Summary of the UNDP Consultation on the New Agenda for Peace[1]

Background

The Secretary General's call for a New Agenda for Peace is borne out of a need to revitalize collective security system and multilateral peace efforts. The world is in transition without a clear destination and faces multidimensional risks that are intensifying. Increasing geopolitical competition further undermines efforts to facilitate collective engagement. It is in this context that we must identify how the United Nations can remain a relevant actor, especially vis-a-vis Member States toward a revitalized agenda for peace.

This brief summarizes the overarching issues highlighted during the virtual consultation convened by the United Nations Development Programme's Crisis Bureau on 18 November 2022, that brought together representatives from UNDP's central bureaux, regional bureaux, and country offices with the New Agenda for Peace penholders.

Main discussion points

- **In recent years the world has witnessed reversals** in global peacefulness, the return of interstate conflict, declines in human development[2] and human security[3], waves of social unrest, online hate speech, and an epidemic of coups/Unconstitutional Changes in Government (UCGs). Faced with these trends, the **UN's ability to effectively use all instruments at its disposal** to address the root causes of fragility and violence, prevent conflict, and to promote, maintain and sustain peace **appears diminished**. **Retaining the UN's normative role** (e.g. on human rights), particularly in complex political and development settings, **has been an additional challenge**.

- In these contexts, the UN's humanitarian instruments admittedly offer vital assistance to save lives. However, the **UN system's over-reliance on these instruments, while development programming is interrupted and preventive diplomacy space is squeezed by contentious multilateralism, risks further entrenching states of fragility and dependency** with no end in sight. Forging a pathway out of this vicious cycle requires better interlocking of all instruments that the UN has at its disposal, rightsizing development and peace components in the HDP nexus and building on national capacities and institutions to build sustainable resilience.

- **Development *is* prevention**: the New Agenda for Peace should renew our commitment to the principle of **indivisibility of peace & development** – that to be a relevant and effective development actor means to be a committed peace actor, and that being a peace actor is only relevant insofar as one can contribute to sustainable development. All evidence demonstrates that **investing in development is the best way to prevent** crises and conflicts. We cannot wait until conditions allow or political bottlenecks are removed before we engage on development and peace. **Regardless of the political context, our duty** – in many cases, in support of national capacities – **is to prevent conflict** from erupting or escalating and promote sustained development engagement, and we must do so with an anticipatory lens before any bullet is discharged.

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[1] Held virtually on 18 November 2022 between UNDP offices and New Agenda for Peace co-leads.
[2] https://hdr.undp.org/content/human-development-report-2021-22
[3] New Threats to Human Security in the Anthropocene: Demanding Greater Solidarity. UNDP Human Development Report Office, 2022 Special Report. https://hs.hdr.undp.org/

- **Sustainable resourcing of prevention**, which is the most cost-effective means of engagement yet faces structural impediments due to systemic underinvestment, **is critically needed**. As the General Assembly Financing for Peacebuilding resolution (A/RES/76/805) recently indicated, we must reenvision the resourcing for prevention and peacebuilding – how funds are allocated by Member States to the Peacebuilding Fund or to our trust funds, global programmes and projects, to incentivizing joint preventive, holistic and coordinated engagement by recipient entities. **Financing, in the context of the nexus, requires a serious bridging effort between the narrative and the financing silos**.

- **UNDP's analysis/assessments/advocacy** in conflict contexts on the impact of war on development[4] and the costs of recovery have been important means **for ensuring evidence-based and risk-informed development**. **While the responsibility for ensuring development lies with de facto authorities in such complex development and political settings, development actors cannot disengage** due to our commitment to sustainable development and have to better articulate how to engage with non-state actors through a principled, risk-mitigated, conflict-sensitive approach. In this regard, to 'stay and deliver,' it is also vital to better articulate and advocate for the recognition of principled approaches to development, to help us express why and how we **should not be deterred to promote development in contexts of political complexity.**

- UNDP's experience operating in politically complex settings has shown that coupling livelihoods, area-based programming, people/community centered approaches with mainstreaming conflict sensitivity, community resilience, inclusion and participation presents valuable opportunities for engagement to produce secondary peacebuilding outcomes. Such contexts have also shown the need for agility, adaptive leadership, and risk-informed development,[5] particularly due to complex challenges such as working with national actors whose legitimacy is challenged, working amid international sanctions, and how we maintain principled approaches to engagement while we 'stay and deliver.'

- Against the increasingly polarized global multilateral environment, we need a **new narrative that balances national security concerns with human security and a commitment to multilateralism**. Global solidarity toward a new agenda for peace requires a localized approach through national buy-in and local ownership, linking national development priorities to the global sustaining peacebuilding agenda.

- The **challenges to sustainable peace and development are as interconnected** as the global geopolitical economy, with the impacts of conflict affecting every development setting, including middle income countries. Working hand in hand with development actors, **mediation,** insider mediation,**[6] national dialogue, and preventive diplomacy must be leveraged more effectively**, including both in leveraging critical spaces such as the Peacebuilding Commission, but also through

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[4] Examples of such analysis include (2022) "The Development Impact of the War in Ukraine: Initial Projections" https://www.undp.org/publications/development-impact-war-ukraine-initial-projections; (2021) "Economic Instability and Uncertainty in Afghanistan after August 15" https://www.undp.org/publications/economic-instability-and-uncertainty-afghanistan-after-august-15; " Assessing the Impact of War in Yemen: Pathways for Recovery" (2021) https://www.undp.org/publications/assessing-impact-war-yemen-pathways-recovery; (2016) "Confronting Fragmentation: Impact of the Syria Crisis Report" https://www.undp.org/syria/publications/confronting-fragmentation

[5] See UNDP (2022) "The UNDP Approach to Risk-Informed Development" https://www.undp.org/publications/undp-approach-risk-informed-development

[6] See UNDP-EU (2020) "Engaging with Insider Mediators: Sustaining peace in an age of turbulence" https://www.undp.org/publications/engaging-insider-mediators-sustaining-peace-age-turbulence

regional organizations and more decentralized structures, and better connecting local efforts in building resilience to Track I processes.

- It is increasingly more relevant to engage **beyond the national level, responding to the specific circumstances and challenges of cross-border settings, sub-regions and regions**. It is important to identify ways of promoting regional engagement, mediation and dialogue when dedicated regional cooperation bodies do not exist, or the existing ones do not have relevant mandates or buy-in from their constituencies. Another lesson learned working at the regional level has been that UN's regional prevention strategies have not always been very effective in building cooperation as intended, because of lack of national ownership. Beyond building national buy-in, future strategies should also be fit for purpose and regularly revised.

- Our work must address **trauma, in full recognition that our national and local partners in conflict settings are themselves traumatized** from the impact of conflict and violence. Mental health and psychosocial support[7] (**MHPSS**) is increasingly relevant in peacebuilding, and our work should go beyond coping with trauma, but rather, helping stakeholders break the vicious cycle.

- We also need to do better in **recognizing, elevating and communicating the positive results** of our work. Through identifying and building on metrics for success, we can more effectively create results that reduce the incentives for violence. In our engagement on gender, we have seen that coupling economic empowerment, behavioral change and addressing gender-based violence have been a recipe for positive returns.[8]

- While the space that UN operates is rapidly changing and becoming more challenging, **we can also recognize good practices in joint programming in which UNDP is engaged** in this space (the UNDP-DPPA Joint Programme on Building National Capacities for Conflict Prevention, UN Transitions project, climate security, elections, rule of law, among others). The metrics for success in such engagements, including on multi-partner and inclusive analysis and data sharing, should be carefully analyzed to ensure that the investments can be aggregated for higher-order impacts.

- **We can be more purposeful, creative and effective in our partnerships**. This includes a more coordinated engagement with civil society, approaching champions of prevention in the form of **regional international financial institutions more effectively, and engaging non-traditional development partners** (donors) but that have an increasing weight in geopolitics, incentivizing them for constructive engagement (e.g. South-South) in regional peace/prevention efforts.

- **If we are to build a better future for succeeding generations, we must ensure that our multilateral order represents the plurality of voices that make it up, from communities to non-governmental actors, or from the private sector and other global activists. Supporting new/renewed platforms and coalitions of global solidarity is critical/needed, as well as expanding space for dialogue where peace and development are discussed as two sides of same coin, not separate silos**.

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[7] See UNDP (2022) "Integrating Mental Health and Psychosocial Support into Peacebuilding"
https://www.undp.org/publications/integrating-mental-health-and-psychosocial-support-peacebuilding
[8] See for example, (2021) "Nonviolent Communication in ADR Centers"
https://www.undp.org/somalia/publications/nonviolent-communication-adr-centres