

11
YEARS

GENEVA
PEACE
WEEK



SESSIONS REPORT **GENEVA PEACE** **WEEK 2024**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. A Feminist Peace Built by All: Pathways to Inclusive Visions of Peace.....	1
2. Breaking the Cycle: Engaging Survivors and Former Extremists to End Violent Extremism	3
3. Inspiring New Thinking: Environmental and Food Security Solutions for Peace	5
4. A Dangerous Intersection: Climate Change, Environmental Degradation, and Inadequate Governance as Drivers of Armed Conflict	9
5. Addressing discrimination and xenophobia in schools through ethics education transformative pedagogies	11
6. From Last Mile to Lasting Peace: Strategies for engaging populations beyond state reach in health, humanitarian, and peace initiatives.....	13
7. Pathways to Peace: Empowering Young Women as Agents of Change	15
8. Building peace through an urban lens	17
9. Building trust across divides – strategies, tools, and success stories.....	19
10. Trustbuilding from the table to the streets: Inclusive Strategies for Sustainable Peace.....	21
11. Mitigating the Human Rights Impacts of Arms Transfers: A Blueprint for Peace.....	23
12. Local Actors as Peace Influencers: Security Sector Governance and Reform’s Role in Peacebuilding in the MENA Region	25
13. What is the Future for Small Arms Control?	27
14. Contributions to Sustaining Peace since 2016: Evaluating Progress and Future Directions	32
15. Trade and sme-led growth in Fragile and conflict-affected settings	34
16. Beyond Survival — Unpacking The Nexus Between Conflict, Gender and Natural Disasters.....	36
17. Social contract and trust building: can another UN-supervised constitutional process bring peace to Afghanistan?"	39
18. Understanding and managing conflict-risk with the private sector.....	41
19. Geneva Peace Week Peace Panel, Understanding the Intersection of Conflict, Hunger, and Peace: Global Perspectives	44
20. How can peace prosper? The role of national peace infrastructures in sustaining peace	46
21. Protection of Civilians at 25 and Beyond: Understanding and reversing current POC trends	47
22. Sparing Water from Armed Conflicts – Building a Coalition of Action.....	50
23. The Role of Special Procedures in Sustaining Peace and Preventing Conflict through Human Rights	52
24. What is Resilience? Bringing coherence to concepts of resilience in conflict prevention and peacebuilding.....	54

1. A FEMINIST PEACE BUILT BY ALL: PATHWAYS TO INCLUSIVE VISIONS OF PEACE

ORGANISERS

The International Peace Institute (IPI), the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA), the Geneva Centre for Security Policy (GCSP), International Gender Champions, the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (HD), and the Berghof Foundation

TOPIC

This public policy forum explored the theme of Geneva Peace Week, “What is Peace?” through a gendered lens and examined how the women, peace, and security (WPS) agenda can be better leveraged to move the multilateral system toward more inclusive and feminist visions of peace.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- **Feminist Peace as a Vision:** The concept of feminist peace transcends traditional peace frameworks by advocating for the inclusion of marginalized voices and addressing the root causes of conflict through an intersectional lens.
- **Role of Women in Peace Processes:** Women's full, equal, meaningful, and safe participation is essential in peace negotiations to create long lasting peace.
- **Engaging Men for Feminist Peace:** Active involvement of men, particularly those in positions of power, is crucial for advancing feminist peace initiatives and dismantling patriarchal structures.
- **Addressing Violent Masculinities:** There is a need to confront violent masculinities that perpetuate conflict and inequality and to adopt a broader understanding of gender roles.
- **Psychological Disarmament:** There is a need to address the psychological aspects of conflict and to understand that conflict is not only physical reality but also a mentality that can be transformed.
- **Collaboration Across Sectors:** Building alliances among feminist actors across different sectors and regions strengthens efforts toward achieving inclusive peace.
- **The Law and Accountability:** There is a need to utilize the legal frameworks at our disposal to hold perpetrators of violence accountable. The law should continue to be used as a tool to push boundaries and direct us towards achieving better, more just outcomes.
- **Challenges to Implementation:** Despite existing normative frameworks like UN Security Council Resolution 1325, significant challenges remain in translating these into actionable strategies on the ground.

SUMMARY OF THE SESSION

On the margins of Geneva Peace Week 2024, The International Peace Institute (IPI), the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA), the Geneva Centre for Security Policy (GCSP), International Gender Champions, the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (HD), and the Berghof Foundation hosted a panel discussion, “A Feminist Peace Built by All: Pathways to Inclusive Visions of Peace.”

The event began with welcoming remarks from Thomas Greminger, Executive Director of the Geneva Centre for Security Policy, followed by Dr. Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein, President and CEO of IPI. They set the stage for a discussion on how inclusive approaches are essential for sustainable peace. Moderated by IPI’s Phoebe Donnelly, the panel featured notable speakers Madeleine Rees, Ingrid Münch, Callum Watson, and Victoria Sandino Simanca Herrera. Each speaker brought unique insights into the complexities surrounding gender and peace.

Madeleine Rees emphasized that while historical contexts shape current realities, feminist peace offers a transformative vision that can bridge divides. She argued against merely making war safer for women and called for proactive measures to prevent violence against women through comprehensive legal frameworks.

Ingrid Münch highlighted the importance of engaging men in the pursuit of feminist peace and recognizing diverse masculinities in order to transform gender and power relations. She advocated for the power of negotiated solutions for peace, called for stronger accountability frameworks, and discussed the need to frame feminist demands in culturally relevant ways.

Callum Watson discussed the need for both physical and psychological disarmament. He spoke about the concept of positive peace, which ensures justice and equality beyond mere absence of conflict. He pointed out that understanding gender roles is critical in addressing violence and conflict dynamics.

Victoria Sandino Simanca Herrera shared her experiences from Colombia's peace process and stressed that feminism must address all forms of oppression. She called for political will from both local and international actors to support women's roles in peacebuilding and the need for collective and collaborative approaches to achieving peace.

The panel concluded with insights from Ambassador OIKE Atsuyuki, who reiterated Japan's commitment to gender equality as a cornerstone for achieving lasting peace. Overall, the event underscored that building a feminist peace requires not only women's participation but also a collective effort to strive for positive peace.

2. BREAKING THE CYCLE: ENGAGING SURVIVORS AND FORMER EXTREMISTS TO END VIOLENT EXTREMISM

ORGANISERS

Global Action Platform (GAP) in collaboration with the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund (GCERF), Think Peace, ONG Garkua, RECOPA, Union Fraternelle des Croyants de Dori

TOPIC

Should former violent extremists be reintegrated? And if yes, how?

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- A survivor is not born. A violent person is not born. Circumstances make a person become a survivor or a former extremist. And these circumstances are created by the social, political, economic, and security environments the person inhabits.
- Reintegrating former violent extremists is essential to breaking the cycle of violence: it addresses the root causes of radicalization, strengthens community resilience, lowers the risk of recidivism, and supports the healing process for survivors, fostering a safer and more inclusive society.
- The journey to become a violent extremist is strongly personalised. The journey out of it equally requires a personalised response to reach a meaningful and beneficial destination.
- Rehabilitation and reintegration should not be reserved just for the ex-combatants. Survivors need to be rehabilitated and reintegrated too. Equally, mental health and trauma healing should not be just for survivors. Ex-combatants need it too.
- Engaging ex-combatants is one of the most effective ways to break the cycle of violence. They simply know how best to dismantle the foundations they helped build. How best to debunk their own crafts.
- A different story can be written for survivors, former combatants, and conflict-affected communities. Engaging directly with local communities through their trusted local partners is one of the surest ways to help write that different story.

SUMMARY OF THE SESSION

The session began with a debate between **Dr Lilla Schumicky-Logan** and **Kevin Osborne** aimed at presenting common arguments against the reintegration of former violent extremists. Dr Schumicky-Logan argued in favour of engaging former terrorists to prevent violent extremism, while Kevin Osborne provided counter-arguments.

The debate concluded with the screening of a slam poem prepared by the **Think Peace** team entitled '*L'erreur est humaine*' (To err is human). The aim was to provide an emotional introduction to the

message that had been discussed throughout the session and more formally delivered during the round table, namely the importance of reintegrating prisoners into society after their imprisonment.

The spotlight then turned to the panel of GCERF beneficiaries and participants.

Kindo Aminata, a survivor of violent extremism, gave a moving account of her journey from the execution of her husband by extremist groups to her social and psychological rehabilitation, supported by the actions of the **UFC-Dori**.

This was followed by the testimonies of two ex-combatants and repentis, **Mr Mahamar Ahmidi and Mr Ibrahim Mammo Maiga**, who have been involved in Think Peace's activities as local agents of positive change. They spoke about the psychology of a terrorist, the drivers of radicalisation and what can lead them away from violent extremist ideology and onto the path of peace.

This was followed by an online presentation by an ex-combatant, **Mr Mamoudou Amadou**, involved in the **NGO GARKUA** project.

The last two speakers on the panel from **RECOPA**, **Alou Abdoulaye**, coordinator and co-chair of the GAP working group on social cohesion, followed by **Laura Oumou**, gender officer, presented the projects they are implementing, in particular to deal with the issue of internally displaced people and the importance of combating stereotypes and stigmatisation within communities.

The question and answer session ended with a speech by **Maimouna Ba**, the regional laureate of the Nansen 2024 Prize. She pointed out that GCERF supports both local society organisations and activists like herself to improve community resilience at all levels. Maimouna appealed for support for the Sahel in its drive to rebuild peace, pointing out that when war ends, unfortunately it does not end in the minds of the victims. She also stressed the importance of education and the psychosocial aspect in terms of support.

Moctar Kane finally had the last word, reminding us that repenting and surviving trauma is a courageous individual choice and undertaking. He pointed out that no one is born a survivor or a violent person, and that it is circumstances that decide the path of each individual. These circumstances are created by the social, political, economic and security environment in which the person lives.

In conclusion, each speaker shared their personal experiences and advocated for the inclusion of ex-combatants and survivors in prevention and peace-building programmes. These GCERF grantees demonstrated how outreach and reintegration activities through GCERF-funded programmes can build resilience to prevent violent extremism. The event was fully narrated and moderated by Dr Lilla Schumicky-Logan, Deputy Executive Director of GCERF.

3. INSPIRING NEW THINKING: ENVIRONMENTAL AND FOOD SECURITY SOLUTIONS FOR PEACE

ORGANISERS

KAF, Ban Ki-Moon Centre for Global Citizens, Sipri

- **Introduction by moderator**

56 active conflicts, highest number since WW2. Crises can't be addressed in isolation. Siloed approaches have not worked. How food security, climate change and conflict are linked? More than a dozen countries face instability rooted in food crises. Food is weaponized in times of war. There is no food security without peace and no peace without food security. Climate extremes are damaging food ecosystems. Of 10 countries most vulnerable to climate change, 9 are insecure.

- **Keynote speech – Amir Abdulla**

Question/introduction to Amir:

*You're currently serving as Commissioner to the Kofi Annan Commission on Food Security. One of the key questions the Commission is grappling with is: **if you could rewind the tape to 1945 and the early years of our modern multilateral system, how would you build the global governance architecture so that no one ever goes hungry?***

*Ambitious as this may be, food security is a prerequisite to peaceful societies, as is peace to food secure societies. **To get the room thinking, you have the floor for about 5 minutes to set the scene for us with some of the challenges you're seeing today and that you've confronted in your long career in the humanitarian coordination and negotiation spaces.***

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Fundamental shortsightedness: they should have been building an architecture that would protect peace.

- It's 50 years before a plan of action on women's rights - 1995 Beijing conference. 30 years after that plan, we're still far from having achieved this agenda.
- UNSC and issue of veto: Lack of will to implement UNSC resolutions, no mechanism to enforce them.
- Myriads of organizations that exist in this sphere: looks like a beauty contest (among men). How to make it more meaningful to the people? If we want to serve the people, we need to know what they want and need, and also find a way to express need a way to express that (better representation of the local level at the global level).
- Regarding climate, his generation didn't understand what was going on and what was going to happen. The current generation needs to receive mechanisms now (to fix the damage and for prevention).
- Need to reimagine UNSC, more women in multilateral space, will and mechanism to implement.

SUMMARY OF THE SESSION

PART 1 – Moderated panel discussion

Setting the scene: Identifying challenges and exploring the gaps in the food-climate-peace nexus

Arizza:

Peace is becoming an increasingly elusive idea yet more than ever; we're seeing the need for peace. From the Sahel to South Asia, populations are mired in conflict, dissent, and the breakdown of social cohesion. None of it can be disassociated from the climate crisis.

*Your own country – the Philippines – faces some of the harshest impacts of climate change, from super typhoons to rising sea levels. We have seen that climate problems can ignite conflicts, causing harvest failures, and have the potential of putting livelihoods to sudden halt. **What are some of the challenges you're witnessing related to this food-climate-peace nexus? And why should these topics be addressed cohesively?***

Grew up in Southern Philippines where it never rained. It always rains there now – massive floodings, landslides and typhoons. For 16 years, highest in World risk index (vulnerability to disasters + unpreparedness)

This climate risk has prevented the delivery of basic services. Acute problem of malnutrition: 4 children dying per hour. Climate change is adding to this problem. Education: class cancellation because of heat, flooding. Losing weeks of education. Country doesn't have the capacity to respond. Next year, mid-term elections. Leadership has a big responsibility to address these challenges through good policies, infrastructure. Issue of corruption.

70% of youth believe that politicians don't listen to them. Need for co-creation, for young people to be deeply involved in decision-making. Globally, only 2.6% of parliamentarians are aged 30 or younger, even though this age group represents the median age of the world's population.

Increased risks for harassment and insecurity for women when they need to go further to fetch for water, are put in IDP camps, etc.

*Halima, you've travelled far to come to Geneva, we're happy to have you among us. You are the founder of Nurtured Agro-resources Limited, a social enterprise providing capacity development to smallholder farmers through trainings and bootcamps on sustainable agricultural practices. **Why is this important? In responding to this, tell us some of the most pressing challenges you are witnessing while doing this work.***

Follow up: Based on your work in conflict-ridden Northern Nigeria, how can we look at solutions such as yours to strengthen the link between resilience building for our food growers and peace?

Northern Nigeria: region that is key for agriculture production but crippled by banditry, insurgency and kidnapping. Insecurity hampers people's access to their farmland. People are being deprived of their livelihood. Women are particularly vulnerable, as they are often left to care for the household on their own when the men are lost to armed violence.

Climate change adds to the challenge. This season, several weeks without rainfall, followed by intensified rainfall. 16000 people displaced by the floods. Crops affected by mould/fungus because of

heavy rains - still being sold on markets > issue of quality of food and the consequences on consumers, illnesses.

85% of food cultivated by small holder famers in Africa.

Need to empower farmers to develop coping strategies. Long-term solutions: govt giving rice to IDPs is not a long-term solution. Need committed action that reaches the grassroots.

Amir – let me turn to you. *We’ve heard from Arizza and Halima, who have both outlined some of the challenges they face in their work:*

You’ve coordinated humanitarian action when it comes to food security from above, in places like New York but you’ve also worked in Juba and Port Sudan among other very difficult places. And most recently in February 2022, you coordinated the Black Sea Grain Initiative – which was instrumental in reintroducing vital food and fertilizer from Ukraine to the rest of the world. Conflicts are on the rise, from Ukraine to Gaza to Sudan, not all conflicts have climate dimensions but in the near future, the climate crisis will be a common denominator of all conflicts directly and indirectly. Today, about 3.3 to 3.6 billion people live in hotspots of high vulnerability to climate change, mainly in Africa, South Asia, South/Central America and Small Island Developing States – as always, vulnerable populations – women and children – are affected the most.

Give us one entry point into how we may avert these crises? Is there hope to change this narrative?

Humanitarian/development continuum: but it is a pendulum on the ground. There are backward shocks. How to prevent people from falling back?

UN Coordinator for the Black Sea grain initiative: Ukrainians, Russians, UN, Turkey. Over time, Russians and Ukrainians accepted to speak to each other. Became a technical discussion on security of ships, ports, etc. When dealing with a common problem, dialogue is possible, and there is hope.

Last but not least, I want to turn to you, Katongo – *you’ve been working with KAF in conducting some very interesting research at the intersection of climate, peace and security. This research places strong emphasis on identifying and amplifying youth voices not least because the rapidly evolving effects of climate change create a range of vulnerabilities for young people. Could you speak to us about this research and some of your main findings linked to the climate-food-peace nexus? In responding to this, could you focus on some of the main areas where an intersectoral and intersectional approach (nexus approach) is needed?*

Livelihood and food is central to the climate-conflict intersection. Climate change exacerbates the risk of tensions. All 6 countries of the research are dependent on agriculture. Climate-insecurity sometimes push young people into criminal and violent activities. Migration is another option. Pressure in host communities.

Not a linear path, lot of intervening factors in-between.

If we know the solutions, where is the inertia?

Reforming the multilateral system: climate, security and food agenda. Encouraging progress: Climate security advisors being deployed within UN system. AU is developing a common position on climate security.

PART 2 – Facilitated Workshop Discussion

Overcoming challenges: identifying opportunities and solutions to promote collaboration

1. Addressing inclusion at the intersection of peace-climate-food

- Give a platform to the grassroots through community/youth/Indigenous-led research
- Flexibility of donors
- Accessibility: Visa issue, holding conferences where it's physically closer/more accessible to the side-lined communities
- Address bias and stereotypes that hinder the equality of the partners around the table
- Communication and disconnect: find a common ground, talk to communities in a way that makes sense to them
- Innovative solution: quadratic voting, which comes from the digital space. It includes the intensity of the opinion.

2. Innovative and novel solutions to governing food-peace-climate

3. Practical examples to breaking silos

- Mindset – not just institutional siloes, mindset of people – viewing the integration of challenge
 - Solutions: capacity building for donors –donors have better linkages
 - Can we create residencies for philanthropic actors? Appetite for philanthropic actors.
 - Insights from those affected – often not very accurate – stories of how this is playing out on the ground.
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4. A DANGEROUS INTERSECTION: CLIMATE CHANGE, ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION, AND INADEQUATE GOVERNANCE AS DRIVERS OF ARMED CONFLICT

ORGANISERS

Managing Exits from Armed Conflict (MEAC) Project, United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, adelphi, Foundation for Conservation and Sustainable Development (FCDS), Berghof Foundation

TOPIC

Environment, Climate, and Peace

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Climate change poses a major risk factor for conflict, increasing conflict potential and making people more vulnerable to recruitment by armed groups, especially in areas with weak government structures. In return, conflict contributes to environmental degradation and further reduces communities' resilience to climate change. Former associates of armed groups are especially vulnerable and programming for them often neglects to address climate change effects.

SUMMARY OF THE SESSION

The panel of experts on the impacts of climate change on armed conflict provided valuable insights into the topic from different contexts. Across the different cases that were discussed, it was clear that climate change increases competition over resources and contributes to livelihood insecurity, which increases the risk of conflict. These insecurities can also drive recruitment into armed groups, as affected communities are left with few alternatives to survive. Additionally, natural disasters and shifting climate patterns strain often already weak government structures, providing opportunities for armed groups to build up alternative governance systems. Climate change also acts as a migration driver, which can create conflicts between migrants and host communities. Further, a loss of livelihoods may result in increased engagement in illicit economic activities, which armed actors likely take advantage of. Illicit economic activities by armed groups, such as illegal logging or drug production, also contribute to environmental degradation. Further, armed actors target government structures and essential resources, for instance, water supplies, which aggravates the impact of climate change on communities and reduces their resilience.

People returning from armed groups and reintegrating into society were found to be even more vulnerable to climate change. They often have less access to resources, land, or livestock, which reduces their ability to make a living, especially in a context where climate change results in increased livelihood insecurity. Further, they face additional insecurities compared to other community members as their former armed group may seek revenge for their disengagement. In addition, former associates of armed groups often do not have official documents, which reduces their access to humanitarian aid

and ability to travel, thus further increasing their vulnerability to the effects of climate change. Furthermore, the effects of climate change on local communities reduce their capacities to accept and reintegrate returnees, as resources and livelihood opportunities are already strained. Thus, ex-associates of armed groups are more likely to engage in more harmful or risky ways to make a living, including illicit activities in protected natural areas, as these are often the only options left to them. This is especially true for women or older individuals, who face additional challenges. For instance, women often experienced gender-based segregation during their time with armed groups, resulting in them not having received the same level of training as their male counterparts.

Programming for ex-associates often does not include measures to improve their resilience to climate change. Generally, there is a need for more livelihood security programming, especially in relation to peacebuilding, for all community members. Further, the panellists identified a need for improved community-level governance on climate change and better management of natural resources. When asked about prior———ities in interventions and programming on climate change and armed conflict, the panellists highlighted livelihood programming, providing security, increasing adaptability, and more education on climate-related challenges. They also mentioned the need to take an intersectional approach and include a diverse range of actors in dealing with climate change and conflict.

5. ADDRESSING DISCRIMINATION AND XENOPHOBIA IN SCHOOLS THROUGH ETHICS EDUCATION TRANSFORMATIVE PEDAGOGIES

ORGANISERS

Arigatou International, Kenya National Commission for UNESCO, Indonesia National Commission for UNESCO, UNESCO Multisectoral Regional Office for Eastern Africa.

TOPIC

Ethics Education

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Through an interactive activity, participants experienced first hand issues of discrimination and had to decide how to react in front of different ethical dilemmas of privilege and discrimination.
- Participants were presented with the principles of Ethics Education and its role in peacebuilding, as well as engaging in a reflective dialogue on how it connected with the previous activity and the presented dilemmas and issues.
- Success stories of implementing Ethics Education in Kenya and Indonesia were shared which fostered a dialogue between the participants and facilitators on practical applications and peacebuilding potential of Ethics Education.
- Technical issues with the sound system impeded online participants to participate in the workshop.

SUMMARY OF THE SESSION

The hybrid workshop on ethics education to address discrimination and xenophobia in schools at Geneva Peace Week 2024 was attended by 14 participants on-site and over 30 online.

The session began with an interactive activity titled "Diminishing Islands," which introduced the concept of ethical dilemmas, conflict and non-violent solutions. The activity successfully engaged in-person participants but due to severe technical problems with the sound system online participants couldn't take part in the whole workshop.

A reflective dialogue regarding the foundational principles of ethics education, focusing on its role in peacebuilding and its impact on children's empowerment took place after the activity. This provided a framework for understanding the importance of ethics education in creating inclusive environments.

Success stories from countries like Indonesia and Kenya were shared, showcasing how the Ethics Education Fellowship program is being integrated into their national educational systems and how it

helped reduce prejudices and bridge divides in schools. Concrete examples from Ministries of Education, schools, and teachers were shared, along with lessons learned from implementation in various regions.

The workshop concluded with a dialogue between participants and facilitators, fostering further discussion on the practical applications and future potential of ethics education in promoting peace and inclusivity in schools.

6. FROM LAST MILE TO LASTING PEACE: STRATEGIES FOR ENGAGING POPULATIONS BEYOND STATE REACH IN HEALTH, HUMANITARIAN, AND PEACE INITIATIVES

ORGANISERS

The Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (HD Centre)

TOPIC

Humanitarian mediation, International Geneva

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- **Bridging Humanitarian and Political Divides:** Humanitarian diplomacy or "political humanitarianism" serves as a bridge between humanitarian and political spheres, initiating trust-building discussions within the humanitarian realm that can later support political dialogues when relationships have matured.
- **Challenges in Non-State Spaces:** Humanitarian work in areas with limited state authority faces obstacles such as insufficient understanding of local dynamics, weak community relationships, and disconnects between international agendas and local needs. Mistrust of governments and international actors complicates these efforts.
- **Building Local Networks for Sustainable Impact:** HD's approach emphasizes deep, long-term engagement with local actors. By training mediators and leveraging community networks, HD fosters trust and builds channels to enable humanitarian access in complex environments, such as securing safe vaccine deliveries in CAR.

SUMMARY OF THE SESSION

This Geneva Peace Week session highlighted the complex and evolving role of humanitarian diplomacy, or "political humanitarianism," in conflict-affected areas with limited state governance. Humanitarian diplomacy operates as a "halfway house" between humanitarian and political action, enabling relationships and trust to develop in ways that may eventually facilitate political discussions. For organizations like HD, this involves gradually opening doors to crucial humanitarian discussions, which, when the time is right, can contribute to larger political dialogues. This process underscores the importance of building trusted relationships that may not initially have a political agenda but that can lay groundwork for future engagement on sensitive political issues.

One of the central challenges of humanitarian operations in non-state spaces is the lack of local political insight and established community relationships. International organizations often bring strategies and priorities that do not always align with local needs, which can lead to mistrust. This mistrust is further

compounded by local scepticism toward both government actors and international organizations. HD insider mediator and Country Director for Afghanistan Mohammad Nabi Ebrar underscored that effective humanitarian mediation requires a deep understanding of how power operates in local settings and the ability to engage with these power structures meaningfully. For HD and similar organizations, this means investing in strong, trusted relationships with local communities over long periods to establish themselves as legitimate, non-threatening actors.

A powerful example of HD's work was shared from HD's Central African Republic (CAR) Project Manager Constance Videmont. Here, HD has been instrumental in supporting the Ministry of Health's vaccine distribution efforts in areas under non-state control. HD negotiates safe passages for a limited period, ensuring that vaccines and medical personnel can safely reach these communities. The organization has developed networks at the community level, where traditional chains of command and political structures are weak. In these areas, HD focuses on training local mediators who work directly with armed groups to negotiate access for health campaigns, rally communities for vaccine drives, and monitor emerging health risks.

This approach reflects HD's commitment to trust-building as a long-term investment. In CAR, HD's continuous engagement over more than five years has helped cement relationships with community leaders and stakeholders. This extended contact allowed HD to gather and convey recommendations from armed groups to official political dialogue tracks, playing an important role in influencing peace processes and broader political discussions at the national level.

The session underscored the critical importance of network analysis in humanitarian mediation. To maximize impact, humanitarian organizations must map local influencers and their networks, understand the interests and trust networks of their contacts, and engage with community members who can sway the attitudes and behaviours of key stakeholders. By focusing on 'influencers of the influencers' and understanding how these individuals operate within their communities, HD can deepen trust and leverage these networks for sustainable impact. The session highlighted how small organizations like HD can play an outsized role by building local networks, deepening relationships, and cementing trust over time, creating pathways for humanitarian assistance even in the most challenging environments.

7. PATHWAYS TO PEACE: EMPOWERING YOUNG WOMEN AS AGENTS OF CHANGE

ORGANISERS

Organisation for Security and Co-operation (OSCE), Geneva Centre for Security Policy (GCSP); Women in International Security Italy (WIIS- Italy) and Mediterranean Women Mediators Network (MWMN).

TOPIC

Empowering Young Women

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Women and youth play a crucial role in peace and security efforts, but face significant barriers, especially in conflict settings;
- Young women bring diverse perspectives to conflict resolution, contribute to lasting peace agreements, and can help break cycles of conflict;
- Networks and mentoring programs are key tools for empowering women in peacebuilding, providing spaces to connect and engage with decision-makers; and,
- Creating spaces, increasing visibility, fostering partnerships, and learning from successful experiences are essential for empowering young women as agents of change in peacebuilding

SUMMARY OF THE SESSION

The panel discussion focused on the crucial role played by women and youth in peace and security efforts. Participants discussed some of the barriers faced by young women, including societal norms, discrimination, and limited resources, noting that many of these challenges are amplified in conflict settings.

GCSP Executive Director Ambassador **Thomas Greminger** noted that youth and women's needs must be considered to ensure their participation in peace processes, and leverage their leadership to prevent conflict. He made reference to three main obstacles: discourse, divergence and divestment. He noted that despite these challenges, many young women lead with resilience and creativity, building community relationships across boundaries.

OSCE Senior Adviser on Gender Issues, Dr. **Lara Scarpitta**, noted that young women face unique challenges that require stronger support in peacebuilding and conflict resolution. She referred to networks as key tools to empower women, providing spaces to connect, sharing experiences, and engaging with decision-makers. She noted that young women bring diverse perspectives to conflict resolution, contribute to lasting peace agreements, become role models, and help break cycles of conflict.

Keynote speaker, Ambassador at Large **Helga Maria Schmid** focused on women's empowerment and the women, peace, and security agenda, highlighting the global increase in gender-based violence and its impact on women in conflict zones. She highlighted the importance of including women, especially young women, in peacebuilding efforts and conflict resolution processes and called for investing in women, promoting women's leadership in peace and security, and eliminating barriers to women's economic empowerment

The panel discussion highlighted the contributions of young women in peacebuilding and conflict resolution in Serbia, Kosovo, and Afghanistan. They were represented by **Alisa Kockar** (Programme Coordinator at National Youth Council of Serbia and Dialogue Academy Alumnae Network member), **Rita Berisha** (Project Manager, University of Iceland and University of Pristina and Dialogue Academy Alumnae Network member) and **Elham Kohistani** Human Rights Defender, WPS Consultant and OSCE Women Peace Leadership Programme Alumni), respectively.

Yama Sukhanyar, Founder and Executive Director of the Youth Center for Dialogue and Peace Yama, opened the discussion in his role of moderator by asking all three speakers to define peace. Panelists noted that, beyond the absence of war, peace was (1) a dream, (2) feeling safe (3) a personal responsibility. The panelists from Serbia and Kosovo highlighted the importance of fostering a culture of dialogue and learning each other's language, noting that the OSCE Dialogue Academy had played an important role in supporting dialogue. The importance of economic empowerment for young women was stressed and speakers shared their personal experiences of being a woman in peacebuilding.

The panel was closed by MWMN and WIIs Italy President, Dr. **Loredana Teodorescu**, who focused on the need to empower young women as agents of change in peacebuilding. She emphasized the importance of recognizing young women's role, overcoming barriers to their participation, and creating spaces for their involvement in decision-making processes. She highlighted four key aspects for moving forward: creating spaces, increasing visibility, fostering partnerships, and learning from successful experiences like networks and mentoring programs.

8. BUILDING PEACE THROUGH AN URBAN LENS

ORGANISERS

Global Cities Hub, Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime, Peace in our Cities

TOPIC

Peace at local level, in cities.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Building peace at city level is not made through formal peace processes with people sitting around a table and signing peace agreements. In cities, building peace is a matter of urban development and urban governance, not only of policing and repression.
- More and more, cities are being destroyed. These undergo “urbicide”, the act of “killing a city”. It’s not only about killing people, but also targeted destruction of the built environment, as well as the deprivation of services and assistance to certain categories of people.
- Urbanization results in more conflicts in cities, but peacebuilders should also take it into account that a lot of new cities emerge in areas affected by conflict.

SUMMARY OF THE SESSION

The event focused on what peace means at the local level in three distinct contexts: Ramallah, a city under occupation; Aleppo, a city destroyed by the war; and cities facing rapid urbanization and urban predation by criminal organizations.

In cities, where a lot of people congregate to take advantage of socio-economic opportunities and to get access to water, energy, education, health, building peace is a matter of urban development and urban governance.

In the context of occupation, the local government of Ramallah faces many challenges, including the need to wait for 12 years to get Israel’s approval to have a cemetery in Ramallah or the difficulty for municipal trucks transporting solid waste to get access to the landfill. Peace requires mobility of people and of trade. Ramallah strives to give hope to its highly educated people, to foster peace by making Ramallah – the economic and administrative capital of Palestine – a “model city”, with free internet in the streets, with numerous public parks and festivals, with the first innovation hub in the Middle East ran by a municipality. Eventually, people should live for Palestine, not die for it.

UN Habitat, underlined that how cities are planned, governed, and managed directly impacts the levels of violence and security. The regulation of resources, public spaces, and overall engagement with local communities plays a significant role in the production or prevention of violence. Urban security is part of the larger development challenge and that is why UN Habitat is working with local governments on issues of land, housing, infrastructure, and basic services.

Aleppo suffered significant destruction during the war, in particular its Eastern part held by the rebels. The notion of “urbicide” was introduced as the act of “killing a city”: it’s not only about killing people, but also targeted destruction of the built environment, as well as the deprivation of services and assistance to certain categories of people (in particular in Eastern Aleppo). The situation remains complicated in Syria today, but prospects for peace still exist. For that, we need to enable people to move freely and go back, rebuild their homes and restore urban life. International organizations engaging in Syria’s reconstruction should condition their support in that regard. Urban development will help foster peace.

Conflicts have urbanized and there are concrete physical implications for urban dwellers: it creates new boundaries and divisions within cities, where people used to mingle together. Further, while urbanization results in more conflicts in cities, peacebuilders should also take it into account that a lot of new cities emerge in areas affected by conflict (mainly due to people’s displacement triggered by conflict in the region). Due to rapid and massive urbanization, local governments are not always able to provide public services on the whole territory, thereby leaving some areas to predatory practices by criminal gangs. These pose severe threats to urban security (physical violence) but also in a longer-term, criminal gangs may infiltrate institutions and take control of municipal services in certain areas. While the response has usually been focused on policing and repression, these issues should be looked at through the lens of urban governance, providing the necessary services and infrastructure to ensure urban peace.

9. BUILDING TRUST ACROSS DIVIDES – STRATEGIES, TOOLS, AND SUCCESS STORIES

ORGANISERS

Initiatives of Change International (IofCI) and Institute for Community-Based Sociiotherapy (ICBS)

TOPIC

Confidence and Trust Building

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Participants valued the practical, hands-on component of the Peace Week. The workshop emphasized real-world strategies and applications which provided attendees with actionable insights and tools they can use in their own contexts.
- IofC International are organizing a Community of Practice style conversation as follow-up in the next two weeks with the 23 participants that left their email address to stay in touch.
- A critical gap still exists between grassroots practitioners and policymakers. This workshop played a small role in bridging this divide.
- Participants gained insights into the importance of paying attention to the inner work that is required to be an effective peacebuilder. This is a core pillar of IofC's approach.

SUMMARY OF THE SESSION

Talia Smith, Manager of IofC International's Trustbuilding Program welcomed participants and outlined the 90-minute workshop structure. **Diogene Karawanga** (ICBS) showcased his work with genocide survivors in Rwanda in order to make healing more authentic and sustainable, using the help of the local community as a "doctor" for those suffering. This was a case study on building trust in a post conflict context. **Leonid Donos** from the Trustbuilding Program in Ukraine explained their approach to building trust in a current conflict situation and the challenges in a society torn apart from a war that has been going on for close to three years. He highlighted the importance of mental health and self-care, and spoke about the role of forgiveness and trust in rebuilding Ukraine's future. He also explained how they tried to pay attention to who was sitting at the table, starting the conversation with people with similar opinions in order to avoid a loss of trust at the beginning of the peacebuilding process, before expanding the discussion to a more diverse group.

Diogene led a short reflection experience where participants were asked to imagine they were in the shoes of someone in Ukraine or during the genocide in Rwanda, based on the stories they heard. The reflection was a way to share the depth of the pain and encourage empathy in the audience.

63 participants joined the workshop both in person and online and questioned the speakers on how to overcome blockages in the face of deep divisions within and between communities, whether social cohesion can be achieved if the perpetrators have not been held accountable yet and about the challenge of rebuilding trust without forgiveness. 'The trust level is a process, you cannot achieve it in a day or two.', commented Diogene and Leonid insisted: 'Forgiveness is fundamental in building trust!'

Talia Smith picked up on the audience's questions, giving background information on the Trustbuilding Program: *'One of the Trustbuilding Program's key challenges is bridging the gap between our grassroots efforts in communities and achieving policy-level influence for systemic change. Additionally, many of our teams face the task of scaling our trustbuilding work to the national level—a space where, interestingly, Initiatives of Change has traditionally focused its efforts on national reconciliation'*.

The last part of the session, participants shared their experiences, stories and best practises of local trustbuilding work. For example, a medical doctor shared her experience of working in crises zones in Africa and concluded: 'You cannot build trust with fear.' A young peace activist who had worked in Armenia shared his insights of using arts-based practices, like theatre, to make people understand that reconciliation is possible in spite of the odds. Another participant spoke about the importance of involving the local communities into the design of the different tools used to help them start the trustbuilding processes in their specific situation: *'Using simple tools are a starting-point. Then evolve when the group is ready for it!'* She also highlighted that collaboration was essential and concluded: *'We can learn together. It is not about who is better!'* It was a rich and lively exchange, participants valued the space to be able to share their thoughts and about their work.

10. TRUSTBUILDING FROM THE TABLE TO THE STREETS: INCLUSIVE STRATEGIES FOR SUSTAINABLE PEACE

ORGANISERS

Search for Common Ground, Interpeace, Berghof Foundation **TOPIC:** confidence and trust building

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- At the most basic and essential level, trustbuilding starts with humanising ‘the other’ again; this is key to make peace agreements hold
- Psychosocial/mental health components should be integrated when engaging in trustbuilding processes
- Insider mediators have a crucial role to play in conflict resolution and are trusted figures within their community- even if this is informal, they can work very well together with formal structures, and a large network of insider mediators can have a sustainable impact on peaceful resolution of conflicts.
- Inclusion is paramount to the success of peace processes, but there can be a dilemma of secrecy versus inclusion of a peace process. In that case, it helps to prepare the ground for inclusion by nurturing networks, having civil society (including women and youth networks) preparing joint asks.
- Consistent advocacy for inclusion of civil society in the negotiations can have impact.
- Inclusion is not a ‘favour’. One option may be to get agreement on a quota of e.g. women around the table. Yet it does not come without risk for the women concerned, hence the mediators need to be risk- and conflict- sensitive and think about protection.

SUMMARY OF THE SESSION

Often, we see peace treaties being signed and then repeatedly see the implementation process fail, often due to the fact that the population has not been included in the process and does not feel a connection to it. How can such trust and confidence in the process be built outside of the room, in parallel?

Hilde Deman from Search for Common Ground talked about 3 major elements in trustbuilding; 1) how do you humanise the other again? (adapted to context, help people see that everyone has experienced trauma and loss.) 2) Recognising the importance of working on social norms, e.g. via radio programmes, 3) Increasing the realisation that conflict is inevitable, but violence is not. So we should aim to change that people use violence to settle conflicts. Hilde used examples from Sierra Leone, Burundi and Sri Lanka to demonstrate how important this kind of long term work is to make peace agreements hold.

Darcy Bizongwako from CENAP talked about land conflicts in Burundi and gave concrete examples of how insider mediators play a key role to settle these, directly, but also in liaison with others, such as governors or an ombudsman. These insider mediators can be different people, eg religious actors,

women, youth. This work, while informal, is well known by the authorities at municipal and provincial level, which gives it legitimacy. Moreover, this type of work is sustainable, as the culture of mediation, putting forward compromises in conflict resolution, will influence the peace process negotiations and negotiators.

Elisabeth Lothe from the Norwegian MFA reflected on the formal role they play in Track I processes, and how it starts with trust, discretion and relations, before creating a process. She also shared dilemmas, such as when there is no table, or when parties demand secrecy which is not compatible with inclusion. One solution to this dilemma is for embassies and partners to start conversations and prepare the ground for inclusion. She also shared how consistent advocacy efforts can have effect, and how it is important to support alliances for advocacy, capacity building, and mobilising efforts to link up, as this has helped civil society to be better prepared to come to the table, with clear demands.

Hind Kabawat from the Tastakel Women Organisation shared how important yet difficult trustbuilding is during active violent conflict, when emotions run high on all sides. She described her experience of the importance of a Special Envoy listening to not just conflict parties but also to the interests of the people, for example to women representatives. She stated it's not a 'favour' to allow women representatives at the negotiation table; in the case of Syria, the demand of a 30% quota was put on the table and supported by several politicians. And we also have to think about how to protect the women representatives that we are working with in the peace process against backlash.

11. MITIGATING THE HUMAN RIGHTS IMPACTS OF ARMS TRANSFERS: A BLUEPRINT FOR PEACE

ORGANISERS

Quaker United Nations Office Geneva, Control Arms, Global Rights Compliance

TOPIC

Human Security and Disarmament

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Arms transfers can have a negative impact on people and their livelihoods in situations of armed conflict and contexts that aren't considered to be involved in an armed conflict.
- The availability of weapons has widespread impacts on a broad range of human rights and stability of regions. Weapons are used for the perpetuation or threat of human rights violations, violence, and transnational organized crime.
- States have obligations and companies have responsibilities to mitigate the human rights impacts of arms transfers under international law. Human rights due diligence or human rights risk assessments are effective tools to identify actual and potential adverse human rights risks through the transferred weapons and to restrain from exporting weapons.

SUMMARY OF THE SESSION

This workshop focused on the role of arms transfers, proliferation and the availability of firearms in both conflict-affected areas or fragile contexts in fuelling conflict, crime, violence, and human rights violations. Two experts, Nakil Bieri and Mwachofi Singo, illustrated the wide-ranging human rights impacts of small arms and light weapons in Latin America and the Sahel during two spotlight presentations. Hearing about the impact weapons have on gender-based violence, sexual and reproductive rights, access to health services, indigenous peoples' rights and environmental harm, centred the workshop's discussion on the impact weapons have on people and communities.

The subsequent spotlight presentations showcased some of the tools that exist with the aim to prevent the transfers of weapons on human rights grounds. Hiruni Alwishewa outlined State obligations and private sector responsibilities regarding human rights considerations when it comes to arms transfers, based on international frameworks, including the Arms Trade Treaty, the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises. David Mueller subsequently gave an overview of the Swiss human rights risk assessment process to illustrate how States can assess arms transfer requests on human rights grounds.

In the interactive second part of the workshop, participants and speakers discussed in small groups a fictional case study on arms transfers. From the perspective of different stakeholders, namely States, arms industry and civil society, participants debated whether they would authorise the arms transfers

in the case study. They also deliberated what the relevant information is and what steps their stakeholders would need to undertake to mitigate arms transfers with negative human rights impacts.

The groups' decisions and questions were discussed in the plenary. Most groups agreed that on the basis of the case study and the assumption of representing a responsible stakeholder, arms transfers cannot be authorized without the risk of contributing to human rights violations. The participants assessed that more information and data need to be collected and provided by weapons recipients and requested and taken into account by exporting companies and export license providers. The situation of arms control laws and vectors or causes for weapons proliferation from neighbouring countries are also relevant elements that need to be considered when deciding on arms transfers. The final conversation included observations that the reality often differs from a human rights-based decision-making process. Geopolitical and geoeconomic considerations, the symbiotic, obscure relationship between governments and private sector and a general lack of transparency giving opportunity for applying pressure and corruption were raised as reasons for why arms transfer decisions in reality may differ to ideals based on human rights law and considerations.

12. LOCAL ACTORS AS PEACE INFLUENCERS: SECURITY SECTOR GOVERNANCE AND REFORM'S ROLE IN PEACEBUILDING IN THE MENA REGION

ORGANISERS

Qatar Strategic Studies Centre, DCAF - Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance

TOPIC

Exploring the critical role of local actors in the MENA region (Yemen, Libya, and the Occupied Palestinian Territories) in fostering peace through Security Sector Governance/Reform (SSG/R) initiatives. The session highlights the unique impact of grassroots actors in addressing conflict and promoting long-term stability.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Local actors are central to sustainable peacebuilding efforts, as they understand on-the-ground realities and have significant influence within their communities.
- Effective engagement and inclusion of marginalized groups, especially women and youth, are essential for equitable peace processes in the MENA region.
- Successful peacebuilding efforts in fragile settings require participatory approaches that incorporate the security needs of both civilians and combatants.
- Building partnerships between regional powers and local actors can help prevent local actors from becoming proxies and instead position them as genuine partners in peace.
- People-centered Security Sector Reform (SSR) can drive local and regional peace if implemented with a focus on inclusivity, security, and the needs of local populations.

SUMMARY OF THE SESSION

Moderated by Ayman Ayoub, Head of the Middle East & North Africa Division at DCAF, the discussion began with introductions and remarks from each panellist, who shared insights into the unique challenges and opportunities faced by local actors in their respective contexts. Ms. Eman Redwan highlighted the urgent need for Palestinian actors to restore hope in peace despite the ongoing war, arguing that local initiatives could counter despair and catalyse long-term dialogue. For Libya, Mr. Bashar Eltalhi discussed the difficulty local actors face in overcoming divisions. He emphasized that achieving a more assertive role in peacebuilding requires trust and constructive engagement between fragmented communities. Prof. Dr. Elham Manea shed light on Yemen, where local actors, especially tribal leaders, have historically influenced social dynamics. She argued that by encouraging these actors to prioritize peace, Yemen could shift away from entrenched conflict. Dr. Rashid Hamad Al Naimi spoke to Qatar's unique position as a mediator, describing the ways local actors are vital peace

facilitators who often hold significant influence over dialogue outcomes. The panel then moved into an interactive discussion, focusing on the broader challenges local actors encounter in advancing peace, including marginalized representation, coordination with regional powers, and overcoming war economies. Panellists shared examples from their respective regions, illustrating how local actors' initiatives have occasionally shaped national dialogue and policy. Emphasis was placed on integrating local safety and security considerations into peace processes and creating mechanisms for effective dialogue in fragmented societies. Panellists underscored the need for regional and international bodies like DCAF to support local actors' capacity in peace efforts, build resilience, and foster environments conducive to equitable peacebuilding. In their closing remarks, the panellists reinforced the importance of localized, people-centered approaches to SSG/R in the MENA region. By empowering local actors through inclusive policies and resource allocation, long-term peace in these regions could become a more attainable reality.

13. WHAT IS THE FUTURE FOR SMALL ARMS CONTROL?

ORGANISERS

Small Arms Survey in collaboration with the Swiss federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA), the Centre on Conflict, Development and Peacebuilding (CCDP) and the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA)

TOPICS AND KEY-TAKEAWAYS

Part I. The Origins of Small Arms Control (Dr. Keith Krause)

Evolution of Small Arms Control

Dr. Krause reviewed the evolution of small arms control efforts since the early 2000s, stressing that it has become increasingly challenging to secure multilateral agreements today. He explained that the global landscape has shifted dramatically since the United Nations' adoption of the Programme of Action (PoA) on Small Arms and Light Weapons. This earlier momentum was driven by precedents like the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Treaty, as well as the devastating conflicts of the 1990s in regions like the former Yugoslavia and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Countries such as Colombia and Costa Rica, along with a coalition of civil society organizations and supportive states—Switzerland, Norway, and the UK among them—played critical roles in advancing the human security and humanitarian disarmament agenda. By building alliances and leveraging multilateral and UN platforms, they creatively mobilized support for this agenda. Dr. Krause emphasized that this coalition building strategy serves as an important lesson for future arms control efforts.

Local Initiatives and Knowledge Building

Dr. Krause underscored the impact of local initiatives in tackling armed violence, highlighting urban-based armed violence observatories as an example. He noted that the success of the Small Arms Survey and early small arms control initiatives was partly due to a shared recognition of the limited understanding of armed violence's scope, scale, and complexity at the time. This acknowledgment fostered collaborative knowledge-building efforts that laid the foundation for the effective control measures seen in earlier stages of small arms work.

Multilateral Instruments and National Action

Despite limitations within the multilateral system, tools like the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) and the International Tracing Instrument (ITI) remain essential for individual states in managing small arms issues. While multilateral efforts can be complex, these instruments provide frameworks that states can leverage independently to address pressing issues related to arms control and regulation.

Data-Driven Policy and Strategic Approaches

The availability of robust data today has normalized evidence-based policymaking within small arms control. However, driving meaningful change still requires a blend of data-informed strategies and

politically savvy approaches. Effective policymaking in this area must balance tactical insight with rigorous data to achieve impactful results.

Broader Context and Linkages to New Agenda for Peace and SDG 16

Finally, framing small arms control within broader agendas can enhance its relevance and impact. Tying small arms control efforts to initiatives like the New Agenda for Peace and Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16, focused on promoting peaceful and inclusive societies, can reinforce national strategies for violence prevention and support global stability goals.

Recommendations

- Mobilize the "community of the willing" to use new instruments like the Agenda for Peace, the Global Framework on Ammunition, and the ATT as springboards to revive and sustain the small arms control process.
- Focus on developing national-level prevention strategies as part of the Agenda for Peace, drawing on the lessons and frameworks from the armed violence reduction agenda.
- Actively push the SDG 16 agenda on peace, security, and arms control, as it is crucial to the achievement of the broader Sustainable Development Goals.

Part II: Taking Stock of the Current Situation (Ms. Anne-S  verine Fabre)

Global violence statistics and trends

In 2021, over half a million deaths were attributed to small arms violence, marking an increase from previous years. This includes 64% intentional homicides (45% involving firearms) and 23% conflict-related deaths, with conflicts in Gaza, Ukraine, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Sudan likely to drive future increases. 15% of global violent deaths in 2021 were women, with a quarter related to conflict and two

thirds to homicides, including a significant number committed by firearms. Approximately one billion firearms are in civilian hands worldwide, underscoring the urgent need for stronger regulatory efforts.

Strengthening Regulations and Preventing Diversion

Strengthening regulations and monitoring systems is essential to prevent legal firearms from reaching illicit markets. Effective small arms control must incorporate detection, tracing, and interdiction measures, as well as strategies to address the underlying demand for weapons.

Challenges from New Technologies

Advances in technology have intensified challenges in controlling illicit arms, with sophisticated items like converted firearms, 3D-printed weapons, ghost guns, and improvised explosive devices increasingly appearing in conflict zones and criminal contexts across regions such as the U.S., South America, and Europe. Untraceable firearms, lacking serial numbers and other identifiers, expose critical gaps in oversight, emphasizing the need for improved law enforcement training and regulatory adaptation.

Multi-sectorial Approach and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

- Small arms control requires a multi-sectorial approach that transcends traditional security frameworks and engages public health, education, and broader development sectors, aligning with the SDGs to address complex social and economic factors driving firearm proliferation.

Case Study: The Caribbean

In the Caribbean, small arms violence has been declared a public health crisis. The Caribbean's homicide rate is three times the global average, with a high percentage committed by firearms. Research by the Small Arms Survey ([Pathway to Policy](#)) reveals that gun violence places heavy burdens on healthcare systems—with gunshot wound treatments costing up to 11 times the average per capita health expenditure—

but also increasingly threatens hospital operations due to incidents of violence within medical facilities.

Stakeholder Integration and Regional Cooperation

Effective small arms control relies on integrating stakeholders from public health, education, and community sectors. Regional frameworks are critical for coordinating

cross-border efforts, fostering sustainable, multi-dimensional strategies to reduce violence and firearm proliferation.

Recommendations

- Invite stakeholders from different sectors, such as public health and education, to participate in discussions on small arms control.
- Highlight the synergies between the different sectors and how they can complement each other's work in the prevention of small arms trafficking and violence.
- Ensure that each sector understands how they are impacted by the phenomenon and what value they can bring to the table, to improve coordination and cooperation at the national level.

Part III. The Future of Small Arms Control (Ms. Viktoriia Voronina)

Overview of Illicit Arms in Ukraine

- The issue of illegal arms in Ukraine is escalating, with over 4,000 cases involving illegal firearms and ammunition recorded in 2023, implicating more than 3,000 individuals. Seized weapons include assault rifles, cartridges, mines, and grenades.
- Based on recent research conducted under the project "[Supporting Ukraine in addressing the risks of small arms and light weapons proliferation](#)", an increasing number of women are involved in crimes related to arms and drug trafficking, and weapons are frequently found in public spaces, creating significant risks for children. Offenders come from diverse backgrounds, including priests, village elders, soldiers, volunteers, and individuals collaborating with Russian forces.

Risks to Children and Public Services

- Children face particular dangers as weapons are sometimes left in public areas like playgrounds and kindergartens, where they can easily be found.

- Weapons have also been discovered in unexpected locations, including railway stations and service sectors such as cafes and banks, posing risks to the general public.
- There is a heightened concern about individuals/veterans with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) who, upon returning to public life, may bring weapons into public spaces.
- The movement of weapons in private vehicles, along with Russian trophies and weapon caches, adds another layer of complexity to the issue.

Community and Stakeholder Engagement

- Attitudes toward small arms vary across Ukraine, with some communities advocating for weapons to be accessible for self-defense.
- Active engagement from stakeholders—such as community leaders, local government bodies, and ministries—is essential for addressing this issue.
- The Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Education play a crucial role in raising public awareness about the dangers of illegal arms.
- Under the EU Association Agreement, Ukraine has specific obligations related to small arms and light weapons, which influence national policy and community-level initiatives.

Recommendations

- Enhance arms control strategies to empower local communities and authorities to work together to address the issue of illicit SALW trafficking.
- Provide knowledge and awareness-raising activities for all stakeholders, including local governments, law enforcement, and the community, to understand the risks and their roles in the process.
- Incorporate activities related to countering illegal SALW into the existing local programs of cooperation with law enforcement agencies.
- Improve the protocol and procedures for the proper storage and handling of firearms by military personnel.
- Explore the feasibility of voluntary surrender programs for illegal weapons, especially in communities close to the conflict zone.

Two videos were presented during the event:

Video 1

Carina Solmirano, ATT Monitor's lead and new head of the ATT Secretariat, highlighting its 10-year history and the challenges faced in its implementation. The ATT, which regulates conventional arms trade, has 115 state parties. Key issues include the need for better implementation, particularly in developing countries, and the inclusion of gender-based violence and violence against children in risk assessments. Solmirano emphasized the importance of synergies between different arms control and disarmament treaties, the need for more inclusive participation of women and youth, and the potential impact of the new global framework on ammunition and autonomous weapons.

Video 2

The conversation highlights the escalation of conflicts and the crisis of multilateralism over the past decade, emphasizing the urgency of regulating the conventional arms trade. The discussion points to the disproportionate impact of small arms on men and women, with 91% of deaths in 2021 being men and 8% women, and the need to address the human dimensions of small arms control, including socio-economic and gender inequalities. The role of emotions in violence and the importance of women's meaningful participation in peacebuilding are also discussed. Innovation and technology are suggested as solutions to enhance peacekeeping efforts. The conversation concludes with a call for civil society engagement to hold states accountable to their obligations and to promote transparency in arms exports to prevent corruption.

SUMMARY OF THE SESSION

The panel discussion traced the evolution of small arms control from the early 2000s to the present, emphasizing the growing difficulties in achieving multilateral agreements in today's complex global landscape. The speaker highlighted the role of influential coalitions, including those led by states like Costa Rica, Colombia, Switzerland, Norway, or the UK, which have championed human security and humanitarian disarmament efforts. Although multilateral efforts face challenges, tools like the UN Programme of Action, the Arms Trade Treaty, and various local initiatives still play an essential role. The speaker stressed the importance of evidence-based policies and the need for politically savvy, tactical approaches to reduce armed violence, pointing to new initiatives like the New Agenda for Peace and Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16 as potential drivers for national violence prevention strategies.

The conversation also covered the urgent issue of escalating global violence, with over half a million deaths recorded in 2021—many involving firearms. To address this, the panel underscored the need for stronger regulations to prevent legal firearms from entering illicit markets. New technologies in small arms, such as conversion devices and 3D-printed guns, pose additional challenges by complicating detection and interdiction efforts. A whole-of

society approach was deemed crucial, with security, health, education, and development sectors all playing vital roles. The Caribbean region was discussed as a case study, where the homicide rate stands at three times the global average, illustrating the need for comprehensive, all-society strategies. The panel emphasized the integration of diverse stakeholders, including public health, into preventive measures, along with the importance of regional frameworks in mobilizing these efforts.

Looking toward the future, the speaker highlighted the intensifying problem of illegal arms in conflict zones like Ukraine, where thousands of cases involving firearms and ammunition have been registered, involving numerous individuals and increasingly affecting women and children. Community engagement and public awareness were emphasized as essential, suggesting that local governments and stakeholders should actively participate in addressing the problem. The challenges of implementing voluntary arms surrender programs were also noted, with a call for comprehensive strategies that involve law enforcement, community leaders, and other sectors to combat the proliferation of illegal arms effectively.

14. CONTRIBUTIONS TO SUSTAINING PEACE SINCE 2016: EVALUATING PROGRESS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

ORGANISERS

ILO, Interpeace, UNHCR, WHO, UNFPA, UNICEF, IOM, DPPA, PBSO, WFP, and FAO

TOPIC

The focus of this event was placed on the efforts made by various UN agencies, programs, and funds to support the Sustaining Peace agenda and the integration of the Humanitarian-Development-Peace (HDP) nexus approach in their actions. In anticipation of the 2025 Peacebuilding Architecture Review (PBAR), UN technical experts gathered to reflect on lessons learned and shed light on current challenges, placing an emphasis on joint-collaboration and the HDP nexus and outlining their respective recommendations for the PBAR.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

The main takeaway from the event was that significant progress has been made since the adoption of the twin resolutions, with ongoing efforts to foster collaboration among diverse actors. The discussion consistently reflected the interconnected nature of sustainable peace, and each agency stressed the importance of integrating their areas of expertise, such as decent work, access to resources, health, and protection for vulnerable populations, into peacebuilding strategies to build resilient communities and set the foundation for sustainable peace. A consensus emerged that integrated approaches and cross-sector coordination among peace, humanitarian, and development actors are key requirements to address inter-connected conflict drivers. With an understanding of peace not simply as the absence of conflict but as the creation of environments in which people can thrive economically, socially, and politically, participants emphasized the need for localization and the integration of local actors, as they are key to sustainability.

Finally, all participating parties concluded their presentations with recommendations for the upcoming PBAR as follows:

- Social justice and rights-based approach at the center of the PBAR and Nexus programming
- Acknowledge the interconnectedness of conflict drivers
- Ensure the inclusion of local actors in peacebuilding efforts
- Work towards inclusive participation and representation in peacebuilding strategies
- Enhanced cross-sector collaboration: The PBAR should leverage and enhance existing collaboration efforts between UN agencies, member states, civil society, and local communities to benefit from their respective comparative advantages in fostering and sustaining long-term peace.
- Prioritize conflict sensitivity and flexible financing

SUMMARY OF THE SESSION

The event consisted of UN Agencies representatives reviewing the advancement of the Sustaining Peace agenda through the lens of their respective areas of expertise. Each agency's representative took turns outlining the progress made in their fields, emphasizing how their work contributes to sustainable peace and detailing their ongoing initiatives. They also shared the challenges they anticipate in the future, discussed the work ahead, and concluded with their recommendations for the upcoming PBAR in 2025.

The event being mediated by Interpeace, PBSO opened the floor by highlighting the importance of building on existing prevention and peace strategies, emphasizing the integral role of civil society in peacebuilding efforts. The ILO followed by sharing its long-standing commitment to peace through social justice and decent work, and labour rights. By explaining how employment initiatives directly help reintegration and reduce social tensions, the ILO further established decent work and social justice as pillars of sustainable peace. Using examples from initiatives in Colombia, Sri Lanka, Tunisia, Jordan, and Lebanon, the ILO demonstrated how decent work opportunities can reduce tensions and promote social cohesion, especially in conflict-affected areas.

The FAO then took the lead, highlighting the exacerbating nature of climate change on food insecurity and conflict. Presented as a “threat multiplier”, climate change also affects agricultural actors and population displacement, further straining relations and intensifying competition. The FAO then presented some of its work in conflict zones, such as the Kyrgyz-Uzbek border, showcasing how addressing resource competition can mitigate conflict. On a similar theme, the WFP also argued that food security initiatives help build resilience and prevent conflict due to their stabilizing nature by addressing immediate needs. Through examples of its work in Ethiopia and Yemen, the WFP urged for a greater appreciation of the links between food security and peacebuilding. UNICEF focused on the impact of conflict and climate change on children, the latter being particularly vulnerable, thus requiring their consideration and inclusion in peacebuilding strategies. Having the potential of being ‘powerful agents of change’, UNICEF further argued that educational and psychosocial support is essential for long-term stability, and therefore must be included in peacebuilding frameworks. UNFPA's message aligned with UNICEF, advocating for the inclusion of gender in peace processes.

Through examples of their work in South Sudan and Syria, UNFPA emphasized the crucial role of gender-based prevention and reproductive health in the promotion of social cohesion and long-term stability. UNHCR, focusing on the needs of displaced populations, explained that the protection and integration of refugees and IDPs are integral to peace efforts. The role of local actors was particularly emphasized, as a community-based approach ensures sustainability. In turn, IOM emphasized that safe and orderly migration actively supports social stability and peace, citing their work in Libya and Colombia as examples of how inclusive migration policies and local dialogue contribute to social reintegration and reduced conflict. Finally, the WHO concluded by acknowledging the limited understanding of the health-peace link, then explained that health interventions build trust, which is essential for peacebuilding efforts in fragile contexts.

15. TRADE AND SME-LED GROWTH IN FRAGILE AND CONFLICT-AFFECTED SETTINGS

ORGANISERS

main organiser - International Trade Centre, co-organisers - World Trade Organization, International Labour Organization, International Organization for Migration, Mercy Corps

TOPIC

What are the most impactful ways to foster trade and empower SMEs for lasting growth in fragile and conflict-affected regions?

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- **Trade as a vehicle for peace and SMEs as agents of stability:** Participants acknowledged the essential role of trade and small businesses in fragile and conflict-affected settings. Trade fosters economic interdependence, promoting peace and resilience, while SMEs act as stabilizing forces within their communities, providing vital goods, services, and livelihoods.
- **Conflict-sensitive trade and market interventions:** Emphasizing the importance of conflict-sensitive assessments and adaptive planning, agencies highlighted the need for dynamic tools and holistic diagnostics that consider both market systems and local conflict dynamics to create resilient and effective interventions.
- **Inclusive trade policies for economic stability:** The workshop highlighted that inclusive trade policies and reforms to the business environment are essential for fostering economic stability. These policies encourage cooperation, transparency, investment attraction, and broader economic growth. Public-private dialogue processes were acknowledged as valuable tools for building ownership and trust in reforms. Additionally, Business Support Organizations (BSOs) were recognized as playing a pivotal role in empowering SMEs and bolstering local economies.
- **Empowering firms as engines of growth and stability:** MSMEs are pivotal for economic recovery in conflict-affected settings. Participants emphasized the need for tailored support and solutions, including connectedness, access to finance, market access, formalization and human capital development, to strengthen MSMEs' role in local economies.
- **Promoting sustainable growth for vulnerable populations:** Recognizing the unique needs of vulnerable groups, participants discussed strategies to foster social resilience, create decent jobs, and ensure inclusive growth in conflict-affected areas, reinforcing stability and long-term development.
- **Informal Technical Working group:** International Trade Centre (ITC), World Trade Organization (WTO), International Labour Organization (ILO), International Organization for Migration (IOM), and Mercy Corps have agreed to continue the technical collaboration through an informal working group. This group aims to facilitate knowledge sharing and enhance synergies in fragile and conflict-affected regions.

SUMMARY OF THE SESSION

The International Trade Centre, in partnership with the World Trade Organization (WTO), International Labour Organization (ILO), International Organization for Migration (IOM) and Mercy Corps, organized the workshop Trade and SME-Led Growth in Fragile and Conflict-Affected settings during Geneva Peace Week 2024.

The workshops aimed to identify key principles, best practices, and actionable recommendations to strengthen trade and SME-led growth in fragile and conflict-affected settings and explore opportunities for collaboration.

This event brought together practitioners to exchange lessons and best practices across four key themes: foundational research, assessments, and market system diagnostics for fragile, conflict-affected environments; trade policy and business environment reforms for private sector growth, peace, and stability; strengthening small businesses in fragile settings through strategies to compete, connect, and change; and sustainable growth focused on promoting economic opportunities for youth, women, and vulnerable populations affected by conflict.

ITC, WTO, ILO, IOM, and Mercy Corps agreed to continue working together at the technical level to implement the key recommendations of the workshop.

16. BEYOND SURVIVAL — UNPACKING THE NEXUS BETWEEN CONFLICT, GENDER AND NATURAL DISASTERS

ORGANISERS

Main organiser: The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF)

Co-organisers:

- The Syria Campaign (TSC)
- International Bridges to Justice (IBJ)

TOPIC

Drawing on firsthand insights and testimonies from Syrian women activists, WHRDs and first responders, the event examined the intersection of conflict, gender and humanitarian disaster response, particularly highlighting how humanitarian disasters in conflict zones—such as the recent earthquakes in Syria and Turkey—intensify existing vulnerabilities and disproportionately affect marginalised groups. Anchored in WILPF's [Beyond Survival project](#), a collaborative initiative rooted in a feminist intersectional analysis of the earthquakes' impact, the session advocated for rethinking humanitarian response efforts in conflict contexts. The event featured a docuseries screening followed by a hybrid panel discussion, advocating for a holistic approach to disaster response that integrates the triple nexus of peace, humanitarian support and development, emphasising intersectionality, local leadership, the gendered dimensions of conflict and the risks of politicised aid. Connections were also drawn to the ongoing war in Lebanon and the genocide in Gaza, underscoring significant shortcomings in current humanitarian efforts and the need for women's leadership and inclusion in crisis response.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- 1. Critical Intersectionality of Disasters, Conflict and Gender:** Disasters like the 2023 earthquakes in Syria and Turkey do not occur in a vacuum; they exacerbate existing vulnerabilities and inequalities in conflict zones, disproportionately impacting women, girls and marginalised groups.
- 2. Need for Feminist, Intersectional Humanitarian Approaches:** Traditional humanitarian frameworks often fail to address the specific needs of women and marginalised communities because they typically rely on one-size-fits-all approaches that don't account for diverse, context-specific vulnerabilities. For example, in many conflict and post-conflict zones, standard humanitarian relief efforts focus on distributing food and shelter but overlook essential services like gender-based violence (GBV) support, safe spaces for women, reproductive health care, and the need for trauma-informed counseling. Without these targeted interventions, women and marginalised groups are at greater risk of exploitation, abuse and further trauma, underscoring the gap in traditional humanitarian efforts. A feminist, intersectional approach is essential for effective disaster response in these contexts.

3. **Multifaceted Challenges in Lebanon Today:** Hanadi Alloush, Program Manager at Damma-hug organisation in Lebanon, discussed Lebanon's compounded crises—political, economic and ongoing armed conflict—which further strain conditions for women, particularly women Syrian refugees and displaced populations. She called for a feminist, rights-based approach to prioritise vulnerable groups and resist obstruction by political agendas.
4. **Women's Essential Role in Crisis Response:** Board Member of Syria Civil Defence (The White Helmets) Dalal El Taher emphasised the critical yet often overlooked contributions of women in emergency and first response roles, advocating for their inclusion in decision-making to enhance effectiveness and inclusivity.
5. **A Call to Redefine Humanitarian Response:** The session concluded with a strong call for incorporating a feminist perspective in humanitarian response, focusing on intersectionality, local leadership, the gendered dimensions of conflict and the depoliticisation of aid.

SUMMARY OF THE SESSION

On October 16, WILPF hosted a peace panel at Geneva Peace Week titled "*Beyond Survival: Unpacking the Nexus Between Conflict, Gender and Disasters*," in collaboration with Syrian partners The Syria Campaign (TSC) and International Bridges to Justice (IBJ). The session explored the intersection of peace, humanitarian support and development, opening with two powerful videos from WILPF's *Beyond Survival* docuseries, highlighting Syrian women's resilience and leadership amidst the 2023 earthquakes. A hybrid panel discussion followed, bringing together Syrian feminist activists, WHRDs, and first responders who advocated for a feminist approach to disaster response in conflict-affected areas.

Hayma Alyousfi, Feminist Researcher and General Program Manager at the Syrian Female Journalists Network (SFJN), shared insights from WILPF's feminist analysis "Now Is Not the Time for You or Your Needs", to which she contributed as a researcher. She underlined the politicisation of humanitarian aid, leading to critical delays in assistance, particularly affecting northwest Syria —where people were left abandoned and essential rescue equipment/supplies arrived long after the critical window for finding survivors. She also noted that women, often in critical roles as caretakers and responders, are deprioritised in disaster settings. Drawing from her experience as a Syrian in Turkey, she further addressed the marginalisation Syrians faced post-earthquake, making connections to the crisis in Lebanon today.

Hanadi Alloush, Program Manager at Damma and co-lead researcher of WILPF's research, addressed Lebanon's layered crises, noting how political and economic instability, compounded by the ongoing war, has exacerbated existing vulnerabilities —disproportionately impacting women, girls, persons with disabilities and particularly Syrian refugees. Reflecting on her work with earthquake survivors and her current experience in Lebanon, Hanadi called for a feminist, rights-based approach to disaster response that prioritises the specific needs of women, especially in conflict zones where aid is often obstructed by political agendas.

Dalal El Taher, Board Member of Syria Civil Defence (The White Helmets), shared her experience as a first-responder in northwest Syria after the earthquake. She highlighted women's vital contributions in crisis situations and called for their inclusion in frontline roles, breaking stereotypes. Additionally, she

stressed the importance of psychological support, training and empowering women in frontline roles—initiatives that have been strengthened in the White Helmets' programs following the earthquake.

Zeina Halawi, Co-founder of the Free Aleppo Lawyers Association (FABA), offered a legal perspective on gender-specific impacts in compounded crises. Recalling her personal experience post-earthquake, she emphasised that structural inequalities and inadequate legal protections further marginalise women, who are frequently left without essential support.

The session was moderated by **Lubna Alkanawaty**, who reflected on her team's experiences responding to the earthquake, drawing parallels to her time under siege in Eastern Ghouta. Lubna also highlighted the long-term repercussions of disasters in conflict settings, and underscored the role of peacemakers in addressing complex, intersecting challenges, including economic instability, geopolitical dynamics, rising militarisation and international complicity.

The session, grounded in WILPF's [Beyond Survival project](#)—a feminist intersectional analysis of conflict, gender and disasters—underlined critical gaps in humanitarian frameworks, concluding with a call to redefine humanitarian action by incorporating a feminist perspective.

17. SOCIAL CONTRACT AND TRUST BUILDING: CAN ANOTHER UN-SUPERVISED CONSTITUTIONAL PROCESS BRING PEACE TO AFGHANISTAN?".

ORGANISERS

Centre for Dialogue and Progress – Geneva (CDP-G), Action for Development (AfD), Association of Judges of Afghanistan (AJA), Centro per Dialogo e Solidarietà – Roma (CDS-R)

TOPIC

Role of UN in constitutionalism and its impact on peacebuilding in Afghanistan

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Constitutionalism is a key process to bring sustainable peace in a country,
- Constitutions act as social contracts provided, they are prepared in a participatory manner through extensive consultative processes
- The role of the UN in preparation of 2004 Constitution in Afghanistan was weak, however they are the only reliable player to help Afghans in a constitutional process today,
- Any constitution should reflect the realities and aspirations of the concerned nations, ideas cannot be dumped on the communities

SUMMARY OF THE SESSION

The topic of the event was "Social contract and trust building: can another UN-supervised constitutional process bring peace to Afghanistan?".

The Peace Panel, opened by interim Director Mr. Timory, focused on the role and value of a UN-backed constitution-making process in Afghanistan. Moderated by Ambassador Marc George, a senior advisor on diplomatic affairs at GCSP and a member of the board of CDP-G, the discussion featured distinguished speakers including Sima Samar, former Chairperson of the Independent Human Rights Commission, Prof. William Maley, Emeritus Professor of Diplomacy at the Australian National University, Ghizaal Haress, former member of Afghanistan's Independent Oversight Commission on Implementation of the Constitution, Haroon Mutasem, former Deputy Ombudsperson of Afghanistan, Amb. Mirwais Samadi, ambassador of Afghanistan in Athens and Zulfia Abawe, professor at the the South Wales University.

Ambassador Mirwais Samadi gave an overview of the political and social environment in Afghanistan and emphasized that instability is caused by a lack of continuity in the Afghan constitutional process, pointing out that past constitutions were ideologically driven, politicized, and violated by Afghan rulers themselves. Amb. Samadi stressed that the Taliban does not respect the rule of law or human rights,

and urged the formation of a political front committed to constitutional governance. He emphasized the UN's crucial role in helping Afghans restore a legitimate, law-abiding state.

Dr. Sima Samar reflected on the post-2001 UN-facilitated peace process. She mentioned the weak role of the UN and more prominent role of the involved states, including the United States government. She argued that human rights must be the foundation of any future constitutional process. Dr. Samar also pointed out the sidelining of human rights in the 2020 peace talks and urged international actors not to normalize rights violations.

Dr. Haroon Mutasem identified key shortcomings in past constitutional efforts, particularly the urban-rural divide that has shaped societal tensions. He argued that the highly centralized government structure did not account for Afghanistan's diverse cultural identities. The lack of accountability for past violations also undermined the constitutional process.

Professor William Maley asserted that while the Afghan constitution remains relevant, there needs to be a comprehensive discussion on the structure of a future constitutional framework. According to him, the previous UN-backed process was rushed, and future efforts should be more deliberate, laying the foundation for a peaceful and stable state.

Ms. Ghizaal Haress highlighted the complexity of constitution-making, underscoring that any new process must reflect the values and diverse identities of Afghanistan's population while establishing clear principles of governance. She expressed concerns that any future Taliban-driven constitution would likely serve to legitimize authoritarian rule rather than create a representative system of governance.

Dr. Zulfia Abawe concluded by stressing the importance of indigenous, community-driven processes rather than "copycat" Western models. She emphasized that the constitutional process must reflect the customary values of Afghan society and provide genuine ownership to the Afghan people.

The panel discussions were followed by a series of questions from the participants in the room and those who joined online.

18. UNDERSTANDING AND MANAGING CONFLICT-RISK WITH THE PRIVATE SECTOR

ORGANISERS

Sustainable Finance Geneva, Geneva Peacebuilding Platform, Interpeace, Finance 4 Peace, PeaceNexus

TOPIC

The role of peace finance in investment strategies

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- **The private sector has a crucial, yet often overlooked role in contributing to a stable, peaceful operating context.** While the practices of businesses can exacerbate conflict, they can also contribute to peace, however they are never neutral. Historically, businesses have participated in major peace negotiations, often quietly and behind closed doors. Businesses depend on stable operating environments for profitability and growth.
- **Conflict and violence are on the rise, costing the world trillions of dollars.** In 2022, conflict cost \$19.1 trillion USD globally—two-thirds of the US GDP and nearly 4 times the amount of money required to achieve the SDGs.
- **There are significant investment risks associated with conflict.** Investors need to be aware of conflict risk and its potential impact on their investments. Conflict can disrupt supply chains, strand assets, and influence regional dynamics. For example, a rebel group in Eastern Congo seized a mining area, generating \$300,000 USD each month, influencing conflict dynamics. The war in Ukraine has shown the global interconnectedness of conflict and financial markets, impacting industries from agriculture to energy.
- **Methodologies are lacking for quantifying conflict risk.** PeaceNexus Foundation, Finance for Peace and Sustainable Finance Geneva are engaged in a research project to fill this gap by developing a conflict risk screening methodology specifically for listed equity. This methodology looks at risk exposure, financial impact, and the company's posture toward peacebuilding in conflict settings.
- **There is a need for more data and tools to help investors understand and mitigate conflict risk.** Existing ESG indicators often lack sufficient focus on social and conflict-related issues, such as SDG 16. Limited disclosure on revenue streams, supply chains, and geographical distribution of products makes it challenging to evaluate a company's true exposure to conflict and assess its potential impact on peace. This lack of data can make it difficult for investors to assess their exposure to conflict risk, leading them to avoid fragile markets all together.
- **Investors have a responsibility to engage in conflict-sensitive investing.** This involves recognizing that business activities can contribute to or mitigate conflict. Companies and investors should integrate conflict sensitivity into their processes and policies and adopt a peace-positive approach.

- **Collaboration between different stakeholders is crucial for advancing peace finance.** This includes collaboration between investors, businesses, peacebuilding organizations, and local communities. By working together, these stakeholders can develop and implement effective strategies for mitigating conflict risk and promoting peace.

SUMMARY OF THE SESSION

The panel explored the intersection of conflict, business, and investment, highlighting the significant financial risks associated with conflict and advocating for the integration of peacebuilding into investment strategies. In 2022 alone, global conflict costs escalated to an estimated \$19.1 trillion USD—a figure equivalent to nearly two-thirds of the U.S. GDP—underlining the urgent financial consequences of global instability. The war in Ukraine serves as a stark reminder of the capacity of conflict to disrupt industries, markets, and economic stability. The panel further argued against the notion of "neutral" investment in conflict-affected areas, asserting that companies and investors operating in such contexts inevitably influence peace or conflict outcomes, whether by design or default.

Speakers defined *peace finance* as a proactive framework to mitigate conflict-related risks and actively contribute to peacebuilding. This term can encompass more traditional approaches that prioritize risk avoidance, as well as approaches that encourage investors and companies to directly promote peace. This may involve investments that strengthen local economies, thereby reducing dependence on illicit activities and creating more resilient communities. Peace finance requires a fundamental shift in perspective, recognizing the potential of peace-positive investments as opportunities, rather than perceiving conflict solely as a financial risk.

The discussion underscored the need for more comprehensive methodologies and data to help investors assess and quantify conflict-related risks. While ESG frameworks and the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights provide some foundation, the field lacks specific metrics to evaluate conflict risk effectively. Existing tools often focus on single-company assessments, missing the interconnected risks within broader portfolios and their cumulative impacts. Addressing this limitation will require the development of new indicators that capture both direct and indirect effects of investment in conflict-affected regions.

This lack of granular data presents a significant challenge for investors aiming to incorporate peacebuilding into their strategies. The panel emphasized the need for transparency in revenue streams, supply chains, and geographic distribution of products for companies active in conflict zones. Such disclosures are essential for investors to accurately gauge conflict exposure and make informed decisions that align with peace-positive objectives.

Another critical theme was the importance of collaboration between the peacebuilding and business communities. There remains a gap in understanding, as many in the business world still view peacebuilding as the purview of governments or international organizations. Bridging this divide will require raising awareness about the critical role that businesses play in promoting stability and the broader peace landscape. Panelists stressed that peacebuilding is a nuanced, time-intensive process; it is not a quick fix but a long-term commitment. Investors who wish to engage in peace finance must be willing to engage meaningfully with experts, local communities, and relevant stakeholders to ensure their investments contribute to sustainable peace.

The panel concluded with the imperative of embedding peace within investment strategies, advocating for a shift from merely mitigating risks to actively pursuing the opportunities associated with peace-positive investments. Addressing conflict risk and fostering peace in fragile contexts will require more robust methodologies, enhanced data transparency, and deeper collaboration between the business and peacebuilding sectors.

19. GENEVA PEACE WEEK PEACE PANEL, UNDERSTANDING THE INTERSECTION OF CONFLICT, HUNGER, AND PEACE: GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES

ORGANISERS

UN World Food Programme, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the UN Organizations in Rome, The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), The Global Network Against Food Crises, and Scaling up Nutrition (SUN) Movement

TOPIC

Conflict, Hunger, and Peace (Food Security)

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- **Full Implementation of UNSC 2417:** It is crucial for UN Security Council members to actively work toward the complete implementation of UNSC Resolution 2417 to address and mitigate conflict-induced food insecurity and malnutrition.
- **Innovative Funding and Partnerships:** There is a pressing need for innovative funding solutions and strengthened partnerships across the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus (HDPN) to foster sustainable support for affected regions.
- **Promotion of the Practical Measures Toolkit:** The [*Practical Measures Toolkit for Armed Actors to Prevent and Mitigate Conflict-Induced Food Insecurity*](#) is an invaluable resource that should be more widely utilized and publicized.
- **Strengthening Legal and Policy Frameworks:** International legal and policy frameworks to combat food insecurity are robust; however, they require more rigorous implementation to ensure comprehensive impact.
- **Integrating Food Security in Peace Support Training:** Food security must be better integrated into peace support training programs for security forces to build capacity and enhance resilience in conflict-prone areas.
- **Addressing hunger in conflict zones requires a cohesive approach** that includes robust legal frameworks, diplomatic engagement, humanitarian efforts, and sustainable funding.

SUMMARY OF THE SESSION

On October 16, 2024, in honor of World Food Day, **WFP Geneva**, alongside **Switzerland**, **FAO**, and **The Global Network Against Food Crises**, convened experts and policymakers to discuss the links between conflict, hunger, and peace. The event was attended by over 100 participants (71 in person and 42 online).

Ambassador Christian Frutiger, Assistant Director General of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), opened the session, underscoring Switzerland's commitment to addressing conflict-driven hunger during its UN Security Council term. He noted the severe impact of conflict on food systems, with armed conflict exacerbating food insecurity and malnutrition. Frutiger emphasized the need to complement local resilience with international support, highlighting Switzerland's focus on the protection of civilians through UNSC Resolution 2417. He celebrated Geneva's unique ecosystem for humanitarian innovation, encouraging comprehensive discussions on conflict and hunger.

Panel Insights

Key panelists provided perspectives on legal frameworks, security considerations, and humanitarian policy:

- **Dominique Burgeon - Director of the FAO Liaison Office with the United Nations in Geneva, representing The Global Network Against Food Crises** discussed the role of early-warning systems and data-driven responses to strengthen resilience in vulnerable, conflict-affected areas.
- **Sarah Fuhrman** of WFP detailed the significance of **UNSC Resolution 2417**, emphasizing the need for legal enforcement to curb the use of starvation as a tactic.
- **Katherine Kramer - Associate Expert at Fight for Humanity and subject matter expert** highlighted strategies to engage armed groups in respecting agricultural sites, water sources, and markets, noting that these protective practical measures can reduce local tensions and contribute to long-term peace.
- **Col. Muthusi Kimwele, International Peace Support Training Centre (IPSTC) Kenya**, underscored the importance of integrating food security into peace support training, positioning it as critical for post-conflict stability and recovery.

Funding and Partnerships

Following the panel, **Rania Dagash-Kamara, WFP's Assistant Executive Director for Partnerships and Innovation**, delivered reflections on the need for innovative funding solutions, partnerships across the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus (HDPN), and increased private-sector engagement to address the rising demand for food assistance in conflict zones.

Concluding Reflections

Ambassador Krisztina Bende, Switzerland's Ambassador to the UN in Rome, concluded by advocating for stronger multilateral and collaborative actions to address the global food crisis and malnutrition. She emphasized the importance of connecting the efforts of both Rome and Geneva, ensuring that their combined resources and strategies effectively reach those most in need, promoting impactful and unified international responses. The **European Union** echoed the need for coordinated action across the Nexus, while **Amir Abdulla**, former WFP Deputy Executive Director, shared his experience applying UNSC 2417 during his time coordinating the **Black Sea Grain Initiative** to illustrate the practical impact of these frameworks. The discussion underscored that addressing hunger in conflict zones requires a cohesive approach that includes robust legal frameworks, diplomatic engagement, humanitarian efforts, and sustainable funding.

Event Lead: Benjamin Syme Van Ameringen, Partnerships Officer, UN World Food Programme – Geneva Office, benjamin.syme@wfp.org

20. HOW CAN PEACE PROSPER? THE ROLE OF NATIONAL PEACE INFRASTRUCTURES IN SUSTAINING PEACE

ORGANISERS

Republic of Kenya, Ministry of Interior and National Administration, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation and the United Nations Development Programme/Joint United Nations (DPPA-UNDP) Programme on Building National Capacities for Conflict Prevention

TOPIC

National peace infrastructures, sustaining peace

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. National ownership, which is essential for sustaining peace, is underpinned by nationally-driven peace infrastructures, which can be formal as well as informal.
2. Peace needs to be rooted at the local level where emphasis and effort on building peace through all levels of society, and the political decision makers is critical to sustaining it;
3. Putting peace “front and centre” and infusing it across sectors, also those who seem to be alien to peace or too technical, is key to ensuring that peace prospers.
4. The enabling environment plays a crucial role in sustaining peace: by working together, peace and development actors can combine their comparative strengths to achieve tangible progress.

SUMMARY OF THE SESSION

This special session of Geneva Peace Week explored the multifaceted dimensions of peace, probing its meaning and value, and the most critical elements required for sustaining it. The session started by exploring the concept of peace as not merely the absence of war but how our collective efforts can not only prevent violent conflict, but move us away from ‘cold peace,’ towards a ‘warm,’ nationally-owned and sustained peace. It presented views from high-level speakers from Kenya, Switzerland and the United Nations, before moving into a discussion on how national peace infrastructures, initiatives and institutions are working together to prevent conflict and sustain peace. It explored the multiple levels at which efforts towards peace occur—from mediation at the level of the political leadership to local peacebuilding in the communities—as well as the various dimensions—economic and social including through women’s empowerment and gender equality, governance, environmental—and why our efforts towards sustaining peace must be joined up, first and foremost with local actors and national institutions. Recognizing how unique national experiences shape these infrastructures, the panel examined comparative insights from UN support for nationally led efforts to design and implement national peace infrastructures aimed at sustaining peace. The panel also reviewed lessons learned: the

Republic of Kenya provided reflections on its own experiences of sustaining peace through its nationally-led review of peace infrastructure and similar experiences were shared from the UN's perspective of its support to peace infrastructures in Nigeria. The event concluded with a strong call for continued engagement and action supporting national peace infrastructures in sustaining peace

21. PROTECTION OF CIVILIANS AT 25 AND BEYOND: UNDERSTANDING AND REVERSING CURRENT POC TRENDS

ORGANISERS

CIVIC, ICRC, Switzerland, Netherlands

TOPIC

Protection of civilians in armed conflict

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Staggering levels of civilian harm in armed conflict require urgent action
- CIVIC's new Protection of Civilians Trends Report and Index draws attention to existing and emerging protection trends and threats, lived experiences of civilians and communities, and how these can be prevented and addressed
- Preventive action is essential, including national prevention strategies and policies
- The crucial role of local organizations needs to be recognized and supported
- Accountability is essential to end impunity; consideration should also be given to local and context-specific preferences and alternative pathways for redress and amends
- The necessary tools and frameworks already exist and there is a need for greater political will and implementation

SUMMARY OF THE SESSION

The session focused on CIVIC's new flagship **Protection of Civilians Trends Report and Index** and was part of a global dialogue series marking the 25th anniversary of the UN Security Council's adoption of a protection of civilians (POC) agenda, and 75th anniversary of the Geneva Conventions of 1949. Covering the year 2023, it was presented against the backdrop of growing harm to civilians in armed conflict, including a 72 per cent increase in civilian casualties compared with 2022, and increases in the use of explosive weapons in populated areas, attacks against healthcare facilities and critical infrastructure, attacks against humanitarian workers, and displacement, to name only a few.

The report aims to complement the UN Secretary General's annual Report on POC, providing insights into the ways conflicts and situations of extreme violence impact civilians across the world. It is organised into four sections – Recognize, Prevent, Protect, and Amend – each of which outlines current protection gaps and emerging threats to civilians and underscores the urgency and feasibility of protecting civilians, the importance of strengthening the resilience of local communities to address and reverse these trends, and the importance of accountability and/or redress for harm caused. In

addition, the Index provides a benchmark to assess the overall protection environment across 163 countries. The Report also provides a Roadmap for action, with both high level and more detailed recommendations for States, the UN Security Council and General Assembly, and UN Peace Operation.

In addition to the trends outlined in the report, panelists noted the broad trend of lack of compliance with international law, in particular international humanitarian law (IHL) and the dangers posed by intentional misinterpretation by states of their international legal obligations. They highlighted the importance of prevention and of establishing the necessary legal, policy and other measures at the national level through the implementation of national prevention strategies *before* conflict occurs, with a view to preventing harm rather than merely addressing its consequences. This includes direct action by parties to a conflict, as well as by third states using available leverage to prevent or put an end to conflict.

The crucial role of local organizations in preventing and responding to threats and harm was also underscored. Whilst local and community-led organizations are increasingly the first – and sometimes only – responders as international organizations face access and other restrictions, there remains a critical imbalance in donor funding. The majority of funding is still directed to the international level, whilst local organizations remain chronically under-resourced and underfunded, despite facing increasing risks.

Consideration must also be given to local and context-specific responses to harm. There is an urgent need for accountability and an end to impunity for harm caused. However, criminal justice is not always the priority for survivors. It is essential to consider the long-lasting, reverberating, and psychological effects of harm and listen to their needs and requests for different pathways for redress or amends.

Ultimately, it was agreed that there is an overriding need for political will to implement measures at all levels to recognise, prevent, protect and respond to civilian harm in armed conflict. Although not a solution in and of itself, the 2024 UN Pact for the Future provides a political commitment to, and a joint vision for, the rules-based order and the need to properly address the protection of civilians. As levels of civilian harm continue to increase, we can no longer proceed with business as usual, and it is incumbent on all states, institutions, armed actors and others to address the protection of civilians as a priority issue.

22. SPARING WATER FROM ARMED CONFLICTS – BUILDING A COALITION OF ACTION

ORGANISERS

Geneva Call, Geneva Water Hub, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Affairs of Slovenia

TOPIC

This panel addressed the critical issue of protecting freshwater resources and water-related infrastructure during armed conflicts.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

The impact of conflict on water systems is severe and long-lasting, causing significant humanitarian, environmental, and developmental challenges. Ensuring access to safe water in conflict zones is essential for survival. It is not only a basic necessity but also crucial for the livelihood, dignity, and well-being of civilians. Protecting water resources helps alleviate the suffering of affected populations and contributes to achieving lasting peace, stability, and development.

The panel focused on several key themes

- **Impact of armed conflict on water resources:** The direct and indirect consequences of conflict-related damage to water resources, including the long-term humanitarian, health, and environmental effects.
- **The role of the Global Alliance to Spare Water from Armed Conflicts:** The alliance aims to protect the human dignity of populations affected by armed conflicts by promoting the protection of freshwater and related installations through legal and technical tools. It focuses on raising awareness of the consequences of water-related attacks, strengthening protections under international law, and exploring the potential for political declarations and inter-governmental cooperation to safeguard water in conflict zones.
- **International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and water protection:** IHL plays a crucial role in safeguarding water resources during conflict, but deliberate violations and impunity remain challenges, underscoring the need for stronger enforcement, better training, and accountability for both state and non-state actors.
- **Water crisis in Yemen and engaging with armed groups:** The ongoing conflict in Yemen has exacerbated water scarcity, leaving millions in need of humanitarian aid, with armed groups controlling critical water resources. Efforts to protect water infrastructure involve engaging with armed groups, training on IHL, and organizing dialogue, though water-related health crises like cholera persist.

SUMMARY OF THE SESSION

The discussion emphasized the significant impact of armed conflicts on water resources, highlighting the long-term and cumulative consequences of attacks on water and water infrastructure, including widespread destruction and pollution in regions like Ukraine, Gaza, and Lebanon. It underscored the urgent need to bridge gaps between existing legal frameworks and their implementation, particularly international humanitarian law (IHL) and human rights law, to better protect civilians and their access to water during conflict. The conversation also stressed the importance of strengthening collaboration among humanitarian, development, and peace actors, particularly in pre-conflict preparedness and resilience building. In conflict zones, issues like water scarcity, contamination, and unreliable infrastructure exacerbate human suffering, and rebuilding clean water systems takes years. The Global Alliance to Spare Water from Armed Conflicts, launched by the Republic of Slovenia, the Swiss Confederation and the Geneva Water Hub, in collaboration with partners, was highlighted as a crucial initiative to promote evidence-based decision-making, inform policy, and foster partnerships to safeguard water, ensuring its role in supporting food security, public health, and human dignity during and after conflicts.

The discussion also included a military perspective on safeguarding water, highlighting the crucial role of training in preparing soldiers to protect both civilians and the environment, including water resources, during combat. It was noted that while soldiers are trained to preserve life and the environment, they ultimately follow orders from political leaders who determine the methods and weapons used in conflict, which can complicate efforts to protect water resources. Despite this, soldiers strive to minimize the use of harmful tactics that could damage water sources, underscoring the dilemma faced by the military in balancing operational needs with the protection of vital resources during armed conflict. The critical importance of International Humanitarian Law (IHL) in protecting water resources during armed conflicts was also emphasized, highlighting its role in safeguarding lives and infrastructure, even in the face of war's devastation. As we celebrate the 75th anniversary of the Geneva Conventions, the need to strengthen IHL was stressed, noting that while it has been effective in preventing harm, deliberate violations and impunity remain significant challenges. Enhanced training and accountability should be key for both state and non-state actors, as it should be for them to respect IHL and improve operational practices to prevent damage to critical infrastructure, particularly water systems. A broader interpretation of IHL was also encouraged, to put more of a focus on the protection of the natural environment.

Discussions also covered the severe water crisis in Yemen, exacerbated by the ongoing conflict over the past decade, which has left 18 million people in need of humanitarian assistance, with a third of the population lacking access to water. Yemen, already water-stressed before the conflict, faces a dire situation with armed groups controlling critical water resources, leaving many civilians with little to no access to water. The role of humanitarian organizations in providing water to displaced populations was stressed, as well as the importance of engaging with armed groups and de facto authorities to ensure the protection of water resources and other vital infrastructure. Efforts include training armed actors on International Humanitarian Law (IHL), promoting the importance of safeguarding water infrastructure, and organizing community dialogue to facilitate resource-sharing and improve security. However, the continuous water scarcity and the resulting health crises, such as cholera outbreaks, remain major challenges in the region.

23. THE ROLE OF SPECIAL PROCEDURES IN SUSTAINING PEACE AND PREVENTING CONFLICT THROUGH HUMAN RIGHTS

ORGANISERS

OHCHR / QUNO

TOPIC

Human Rights and social justice and inclusion, sustaining peace, conflict prevention

KEY TAKEAWAYS

the important and practical impact Special Procedures can have on sustaining peace and conflict prevention, and the challenges and concrete examples of how to further enhance this capacity.

SUMMARY OF THE SESSION

H.E. Mr. Jürg Lauber, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary and Permanent Representative of Switzerland delivered the opening remarks, followed by a panel moderated by Nathalie Rondeux, Coordinator, Special Procedures Branch, OHCHR. The panel featured Mr. Clément Nyaletsossi Voule, former Special Rapporteur on freedom of peaceful assembly and of association; Ms. Anita Ramasastry, former member of the Working Group on Business and Human Rights and former Chair of the Coordination Committee of Special Procedures and Mr. Adam Day, Head of the Geneva Office of United Nations University Centre for Policy Research. Ms. Laurel Townhead, interim Director of QUNO, provided the closing remarks.

The event, attended by 82 participants (40 in person and 42 online), was an opportunity to revive the concrete recommendations of the [report](#) “*Integrating Human Rights and Sustaining Peace: Exploring Special Procedures*”, published in November 2023 by OHCHR, QUNO and PBSO and provided rich and concrete examples of the impact that Special Procedures (SPs) can have in peacebuilding, conflict prevention, early warning and addressing root causes. From the escalating violence and conflicts in Afghanistan, DRC, Palestine, Myanmar, Soudan, the Sahel and Ukraine to the specific tools used by SPs, such as individual and collective communications, country and thematic visits, panelists highlighted the wide range of opportunities in leveraging human rights mechanisms to prevent conflict and sustain peace.

Some of the challenges raised during the discussion included the dependance of human rights mechanisms on governments’ willingness in opening spaces for engagement, the lack of resources limiting SPs’ ability to carry out their important work, their lack of access to key actors in New York, which is essential for achieving sustainable impact, and the international community’s passive response to early warning signals. Concrete recommendations to address those challenges included: the added value of integrating SPs into the Peacebuilding Architecture Review for a more sustainable

impact on peacebuilding, the need for the UN Department of Peacebuilding and Political Affairs and the Peacebuilding Support Office to have a presence in Geneva, to complement OHCHR's presence in New York, and the need for the Peacebuilding Fund to take into consideration relevant SPs reports. A concrete positive example of SPs' impact on sustaining peace and preventing conflict was their influence on Kenya's 2022 election, which contributed to the peaceful conduct of the elections despite widespread concerns that they could turn violent.

During the discussion, the audience raised concerns about the inefficiency of the UN in peacemaking, particularly citing the Israel Palestine conflict. The panel acknowledged these inefficiencies and highlighted that without a stronger commitment to peacemaking and a reform of the UNSC, there can be no sustainable impact for peace. In response to questions about how to positively influence countries that are unresponsive to SPs' warnings, the panel suggested further efforts and confidential advocacy, and the importance of mandate holders meeting with all concerned parties, including those labeled as terrorists, to ensure a comprehensive and sustainable approach to conflict resolution and peacebuilding.

24. WHAT IS RESILIENCE? BRINGING COHERENCE TO CONCEPTS OF RESILIENCE IN CONFLICT PREVENTION AND PEACEBUILDING

ORGANISERS

Interpeace, The Centre for Sustainable Peace and Democratic Development, SeeD

TOPIC

Resilience

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- There are various definitions of resilience across disciplines. We understand resilience for peace as *“endogenous attributes, capacities, resources and responses that enable individuals, communities, and institutions to peacefully deal with the impact of conflict and violence, as well as adapt and learn to prevent new and emerging patterns of conflict and violence.”*
- Not every positive skill, capacity or asset is resilience and not everything negative is fragility
- We measure resilience when we want to quantify how resilient or fragile a system is, what makes the system resilient and how to disrupt adversities that are difficult to eliminate.
- Resilience should be seen as a process rather than an end goal, allowing for iterative learning to sustaining peace, fostering adaptable, long-term strategies, and advocating for collective responsibility.

SUMMARY OF THE SESSION

The session commenced with exploring definitions, convergences and divergences, along with dimensions, levels and systems of resilience. A QR code and link was shared with the participants at the start, and the results as well as the results of previous online inquiry were presented on screen. There was then a presentation on definitions, specifically what is and what is not considered resilience, common emerging resilience factors as well as main critiques of the resilience lens.

The session then transitioned into a presentation on measurement tools, strengths, and gaps, and how we can investigate inter-dimensional relations. The audience was engaged through presentation of charts and graphs that helped think through how to formulate resilience questions, focusing on agents, affected outcomes and adversity. The session then proceeded to explore case studies and lessons from Burkina Faso and Ivory Coast using SCORE Index based resilience analysis, interlaced with interactive elements with the audience to identify resilience factors.

The session concluded with an interactive session where findings from a resilience study in Ethiopia were shared with the audience and small groups were tasked with identifying and sharing potential policy and practice options to use research to inform action.



F O U N D A T I O N

GENEVA PEACEBUILDING PLATFORM FOUNDATION

C/O DCAF, Maison de la Paix,
Chemin Eugène-Rigot 2E,
1202, Geneva, Switzerland



www.genevapeaceweek.ch