

UNESCO's contribution to the SG's Policy Brief on the New Peace Agenda

Divides are growing starker as inequality continues to increase; a new billionaire emerged every 30 hours during the pandemic, the same time that it successively took for nearly one million people to be pushed into extreme poverty¹. The climate crisis is reaching new levels of urgency; the latest IPCC report warned that global warming could reach the threshold of +1.5°C around 2030, exacerbating vulnerabilities, conflict, and forced migration.² Discrimination and exclusion proliferate at an alarming rate both online and offline. Instances of race or ethnicity-based online hate speech occurred as often as every 1.7 seconds in 2020-2021, marking a 28% increase in pre-2020 levels³. Cyberbullying and cyberviolence, particularly for girls and women, is an increasing problem worldwide, hampering the full realization of gender equality and violating women's rights. Education is under attack, particularly for girls and women. Emerging technologies, such as AI and neurotechnology, risks increasing inequalities and leading to new types of violence that call for a multilateral response and better governance. Disinformation, misinformation, hate speech and conspiracy theories contribute to increase the polarization in many societies, fueling conflicts, undermining democracies, and making peacebuilding and peacekeeping more challenging.

UNESCO is responding to these challenges by developing better understandings of the underlying drivers of conflict and enhancing global efforts to mobilize effective responses to invest in peace prevention and peacebuilding. It is strengthening the identification of risks through foresight; combating hate speech and dis/misinformation, racism and discrimination; promoting an ethical governance approach to emerging technologies; education for peace and sustainable development and gender equality. It is also safeguarding cultural heritage – a force for peace - and rebuilding it when destroyed during conflicts.

I. Investing in prevention and peacebuilding

Promoting education for peace and sustainable development will require:

- 1) Increasing investments in Global Citizenship Education to instill in learners the values, attitudes and behaviors that support responsible global citizenship peace, human rights and sustainable development. This includes Preventing violent extremism through education, Education about the Holocaust and genocide, Languages in education and the Rule of Law, as well as standard-setting work via the 1974 Recommendation concerning education for international understanding, co-operation and peace and education relating to human rights and fundamental freedoms. TVET should also be leveraged for social integration of disengaged and marginalized youth in particular youth Not in Education, Training and Employment (NEETs).

Peacebuilding in the digital space will require efforts to:

- 1) Integrate consideration of the impact of digital transformations – particularly as relates to hate speech, mis and dis-information, and its impact on material inequalities - into the design of prevention and peacebuilding programming, in particular through the guidelines for the

¹ <https://www.oxfam.org/en/press-releases/pandemic-creates-new-billionaire-every-30-hours-now-million-people-could-fall>

² https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg2/downloads/report/IPCC_AR6_WGII_TechnicalSummary.pdf

³ <https://www.ditchthelabel.org/research-papers/hate-speech-report-2021/>

regulation of digital platforms that UNESCO is developing to improve the reliability of information while preserving freedom of expression and human rights⁴.

- 2) Ensure close dialogue between international bodies, governments, regulators, and private sector companies to agree upon common standards to manage technological advancement to promote peace and prevent conflict, including through the implementation of UNESCO's Ethics of AI Recommendation, adopted in November 2021 by 193 Member States.
- 3) Strengthening efforts to promote critical thinking through and media and information literacy
- 4) Invest in foresight capacities to identify disruptive digital transformations and assess their potential impact on drivers of conflict and peace

Combatting racism and discrimination within the New Agenda for Peace will necessitate:

- 1) The promotion of anti-racism and anti-discrimination as an integral component of humanitarian and peacekeeping actions
- 2) Enhanced knowledge on the value (including economic value) of anti-racism and anti-discrimination efforts in terms of preventing conflict and violence
- 3) Bolstering of anti-racism and anti-discrimination as a connecting theme to bridge the youth, peace and security agenda; the women, peace and security agenda; and the New Agenda for Peace

Promoting science for peace calls for:

- 1) Strengthening international cooperation on global issues: freshwater resource management, ocean health, climate change, natural disaster reduction, biodiversity loss, and capacity building in basic science, engineering, emerging technologies and innovation through programmes on the management of transboundary sites, i.e. UNESCO's World Heritage sites, biosphere reserves and geoparks, and transboundary water resources, as well as Water for Peace programmes.
- 2) Applying international standards for making science more accessible, inclusive and equitable for all through UNESCO's Recommendation on Open Science and finding synergies between science and the knowledge of indigenous peoples and local communities.

Putting culture at the heart of the New Agenda for Peace will require efforts to:

1. Integrate culture into humanitarian action, military operations, and peace-keeping efforts as a tool for resilience, peace-building and post-conflict recovery and reconstruction
2. Promote the inclusion of culture in international processes on disaster risk reduction and climate change, as well as in the development of related policies and tools
3. Strengthen advocacy and action against the illicit trafficking of cultural property and promote its protection, return and restitution
4. Reinforce emergency preparedness and response in the cultural sector
5. Advocate for a better recognition of the importance of the role of intangible cultural heritage in emergencies
6. Ensure the protection and promotion of cultural diversity

II. Reshaping responses to all forms of violence and combatting racism and discrimination

⁴ These guidelines were discussed at the Internet for Trust Conference, organized by UNESCO in Feb. 20-23 November 2022.

Reshaping responses to violence calls for:

- 1) Strengthening evidence-based effective responses to prevent and address school violence follows a holistic model, often known as a “whole-school approach”, or recently recommended as a “whole-education approach” to promote the active engagement of the entire education sector, necessitating the engagement of different stakeholders both within and outside of the school setting. This includes strong political leadership, supported teachers, relevant curriculum, effective reporting mechanisms and involvement of all stakeholders in the school community, including parents, empowered learners and effective monitoring mechanisms. UNESCO is continuously monitoring and documenting global trends related to school-related violence⁵.
- 2) Providing guidance and training content to address violent pasts through education to foster historical literacy, an overall appreciation of human rights, global citizenship and civic responsibility, contributing to more secure and peaceful societies.
- 3) Strengthening efforts to fight violence against journalists, particularly female journalists through the UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity and to support media and elections, since electoral periods can be a moment for further enhancing peace or to disrupt it.
- 4) Strengthening efforts to counter hate speech through education and media and information literacy
- 5) Enhancing efforts to promote international standards on freedom of expression to address root causes of hate speech and build more peaceful societies, and support countries to build effective responses, including by fostering the capacity building of regulators, judicial operators and security forces and advocating for enhanced transparency of internet companies through UNESCO’s work to develop global guidelines for regulating digital platforms to safeguard freedom of expression and access to information.

⁵ [UNESCO 2019, Behind the numbers: ending school violence and bullying](#)
[UNESCO 2017, School Violence and Bullying, Global Status Report](#)