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## The 2030 Agenda and the concept of peaceful, just and inclusive societies

How did we arrive at the inclusion of the concept of peaceful, just and inclusive societies into the 2030 Agenda?

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In 2012, during the third United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (UNSCD), also known as Rio + 20, three years after the deadline to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the member states of the United Nations outlined the negotiation process for the development agenda that would follow the MDGs (the post-2015 agenda).

They agreed that the new agenda, its objectives and goals would not be drafted by the UN secretariat, as the MDGs were, but instead be the product of a universal negotiation that would include all member states. They knew that these negotiations would be extremely difficult, given that the Rio + 20 conference, which attempted to reconcile the environmental objectives with the economic and social objectives of the global community, had not succeeded in doing so.

In fact, there was not even the slightest agreement: while the gap between those who advocated prioritizing the reduction of poverty and the "environmentalists" grew, a third group further complicated matters by arguing that a number of new, interrelated issues would need to be included. These included: urban growth, inequality, oceans, violence, and good governance. The lack of consensus, led to the final document of Rio + 20<sup>1</sup> naming all the "priorities" in a long narrative, but not in an actionable manner.

It was decided that the decisions on the topics to be covered in the new agenda as well as the modalities for their negotiations would be postponed until later in New York, once the Intergovernmental Working Group on the Sustainable

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<sup>1</sup> United Nations, *El Futuro que Queremos (The Future We Want)*, accessed July 6, 2018, [sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/764Future-We-Want-SPANISH-for-Web.pdf](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/764Future-We-Want-SPANISH-for-Web.pdf).

Development Goals (SDGs) would begin to meet. It was going to be, and was, a formidable challenge to negotiate these differences.

In view of what was shaping up to be a virtually impossible task, the then Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon convened a 27-member High-Level Panel (HLP) to present him with recommendations on the creation of "a bold but practical development agenda." The intention was to see if this group of eminent persons, which included representatives from governments, the private sector, academia, civil society, and youth, could discuss and analyze the many issues and priorities and come up with recommendations on shaping a post-2015 development agenda that would help provide real answers to the global challenges of the 21st century, building on the MDGs and aiming at poverty eradication.

The task proposed by the secretary-general was far from easy. The recommendations also had to address how broad political consensus could be built and maintained on an ambitious but achievable new agenda revolving around three factors: economic growth, social equity, and environmental sustainability.

Several countries argued that, with the appointment of this Panel, the secretary-general and the secretariat were trying once again to define the agenda. For this reason, the member states insisted that the Working Group's role should only be to provide advice to the secretary-general and that its recommendations<sup>2</sup> would only be an input to the report to be submitted by the General Secretariat as input to the negotiations of the Intergovernmental Working Group.

Even given these conditions, it was known that the recommendations of the eminent persons who made up the High-Level Group would greatly influence the subsequent talks. And so, they did. In the end, the report and recommendations of the HLP were used as the basis for many of the negotiations that led to the creation of the 2030 Agenda, which was adopted in 2015.

The mandate of the High-Level Group also included extensive thematic and regional consultations with citizens and civil society organizations, private companies, and academia. Consultations were held with over 5000 civil society

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<sup>2</sup> Grupo de Alto Nivel de Personas Eminentes sobre la Agenda de Desarrollo Post 2013, *Una Nueva Alianza Mundial: erradicar la pobreza y transformar las economías a través del desarrollo sostenible-Informe del Grupo de Alto Nivel de Personas Eminentes sobre la Agenda de Desarrollo Post*, accessed July 6, 2018, [www.un.org/es/sg/pdf/hlp\\_report\\_post2015\\_sg.pdf](http://www.un.org/es/sg/pdf/hlp_report_post2015_sg.pdf).

organizations in 120 countries, 250 companies in 30 countries and other thematic and regional consultations. The Panel's secretariat (of which this author was deputy director), in addition to commissioning analyses and studies from well-known experts and specialists, worked with the United Nations system to conduct a global survey—which by 2012 could be done electronically—to ascertain the aspirations, desires and priorities of citizens around the world regarding the new agenda.<sup>3</sup> More than half a million people participated in the survey.

The almost unanimous results gathered from different parts of the world indicated that while it was considered appropriate to continue working with the mainly social issues and tasks outlined by the MDGs, it was necessary to add to the new agenda targets for issues such as good governance, security, reduction of violence, justice, and the rule of law, among others. In other words, while citizens and organizations around the world recognized the social achievements of the MDGs, they were clamoring for more peaceful, just, and inclusive societies. In other words, they were saying that without peace, justice and inclusion, there is no true and sustainable development.

This clear endorsement from such a broad group of citizens around the world prompted the idea of adding a goal on peace, inclusion, and justice to the Working Group's report. Eventually, in the 2030 Agenda, this goal would become SDG16: Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies.

In its narrative, the 2030 Agenda recognizes the need to build peaceful, just, and inclusive societies that provide equal access to justice and are based on respect for human rights (including the right to development), effective rule of law and good governance at all levels, as well as transparent, effective, and accountable institutions. Poverty eradication is possible only in the context of an inclusive society. The 2030 Agenda also addresses the factors that impede such development by giving rise to violence, insecurity, and injustice, such as inequality, corruption, bad governance, illicit financial flows and arms traffic.

Achieving the inclusion of these issues, which are reflected in SDG16, and which are so important and obvious to many people, was a tenacious political battle. A battle that was fought among the 27 members of the High-Level Panel and even more so when the negotiation involved all 193 UN Member states. The

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<sup>3</sup> UNICEF, *El Mundo que queremos (My World)*, accessed July 6, 2018, [www.unicef.org/peru/spanish/El-mundo-que-queremos-ODS-Version-Amigable-para-ninos.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/peru/spanish/El-mundo-que-queremos-ODS-Version-Amigable-para-ninos.pdf).

arguments for inclusion as outlined in the previous paragraph were made with many examples showing that the reality of sustainable development implied having to address issues of justice, inclusion, and peace in an integrated manner with environmental, economic and social issues. Many times, by measuring only economic indicators and data, the international community had failed to see several crises—such as the Arab Spring in Tunisia—coming. Some argued that including these issues meant politicizing development, others saw them as a threat to sovereignty since they could be used as an excuse for interference by powerful countries and would mean the transfer of funds earmarked for development to security issues. Nevertheless, with adjustments to the language and many long nights of negotiation, SDG 16 was included and maintained. However, although it is now an integral part of the 2030 Agenda, it is the only SDG that some member states continue to question at the political level.

Because of this continued "pushback" by some countries, and because many others felt that it was relatively new to think about these issues at the level of development programs, three member states—Brazil, Sierra Leone, and Switzerland—took the lead in bringing together a group of countries and organizations that believe in and support SDG16 (the so-called Pathfinders for Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies) to develop a roadmap<sup>4</sup> to accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda's commitments on these issues. In their introduction, the three convening governments describe the roadmap as a **"first guide" for implementation.**

The objective is not to provide a "recipe" for implementation, but a basis for **accelerated realization of the SDG16+ targets.** They also aim to help governments and other partners identify opportunities for scaling up implementation, based on the best available evidence and by connecting them with alliances and partnerships that are working on these issues. They underline that this roadmap **aims to bring together the efforts of those working on these issues and create a platform that can assist and accelerate their implementation.**

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<sup>4</sup> Pathfinders for Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies, *The Roadmap for Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies – A Call to Action to Change our World.* (New York: Center on International Cooperation, 2019), available at <http://www.sdg16.plus>.

## How was the roadmap developed?

First, an analysis was made of the relationship between SDG16 and the rest of the 2030 Agenda since it is a cross-cutting and integral goal and should not be seen in isolation. This demonstrated that while the goal has 12 targets to promote just, peaceful and inclusive societies, there are 24 targets from seven other goals that directly measure some aspect of peace, inclusion or access to justice. For this reason, the roadmap refers to SDG16+ (See Figure 1).

**Figure 1**



Once this analysis was done and in order to clarify the transformation required to meet the 36 goals, the available data for each of them was reviewed in an attempt to explore trends and establish baselines.

With regards to **peaceful societies**, it demonstrated that violence, already so deep, extensive, and diffuse, could worsen. Violence is a profound threat to sustainable development and a dimension whose effects on inequality are not sufficiently taken into account. Different forms of violence interact with each other and cannot be dealt with in isolation.

In the area of **just societies**, it noted that it will be impossible to achieve the 2030 Agenda if current trends continue. While data on targets for achieving just societies are scarce, we know that there are huge numbers of people who have no access to justice. We also know that corruption and illicit financial flows tend to undermine trust in governments and retard the development of societies. Human rights and gender parity are also fundamental conditions for a just society.

In terms of **inclusive societies**, the analysis confirmed that there is a crisis of governance and a growing sense of exclusion globally, and that achieving the 2030 Agenda therefore depends on an unprecedented improvement in governance standards. If we do not build more inclusive societies, poverty eradication will not be possible. It was also found that work needs to be done to improve data for political, social, and economic inclusion.

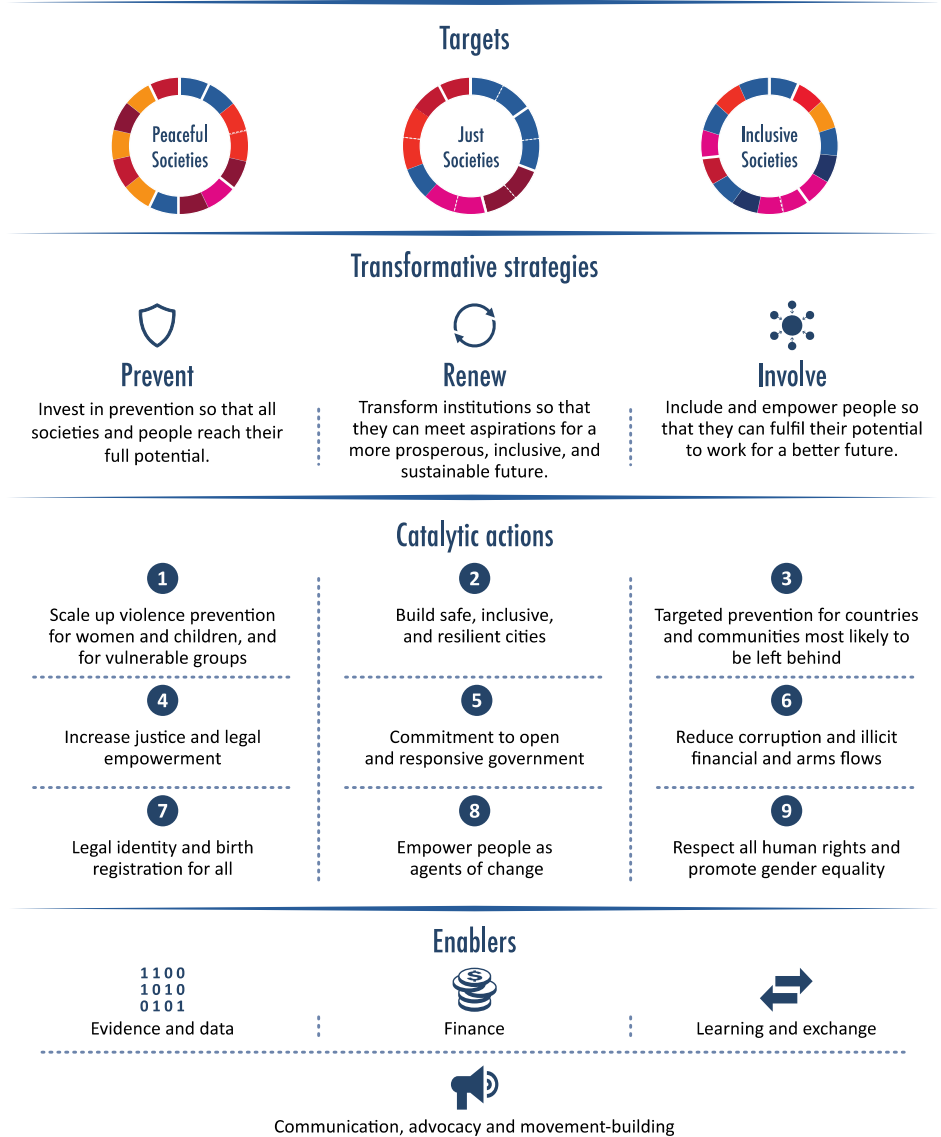
## **What does the Roadmap propose? (See Figure 2)**

The roadmap identifies three transformative strategies, nine catalytic action areas and four enablers needed to support the implementation of the SDG16+ at the national level.

**Figure 2**



We are determined to foster peaceful, just and inclusive societies which are free from fear and violence.



The three transformative strategies, which are strongly interconnected, which are strongly interconnected, recognize the need for a cross-cutting and integrated approach to achieve sustained progress on all SDG16+ targets. First, **a new commitment to prevention** is needed to address unacceptable levels of violence and insecurity.

Prevention is a universal responsibility that all countries must assume, but there are contexts in which increasingly intensive and targeted approaches are required because risks to sustainable development are on the rise. Effective prevention directly reduces all forms of violence, while resolving grievances, reducing polarization and mistrust, and strengthening institutions so that they can manage and resolve disputes fairly.

**Institutional renewal** is another transformative strategy required to achieve change toward more sustainable patterns of development. Many societies feel that their institutions are ill-equipped to respond effectively to the aspirations of their citizens and therefore need to be reconfigured. On the other hand, commitment to meeting the SDGs and their targets implies a substantial increase in what is required of institutions. Moreover, good governance should not be seen in isolation, but as a responsibility of all sectors and institutions of society. All must seek new ways to respond to aspirations for a more prosperous, inclusive, and sustainable future.

A new approach to ensuring **greater inclusion and empowerment** is essential if people are to realize their potential. We are living at a time when many feel excluded from their societies and from globalization. It is a trend that is fueling political instability, reducing social cohesion and, in some cases, generating violent conflict. The 2030 Agenda promises greater social, economic, and political inclusion, goals that can only be achieved through greater empowerment of all but especially women, children, youth and the most vulnerable groups.

**The nine catalytic actions** provide a practical starting point for achieving the SDG16+ targets. They identify areas where there is immediate potential to accelerate implementation based on existing evidence and experience. Each action contributes to progress on multiple targets.

The catalytic actions proposed by the roadmap are:

1. Scale up violence prevention for women, children, and vulnerable groups.
2. Adopt measures to build safe, inclusive, and resilient cities.
3. Increase targeted prevention in countries and communities that are most at risk of being left behind, including those most affected by conflicts and violence.
4. Increase legal empowerment for all as well as access to justice.



5. Commit to an open and responsive government, and accountable and transparent institutions that are equipped to meet the needs of people and respect their rights.
6. Reduce corruption, and illicit financial and arms flows.
7. Provide birth registration and legal identity for all.
8. Empower people as agents of change.
9. Respect all human rights and promote gender equality.

For each catalytic action, the roadmap sets out recommendations for implementation and explains how implementation will contribute to strengthening prevention, institutional renewal, inclusion, and empowerment strategies. For each action, examples of implementation at the national level are highlighted, demonstrating the diversity and scale of innovation in different countries. It also identifies the main partnerships, alliances and platforms that are working on the issues related to each of the catalytic actions. See **Figure 3**– the example of the catalytic action 4: Increase Justice and legal empowerment.

Figure 3



## 4 Increase justice and legal empowerment

We have an opportunity to promote the rule of law and increase access to justice in all countries, with a substantial impact on the most vulnerable and furthest behind.

### Prevent

Grievances are addressed, reducing the risk of violence and tackling impunity.

### Renew

Justice and security institutions become more accessible and responsive.

### Involve

People can claim their rights and entitlements, allowing them to reach their full potential.

More than 5 billion people are unable to count on the full protection of the law. While many countries have taken steps to increase access to justice, justice for all will not be reached on current trajectories. We can accelerate progress if we:

- Understand people’s justice problems and whether they feel they are fairly treated when they seek a legal remedy.
- Empower them to use and shape the law in ways that remove obstacles to their development, and that of their families and their communities.
- Focus on the needs of victim and witnesses of violent crimes within the justice system, in particular women and children, and vulnerable groups.
- Enable people to access justice for civil matters, including those related to land and property, family law, health, and labor.
- Support alternative resolution mechanisms to solve disputes outside the formal justice system where possible, allowing courts to concentrate on more serious cases.
- Ensure full judicial independence and transparency, and make justice and security institutions more inclusive, accountable, transparent, and effective.

The justice sector has long been neglected and underfunded. However, this is an area of growing innovation and where many countries are showing leadership.

1. Build on the agenda for people-centered justice set out in the report of the Pathfinder’s Task Force on Justice and Inclusion and the Task Force’s recommendations.
2. Use regular surveys to capture data on legal needs, rates of victimization, and confidence in justice and security institutions.
3. Develop a strategy for improving access to legal aid and assistance for civil and criminal matters, building on the UN Principles and Guidelines on Access to Legal Aid and the UNDP/UNODC Global Study on Legal Aid.
4. Increase the capacity of justice and security institutions to operate in ways that are informed by the evidence on violence prevention, building trust and legitimacy, and increasing accountability.
5. Extend and improve services provided at the community level, while increasing the use of mobile courts, informal dispute resolution mechanisms, and other cost-effective approaches, in line with international human rights standards.
6. Strengthen administrative justice, including access to redress and complaint mechanisms, and facilitate people’s ability to claim their rights related to health, education, land, and natural resources.
7. Support transitional justice processes to secure truth, justice, reparations, and guarantees of non-recurrence for victims of conflict or large scale human rights violations, and invest in efforts to prevent recurrence.
8. Make greater use of the Open Government Partnership (OGP) and other national, regional and global platforms to provide justice for all, while funding and protecting grassroots justice defenders.

**Guatemala**  
 La Comisión Internacional contra la Impunidad en Guatemala (CICIG) es una iniciativa guatemalteca establecida como un esfuerzo conjunto con la ONU para asistir a las instituciones estatales en la investigación, el juicio y el castigo de las personas responsables de estructuras delictivas, o que estén asociadas a ellas. Desde 2007 a 2017, ha ayudado a dismantelar redes de corrupción que involucraban a funcionarios públicos de alto rango y miembros del sector privado. La CICIG ha propuesto medidas que fortalecerán la legislación y las instituciones, mientras el gobierno trabaja para garantizar que el sector de justicia cumpla con su mandato de proporcionar justicia para todos en Guatemala.

**Países Bajos**  
 En los Países Bajos, el acceso a la justicia se ve facilitado por centros de ayuda legal, establecidos en la mayoría de las municipalidades del país, que ofrecen asesoramiento jurídico profesional gratuito. También es posible buscar soluciones a problemas de dimensión legal mediante una innovadora plataforma online llamada "Guía para la Justicia", que proporciona a los ciudadanos las herramientas necesarias para abordar de manera eficiente y económica problemas legales, por ejemplo divorcios, a su propio ritmo. Los Países Bajos también continúan respaldando la investigación y el juicio de atrocidades en masa y otros delitos internacionales graves, y están comprometidos activamente con la iniciativa para un tratado multilateral sobre asistencia legal mutua y extradición por dichos delitos.

**Sierra Leona**  
 Sierra Leona ha incrementado sus esfuerzos para consolidar un sistema judicial que cumpla con las necesidades de la población y avale el desarrollo futuro del país. Estos esfuerzos se dirigieron a grupos excluidos, mediante el establecimiento de un Consejo de Asesoramiento Legal, el uso de cortes móviles en áreas sin estructura legal permanente y fortaleciendo los sistemas de justicia no formales. Se han reducido los periodos de espera y el Ministerio de Justicia está comprometido en incrementar la financiación y garantizar que las personas comprendan sus derechos y el funcionamiento del sistema legal.

**Argentina**  
 Argentina tiene más de 80 centros que proporcionan servicios legales y comunitarios integrales a comunidades desfavorecidas. Cada centro tiene un equipo de abogados, psicólogos, trabajadores sociales y mediadores comunitarios. Algunos centros también ofrecen acceso a servicios de protección social y cooperan con agencias estatales como la Administración Nacional de Seguridad Social. Además, un conjunto de defensorías públicas, facultades de Derecho y colegios de abogados proporcionan representación legal gratuita en casos civiles que no suelen ser aceptados por abogados privados. En 2017, la red tiene el objetivo de brindar apoyo a 400.000 personas y está complementada por el programa El Estado de tu Barrio.

<p><b>Namati</b></p> <p>Un movimiento a nivel mundial de defensores legales comunitarios que ayudan y empoderan a las personas a entender, usar y dar forma a las leyes.</p>	<p><b>Red Internacional de Asistencia Legal</b></p> <p>Conformada como respuesta al Estudio Global sobre Asistencia Legal. Tiene el objetivo de informar, respaldar y empoderar a los proveedores de asistencia legal de todo el mundo.</p>	<p><b>El Punto Focal Mundial para la Policía, la Justicia y el Sistema Penitenciario</b></p> <p>Unifica el trabajo de la ONU para fortalecer el Estado de derecho en las áreas de la fuerza policial, la justicia y el sistema penitenciario, en algunos de los lugares más inseguros del mundo.</p>	<p><b>El Foro Mundial sobre Leyes, Justicia y Desarrollo</b></p> <p>Red de diversos sectores involucrados que tiene como objetivo generar las soluciones legales innovadoras necesarias para cumplir con los ODS.</p>
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**Alianzas y plataformas**

The four enablers identified in the roadmap favor progress towards the implementation of SDG16+ targets. First, it is necessary to adopt a strategic approach in order to strengthen **the evidence and data** that can provide decision-makers with the arguments for investing and working on SDG16+ issues. Second, the **investment case** needs to be strengthened because it is essential to mobilize financing from multiple sources, including governments, international public finance, the private sector, foundations, and innovative sources of finance. Third, new approaches to **learning and exchange** among pioneer countries on these issues should be encouraged, with an emphasis on what works and what has been achieved. Finally, a greater effort is needed to

**communicate, disseminate, and promote** what is being done in this area and to work on strengthening the norms and values that support the consolidation of peaceful, just, and inclusive societies.

The roadmap is expected to help countries understand their areas of strength and weakness in implementing the SDG16+ targets, identify immediate priorities for scaling up implementation based on their current development strategies and plans, and finally to take forward a vision of longer-term actions aimed at building peaceful, just, and inclusive societies that can integrate these guidelines into future planning cycles. It is also expected to strengthen learning and exchange with more and diverse countries, and to suggest how to enlist the support of regional and international alliances, platforms, and partners.

The roadmap underlines that to maintain the universality of the platform, special attention will need to be paid to countries that otherwise do not have the capacity to participate fully, being the least developed and most vulnerable.

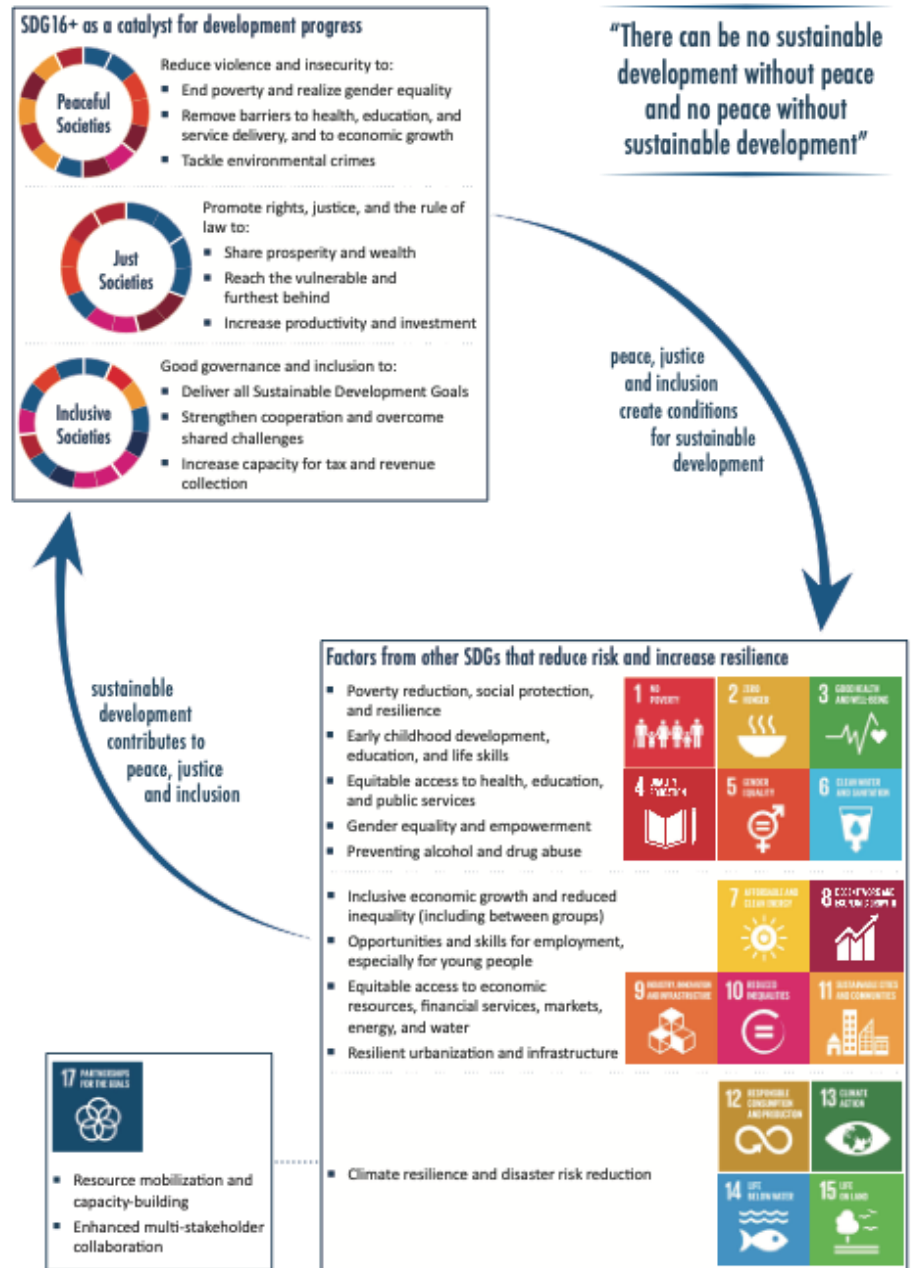
## Supporting international compliance

The second priority of the Pathfinders is to leverage the roadmap to strengthen strategies and work on SDG16+ issues at regional and international levels. They are committed to supporting regional and international actors already working on the implementation of some of the roadmap targets such as the Global Partnership to End Violence against Children. An associated effort is being undertaken jointly with the Spotlight Initiative to eliminate violence against women and girls.

Among many other possible areas of action are collaboration with UN-Habitat, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and other partners to strengthen support for building safe, inclusive, and resilient cities, or to strengthen global and regional cooperation to curb corruption, illicit financial flows and arms trafficking.

It also aims to increase the number of other sectors that address the obstacles that impede compliance with the SDGs and that are associated with violence, insecurity, injustice, exclusion, and poor governance **(See Figure 4)**.

Figure 4



In addition to promoting the realization and achievements of SDG16+ goals at national, regional, and international levels, the road map also proposes to work intensively on **three major areas of challenge** related to SDG16+.

These are issues that need a well-targeted and intensive push if the goals related to them have to be met by 2030. The big challenges are:

1. **Accelerate the delivery of SDG16.3 - access to justice for all - and others that have to do with the construction of just societies.** To this end, under the leadership of the Pathfinders, a Task Force on Justice was established in February 2018, which is chaired by ministers from Argentina, the Netherlands, and Sierra Leone, and by Hina Jilani, a lawyer and human rights activist, belonging to the "Elders" group. The Task Force aims to make recommendations that can foster an acceleration in the provision of justice for individuals and communities who are on the margins of the protection of the law. It will address the following issues: the justice gap; the case for investment in justice; strategies, tools and approaches that can support access to justice; and how to defend and protect those who defend justice. How can international and regional cooperation support access to justice at the national level? The Task Force is supported by a growing alliance of justice partners who are working on many of these issues and whose reports will inform the Task Force's report. For example, the World Justice Project, UNODC and other partners are developing a new synthesis of justice data. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the World Bank are building a case for investing in justice. UN Women and UNODC are convening a ministerial-level team on justice for women, while The Hague Institute for Innovation in Law (HiIL) is leading a working group on innovation and the International Center for Transitional Justice is leading a working group on transitional justice.
2. Work is also underway to meet **the second major challenge that centers on the promise of SDG16.1 to "Significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere."** This challenge has the potential to play a leading role in the 2030 Agenda (as poverty reduction did in the MDGs) and to be an enabler for achieving broader progress with the SDGs. It sets a measurable target for violence prevention and reduction at the center of the 2030 Agenda, highlighting the threat that violence, insecurity, and injustice pose to achieving all 17 SDGs. The target also addresses all forms of violence that require 16 comprehensive and integrated strategies capable of responding to countries and regions with different burdens of violence. It also provides

an opportunity to bring together communities working on various forms of prevention, given that the threats are interconnected, and most solutions have been found to help prevent multiple forms of violence. Work on this challenge will hopefully bring together all disciplines and sectors to explore how [SDG16.1] and can be realized and funded, creating an agenda for action.

- 3. The third major challenge is to develop a new agenda for social, economic, and political inclusion and to combat inequality.** This means identifying new models for inclusion and participation, while making recommendations on how to protect civic space and ensure that all parts of society can play a full role in sustainable development. The challenge offers the potential to build a bridge between those working on the issues of exclusion and economic inequality, bringing together SDG16+ and SDG10 (inequality) communities in a common effort to identify policy and programmatic solutions.

The results of this work will be used to establish an approach that is conducive to learning and can help in the development of countries' political agendas. The hope is also that, by involving as many actors as possible, the ambition to achieve these goals and the political will for their implementation can be stimulated. The report of the Task Force on Justice that is expected to help increase political will to work and invest in justice will be launched in spring 2019 and will be presented at the High-Level Political Forum and the UN General Assembly that same year when the achievements made in the implementation of SDG16+ will be reviewed. The other two major challenges will continue to be worked on throughout 2019 in the hope that the results can be used to drive action from 2020.

The intention of the Pathfinders for Peaceful, Just and Inclusive societies is to present results and demonstrate progress in the implementation of SDG16+ at the 2019 High-Level Political Forum, which will focus on the theme of "empowering people and ensuring inclusion and equality" (SDG16 and SDG10). They want to show that it is possible to work and make progress on these issues, which are central to sustainable development and affect all countries regardless of their per capita income level.



Likewise, when world leaders meet at the General Assembly that year to review progress in each of the areas of the 2030 Agenda, the convening countries of the Pathfinders claim that "by that time, we should have taken significant additional steps to reduce fear and violence and to build just societies that are inclusive and empowering."

That year will mark six years since the issues of peaceful, just and inclusive societies were first considered to be included in the 2030 Agenda. We hope that by then with the evidence, data, and achievements (among other things from seminars such as this one) there will be no doubt about the need to address these issues, which are essential to meet the targets of the 2030 Agenda.

*\* I would like to thank my colleague David Steven, Deputy Director of CIC, who is the author of many of the works associated with the Roadmap that I used as the basis of my presentation and this monograph.*