, and addressing inequalities and exclusion, are not side issues: they are key building blocks in creating the resilience that will help societies achieve ALL development goals.

Excellencies, I have two points in conclusion:

First, I wanted to draw your attention to the recently released statistical note for the Technical Support Team issue brief on “Conflict Prevention, Post Conflict Peacebuilding and the Promotion of Durable Peace, Rule of Law and Governance”, which states conclusively that “Measuring peace, rule of law and governance is both feasible and necessary to guarantee the achievement of all development goals”. That is to say, the experts seem confident that *peace can be measured*, that meaningful targets and indicators exist or can be created.

And finally, given the fundamental importance of this issue, *we believe that there should be a standalone goal for peace and stability*, in addition to related targets that will be mainstreamed throughout all the goals.

Thank you.

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