

Connecting Development and Peace to operationalise Goal 16 for the EU

DEVE Hearing on Good governance and the implementation of Goal 16

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1. Intro: the 2030 agenda holds huge potential, but how do we turn it into reality?

Last year, world leaders made a commitment to promote more peaceful, just and inclusive societies - one of five global priorities to be realised across the goals of the 2030 Agenda. If this commitment is to amount to more than rhetoric, we need to build genuine peace, underpinned by justice, inclusion and political freedoms for all – and we must be able to distinguish this peace from unsustainable stability enforced through the gun.

The 2030 Agenda holds immense potential: we now have a global framework, agreed to by all the world's states, the UN and thousands of NGOs, which can be used to direct and monitor a fifteen-year, people-focused, developmental approach to preventing crisis in a way which is flexible to context and mobilises multiple stakeholders.

This is obviously a very optimistic reading of what the 2030 Agenda could do. This will not happen on its own, and we need to work hard to turn it into a reality.

During my presentation, I will cover

- Why it is important that the EU invest in Goal 16;
- Where its priorities should lie; and
- What the main threats are to realising commitments under this goal.

2. Brief intro to Saferworld and our work on SDGs

First, very briefly, I would like to introduce myself: my name is Kloe Tricot O'Farrell and I am the EU Policy and Advocacy Coordinator for [Saferworld](http://saferworld.org), an independent international organisation working to prevent violent conflict and build safer lives. Notably, we have been advocating for the inclusion of [peace, governance and justice in the 2030 Agenda](#) for the past five years. Now that it has been adopted, we are working to ensure a strong commitment to its implementation so that it can make a real difference to people's lives.

3. Why the EU should invest in Goal 16

It is crucial that the EU – and member states – invest in Goal 16, not only because there are still challenges to promoting it globally or because it make sense for the EU to do so as it offers entry points to engage on a number of other issues, but also in view of worrying conflict trends. Not least:

- The number of armed conflicts has jumped from 31 in 2010 to 50 in 2015, whereas the number of displaced people rose from 37 million in 1996 to 65.3 million in 2015 – this amounts to a 75% increase in less than 20 years.
- In addition, more people have died in armed conflict in 2014 than in any other year in the last two decades. The second most deadly year was 2015.
- Measures of the other components of goal 16 have also shown worrying deviations in recent years. According to [Freedom House](#), for instance, more countries have seen declines in freedom than have seen advances between 2005 and 2014. More than 60 countries have passed or drafted laws that [curtail the activity of civil society](#) in the last three years, and two-thirds of the 180 countries surveyed in the last [World Press Freedom Index](#) performed less well than in the previous year.

4. There are five things that the EU should do to support Goal 16

- First, it should continue to champion Goal 16

It is crucial that it does so the international level, mainly because while the 2030 Agenda, and as such Goal 16, has been agreed by all the world's states, there is still resentment and push-back from member states in New York. As the normative battle around Goal 16 continues, the EU and Member States need to stay true to its vision and protect it (*I will go over this point in a little more detail in the final section of my presentation*).

In addition, because there are many goals and therefore a risk that states will adopt a pick-and-choose approach, Goal 16 needs to be championed at the national level. When doing so, the EU needs to remember that specific aspects of Goal 16 will be relevant to different actors in different contexts and at different junctures in time. This will mean:

- Working to context;
- Working flexibly and resisting the temptation to replicate template programming approaches;
- Waiting for those moments when there is a sudden opening for change;
- Working to sensible long-term time horizons given the 15-year time span of the SDGs;

And, acknowledging the politics of all of this, which is linked to my second point:

- The EU needs to think about how change really happens and how change agents can be supported

Consensus on the need to “work politically” will be meaningless if interpreted only as understanding local politics and working with the grain of the status quo. Providing financial, technical but also political support to domestic actors trying to drive positive change should be part and parcel of all development programming. This means understanding where the energy for change is in a society and mobilising behind it. Repressive regimes are not going to roll over in the face of some new UN language, but Goal 16 has created new levers for domestic change-makers to pull on, and a legitimate basis for international actors to back them.

- Third, the EU will need to work with relevant stakeholders in new ways

The 2030 Agenda explicitly calls for government, multilateral, civil society and private sector stakeholders to work in concert. Multi-stakeholder partnerships, whether long-term or ad-hoc, will prove valuable in plugging global governance deficits. But they will also be critical at national level. Transformative change does not come at the hands of a single Minister or a new government policy; it comes from coalitions working across society and state, and by engaging well beyond the like-minded.

Silos should be broken through agreement around a holistic, shared understanding of transformative change that guides interventions. As such, the EU should be promoting the broader peaceful, just and inclusive societies agenda which can act as a platform to bring together relevant stakeholders to work on interdependent issues, such as peaceful societies and gender equality.

- Fourth, the EU, and western foreign policy actors more broadly, will need to work much more coherently to better align bilateral, domestic and multilateral policy.

First, special support will continue to be needed in countries at risk of or experiencing conflict. This means bilateral support that is coherent across government and working to a long-term time-frame of change. It's no use providing aid to change-makers fighting mis-governance and corruption when you're licensing arms exports to the very political elites who are trying to stop them.

Second, the universal relevance of the 2030 Agenda to the challenges we face at home must be taken seriously if we expect others to do the same and enter into a meaningful two-way exchange on different models of progress. The EU and Member States won't be able to push countries on corruption or access to justice unless they show that these issues are taken seriously internally.

Third, decisive collective action at global level will be required on transnational conflict drivers, such as illicit financial flows or conflict commodities. This requires leadership at multilateral level to get everyone moving in the same direction.

The ability for policy to operate across these three levels simultaneously will prove more useful than the donor-recipient approach which still frames policy today.

- And finally, fifth, the EU must support the creation of new datasets

Thanks to the 2030 Agenda, we now have means to track global progress: the [global SDG indicators](#) are not perfect, but they will generate new data on issues not traditionally tracked officially or in a way that is comparable between countries. In particular, indicators on levels of inequality, access to justice and of corruption for instance will be crucial to hold relevant stakeholders to account and could play a critical role in processes where change is being contested. They could also be helpful in identifying conflict risk.

As such, the world will need to make significant investments in data gathering capacities, especially within national statistical systems, all the while supporting their independence from political interference. Moreover, donors should be thinking about how to support capacities among multilateral agencies, civil society and citizens themselves with the overall aim of creating pluralistic data ecosystems.

Two things to note on indicators:

- The global indicators are not yet fully signed off. It is important that the EU and Member States see them through and don't allow others to torpedo the process through opening them up.
- Second, I want to briefly highlight a project Saferworld is involved in, called the [Goal 16 Data Initiative](#), which brings together 14 organisations seeking to improve how we're measuring issues related to peace, justice and inclusion.

5. However, some of the main threats to achieving Goal 16 could lie in our domestic politics:

With all of this in mind, it is important to recognise that a number of threats and risks lie ahead for the peaceful, just and inclusive societies' agenda and for Goal 16 specifically. Many of these risks lie at national or regional level and are not issues that external actors have any control over. Some of them lie in the policies of other powers over which Western actors also have little power. But, with these caveats in mind, I do think that one of the greatest threats to achieving Goal 16 could lie in our own politics at home.

Unprecedented numbers of migrants reaching Europe's shores and the threat of terrorist attacks in European capitals have led migration management and counter-terrorism to dominate the agendas of the EU and its member states. Problems which used to be dealt with 'over there' are now having direct impacts on domestic politics 'over here'. Coupled with austerity and a growing scepticism of the benefits of globalisation, fear and uncertainty have reinforced populist, ultra-nationalist and xenophobic voices in European politics and forced those in power to demonstrate their resolve when responding to domestic concerns. In turn, pragmatic, short-term and security-focused interventions are being prioritised over principled, long-term and people-centred approaches to global security.

The recently published [Global Strategy for Foreign and Security Policy](#) which sets out the core interests and principles that will inform EU external action for the years to come, highlights the increased emphasis on domestic interests in foreign policy decision-making. While the strategy stresses the importance of conflict prevention and human security, and recognises the importance of promoting peace and stability beyond EU borders to ensure its own security, it also emphasises the need for development policy to be more flexible and aligned with strategic priorities. This is indicative of a wider risk; that commitments to alleviate poverty and promote peace will be discarded or used as a lever to secure short-term strategic objectives.

Development resources are already being allocated to support migration management efforts as well as [preventing violent extremism \(PVE\) interventions which now qualify as Official Development Assistance \(ODA\)](#). The [Capacity Building in support of Security and Development \(CBSD\) initiative](#) to provide 'train and equip' support to security actors in third countries, including the military "in pursuit of development policy goals" is also troubling. The initiative references Goal 16 and [argues](#) that "not addressing critical operational needs of partners hampers the achievement of essential objectives for development, i.e. to foster conditions for peace and human security."

While the EU recognises in this context the importance of promoting human rights, the rule of law as well as democratic and good governance principles, reliance on train and equip programmes to foster peace and development raises several concerns.

- For one, the aim of development cooperation is to promote people's well-being, which may in turn support national security. When the former is explicitly subsumed by the latter, both aims become more distant.
- Second, Goal 16 lays out a long-term and bottom-up developmental approach to preventing conflict, making governance more inclusive and widening access to justice. And while target 16.6 relates to institutional capacity building, it specifically emphasises the need for them to be 'effective, accountable and transparent.' As such, training and equipping governments who lack the political will to undergo meaningful reforms and improve public security will not advance this priority. On the contrary, strengthened but unreformed security sectors lead directly to less peaceful societies. Despite this, the EU is in danger of prioritising the institutional capacity of third countries, regardless of whether they are taking responsibility for changing the conditions (which they may have created) that drive insecurity or instability. While many are specifically (and rightly so) concerned about the CBSD initiative, I do feel that the broader approach consisting in short-term, top-down, securitised interventions is problematic. A clear [example](#) of this is the Better Migration Management (BMM) project, the flagship project of the Khartoum Process, through which the EU will provide trainings, technical assistance and equipment to enhance the capacity of state institutions to manage migration and tackle human trafficking and smuggling in countries such as Ethiopia, Eritrea and Sudan – which are states that have consistently failed to protect human rights or provide means for people to hold security actors accountable.

EU responses to insecurity should not come at the expense of its commitments to promoting democracy, the rule of law, human rights and fundamental freedoms. At a time when national governments are becoming more hard-line and exclusionary, it is all the more important that a supra-national body like the EU rises above domestic interests and continues to champion the rights of the poor and oppressed wherever they live. But this is about more than principles: there is little proof that these approaches will prove effective, especially in the long-term. On the contrary, there is ample [evidence](#) of the pitfalls of developing toxic partnerships and using aid in pursuit of statebuilding objectives. Genuine peace is underpinned by justice, inclusion and political freedoms for all; this understanding should guide EU and Member States' interventions and inform how they frame their objectives, in the context of their support to the 2030 Agenda but beyond as well.