GENEVA PEACE WEEK 2025
SESSIONS REPORT

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PEACE PANELS

1. Arms Control in the Middle East: Challenges and Opportunities for Peace after the Fall of the Assad Regime

ORGANISERS: Small Arms Survey, DCAF - Geneva Center for Security Sector Governance and Geneva International Center for Humanitarian Demining

TOPIC: Human Security and Disarmament

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- There is a clear **public and political will for change.**
- **It is incumbent on International Geneva to avoid over-burdening the system by ensuring coordination among the relevant organizations** in providing support across security-related areas.
- **Data-deficits were highlighted** in each of the three security nexus areas, which is an important issue particularly that we need to have data-driven policy and engagement.
- **Immediate action is needed to deliver real impact on people's lives** and to place them at the center of all efforts.

SUMMARY OF THE SESSION:

This panel brought various perspectives on the implications of the recent developments in Syria. Central to stabilization efforts in the country is the **security pillar** and the nexus of **mine action, security governance and tackling the issue of the illicit proliferation of small arms and light weapons. Securing unsecure stockpiles and the clearing of contamination from damaged sites will have an immediate impact on the safety and security of those communities affected.** Meanwhile efforts to limit the illicit proliferation of small arms and light weapons, through improved **weapons and ammunition management** will contribute to creating a conducive environment for **longer term peace and stability**. While the problems facing Syria are complex, tackling this nexus of security issues is central to **Syria's stability, the safety and security of its people's, as well as regional security.**

The panel addressed the **security nexus in Syria** by bringing voices from the field active in the security pillar (**White Helmets**) together with Geneva-based actors working in the areas of international security sector governance, mine action and weapons and ammunition management (**the Small Arms Survey, GICHD, and DCAF**). Therefore, three related sectors were discussed:

- **Mine-clearance for humanitarian and economic development**
- **Governance of the security sector as a key component to economic and political development**
- **Limiting and combating illicit proliferation of arms and armed violence reduction as essential pillars to avoiding a return to conflict or erosion of state legitimacy.**

2. Beyond Compliance in a Chaotic World: Achieving Fuller Protection in Armed Conflict

ORGANISERS: Fight for Humanity, together with the Beyond Compliance Consortium (BCC), the University of York, the Centre on Armed Groups, Utrecht University and the Center for Civilians in Conflict

TOPIC: Armed conflict civilian protection and humanitarian action

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- **The harm and need framework places people's lived experiences at its core,** linking them to both legal and non-legal responses.
- **Compliance and restraint among armed actors** are influenced not only by law but also by morality, identity, and social belonging.
- **Harm extends beyond physical damage** to include psychological, economic, cultural, and ecological dimensions.
- **Community and junior actors often hold more holistic views** of harm and restraint than formal leadership.
- **International Humanitarian Law (IHL) compliance remains essential** but should be **reinforced through broader strategies** (IHRL, political development).
- **The participation of affected communities is key** to accurately assessing harm and prioritizing responses.

SUMMARY OF THE SESSION:

On 14 October 2025, Fight for Humanity, in collaboration with the Beyond Compliance Consortium (BCC), the University of York, Utrecht University, the Centre on Armed Groups, and the Center for Civilians in Conflict (CIVIC), hosted a peace panel during Geneva Peace Week. The discussion, moderated by Anki Sjöberg from Fight for Humanity, brought together over 100 participants to explore how a **harm + needs approach** can shape more effective legal and extra-legal strategies to promote respect for **International Humanitarian Law (IHL)** and **International Human Rights Law (IHRL)**, encourage restraint among armed actors, and strengthen **civilian protection in armed conflict**.

Dr. Katharine Fortin (Utrecht University) presented the BCC's research programme, emphasizing that understanding the **everyday lived experiences of people in conflict**—through a harm + need lens—enables a more **context-sensitive mapping** of those harms and needs onto international law. This socio-legal approach helps identify which legal and non-legal responses are most relevant and effective.

Prof. Ioana Cismas (University of York) elaborated on the conceptual foundations of harm + need, drawing on fieldwork from Myanmar and Northern Thailand. She highlighted that this framework broadens the analytical scope to include structural, temporal, and geographic dimensions often overlooked by law. It exposes the **"invisible realities" of conflict** that remain deeply significant to affected populations.

Consortium researchers from Ukraine and Somalia shared early findings from field interviews with armed actors, civil society, and humanitarian organizations. In Ukraine, Khrystyna Kozak (CIVIC) noted a consensus that harm extends beyond physical suffering to include **psychological, economic, cultural, and ecological dimensions**. She also observed that

GENEVA **PEACE** WEEK
12 YEARS

restraint often stems from moral identity and belonging, rather than fear of punishment—underscoring that protecting civilians is intertwined with self-preservation.

In Somalia, Rahma Abikar (Centre on Armed Groups) found **divergent understandings of harm and restraint** between senior armed group leaders, who emphasize formal codes and accountability systems, and junior members and community actors, who highlight tactical motives, clan ties, and public image as key drivers. The latter also tend to view harm and need more holistically, linking them to **justice, long-term recovery, and structural change**.

Overall, the panel demonstrated that harm + need, compliance, and restraint vary across contexts but remain interrelated. It reinforced that **IHL compliance must remain central** while being complemented—not replaced—by IHRL and **extra-legal strategies** such as political, diplomatic, or developmental efforts. Finally, the discussion concluded that a genuine harm + need approach must be **participatory, involving affected stakeholders directly** in identifying and prioritizing responses, to truly address the complex and multifaceted realities of armed conflict.

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3. Between Rupture and Resolution: Is a Political Path Still Possible for Israel–Palestine and the Region?

ORGANISERS: Principles for Peace Foundation (P4P) in partnership with Geneva Initiative and the Palestinian Peace Coalition

TOPIC: Partnerships and Multilateralism for Peace

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- **Unprecedented Regional and International Coordination**: After years of disengagement, Israel and Palestine are drawing unprecedented regional and international attention. The emergence of new coordination mechanisms, such as the Global Alliance co-chaired by France and Saudi Arabia, reflects a rare alignment between the region and the West. In the midst of the most acute crisis in decades, this renewed engagement creates a fragile but real opportunity to advance a principled and pragmatic approach toward a regional political, security, and economic framework that can accommodate Palestinian aspirations and Israeli concerns. The momentum is imperfect but valuable, and will require sustained international engagement and accountability of key leaders to keep advancing toward a political solution.
- **Shift in Political Momentum Post-Ceasefire**: Public opinion in both Israel and Palestine has hardened significantly over the past two years. Yet within a few hours of the ceasefire announcement, perceptions and political discourse shifted dramatically, reopening space for conversation around peace and resolution. This demonstrates that public sentiment can evolve rapidly, shaped by developments on the ground; a critical factor to consider when assessing the potential for political change.
- **Palestinian Authority Legitimacy and Governance Reform**: The Palestinian Authority remains central to any sustainable vision for Gaza and broader Palestinian governance. Despite its shortcomings, the PA remains the only viable institutional framework for Palestinian self-governance. Moving from war to peace will therefore require internationally supported reforms that revitalize and legitimize the PA through inclusive, representative, and accountable leadership, affirming the principle that Palestinians must govern themselves.
- **Balancing Short-Term Stabilization with Long-Term Political Horizon**: Addressing immediate stabilization and service delivery needs must go hand in hand with efforts to restore hope in a credible political horizon. Tangible, visible improvements in daily life are essential to rebuild trust and lay the groundwork for Palestinian self-determination and statehood. Short-term actions must build toward, not substitute for, long-term political solutions.
- **Critical Role of International Actors and Third-Party Involvement**: Sustainable progress will hinge on meaningful regional and international engagement, including through mechanisms such as a UN Security Council mandate. Comparative experiences from Timor-Leste to other post-conflict transitions highlight the importance of sequenced, internationally supported processes that balance stabilization with the restoration of local ownership.

SUMMARY OF THE SESSION:

The panel convened days after a **ceasefire was announced between Israel and Hamas**, led by US President Donald Trump. Moderated by Hiba Qasas, Executive Director of P4P, the discussion brought together Dr. Helder da Costa (General Secretary of the g7+), Ambassador Hesham Youssef (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Egypt - Retired), Gadi Baltiansky (Executive Director of the Geneva Initiative), and Nidal Foqaha (Executive Director of the Palestinian Peace Coalition) to examine whether current political momentum can translate into a **viable political pathway for Israelis and Palestinians**.

The session opened with recognition of the **extraordinary moment**: **unprecedented levels of violence**, combined with **unprecedented regional and international engagement** around the Israeli-Palestinian issue, including France and Saudi Arabia's collaboration at the Global Alliance for the Implementation of the Two-State Solution and Turkey-Egypt-Qatar's coordination on ending the war. This represents a **fundamental shift toward new forms of multilateralism where regional actors are taking up crucial roles** alongside traditional international actors.

Panelists highlighted the **dramatic transformation in sentiment within a few hours of the ceasefire**. Israeli public discourse shifted from dismissing those working for and talking about peace to **discussions about peace at the highest political levels**. Palestinians experienced significant shifts both in ground realities and in perceptions after more than two years of devastating violence. This **rapid change in political atmosphere may open space for discussions previously considered impossible**.

A **central theme emerged around Palestinian governance and legitimacy**. Despite Israeli objections and exclusion of the PA from Gaza's reconstruction in Trump's 20-Point plan, panelists stressed that the **PA's involvement is indispensable**, alongside the need for reforms. The discussion underscored that a transition from war to peace must include a serious, internationally supported process to **revitalize Palestinian governance, leading to legitimate, accountable, and elected leadership capable of commanding genuine public trust**.

The panelists also emphasized that short-term stabilization efforts need to consider and ultimately build towards creating the conditions for **long-term political settlement**. They noted that Palestinians need to see **substantial and tangible changes on the ground to build trust and create credible pathways for Palestinian self-determination and statehood**.

Discussion of **international involvement** explored what forms of **third-party engagement are both needed and acceptable**. Comparative lessons from Timor Leste highlighted the potential value of **UN-led multilateral processes** and international forces supporting humanitarian assistance, infrastructure, and governance establishment. They discussed perceptions about whether the current US-led approach can incorporate genuine multilateral engagement, with emphasis on the importance of **UN Security Council involvement**.

The session concluded with emphasis that while imperfect, the **current moment represents an opportunity that must be seized**, the **fragile momentum created by the ceasefire and unprecedented regional involvement requires sustained engagement** to hold key leaders accountable and continue pushing toward **political solutions**.

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4. Climate Action for Conflict Prevention and Peace: Lessons and Opportunities from Asia and the Pacific

ORGANISERS: Adelphi, Centre on Conflict, Development and Peacebuilding (CCDP), Toda Peace Institute

TOPIC: Environment and Climate and Peace

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- **Climate change as a conflict multiplier**: In Sri Lanka, climate change worsens existing vulnerabilities and resource competition, intensifying tensions rooted in past ethnic conflicts.

- **Conflict-sensitive climate action**: Effective climate interventions must be inclusive, politically aware, and delivered through trusted local institutions.
- **Barriers to climate finance in Papua New Guinea**: Communities face technical and access challenges in obtaining climate funds.
- **Proposed reforms for climate finance**:
  - Greater inclusion of women, youth, and rural communities in decision-making.
  - Free, prior, and informed consent to build trust with communities.
  - Open data sharing to allow local monitoring of fund usage.
  - Capacity building for communities to access climate finance effectively.
- **Climate action as a tool for dialogue and peace**: Shared resource management can foster cooperation and community dialogue.
- **Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs)**: Success requires both strong evidence of the business case and genuine community buy-in to prevent opposition.

SUMMARY OF THE SESSION:

The peace panel explored critical **lessons and opportunities for climate action as a tool for conflict prevention and sustainable peace across Asia and the Pacific.** In particular, it zoomed into the lived realities in Sri Lanka and Papua New Guinea.

Drawing on insights from the recently published report "Gender Responsive Climate Security Assessment for Sri Lanka," Janani Vivekananda as co-author, highlighted how climate change is compounding existing vulnerabilities and leading to resource competition, deepening existing tensions between communities still grappling with the legacy of Sri Lanka's ethnic conflict (1983-2009). The discussion underscored a crucial imperative: **climate action must be conflict-sensitive** to succeed, meaning that it must be inclusive, designed with awareness of political dynamics, and delivered through trusted local institutions.

Climate finance emerged as another central theme. Helen Hakena, co-founder and Executive Director of the Bougainville-based NGO, Leitana Nehan Women's Development Agency, outlined the challenges that communities in **Papua New Guinea** face in accessing **climate finance**, including the lack of technical capacity. She advocated for **four critical reforms**: **greater inclusion of women, youth, and rural communities in climate finance decisions**; free, prior, and informed consent to build trust between local communities and international peacebuilding, development, and humanitarian actors; **open data sharing** so communities can hold their government accountable through **monitoring and reporting of how climate funds are being used**; and **greater capacity building of local communities** for accessing climate finance.

The **potential of climate action in fostering dialogue and peace** was another underlying theme. Eliza Urwin, who leads the Community of Practice on the Environment, Climate, Conflict, and Peace (co-hosted by the Environmental Peacebuilding Association and the Centre on Conflict, Development, and Peacebuilding at the Geneva Graduate Institute), illustrated this potential through case studies demonstrating how **shared resource management can foster cooperation**.

The importance of Public-Private Partnerships was highlighted by a member of the audience, with discussions emerging on the need to both build strong evidence for the **business case** and securing **genuine community buy-in** to prevent public dissatisfaction and opposition.

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5. Convergence and Divergence in Regional and International Dynamics in Peacebuilding and Peace-Making: The Case of Afghanistan Since Doha Talks

ORGANISERS: Center for Dialogue and Progress-Geneva (CDP-G), Center for Dialogue & Solidarity Roma, Centre for Afghanistan Policy Studies

TOPIC: Partnerships and Multilateralism for Peace

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- **The Doha talks between the U.S. and the Taliban** were fundamentally flawed.
- **The Doha talks and existing geopolitical rifts created deep divergences in the region** and beyond regarding peace-making in Afghanistan.
- **The Doha process sowed the seeds** of the current disaster in Afghanistan.
- **Afghanistan remains an active, extremist, ideologically driven conflict** with a high risk of spreading throughout the region.
- **Nuclear safety risks** could become a serious emerging issue.
- **The exclusion of women from peacebuilding exacerbates crises** and hinders sustainable peace efforts.

▪ **A fundamentally new path is required**, one that focuses on working with Afghanistan's democratic forces.

SUMMARY OF THE SESSION:

The panel discussion at Geneva Peace Week 2025, titled "Convergence & Divergence in Regional & International Dynamics in Peacebuilding & Peace-Making: The Case Study of Afghanistan Since Doha Talks," warned that Afghanistan is risking a relapse into a **"very hot geopolitical game"**. Experts agreed that the **failures of the past peace processes**, particularly the U.S.-Taliban negotiations in Doha, paved the way for the current crisis.

The Doha process was largely **unilateral**, focused on the U.S.'s immediate plan for a safe withdrawal and an agreement on counterterrorism, rather than the demands of the Afghan people for genuine peace. This deal, potentially compounded by secretive annexes, **legitimized the Taliban and wiped out two decades of progress**, creating deep regional and internal suspicion. Furthermore, divergence began when regional countries pushed for the difficult U.S. and NATO withdrawal.

A significant theme was the **weaponization and exclusion of women**. Ms. Koofi noted the **persistence of women's exclusion from peace processes**, despite the 25th anniversary of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) resolution 1325. Under the Taliban, women's participation in politics and civil services has **dropped to zero**. Concurrently, the country faces an alarming proliferation of **radicalization**, with the Taliban prioritizing the hiring of 100,000 new teachers for jihadi madrasas, spending $500 million, while schools remain closed for girls.

Professor Michael Semple characterized the situation as an **"active conflict"** ruled by a violent jihadi movement that uses all state resources for ambitions extending beyond Afghanistan's frontiers. He stressed that the **Taliban is ideologically committed to establishing an ideological state and does not seek peace**. This geopolitical maneuvering is compounded by dangerous **nuclear security implications**, as the Taliban is securing the Afghan Nuclear Institute site and developing secret technical cooperation with Iran and Russia, raising profound non-proliferation concerns.

The consensus was that the tactics of the past are obsolete, and **peace cannot be achieved by or through the Taliban**. The path forward requires a fundamental shift towards **empowering the Afghan national democratic forces**. Panelists urgently called for the international community to provide **safe, secure spaces** (in Europe and the region) for Afghan national democratic forces and civil society to organize, deliberate, and prepare for a return to **pluralism**, thus preventing Afghanistan from falling into another geopolitical abyss.

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6. Fighting for a Voice: Women Ex-Combatants and the Politics of Reintegration

ORGANISERS: Berghof Foundation,United Nations Department of Peace Operations (UNDPO), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) , Center on Armed Groups, DDR Section

TOPIC: Gender and Minorities and Identities

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- **Reintegration must adopt a gendered and intersectional perspective**, taking into account the double stigma faced by women as former combatants and as women, as well as economic, educational, and psychological barriers.
- **Women must be supported to move beyond stereotypes reinforced by traditional DDR programs**, gaining civic and political skills, economic independence, and meaningful participation in peace processes and governance.
- **Sustained political reintegration is achieved through collective agency**, solidarity, structural reforms, and societal change, not merely through technical programs.

SUMMARY OF THE SESSION:

The panel moderated by Carla Ruta, Expert in International Humanitarian Law, brought together Bouthaina Dinar (Deputy Chairperson, SPLM-N Revolutionary Democratic Current), Véronique Dudouet (Senior Advisor, Berghof Foundation), Victoria Kruger (DDR team at UNDP), and Sergiusz Sidorowicz (DDR Policy and Planning Officer, UN Department of Peace Operations). The discussion examined the **barriers and opportunities for women ex-**

GENEVA PEACE WEEK
12 YEARS

combatants seeking to regain political agency after conflict, and how **Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) processes can foster genuine, gender-responsive political transformation**.

Opening the session, Bouthaina Dinar reflected on her own experience as a woman in the Sudan People's Liberation Movement, describing women as **"the marginalized of the marginalized."** She spoke of the complex realities women face both during and after armed struggle: exclusion, sexual violence, and persistent stigma. While joining an armed movement may offer a sense of purpose or equality, returning to civilian and political life often proves even more challenging. Women who seek leadership are frequently branded as traitors, their contributions minimized, and their access to political space constrained by poverty, lack of education, and entrenched patriarchal structures. Bouthaina called for **comprehensive support addressing social, economic, and psychological needs** including legal protection, access to education, and capacity-building for political engagement. She further argued how reintegration must also consider reproductive health and the specific vulnerabilities faced by women displaced by ongoing conflict.

Building on this testimony, the panel discussed how **DDR, once conceived as a technical process to disarm and demobilize combatants, has evolved into a framework that emphasizes the social and political dimensions of reintegration**. **Effective DDR must move beyond livelihood assistance and security concerns to address power relations and inclusion**. Panelists noted that **women ex-combatants face a "double stigma" as former fighters and as women** which often leads to their exclusion from leadership and community acceptance. In some cases, traditional DDR programs have reinforced stereotypes, offering gendered training such as sewing instead of civic or political education.

Panelists stressed that reintegration should enable women to **rebuild economic independence, gain civic and political skills, and navigate resistance from entrenched patriarchal and militarized norms**. They agreed that political reintegration is sustained not through tokenistic measures, but through **women's collective agency, solidarity, structural reforms, and societal change**, supported by institutions and international cooperation bodies that **prioritize women's leadership and political agency**. Practical strategies include ensuring **women's meaningful participation in peace processes, DDR design, and monitoring**, and linking reintegration to governance, constitutional, and security sector reforms.

The discussion also highlighted the need to **challenge militarized masculinities and engage men as allies in transforming social norms** around leadership and care. Panelists emphasized that reintegration must involve local communities and address ethical dimensions of inclusion. As the panel concluded, it was emphasized that **political reintegration for women ex-combatants cannot be achieved through technical programs alone, it requires persistence, solidarity, and a collective effort to transform the very systems that have long silenced women's voices**.

GENEVA PEACE WEEK
12 YEARS

7. Fireside Chat with Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Shirin Ebadi

ORGANISERS: Geneva Peacebuilding Platform and The Nobel Women's Initiative

TOPIC: Human Rights and Social Justice and Inclusion

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- **Lack of democracy, accompanied by internal repression leads to regional instability**. In the case of Iran, support for proxy groups in the region has also undermined peace, while internal repression has stifled dissent and prevented voices in favour of peace from being heard.
- **Dictatorship goes hand in hand with corruption**, which limits economic opportunities and leads to poverty.
- **Insufficient international efforts at holding governmental authorities accountable,** even if motivated by appeasement and economic engagement emboldens undemocratic regimes and worsens repression.
- **Grassroot movements are a powerful force for change**. In Iran, the "Women, Life, Freedom" movement was rooted in decades of women's resistance, and with the support of international initiatives, was very impactful even if it did not ultimately succeed.
- **Activists in exile also have a critical role to play**. They maintain connections with communities through modern communication platforms and technologies, which allows them to support social movements and political oppositions, and raise the international profile of their struggle.
- **Meaningful change can never be imposed from the outside**. International solidarity and platforms are critical in amplifying silenced voices and supporting domestic movements, but change must ultimately come from domestic mobilization.
- **Democracy must never be taken for granted**. Democracy is more than a set of institutions. To persist and flourish, it requires constant care, vigilance, and active participation from citizens.

SUMMARY OF THE SESSION:

The conversation opened with reflections on the **destructive impact of dictatorship and the absence of democracy**, particularly focusing on the **Islamic Republic of Iran** since its establishment in 1979. Dr. Ebadi described how the regime's foreign policy, including **support for proxy groups** like Hezbollah in Lebanon and the Houthis in Yemen, has fueled regional instability and undermined peace. She also highlighted the **severe internal consequences for Iranians**, including **widespread poverty, repression**, and a **high rate of executions**, especially among ethnic minorities.

Both speakers emphasized the **systematic targeting of minorities** such as Kurds, Baluchis, and Baha'is, noting that these groups face **disproportionate rates of execution and imprisonment**. Mr. Aliassi provided historical context, explaining how Kurdish opposition to the Islamic Republic has led to decades of discrimination and violence. The discussion then turned to the broader challenge of bridging the gap between universal human rights ideals and the realities shaped by political interests and power dynamics. Dr. Ebadi criticized Western governments for engaging in **appeasement and hostage diplomacy** with Iran, arguing that such actions undermine accountability and embolden the regime. Both speakers agreed that while international solidarity is important, **meaningful change must ultimately come from within Iran**.

The conversation also explored the **role of women in peace and inclusion**, with Dr. Ebadi discussing the **"Women, Life, Freedom" movement** and her involvement in founding the Nobel Women's Initiative. She described how **decades of women's resistance** have shaped the current movement for rights and justice. Mr. Aliassi highlighted the **leadership and organizational strength of Kurdish women**, who have played transformative roles in peacebuilding and resistance against both patriarchal and authoritarian structures.

Reflecting on the challenges of activism from exile, both speakers described how they maintain connections with communities inside Iran through **technology, such as Starlink and secure messaging apps**. They stressed the **importance of international platforms in amplifying the voices** of those who are silenced or imprisoned within Iran. The discussion then addressed the future of peacebuilding and accountability in the face of **shrinking civic space and rising authoritarianism worldwide**. Dr. Ebadi used the metaphor of democracy as a flower that requires constant care and vigilance, urging the next generation of human rights defenders to remain **hopeful, persistent, and vigilant**.

During the audience Q&A, questions ranged from how to unite the Iranian opposition and overcome challenges, to the role of international institutions and the plight of religious minorities like the Baha'is. Dr. Ebadi and Mr. Aliassi reiterated the **need for unity among opposition groups**, reform of international systems such as the United Nations, and the **importance of grassroots leadership**. The event concluded with a call to uphold **truth and justice as the foundations of peacebuilding**, and gratitude for the courage and vision of the speakers.

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GENEVA
PEACE WEEK
12 YEARS

8. From Margin to Centre: Acknowledging & Strengthening Minority Women's Role in Peacebuilding

ORGANISERS: Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) / Gender Issues Programme and High Commissioner on National Minorities, Council of Europe, Legal Action Worldwide

TOPIC: Gender, Minorities and Intersecting Identities

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- **The intersection of gender and minority identity is still insufficiently addressed** in research and in practice and there is need for improved data collection to enable evidence-based policy making.
- **Legal accountability strengthens minority women's claims to rights and resources and their access to justice.** Existing legal and policy frameworks such as the Council of Europe Framework Convention and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and Minorities should be leveraged to this end.
- **Participation requires resources and adequate funding** of minority women's organisations as essential prerequisites for their involvement.
- **Grassroots organisations are trusted at the community level and often carry out essential work** on recovery and reconciliation processes. Capacity building and leadership development supports them to engage effectively and with authority in processes.
- **Changing dominant narratives on minorities** and shifting public discourse on minority women are key to breaking down societal and institutional barriers to inclusion. Meaningful participation of minority women requires safe participation spaces.
- Last, but not least, **it is essential to recognize how gender, ethnicity, religion, and other identities intersect to effectively tackle structural barriers** and enable participation in peacebuilding.

SUMMARY OF THE SESSION:

The peace panel "From Margin to Centre: Acknowledging & Strengthening Minority Women's Role in Peacebuilding" was opened by Ambassador Christophe Kamp, OSCE High

Commissioner on National Minorities, and Ambassador Miroslav Papa, Special Representative of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe to the United Nations, both of whom stressed the importance of a **gendered approach to national minorities** to understand the **multi-layered discriminations minority women experience**.

The following panel discussion saw four experts from institutional, civil society and academic backgrounds share their experiences and insights on working at the **intersection of gender, minorities, and peacebuilding**. Prof. Judith Wyttenbach, Gender Equality Rapporteur of the Council of Europe Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities reported that the Committee regularly adopts recommendations to states parties aiming to address **multiple and intersectional discrimination** of women and girls, and to promote greater gender balance across all fields of participation and representation. In this context, she particularly emphasized the need for **improved (disaggregated) data collection and economic empowerment of minority women**. Antonia Mulvey, Founder and Executive Director of Legal Action Worldwide highlighted common barriers for minority women in **accessing justice** in her contribution, such as lack of legal documentation and access to education. She underlined the importance of **restorative justice** in making their struggle visible and enabling just peace.

Contributing an institutional perspective as Chief of OHCHR's Indigenous Peoples and Minorities Section, Hernan Vales, indicated the need for **formal peace processes and institutional mechanisms to change to better enable inclusivity**. He pointed out that women already shape peace, however, often without recognition, without funding or without a proper seat at the negotiating table and drew attention to **resource constraints as a key barrier for participation of minority women**. Finally, reiterating that there can be **no peace without justice, including acknowledgement and reparation of past trauma**, Terezia Rostas, a Roma human rights and gender justice advocate and Founder of Care for Young People's Future CIC and Welcoming Cultures UK, strongly called for **acknowledgement of women's leadership within Roma communities** and efforts not only for participation, but for **co-creation of peacebuilding processes**.

During the Q&A with the audience, among others the question of **representation of minority women in international spaces of dialogue** such as the Geneva Peace Week was raised and participants called for **proactive transformation of dialogue spaces**.

Overall, the panel highlighted the **value of inclusive approaches and the costs of exclusion**, while calling for additional efforts to acknowledge and empower minority women in order to achieve sustainable peace. Closing the session, the OSCE's Senior Gender Adviser Dr Lara Scarpitta underlined, among others, the importance of cooperation and called for **collective action to centre the voices of minority women** and to dismantle the barriers that prevent their **full and equal participation in peace processes**.

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9. From Peace Negotiations to Stabilization and Reconstruction: the Role of Businesses in the Aftermath of Conflict

ORGANISERS: Geneva Peacebuilding Platform and Independent Diplomat

TOPIC: Confidence and mediation

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- **Businesses as peacebuilding stakeholders:** Private businesses—both international corporations and local SMEs—are already de facto peacebuilding stakeholders by virtue of their operation in conflict and post-conflict environments, where they are often not only economic actors, but also social and political ones. As such, they can play a significant positive role in peacebuilding.
- **Leveraging shared interests:** Conventional peacebuilding organizations and businesses share core interests in stability, good governance, and community well-being. Accordingly, especially at a time where the peacebuilding ecosystem is under strain and unable to cope alone with increased needs, both sectors could collaborate on common goals.
- **Understanding the role of the private sector beyond philanthropy or job creation:** contrary to narrow understandings of the contribution of businesses to peacebuilding focused purely on funding or economic benefits, their contribution could be valuable at many stages and levels of peacebuilding—whether for policy or operational purposes, at both the local and international levels. They can provide knowledge, expertise, capacity, different methodologies, networks, alternative discussion channels, innovative problem-solving, in a way that complement the work of conventional peacebuilding actors.
- **Overcoming the trust barrier, and cultural gaps**: Both at the institutional and individual level, the peacebuilding and business communities operate in drastically different ways, with different mindsets, and tend to speak different languages. Accordingly, enabling productive partnerships requires efforts to build trust, foster mutual understanding, and develop shared frameworks.
- **Fostering structured, collaborative, transparent, and truly inclusive approaches**: To prevent negative public perception, power imbalances, risks of conflicts of interest, or paying disproportionate attention to some business actors over others—e.g. international corporations over local SMEs—efforts to involve the private sector in peacebuilding should be structured, truly collaborative, inclusive, and as transparent as possible.
- **The importance of risk management**: Businesses are often risk-averse, especially in fragile environments, yet participating in peacebuilding efforts present many risks—

reputational, legal, political, operational, financial, security etc. Mobilizing them to achieve peacebuilding objectives therefore requires crafting de-risking strategies, including risk-sharing and support frameworks, to make their involvement more attractive and feasible.

- **Complementarity with corporate responsibility efforts**: Collaboration for peacebuilding should not be seen as distracting from efforts towards greater corporate responsibility—rather, both are complementary. While a distinction most likely needs to be maintained, and while the private sector's involvement in peacebuilding should enable "bluewashing", initiatives in both areas can be mutually reinforcing.
- **The need to renew narratives and clarify incentives**: To successfully engage with the private sector—whether international corporations or local SMEs—the peacebuilding community needs to elaborate different narratives that speak the language of businesses, and underline pragmatic incentives, including by highlighting the tangible benefits of peace.

SUMMARY OF THE SESSION:

The discussion explored the evolving role of **private businesses in peacebuilding**. Panellists began by recognizing that businesses—in all their diversity, ranging from international corporations to local small and medium enterprises—by virtue of their activities in both conflict and post-conflict environments, are often **de facto peacebuilding stakeholders**. They inevitably play a role in peacebuilding efforts, which, while it can sometimes have negative effects, is generally positive.

Participants also noted that, from a pragmatic standpoint, the interests of conventional peacebuilding organizations and corporate actors often align, as companies typically value stability, good governance, and the well-being of the local communities. While the importance of businesses in fragile or conflict-affected areas is known within the peacebuilding community—mostly due to their role in **economic recovery**—they are still frequently overlooked in processes where international organizations and states continue to dominate the agenda. Among the causes, panellists noted an **insufficient understanding of the work of businesses**, a general **lack of mutual understanding and trust** between corporate actors and peacebuilding stakeholders—with a reluctance from these latter to collaborate with profit-seeking actors—and a **significant cultural gap**.

Panellists also regretted that recent interest by peacebuilding actors to engage with the business sector has frequently been limited to **fundraising considerations**. While this approach is understandable, particularly given significant financial strain resulting from reductions in funding by traditional donors, it may have the unintended consequence of alienating businesses or creating the perception that they are valued solely as sources of financial support. More importantly, such a funding-seeking approach **overlooks the broader opportunities offered by a strengthening of meaningful collaboration with the private sector**.

Similarly, while acknowledging the importance and the progress made in the now-well-established area of business and human rights, the discussion stressed that—while in many ways complementary—the potential role of the private sector in peacebuilding should be understood as **going well beyond matters of due diligence and compliance**.

GENEVA PEACE WEEK
12 YEARS

Drawing from their experiences in relation to Yemen and Syria, as well as South Africa and Myanmar, speakers highlighted that **businesses can play a significant role in advancing peacebuilding efforts in a variety of ways**. They can get involved at different levels—whether policy or operational, international or local—and at various stages of peacebuilding—from initial negotiations, to reconstruction, as well as the implementation stage of peace frameworks. In addition to technical or logistical assistance—already mobilized occasionally in some contexts—businesses can support peacebuilding efforts by contributing **specialized knowledge, contextual expertise, connections and networks, or even advocacy capacity**. Corporate actors can also provide **useful data and indicators to monitor progress in peacebuilding efforts, identify markers of success, or flag early-warnings**. With respect to particularly sensitive situations or processes, they can also provide **alternative channels of discussion or conceptual frameworks**, as well as access to a wider range of interlocutors. As such, they can **complement other efforts and offer complementary, potentially less politicized, pathways to solving problems**.

Conversely, panellists argued that the **failure to sufficiently include businesses** when developing and implementing peacebuilding policies and programmes **may impede the achievement of their intended objectives**—whether it is by putting more stress on limited peacebuilding resources and capacity, overlooking critical signals, slowing down economic recovery, or failing to generate sufficient society-wide momentum for peace.

Turning to the challenges and necessary steps to unlock the potential of businesses in peacebuilding, the discussion first recognized that major differences exist between local and international corporate actors. That being said, participants stressed that the primary obstacle often remains the **risk-aversion of businesses**, whether it has to do with practical, reputational, legal, political, financial, or security concerns. Accordingly, potential initiatives could focus on **de-risking**—i.e. developing strategies to make it safer and more appealing for companies to participate in peacebuilding efforts—and exploring **protection and guarantee mechanisms** supported by international institutions. Panellists also highlighted that successful engagement with corporate actors would require **clarifying the incentives and crafting new narratives** that effectively demonstrate the **mutually beneficial added value of their involvement in peacebuilding**.

As to **local businesses specifically**—which several speakers argued should be engaged with in priority and should not be overshadowed by international corporations—panellists emphasized the importance of ensuring **thoughtful and inclusive strategies to avoid any appearance of favouritism, imbalance of power, or worsening pre-existing tensions**. The discussion indeed stressed how, despite a sense that engagement with private actors is generally less politicized, business ecosystems often have **complex ramifications with parties and communities involved in conflicts** that must be accounted for in engagement strategies.

While the discussion predominantly revolved around the positive contributions businesses can make toward delivering and sustaining peace, participants also addressed potential drawbacks and criticisms. Most notably, speakers acknowledged that collaborations with the private sector may raise **thorny ethical issues**, could be seen as **bluewashing attempts**, elicit concerns of possible **conflicts of interest**, or raise eyebrows among civil society organizations in particular. For these reasons, participants underscored the necessity of

GENEVA **PEACE** WEEK

conducting such engagement in **structured frameworks**, but also in parallel with efforts to **strengthen governance and accountability mechanisms**.

In concluding this rich conversation, acknowledging that corporate actors are unlikely to be the ones taking the first step, panellists urged the **peacebuilding community to take the lead**, first by seeking a better understanding of the role of businesses in peacebuilding and **moving past the narrow focus on fundraising**, and instead by reflecting collaboratively and practically on **substantive engagement strategies**, by elaborating **compelling narratives likely to resonate with businesses**, and by proactively initiating **practical collaborative efforts**.

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10. From Risk to Resilience: Embedding Human Rights Due Diligence in Peacebuilding

ORGANISERS: International Organization for Migration (IOM), United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), United Nations University Centre for Policy Research Geneva (UNU CPR), Talking Drum Studio: Liberia Peace Center (TDS Liberia)

TOPIC: Human Rights, Social Justice and Inclusion

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- **Recognising HRDD as more than a compliance tool.** It is a unique analytical framework and tool for organisations to take responsibility for potential human rights impacts stemming from their activities.
- **The role of human rights monitoring and reporting in providing actionable signals** that often precede conflict and captures social and economic indicators of inequality that can be overlooked by traditional peacebuilding efforts.
- **Community-level engagement is critical for HRDD to be impactful**. Local actors should be engaged in the process to strengthen trust and prevent violations from occurring and thereby work towards more sustainable peacebuilding.
- **In counter-terrorism, security and human rights must go hand in hand.** Without human rights frameworks, security-driven approaches can lead to human rights violations, aggravating the very grievances that can fuel terrorism.
- **Integrating HRDD into peacebuilding models can help to address current challenges** of disconnect from field realities, loss of trust in external peacebuilders and state and elite capture.

SUMMARY OF THE SESSION:

The panel discussion explored how **HRDD can transform peacebuilding from a reactive process into a proactive, risk-informed approach**. Sara Ferro Ribeiro (IOM) emphasized that **HRDD is not merely a 'check-box-exercise' but a commitment to ownership of risk and organizational accountability** for potential human rights impacts. She illustrated this through field experiences where operational oversights, such as inadequate weapons storage protocols, created conditions for human rights violations. She outlined IOM's **multi-layered HRDD framework**, spanning macro-level legal and political analysis, organizational-level assessments of security forces, and individual-level evaluations of trauma and psychological risks.

Dr. Adam Day (UNU-CPR) presented research demonstrating that the United Nations (UN) human rights system and reporting generate **unique early warning signals before conflict erupts**. These signals, which are rooted in lived experiences and inequalities, are critical for anticipating conflict drivers and complement traditional security monitoring. Integrating such

GENEVA PEACE WEEK

12 YEARS

analysis into peacebuilding allows a more articulated understanding of **underlying inequalities that can increase the risk of violent conflict**.

Trokon McGee (TDS Liberia) highlighted the importance of **community engagement in operationalizing HRDD**. In post-conflict Liberia, **grassroot engagement has been critical to rebuild trust**. This has included gender-based analysis, collaboration with civil society and using **participatory theater, radio programs, and documentaries to translate human rights concepts into accessible and community-level narratives**. Using creative storytelling tools can amplify local voices and make human rights concepts relatable while helping to surface risks such as exclusion, corruption or abuse in a non-threatening way. Stories as such can generate dialogue and pave ways to strengthen accountability and rights-respecting practices.

Ulrich Garms (UNODC) examined the intersection of **counter-terrorism and human rights**, highlighting the human rights pillar in the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (2006). He noted that while UN frameworks recognize the complementarity between counter-terrorism and human rights at a strategic level, **security-driven measures often undermine rights and fuel grievances**. Reintegration programmes under DDRR for former actors of non-state armed groups in regions like the Sahel and Lake Chad Basin illustrate both opportunities and risks. Communities may be exposed to re-traumatization if former combatants return without adequate security guarantees or justice measures. **Robust screening is essential to ensure those responsible for grave crimes face judicial processes**. Additionally, assistance must be distributed equitably, with benefits extended to community members alongside former combatants to prevent resentment and perceptions of rewarding violence.

Finally, the discussion highlighted that **human rights approaches help to identify grievances and inequalities and measure outcomes of equitable access to resources and power**. Further, speakers called for HRDD to include psychological, gendered, and social dimensions. **Stronger emphasis on conditionalities and red lines that are harmonized across UN actors is essential to maintain coherence and ensure greater impact**. By embedding HRDD into peacebuilding, the UN can move from risk to resilience, anticipating conflict drivers, empowering communities and **safeguarding human rights as a cornerstone of sustainable peace**.

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11. Harvesting Peace: Food, Jobs, and Social Cohesion in Conflict-Affected Settings.

ORGANISERS: International Labour Organization (ILO) in partnership with the Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO), Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), Interpeace and the Danish Refugee Council (DRC)

TOPIC: Food Security and Livelihoods

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- **Decent work and labour rights rebuild trust** and turn livelihoods into a source of dignity and cohesion.
- **Food systems are peace systems** — when families can eat and earn, communities stabilize.
- **Peace begins locally** — where communities organize, mediate, and protect livelihoods, even in fragile contexts.
- **Embrace the HDP Nexus approach** - bridging humanitarian, development, and peace actions.

SUMMARY OF THE SESSION:

This joint panel, co-organized by the UN Peacebuilding Fund (PBF), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), Interpeace, and the International Labour Organization (ILO), will explore how **decent work and food security can contribute to conflict prevention and the rebuilding of social cohesion** in fragile and post-conflict settings. In areas affected by violence and instability, the breakdown of food systems and the erosion of livelihoods can heighten vulnerability and social division. **Decent work and food security**—each vital to human dignity and resilience, and with respective rights frameworks—are also deeply interconnected. Their combined potential to **support peacebuilding efforts** offers an area of growing relevance that calls for deeper exploration.

The panel was moderated by **Negro Frederico**, Senior Specialist, Coordination and Crisis Response (ILO). Among the panelists we had (1) **Marcus Lenzen**, Deputy Chief of the UN Peacebuilding Fund (PBF), (2) **Thomet Nieves**, Chief Technical Adviser, Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus (ILO), (3) **Julius Jackson**, Lead, Conflict and Peace Unit, Office of Emergencies and Resilience at FAO, (4) **Alrasheed Mohamed Eisa**, part of the Head, Peace & Reconciliation Committee at Nertiti, Central Darfur, and **Ismail Younus Mohammed**, Peacebuilding Specialist at the Danish Refugee Council in Sudan.

The panel discussion was organized into two rounds. In the first round, each panelist responded to a specific question about their organization's ongoing work related to peace. Several key points were addressed during the first round, with the "Pact for the Future" marking a major shift from past resistance by states wary of external interference. Growing vulnerability to climate, food, and security crises has intensified fragility, driven by economic insecurity, informality, exclusion of women and youth, and the erosion of rights. **Decent work, social**

protection, and food security remain central to conflict prevention and lasting peace. Global hunger has risen for the sixth consecutive year, with **conflict continuing to be the primary driver**. **Food security, resilience, and peace are deeply interconnected**, and the right to food remains fundamental even amid protracted crises. **Building communal trust is essential**, and **local actors must have genuine ownership, as well as access to resources and markets, to sustain peace**.

The second round featured a general question posed to all panelists to gather their perspectives on peacebuilding within the current UN context. Through the following question, **how does coordination between UN actors and partners make a difference, and what concrete steps can your organizations and the wider UN system take to ensure that jobs and livelihoods for youth, women, and other marginalized groups directly contribute to peacebuilding at the country level?** Each organization shared its perspective. Marcus from the PBSO highlighted the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) as a key mechanism for promoting shared measurement frameworks, strengthening monitoring and evaluation, and fostering continuous learning from practice. He emphasized that **success should not be judged solely by outputs**—such as jobs created, or food provided—but by **outcomes that reflect greater peace and dialogue**. Nieves from the ILO underscored that **peace is a collective responsibility shared by citizens, civil society, and the private sector**, noting that even where the ILO is not present, its **Decent Work Agenda should be mainstreamed** across all partners and stakeholders. From FAO, Julius stressed the importance of ensuring that all interventions are **conflict-sensitive**, as failure to do so can deepen fragility. He emphasized the need to **integrate conflict sensitivity throughout the project cycle and institutional systems**. Finally, Alrasheed and Ismail from the DRC highlighted the importance of **coordination and collaboration** with other actors as essential steps toward building a stronger and more sustainable path to peace..

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12. Land restoration as a pathway to peace and security

ORGANISERS: United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) and the Geneva Centre for Security Policy (GCSP)

TOPIC: Environment and Climate and Peace

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- **Land restoration is a peace and security imperative.** Degraded land erodes livelihoods, governance, and social cohesion, reinforcing cycles of fragility. Restoring it revitalises ecosystems and economies while strengthening resilience and stability.
- **Environmental and social systems are deeply interconnected.** Conflict, resource scarcity, and ecological decline are mutually reinforcing; addressing them requires integrated, cross-sectoral approaches that connect environmental recovery with social and governance resilience.
- **Community-led governance builds peace from the ground up.** Inclusive, locally driven management of land and water resources fosters trust and cooperation. Linking dialogue to tangible improvements in access, livelihoods, or services ensures durable collaboration and legitimacy.
- **Coordinated nature-based solutions deliver multiple benefits.** Aligning implementation of the Rio Conventions on land, climate, and biodiversity can advance environmental goals while reducing competition, improving food and water security, and supporting human security.
- **Partnerships across the environmental–development–peace nexus multiply impact.** Joint planning between ministries, institutions, and peacebuilding actors connects technical capacity, finance, and local knowledge to achieve sustainable, peace-positive outcomes.
- **Innovative and risk-sensitive financing in fragile and conflict-affected settings (FCAS) is essential.** Blended finance, transparent data systems, and risk-sharing mechanisms can channel investment toward restoration in fragile and conflict-affected settings.
- **Data and technology enable better decision-making**. Geospatial mapping, early warning systems, and initiatives such as Mapping Pathways for Security (MPS) help prioritise interventions, de-risk investment, and strengthen cooperation across borders.
- **Locally grounded restoration ensures legitimacy.** Projects reflecting the lived experiences of farmers, women, and displaced communities foster ownership and make environmental and peacebuilding gains more durable.
- **Credible, co-created research drives policy action.** Reliable, relevant, and timely evidence, developed in collaboration with policymakers, helps translate the land–climate–peace nexus into coordinated, practical responses.

SUMMARY OF THE SESSION:

On 16 October 2025, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) and the Geneva Centre for Security Policy (GCSP) co-organized a Peace Panel entitled "Land Restoration as a Pathway to Peace and Security" during Geneva Peace Week 2025. The event convened experts and practitioners from environment, peacebuilding, security policy, and sustainable development fields to explore how restoring degraded land can reduce fragility and foster cooperation and stability in **fragile and conflict-affected settings (FCAS)**.

The discussion built on growing evidence that environmental degradation and land loss are not solely ecological challenges but increasingly **key drivers of insecurity**. As land-based resources such as soil, forests, and water diminish, competition intensifies, undermining livelihoods, displacing populations, and straining already fragile governance systems. Over the past decades, a significant share of intrastate conflicts has been linked to natural resources, underscoring the **centrality of land in sustaining peace and human security**.

Speakers highlighted that land degradation operates as both a cause and a consequence of fragility, reinforcing cycles of environmental decline, economic distress, and social instability. Breaking this vicious cycle requires recognising **land restoration as a strategic pathway to peace and stability**. Rehabilitating degraded land revitalises livelihoods, strengthens local economies, and rebuilds ecosystem functions essential for food and water security. Community-based restoration through regenerative agriculture, water-harvesting systems, and participatory resource management provides both material and social dividends, turning degraded landscapes into platforms for **trust-building and adaptive governance**. The Peace Forest Initiative (PFI) under the UNCCD exemplifies how collaborative, cross-border partnerships can link **land and ecosystem restoration with confidence-building and peace** through joint action, equitable benefit-sharing, and transparent, trust-based governance.

Inclusive, community-led governance of land and water resources emerged as a key enabler of peace-positive restoration. Experiences from Iraq and Somalia show that linking dialogue with tangible results, such as improved access to water and restored livelihoods, can transform relationships and strengthen local governance.

Harnessing synergies among the Rio Conventions on land, climate, and biodiversity offers an important opportunity to deliver coordinated nature-based solutions that advance multiple goals. Greater policy coherence across environmental, development, and peacebuilding frameworks helps bridge institutional silos and align restoration, adaptation, and conflict-prevention efforts. Well-designed, conflict-sensitive approaches can reduce competition over resources, enhance local resilience, and indirectly **strengthen peace and security**.

Despite the availability of global financing for environmental and peace objectives, **investment in land restoration within FCAS remains limited**. Addressing this gap requires **innovative and risk-sensitive financing mechanisms** that encourage collaboration between public, private, and local actors. Data-driven approaches (geospatial intelligence, early warning systems) and initiatives can help de-risk investment by improving transparency and prioritising interventions.

Finally, the panel underscored that lasting impact depends on grounding peacebuilding and restoration efforts in the lived realities of those most affected by degradation and insecurity.

Evidence-based, participatory approaches that connect global commitments with local priorities build trust, legitimacy, and sustainability. In this way, land restoration becomes not only an ecological necessity but a practical instrument for rebuilding social contracts, revitalising local economies, and advancing peace and human security.

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13. Peace Dialogue "Participation and Inclusivity in Peacebuilding: Linking Geneva and New York through Civil Society, Older Persons and Water Diplomacy"

ORGANISERS: Geneva Peacebuilding Platform and Permanent Mission of the Republic of Slovenia to the United Nations Office

TOPIC: International Geneva and Peacebuilding

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- **Inclusivity in peacebuilding is essential:** ensuring that peace is built on robust foundations requires the meaningful participation of all communities, groups, and stakeholders, including often under-represented groups, especially women, youth, and older persons. Without inclusion, peace processes and peacebuilding efforts risk lacking both effectiveness and legitimacy. However, ensuring inclusivity must be about more than merely "ticking the box".

- **Recognizing the critical contribution of civil society organizations:** CSOs play a vital role in peacebuilding, acting as first responders, guarantors of accountability, providers of expertise, and bridges between institutions and policy-making spaces. However, their participation often continues to be ad hoc and insufficiently institutionalized, limiting their influence and risking to overlook some key actors. CSOs must be recognized as more than mere implementation partners or "subcontractors" in peacebuilding, and must be seen as strategic partners.

- **Importance of trust as a building block of peace**: all aspects of peacebuilding rely, to an extent, on trust. Alongside high-stake political efforts to resolve conflict and violence, establishing trust is therefore absolutely essential to ensuring durable peace. Enhancing inclusion and participation is a key step towards establishing trust, and reinforcing the legitimacy of peacebuilding policies.

- **The need for continued efforts to bridge Geneva and New York:** a well-known challenge in global peacebuilding, there continues to be a need for stronger synergy between Geneva's ecosystem—rich and diverse, with unique expertise in the area of human rights and humanitarian action, among others—and New York's peace and security architecture. Policy coherence and cross-pillar collaboration are crucial, but practical obstacles remain, and efforts to overcome them must receive adequate support.

- **Raising awareness on the contribution of older persons:** older persons play key roles as mediators, mentors, and repositories of collective memory, yet they remain underrepresented in peacebuilding, whether at the global level or in peace processes on the ground. Peacebuilding stakeholders and states need to ensure a better inclusion of older-persons, which also requires better addressing their specific needs and rights, including through a binding international instrument.

- **The potential of water diplomacy**: cooperation over shared water resources, in addition to being indispensable, is also a proven tool for building trust and preventing conflict. While still sometimes perceived as a niche topic, water diplomacy provides a wealth of experience and lessons that can be utilized in other areas, and given the strategic nature of water resources, it should be integrated into peacebuilding strategies at all levels.

- **Mobilizing states in support of civil society agendas:** given the continued preeminence of states in peacebuilding, the collaboration between CSOs and willing states is essential and can be very impactful. States that are sensitive to the pleas of CSOs in specific areas—for instance in water diplomacy or when it comes to older persons—must take proactive steps to make their voices heard and effectively support their agenda.

SUMMARY OF THE SESSION:

Ambassador Pipan of Slovenia opened the event by emphasizing the importance of **inclusivity, equality, and trust** as foundational principles for **sustainable peace**. She highlighted the need for better integration between New York and Geneva, advocating for a **holistic and rights-based approach to multilateralism**. Ambassador Pipan outlined Slovenia's achievements in this area, as well as its commitment to do more, taking advantage of its membership of both the **UN Security Council** and the **Peacebuilding Commission**.

Panellists went on to discuss the **indispensable role of civil society organizations (CSOs)**, who play multiple key roles in peacebuilding, from first responders in crises, to **guarantors of accountability**, as well as **bridges** between various levels of government, and between local realities and global policy. Yet, panellists noted that **CSO participation** in sensitive peace processes or in peacebuilding more generally remains often **ad hoc and insufficiently institutionalized**, which limits their influence and makes their engagement subject to the whims of parties. This can also mean that specific interests and concerns advocated by some CSOs risk being **overlooked or deprioritized**. **Ms. Larivière of Interpeace**, also highlighted how CSOs are sometimes only treated as **subcontractors rather than strategic partners**, which is a missed opportunity and can give the impression of a lack of consideration. Ms. Larivière also traced the insufficient role played by CSOs back to the often-**narrow definition of "peace"**, which can lead to excluding areas of concern like **organized crime, urban violence, or environmental issues**, and the organizations working to address them. Additionally, participants stressed how **adequate CSO engagement** is also **key to creating sufficient co-ownership of peace processes**, which in turns help ensure that aspirations or formal agreements translate into **concrete action**.

Against this backdrop, participants highlighted how such uneven level of engagement of CSOs in peacebuilding could also be seen in the **persisting gaps between Geneva's and New York's peacebuilding ecosystems**. While the close relationship between both ecosystems is well-known—**Ambassador Blokar** recalling the common metaphor of **"policies [being] cooked and prepared in Geneva, and served and eaten in New York"**—many gaps remain, and the current **crisis of multilateralism** continues to test the collective resolve to address them. Ambassador Blokar also acknowledged that some of the remaining challenges were very much practical and could be addressed, including through the kind of work undertaken by the GPP, including initiatives like the "Peace Dialogue" in the context of the **Geneva Peace Week**.

Turning to the topic of **water diplomacy**, **Prof. Danilo Turk**, former President of Slovenia, underlined how, water being one of the most important natural resources, common challenges in this area could be both a potential source of **conflict or threat multiplier**, and a **powerful tool for cooperation and trust-building** among states neighbouring each other. Reflecting on Slovenia's experience in this area, and his own work across multilateral spaces—including most notably with the **Geneva Water Hub**—Prof. Turk noted increasing interest and demand for cooperation and training in water diplomacy. As such, the discussion emphasized how the experience and successful developments in **water diplomacy are helpful to illuminate and find solutions to the broader challenges of CSO engagement and inclusion in peacebuilding more generally**.

The conversation then turned to the other example of the—often-overlooked—contribution of

GENEVA PEACE WEEK

12 YEARS

older persons. **Ms. Silvia Perel-Levin**, Vice-Chair of the NGO Committee on Ageing, highlighted how older persons play a **unique role in peacebuilding**, as both **carriers of memory, mediators between generations, and mentors**—other speakers also pointing out the critical role played by **"elders"** in many contexts on the ground, especially on the African continent. On the flip side, Ms. Perel-Levin also stressed that **older persons continue to be among the categories most affected by violence and conflict**, an often insufficiently reported fact and a fact suggesting that enhancing their inclusion in peacebuilding also requires taking steps towards **better protecting them**. In this respect, she argued that the **lack of a dedicated international legal framework on the rights of older persons** constituted a major shortcoming. Regarding the inclusion of older persons in *global* policy discussions, Ms. Perel-Levin stressed that **Geneva offers more meaningful opportunities for participation and a greater culture of inclusion**, especially through the **Human Rights Council**, while New York remains much less accessible. While recognizing the progress made—most notably the establishment and work of the **Open-ended Working Group on Ageing**, and the proactive work and organizing of CSOs representing older persons—the conversation highlighted that **more work was needed**, and that, among all the options on the table, the **development of a binding international legal instrument** should be considered, together with potential new creative avenues.

At several points throughout the conversation, speakers recognized that, given the **largely state-centric nature of current multilateral mechanisms**, and as multilateral actors and institutions are increasingly coming under attack, addressing many of the issues discussed will require **states taking the lead and pushing for positive developments on behalf—and in close coordination—with civil society**. Conversely, civil society organizations need to find states willing to support their agenda and **nurture collaborative relationships**.

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14. Rebooting the international peacebuilding system: a call for hydrodiplomacy

ORGANISERS: Geneva Water Hub

TOPIC: Confidence Mediation and Trust Building

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

Geneva must now assert itself as the City of Water for Peace. With clarity, partnerships, and inclusive leadership, water can heal divisions, sustain communities, and anchor peace.
- **Water is central to peace,** security, climate action, humanitarian action, and sustainable development.

- **2026 UN Water Conference** is an opportunity to institutionalize water-for-peace diplomacy.
- **International Geneva is uniquely positioned** to leverage a global reference framework for water diplomacy.

SUMMARY OF THE SESSION:

Dr. Danilo Türk, Lead Political Advisor of the Geneva Water Hub, opened and moderated the session by framing water as both a **risk and an opportunity** in peacebuilding. He called for renewed trust, mediation, and inclusive diplomacy to transform shared challenges into collective solutions.

H.E. Cheikh Tidiane Dieye, Minister for Water and Sanitation of Senegal, recalled his country's **five decades of transboundary cooperation** through the OMVS and OMVG river basin organizations — long-standing examples of African water diplomacy. He called upon Dakar to play a growing role in preventive diplomacy backed by science and education through the Dakar Water Hub. He emphasized that water must remain a **tool for peace, stability, and solidarity**, underlining Senegal's co-hosting with the UAE of the **2026 UN Water Conference**, inviting stakeholders to contribute to **Dakar Preparatory High-Level Meeting** in January 2026.

Representing the **United Arab Emirates**, **H.E. Abdulla Balalaa**, Assistant Minister for Foreign Affairs, highlighted water as a **foundation for dignity, development, and unity**, especially in politically divided contexts. The UAE's experience — from desalination research to humanitarian water initiatives — demonstrates that water diplomacy can **transform flashpoints into cooperation**. He reaffirmed the UAE's commitment to **SDG 6 and SDG 16**, and to inclusive, transparent preparations for the 2026 Conference.

H.E. Habib Achsanul, **Deputy Permanent Representative of the Mission of Indonesia**, linked water to **human dignity and peace**, warning of the risks of weaponization and advocating for the **human right to water and sanitation**. He underscored the Global South's leadership through the Bandung Principles and called for the 2026 Conference to serve as a platform for **inclusive dialogue bridging humanitarian, development, and governance frameworks**. He invited to engage with the **UN Special Envoy for Water**.

For **Switzerland**, **H.E. Christian Frutiger**, representing the **Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation**, reaffirmed water's **central role in diplomacy and humanitarian action**. Initiatives such as **Blue Peace** embody Switzerland's approach to turning potential conflict into cooperation. Geneva, he underlined, is **more than a city — it is a global hub** where humanitarian, development, and peace agendas converge. **International Geneva** remains uniquely positioned to shape global policies based on science anticipation, to **amplify Global South voices** and to foster inclusive, policy-driven water diplomacy.

Discussion Highlights

Participants emphasized the operationalization of water diplomacy through **local trust-building**, **community engagement**, and **integration of climate considerations**. Inclusion was central — acknowledging **Indigenous rights, youth, and gender perspectives**.

Participants further exchanged on the key role of the private sector, ranging from the "do no harm" principle, to technical innovation, bridging infrastructure gaps and financing schemes to promote benefit sharing at intersectoral and transboundary level.

Takeaways

Water lies at the **core of peace, climate resilience, and sustainable development**.

Diplomacy must evolve — from reactive crisis management to **proactive resilience-building**, from national approaches to **transboundary cooperation**, and from top-down governance to **inclusive engagement**.

The upcoming **2026 UN Water Conference** presents a historic opportunity to **institutionalize "water for peace" diplomacy**.

Geneva, as an internationally recognised space for trust building, bridging silo policies, elaborating international norms, fostering inclusive approaches, is called upon to play a central role as the City of Water for Peace, **turning water into a force that unites, sustains life and prosperity, and builds peace**.

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15. Sustaining Peace through Health: How can Health Actors Foster Dialogue, Cooperation and Trust?

ORGANISERS: Humanitarian Policies and Interagency Cooperation Unit, WHO Headquarters, China Foreign Affairs University

TOPIC: Peace Responsive Approaches

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- **Health systems worldwide are under strain.**
- **Official development assistance continues to decline.**
- In this context, there is growing recognition that:
    - Health is not only a sector that must withstand various **challenges**, but also
    - A unique **entry point** for building trust,
    - Fostering **cooperation**, and
    - Advancing **reconciliation** processes and **lasting peace**.

SUMMARY OF THE SESSION:

Peace and global health are being seriously challenged across the globe. The panel focused on the links between health and peace, emphasizing how **health initiatives can contribute to peacebuilding in conflict regions**.

Professor Han discussed the importance of **innovative cooperation** to implement International Health Regulations (IHR) in conflict regions. He highlighted that a **partnership framework involving health, peacebuilding and conflict actors** will enhance **health security**.

Mr. Kayitare shared Rwanda's post-genocide experience, highlighting an **integrated approach to mental health, peace, and development**. He demonstrated how **Mental health intervention** at different levels, such as individual, family, and community levels, would **lay the groundwork for sustainable peace**.

Mr. Saidou shared the project conducted by WHO, IOM and the Cameroonian authorities in the Far North of Cameroon and showed that **health intervention could increase trust between groups** at community level, improve the ability of the National Disarmament, Demobilisation, and Reintegration Committee (NDDRC), and better **prevent youth enrolment and recidivism in armed groups** designated as terrorist organisations (AGDTOs).

Mr. Simonian provided an overall picture of **WHO's work linking health and peace efforts** in various parts of the world and introduced **WHO's Global Health and Peace Initiative**. He argued that **health is a major driving force** along with other variables and can be seen as a **peace (and conflict) barometer** - when situations improve, health systems start to flourish and populations get better access to health services. **Health is a powerful tool for peacebuilding, offering entry points for dialogue, trust-building, and social cohesion** in fragile and conflict affected settings, working at different levels or various tracks of engagement, on a context-specific basis.

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16. The Future of Peace Operations: Insights from Women, Peace and Security, Security Sector Governance, and Protection of Civilians

ORGANISERS: DCAF – Geneva Center for Security Sector Governance and the Center for Civilians in Conflict (CIVIC)

TOPIC: Future Peacebuilding Missions and Operations

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- **Keep core agendas at the center.** Security Sector Governance (SSG), the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda and Protection of Civilians (PoC) are essential for the effectiveness, success and legitimacy of UN Peace operations. These pillars deliver immediate impact – preventing civilian harm, reducing risks of physical abuses, increasing women's participation in peacebuilding and peace operations – while also

laying the foundations for successful transitions. They are mutually reinforcing and strongly interlinked, making their integration in mandates critical for operational success.

- **Maintain essential capacities**. Regardless of how peace operations evolve, ensuring a minimal in-mission capacity on SSG, WPS, and PoC is vital to remain responsive to political priorities and to support credible and sustainable transitions. Without adequately capacitated senior leadership, important windows of opportunity for political dialogue may be missed.
- **Leverage partnerships and diversify resources.** While minimal advisory capacities should be maintained, missions do not need to implement all activities directly. Future missions will need to work more collaboratively, drawing on bilateral, regional, and civil society partners, while engaging more proactively with international financial institutions.

SUMMARY OF THE SESSION:

Security Sector Governance, the Protection of Civilians, and the Women, Peace and Security agenda jointly shape the **effectiveness and legitimacy of peace operations**, as three **mutually reinforcing pillars** for prevention, protection, and sustainable peace. Their integration is essential both for addressing immediate risks and for laying the foundations for credible political transitions.

Security Sector Governance is fundamental to effective peace operations, ensuring **effective, accountable and inclusive institutions** that foster trust and legitimacy. It serves as a key mechanism for prevention by addressing structural causes of conflict and supporting transitions towards stability. It is also vital to enable national authorities to take over protection responsibilities.

Protection of Civilians is both a humanitarian imperative and a strategic objective. Rising global civilian casualties, coupled with reduced peacekeeping resources, underline the need to strengthen protection frameworks. Examples of **early warning systems and community-based protection mechanisms** demonstrate measurable success in saving lives. Civilian protection is an ethical obligation and an investment in long-term stability, requiring **shared responsibility** between missions, host governments, and communities.

The Women, Peace and Security agenda is an operational necessity that enhances mission performance. The **participation of women** across all functions transforms protection approaches and **broadens communication with communities**. Diverse teams ensure a more comprehensive understanding of security environments. Visible participation of women in security roles sends a strong message of inclusion, inspiring national institutions to embrace diverse teams. Increasing women's participation requires both representation across diverse roles and leadership, as well as an **enabling environment** (e.g. adequate facilities, supportive leadership, and workplaces free of bias).

The experience in the DRC illustrates the **interdependence of these pillars**. The army and police are mandated to protect citizens but are implicated in human rights violations, while police tasks are often carried out by military personnel lacking appropriate training or equipment. Deployments face high-risk conditions, access constraints, low salaries, and

limited social services. WPS progress, including women's participation in security forces and peace processes, shows promise but remains a generational task. For this reason, it is critical to ensure that **sufficient in-mission capacities exist to advise political leaders on promoting inclusive reforms** that strengthen security institutions, protect civilians, and advance sustainable peace. It also shows the need to proactively build partnerships to ensure dedicated resources and sustained engagement beyond immediate mission timelines.

Amid financial constraints and growing complexity, preparing for the future of peace operations demands clear priorities and urgency. **SSG, WPS, and PoC are core components of peace operations, producing immediate results while enabling successful transitions in the longer term.** Improving the safety and protection of populations must be a **shared responsibility with national authorities** and must reflect the needs and expectations of local communities.

As peace operations evolve into potentially more modular and flexible formats, **future missions should prioritise early investment in SSG, WPS, and PoC, ensuring that each mission maintains effective capacity in these areas.** Partnerships with regional organisations, bilateral actors, and civil society should be strengthened, and **new financial partners**, including international financial institutions, should be engaged to address funding gaps. In the context of emerging challenges such as climate change, new technologies, mis- and disinformation, careful prioritisation is needed to maintain coherence while ensuring that peace operations remain **responsive, inclusive, and effective** in addressing human security needs.

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17. The Israel-Palestine conflict: how can security governance lay the foundations for stability?

ORGANISERS: Palestinian Centre for Research and Strategic Studies (PCRSS), DCAF – Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance, Strategic Studies Centre, Qatar

TOPIC: Armed conflict civilian protection and humanitarian action

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- **The ceasefire between Israel and Hamas must be fully implemented**.
- **Inclusive and locally rooted governance is essential** for rebuilding trust, strengthening institutions, and supporting sustainable peace.
- **Palestinian voices must be central** to any security sector governance efforts in Gaza; without genuine local agency, stability cannot be achieved.

- **Accountable political governance in the occupied Palestinian** territory is crucial for restoring confidence in Palestinian institutions**.**
- **Gaza's can only be governed by Palestinians,** with legitimacy built on domestic structures and rooted in the needs of the people.

SUMMARY OF THE SESSION:

Bringing together Palestinian and Qatari voices, this panel explored how **governance-based approaches** can contribute to **peace and stability** in the context of the Israel Palestine conflict. The discussion focused on how **inclusive, accountable, and locally rooted governance of the security sector** may help rebuild trust, strengthen institutions, and support **peace efforts that reflect local ownership**.

Panellists first agreed that the **Gaza war must end and violence cease immediately** and that the ceasefire between Hamas and Israel must be fully implemented, as a condition for any security sector arrangement in Gaza. They collectively underscored the need to **meaningfully include Palestinian voices** in any security governance initiative in Gaza. As one speaker noted, "there can be no stability in Gaza if Palestinians feel that their survival and future depend on factors beyond their control." In this sense, the conversation highlighted the importance of promoting **accountable political governance across the occupied Palestinian territory** as a foundation for **restoring confidence in Palestinian institutions**. Ultimately, participants stressed that **Gaza can only be governed by Palestinians** and that **legitimacy should be built locally**, as a pathway toward stability and dignity for Palestinians, and, more broadly, to contribute to peace and security across the region.

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18. The Search for the Forcibly Disappeared: a Key Contribution to Peacebuilding

ORGANISERS: Geneva Peacebuilding Platform, Convention Against Enforced Disappearances

TOPIC: Data-driven Decision-making and Accountability

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- **Truth is foundational to peace**: sustainable peace demands uncovering the truth about the disappeared, not silencing it.
- **Families are agents of peacebuilding**: their love, advocacy, and persistence should be recognized and supported.
- **Documentation and evidence preservation** are vital to prevent denial and ensure accountability.

- **Inclusive, democratic spaces** must allow victims to share experiences free from manipulation.
- **International coordination**: among families, civil society, and mechanisms like the IIMP is essential.
- **Memory and commemoration of the disappeared** must be safeguarded as part of national healing.
- Peace is not merely the end of violence but the **presence of justice, participation, and human rights**.
- **A World Parliament of Victims of Enforced Disappearances** could foster global solidarity and shared advocacy.
- **The 20th anniversary of the Convention on Enforced Disappearances** (December 2026) should serve as a milestone for progress.
- **Supporting families and ensuring accountability** remain moral imperatives for international peacebuilding efforts.

SUMMARY OF THE SESSION:

The session, held as part of **Geneva Peace Week**, examined how the search for the disappeared, particularly in the context of Syria, forms an **essential part of peacebuilding, justice, and reconciliation**. Moderated by Prof. Marina Eudes, the discussion brought together legal experts, relatives of the disappeared, and institutional actors working on the right to truth and justice.

Prof. Olivier de Frouville opened the session by reflecting on the global challenge of **enforced disappearances** and the enduring tension between truth, justice, and peace. Drawing from his experience as Chairperson of the UN Committee on Enforced Disappearances, he highlighted how governments often resist investigations, fearing that exhumations or truth-seeking might reignite conflict. He rejected this argument, insisting that **lasting peace cannot exist without truth**. Enforced disappearances, he said, **suspend time and prevent societies from healing**, as families live in permanent uncertainty. He emphasized that the **love and resilience of families can drive social healing** if states create inclusive spaces for their participation. As forward-looking proposals, he called for a **World Parliament of Victims of Enforced Disappearances** to connect families globally, and for nominating leading family representatives for the Nobel Peace Prize as recognition of their peacebuilding efforts.

Obeida Dabbagh then gave a deeply personal account of losing his brother and nephew, arrested and disappeared by Syrian Air Force Intelligence in 2013. His search for justice led him to become a plaintiff in a landmark **French universal jurisdiction case** against senior Syrian officials for crimes against humanity. Dabbagh emphasized the decisive role of **civil society organizations, journalists, and independent legal advocates** in documenting evidence and pursuing accountability where governments have failed.

Asmaa Al-Farraj, co-founder of Families for Freedom, shared her story as a relative of the disappeared and described her ongoing struggle to uncover the fate of her loved ones. She reflected on the collective suffering of families across Syria and stressed the need for **truth, transparency, and state recognition of their loss**. Al-Farraj insisted that **peace processes must place the issue of the disappeared at their center**, ensuring that families are not instrumentalized but truly **empowered as partners in justice**.

Ugo Cedrangolo presented the mandate and work of the **Independent Institution on Missing Persons in the Syrian Arab Republic (IIMP)**, a unique UN-created mechanism established in 2023 after years of advocacy by families. The IIMP aims to **clarify the fate and whereabouts of all missing persons in Syria**, whether due to enforced disappearance, conflict, or migration. Cedrangolo outlined ongoing efforts to collect and analyze data, develop forensic capacity, and cooperate with Syrian and international stakeholders. He underlined that searching for the disappeared is both a **humanitarian and truth-seeking mission, essential for individual healing and rebuilding social trust**. However, he cautioned that the task is immense, requiring coordination, transparency, and patience, while managing families' urgent expectations.

In closing, Prof. Marina Eudes summarized the discussion: **a country cannot rebuild until families obtain truth, justice, reparations, and guarantees of non-repetition**. The **preservation of memory, inclusion of families, and protection of evidence** are indispensable pillars of peacebuilding.

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19. 80 Years of the UN Multilateralism: Reinforcing a Timeless Framework for Global Peace

ORGANISERS: United Nations Office at Geneva (UNOG) , The Permanent Mission of Switzerland

TOPIC: Future-proofing Peace

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- **Multilateralism must be renewed, not replaced.** The UN's 80-year legacy shows that multilateral cooperation remains indispensable, but its institutions, power balances and working methods must adapt to new geopolitical and technological realities.
- **Inclusion is central to "future-proofing" peace.** Sustained peace requires meaningful participation of the Global South, women, youth, local communities and non-state actors in decision-making and implementation.
- **International Geneva is a laboratory for innovative multilateralism.** Its ecosystem of UN entities, states, civil society, academia, and the private sector can pilot new governance models and cross-sector partnerships, including on digital and climate-related risks.

- **Memory, evidence and accountability matter.** Archives, knowledge systems and research are critical to counter disinformation, learn from past peace processes, and design reforms grounded in international law and empirical evidence.
- **Peacebuilding and development must be interconnected** through flexible, ecosystem-based cooperation.
- **Structural barriers must be confronted.** Geopolitical rivalries, inequality, fragmented institutions and underinvestment in prevention continue to undermine peace; the Pact for the Future, New Agenda for Peace and UN80 initiatives must be leveraged to address these systemic issues, not just symptoms.

SUMMARY OF THE SESSION:

The session examined how the United Nations can **"future-proof peace"** as it marks its 80th anniversary, with speakers reflecting on **global crises of legitimacy, inequality and fragmentation**, and on how the **UN80 process** can renew multilateralism. In her opening message, the UNOG Director-General recalled the UN's founding vision - **preventing war, protecting human dignity and promoting development** - stressing that this mission remains essential but requires modern tools, inclusive governance and stronger global solidarity.

Speakers broadly agreed that **UN80 must be a transformative moment**, focused on **modernising multilateralism** rather than making narrow administrative adjustments. The system created in the mid-20th century **no longer reflects today's balance of power**, nor adequately represents the voices and priorities of the Global South. **Africa's underrepresentation** - particularly in the Security Council - was highlighted as a structural imbalance that undermines legitimacy. **Rebuilding trust**, participants stressed, requires **greater inclusion, equity and meaningful participation** of women, youth, civil society, local actors and the private sector.

Ambassador Waweru noted that the **Global South expects a more just and responsive international order**, while Ms. Veres emphasised that sustainable peace depends on addressing root causes such as **inequality, exclusion, climate stress and weak governance**. Dr. Krause warned that **geopolitical rivalry, institutional fragmentation and underinvestment in prevention** threaten to make the UN less relevant unless structural reforms are pursued. Ms. Hilding Norberg highlighted the need for **"networked multilateralism"** that integrates diverse actors into flexible, solution-oriented partnerships. Ms. Blukacz-Louisfert underlined that **institutional memory, archives and data ecosystems are essential for accountability, learning and combating misinformation**.

Throughout the discussion, speakers reaffirmed the **vital role of International Geneva in renewing multilateralism**. They highlighted its status as a **neutral, inclusive and interdisciplinary hub** where humanitarian, human rights, development, health, trade and digital governance communities converge. Geneva's unique ecosystem allows for **innovation, policy experimentation and multi-stakeholder collaboration**, making it an **indispensable platform** for shaping the future of peace and global cooperation. Several participants suggested **decentralising some peace and security dialogues to regional hubs** such as Geneva or Nairobi to broaden participation, strengthen links to field realities and foster more integrated approaches that connect peacebuilding, human rights and development.

GENEVA PEACE WEEK
12 YEARS

During the Q&A, participants raised questions on **restoring trust in the UN**, ensuring reforms translate into action, and governing emerging challenges such as **AI and disinformation**. Panellists stressed that trust is rebuilt not through rhetoric but through **transparency, adherence to international law, and tangible improvements in people's lives**. They also highlighted the importance of **empowering local ownership** and ensuring reforms reflect the priorities of affected populations. Discussions acknowledged frustration with **Security Council paralysis** and explored how inclusive coalitions - if anchored in universal norms - could complement multilateral diplomacy.

Despite acknowledging major risks - **inequality, polarization, declining trust** - speakers expressed **cautious optimism**. The session concluded that the world still needs a **strong, respected and inclusive United Nations**. The shared vision was for a UN that **adapts to modern realities** while remaining grounded in its founding principles of **peace, justice and cooperation** - with **Geneva playing an important role in advancing this renewal**.

PEACE WORKSHOPS

20. Algorithms of Division or Dialogue? Countering AI-Fuelled Polarisation for Peace in Action

ORGANISERS: Globethics, TechEthics

TOPIC: New Technologies Cyber security and Artificial Intelligence

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- **Human-centric design must guide the development** and use of AI.
- **Ethical, human-centred AI design** is essential for peace.
- **AI introduces evolving security risks** requiring coordinated responses.
- **Development-focused AI** must avoid reinforcing inequality.
- **Governance frameworks need stronger accountability** and interoperability.
- **Peacebuilding can benefit from AI tools** when responsibly applied.

GENEVA PEACE WEEK

12 YEARS

- **Cross-sector collaboration is necessary** to counter AI-fuelled polarisation.

SUMMARY OF THE SESSION:

The session **"Algorithms of Division or Dialogue? Countering AI-Fuelled Polarisation for Peace in Action,"** held during Geneva Peace Week 2025, focused on how **digital ecosystems** have become critical spaces where conflict dynamics take shape. In a world marked by **geopolitical fragmentation** and rapid technological innovation, the workshop examined how **artificial intelligence and algorithmic systems** influence public discourse, shape social narratives, and contribute both to **division and to opportunities for peace**.

Three expert speakers provided complementary perspectives on the **risks and possibilities of AI**. **Paola Gálvez Callirgos**, AI Ethics Manager at Globethics, addressed the **ethical responsibilities** involved in **AI design and governance**. She emphasised the need for **dignity, fairness, and transparency** in digital systems to ensure that technology contributes to **cohesion rather than fragmentation**. **Gosia Loj**, Deputy Head of the Security and Technology Programme at UNIDIR, examined AI from a **security perspective**. She discussed how **automated decision-making, surveillance capabilities, and weaponised information flows** were reshaping global security environments and underscored the urgent need for **international coordination and confidence- building measures**. **Mia Speier**, Senior Consultant on Digital Rights at Shared Planet, focused on AI in the context of **development**. She explored how AI could improve **participation, access to services, and protection of digital rights**, while warning that poorly designed systems risked reinforcing **inequality and marginalisation**.

The session also considered how **AI could support peacebuilding** rather than undermine it.Participants discussed the potential for AI tools to contribute to **conflict early-warning systems**, enhance the **inclusivity of peace processes**, and strengthen the ability of organisations to interpret complex social landscapes. These conversations encouraged participants to reimagine digital spaces not only as sites of risk but as environments where **dialogue, empathy, and collective resilience can be cultivated**.

In the final part of the workshop, participants joined breakout discussions at three thematic tables: **governance, development, and security**. At the **governance table**, participants explored **accountability, regulation, and the need for interoperable global standards**. The **development table** examined ways AI could **empower communities and protect digital rights**. The **security table** focused on **countering information manipulation** and addressing emerging risks connected to new technologies.

The workshop concluded with a shared recognition that **reclaiming digital spaces** requires **ethical design, responsible governance, and cross-sector collaboration** to ensure that AI becomes a tool for **dialogue rather than division**.

GENEVA PEACE WEEK
12 YEARS

21. Building a Framework for Integrating Mental Health and Psychosocial Wellbeing into Peace Policies

ORGANISERS: Healthnet TPO, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands, International Organization for Migration (IOM), MHPSS – Mental Health and Psychosocial Support WPS – Women Peace and Security NAP – National Action Plan

TOPIC: Mental Health

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- **Integrating Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) into peacebuilding** fosters transformative change, addressing both structural and cultural forms of violence to achieve sustainable peace.
- **Lessons from Colombia and South Sudan suggest that, regardless of the context, integrating MHPSS and peacebuilding consistently contributes to achieving peace** and inclusion goals. Despite the programmes operating in vastly different cultural, social, and political environments, both have shown that embedding wellbeing within peace frameworks helps shift harmful norms, strengthen inclusion, and rebuild social cohesion.
- **Collective and embodied care approaches are key for women's empowerment,** advocacy, and local leadership in peace processes.
- **The discussion emphasised that mental health is a global peace issue**, relevant not only to conflict zones like Gaza or Ukraine but also to polarised societies such as the United States.

- **Participants agreed on the need for multi-level, cross-sectoral coordination and the inclusion of MHPSS within frameworks** such as the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda

SUMMARY OF THE SESSION:

This session, organised by HealthNet TPO, explored practical pathways to embed **mental health and psychosocial wellbeing** within **peace policies**, drawing from the organisation's thirty years of experience in **fragile and conflict-affected settings**. Building on five years of programming under the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs' National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (WPS), the session presented insights from South Sudan and Colombia, where HealthNet TPO integrates **MHPSS** into **community peacebuilding initiatives**.

The event opened with a discussion on HealthNet TPO's approach and how integrating MHPSS and peacebuilding broadens our understanding of **violence**, ultimately allowing us to acknowledge not only physical harm but also **psychological and social dimensions that undermine peace**. This conceptual expansion facilitates **transformative change**, allowing for more **inclusive peace processes** achieved through the empowerment of communities as **peace agents**.

In Colombia, this approach was reflected in the *Women Advocate Peace* project, which demonstrated the power of **collective care spaces, intergenerational healing, and cultural practices** to empower women and Indigenous leaders. Examples from the project showed how, through systemic advocacy and **ancestral knowledge**, Kämentsá Indigenous women achieved recognition for their traditional healing roles, exemplifying how **wellbeing and peace are intertwined**.

In South Sudan, the *Leaders of Peace* project illustrated how MHPSS interventions fostered **social cohesion and reconciliation**. **Safe spaces, psychosocial support, and Couple Engagement Groups** helped women feel safer and enabled men to become allies in promoting equality. These initiatives shifted community norms, reduced inter-tribal conflicts, and strengthened **women's leadership in local peace dialogues**. Finally, both teams in Colombia and South Sudan reiterated the importance of **knowledge sharing**, exemplified by the Shared Learning Agenda – a collaborative process that connects practitioners across both countries to document lessons, exchange methodologies, and identify common strategies for **embedding MHPSS into peace and policy frameworks**.

Following these case studies, MHPSS and peacebuilding experts from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands, IOM, and independent consultants reflected on the broader implications for global peace frameworks. They emphasised that **integrating MHPSS is not an "add-on" but a core requirement for durable peace**. This was followed by a discussion with the workshop's participants, which underscored the urgency of addressing mental health in both conflict and non-conflict contexts, from Gaza and Ukraine to societies experiencing political and social polarisation, such as the United States.

The session concluded by co-developing **advocacy recommendations**, calling for a **multilevel and cross-sectoral approach** to peace policy. Participants agreed on several "key asks" to the global peace community, such as **redefining safety and security to include**

GENEVA PEACE WEEK
12 YEARS

psychosocial wellbeing, recognising the past and present impact of trauma, coordinating across sectors to translate wellbeing into peace policy, and recognising the complexities of implementation.

Overall, the workshop reaffirmed the importance of **placing mental health and psychosocial wellbeing at the heart of peacebuilding**: a step toward more inclusive, adaptive, and human-centred peace frameworks.

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22. Data-driven peace: The way forward for UN programming in conflict transitions

ORGANISERS: International Organization for Migration (IOM), UN Peacekeeping, United Nations Development Programme(UNDP), United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR)

TOPIC: Data-driven Decision-making and Accountability

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- **The importance of data systems** that reflect the mobility, protection and inclusion needs of diverse returnee populations.
- **Ongoing challenges around data ownership,** sharing and uptake persist, which often hinder effective policy and decision-making. Findings from the collected data need to be effectively shared with communities, organizations, and governments for data-driven programming and interventions.
- **The need to involve communities in data collection and ensure accountability to those the programmes aim to serve.** In designing and implementing data architectures, communities need to be included to build trust and accurately reflect their real experiences without increasing vulnerabilities.
- **Often, there is relevant data already available that could be used to support effective design and implementation of DDR programming,** but more needs to be done to develop joint interventions across organizations and ensure that existing data is systematically used in humanitarian work.

SUMMARY OF THE SESSION:

GENEVA PEACE WEEK
12 YEARS

The 2020 Data Strategy of the United Nations Secretary-General for Action by Everyone, Everywhere called upon the international community to nurture **"data as a strategic asset for insight, impact and integrity**." Translating these commitments into practice remains inconsistent and inadequate, particularly in **insecure contexts with hard-to-reach populations**. This workshop, co-organised by UNIDIR, UNDP, DPO and IOM, addressed how a **data-driven approach** can be applied to support the return of conflict-affected populations and ex-associates of armed groups that are reintegrating back into civilian life.

With shifting dynamics in several contexts, the UN community may be called to provide new support or adapt current approaches to return and reintegration in places like Syria, Ukraine, Ethiopia, and Haiti. To implement the UN Secretary General's **Data Strategy** in these – and other contexts, UN organizations need to **collect better-quality data** throughout the entire programming cycle; **share it** with coordinating UN, international, national and local actors; and operationalize findings into **tailored, real-time support**. If designed from the beginning of a programming cycle, this data architecture could ensure that programmes **do no harm** and are locally informed, coordinated, efficient, and above all **impactful**.

In pursuit of data systems that serve as a **strategic asset for UN-supported reintegration efforts**, Dr. Glaucia Boyer (UNDP) opened her remarks by asking - '**whose perspectives are we collecting?**' She highlighted the importance of conducting data collection in a **locally grounded and sensitive manner**. Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (**DDR**) processes occur in highly fragile and complex contexts, in which people's individual and community level sensitivities need to be considered when designing data collection. **Communities should therefore play a key role** in defining what constitutes reintegration success, how to measure it, and what to do with the assessment findings.

Recognizing the utility of a data driven approach at all stages of planning, Sergiusz Sidorowicz (DPO) raised the importance of collecting and using **quality data** both in designing DDR processes as well as during and after implementation to **ensure accountability**. While best practices from different contexts should be applied when designing new DDR programming, **copying and pasting from one context to the next ultimately harms reintegration trajectories**. Mr. Sidorowicz also noted that on the one hand, there is often too much (**low quality**) information available and on the other hand, **specific and reliable data needed is often not available**. Addressing this gap can help improve the quality of DDR processes.

Finally, Juliana Betancourt highlighted several IOM data tools related to DDR and humanitarian work (e.g., **IOM mobility tracker, Transhumance Tracking Tool (TTT), Information Counselling and Referral Services (ICRS)**). Often, there is **relevant data already available** that could be used to support effective DDR programming, but more needs to be done to develop **joint interventions across organizations** and ensure that existing data is **systematically used in humanitarian work**. Ms. Betancourt cautioned that the UN community needs to keep in mind that in collecting and analyzing data, **communities need to be included more to build trust and accurately reflect their real experiences without increasing vulnerabilities**.

23. Drafting a Shared Compass: Co-Creating a Code of Conduct for the Responsible Use of AI in Peacebuilding

ORGANISERS: Agency for Peacebuilding (AP) , CMI – Martti Ahtisaari Peace Foundation, CyberPeace Institute

TOPIC: New Technologies, PeaceTech, Cybersecurity and Artificial Intelligence

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- **AI creates major opportunities for peacebuilding**
  AI enhances conflict analysis, enables better listening to communities, and improves decision-making through forecasting, automation, and mediator assistance tools like LLMs. These tools broaden participation and increase contextual awareness in peace processes.

- **AI also introduces significant risks that threaten peace processes**
  Vulnerabilities include cyberattacks, data exposure, model bias, cultural misinterpretation, inadequate security protocols, and potential manipulation of AI-driven platforms. These risks can undermine trust, distort negotiations, and endanger communities.

- **Cyber threats targeting peacebuilders are increasing rapidly**
  Peacebuilding organizations have experienced over 11,670 recorded cyber incidents in recent years, with a global rise of 58% in weekly cyberattacks, showing that peacebuilders are high-value targets for malicious actors leveraging AI.

- **Concrete risk scenarios show how AI can be manipulated**
  Scenarios include attackers influencing AI-mediated sentiment analysis in community consultations or using AI-powered spear-phishing to steal sensitive negotiation data—both of which threaten the integrity of peace processes.

- **Effective AI governance and capacity-building are essential**
  The workshop highlights the need for training, coordination, robust security protocols, bias mitigation, data protection, and inclusive design. Co-creating a code of conduct—or "Shared Compass"—is necessary to guide responsible AI use in peacebuilding

SUMMARY OF THE SESSION:

The session **"Drafting a Shared Compass: Co-Creating a Code of Conduct for the Responsible Use of AI in Peacebuilding"** explores both the **transformative potential** and the **serious risks** associated with integrating **AI into peacebuilding processes**. AI's expanding role requires **careful governance, shared norms**, and a multilayered understanding of its implications.

On the positive side, AI presents **three major areas of opportunity**. First, it supports *better conflict analysis* by processing vast quantities of social media, news, satellite data, and web content, enabling peacebuilders to monitor real-time dynamics and uncover emerging threats. Second, AI enhances *better listening*, allowing practitioners to engage communities more inclusively through WhatsApp bots, Pol.is, Remesh AI, and other deliberation platforms. Third, AI improves *decision-making and workflows* through forecasting tools, behavioral modeling, mediator assistants, and automated administrative support. These capabilities can widen participation and reduce barriers for marginalized voices.

However, the presentation emphasizes that **opportunities come with significant risks**. As AI tools enter peace mediation processes, the **attack surface expands**. Peace organizations already face rising levels of cyberattacks—over **11,670 documented incidents**. **AI amplifies both vulnerabilities in peacebuilding tools and the capacities of malicious actors**.

Two illustrative risk scenarios highlight these dangers. The first describes attackers **manipulating AI-driven sentiment analysis** to gather feedback from more than 1,000 participants. By tampering with dialect recognition or inserting malicious prompts, adversaries can **distort community insights, exclude marginalized groups, and disrupt negotiations**. The second scenario demonstrates how **AI-powered spear-phishing** can impersonate trusted partners, **steal sensitive negotiation data**, and **damage mediator credibility**—potentially halting delicate peace efforts.

Beyond external threats, **implementation challenges** such as a **lack of AI training, inadequate security protocols, cultural misinterpretation, biased models, and poor data protection** also pose internal risks. Without capacity-building, standards, and coordinated governance, these weaknesses can **jeopardise peacebuilding outcomes and public trust**.

The workshop showed a significant appetite for the topic from different stakeholders, from diplomats to NGO staff, from scholars to private companies.

GENEVA
PEACE
WEEK
12 YEARS

24. From Tipping Points to Turning Points: Tools for Climate, Peace and Security

ORGANISERS: Kofi Annan Foundation, Centre for Sustainable Peace and Democratic Development (SeeD), KRIS for Peace and Saferworld

TOPIC: Environment and Climate and Peace

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- In the face of polycrises linked to climate change, conflict and environmental degradation, several peacebuilding organizations, such as SeeD, Saferworld, KRIS and KAF, have developed and tested practical tools that can easily be contextually calibrated to help practitioners and researchers **make sense of complexity, develop very localized strategies and provide agency to local communities** facing these multiple threats.
- These tools have been tested in a particular context (i.e. South Sudan, Niger, Philippines), and have provided a granular understanding of how climate, peace and the environment intersect and how they **can inform early warning, early response as well as conservation and prevention strategies**. They have and can further inspire further application and adaptation in other countries.
- **Youth inclusion is not a "nice to have" but a "must have"**. Young people do care about the environment. Engaging them in climate or environmental action can be a strategic entry point for them to also participate in peacebuilding efforts.
- Mental Health, environment and security are intricately intertwined. **Interventions that seek to address the peace, climate and environment nexus need to integrate mental health both in their analyses and their solutions**.
- There is **not always a clear difference between sources of vulnerabilities and of resilience**. Some factors, like social media, can both strengthen people's ability to respond to a crisis, when used to mobilize support or flag unmet needs, and hinder it, when used to spread misinformation, fuel stigma or harassment. Other capacities and assets from empathy to trust can act as vulnerabilities and resilience factors, and thus required very nuanced, contextualised and reflective approaches.

SUMMARY OF THE SESSION:

GENEVA
PEACE WEEK
12 YEARS

The workshop started by the moderator's framing of the topic, explaining that as **climate emergencies intensify**, the question is no longer if climate change drives insecurity—but how we respond to it in a **multi-systemic and coherent way**. Therefore, this session aimed to bring together **diverse experience across contexts and themes**, with a specific focus on **tools and analysis** – particularly **community-led and youth-led approaches** – which have helped to deepen understanding and to better inform **early warning systems, and climate adaptation strategies in fragile and conflict affected settings**.

Following this introduction, participants were split into 3 groups and were introduced through a game to a **specific tool** that had been developed and tested by the organizing teams to address the **environment, climate and conflict nexus** in a particular context:

- SeeD presented its application of its **social cohesion and reconciliation index (SCORE) in Niger**, as a tool to examine the relationship between **climate stressors and recruitment into armed groups**.
- KRIS for Peace and the Kofi Annan Foundation focused on their **research framework and training curriculum on youth vulnerabilities and resilience to climate and conflict in the Philippines**.
- Saferworld shared its **Conflict Sensitivity Resource Facility** that has been used to help **conservation actors in South Sudan integrate conflict sensitive approaches** to navigate the volatile context.

Within each group, participants reflected on the method, its impact and its applicability to other contexts they were familiar with. They also discussed **intervention strategies** that could address the challenges presented in the case study. To conclude, the moderator drew contrasts, commonalities, differences, lessons from the group discussions and participants' reflections in plenary.

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25. How AI Can Power Decision-Making in Fragile Contexts: Introducing the Peace Navigator

ORGANISERS: Principles for Peace Foundation and Institute for Economics and Peace

TOPIC: New Technologies Cyber security and Artificial Intelligence

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

The Peace Navigator is a contribution to the peace ecosystem because it provides:
- **Timely Situational Awareness:** Provides decision-makers in fragile contexts with up-to-date analysis, enabling early warning and informed resource allocation.
- **Analytical Framework in line with the Principles for Peace:** Tracks 40 indicators across the Eight Principles for Peace to detect emerging vulnerabilities and guide strategic interventions.
- **Historical & Data-Driven Insights:** Leverages AI to analyze 50,000+ webpages and 29,000+ documents from 56 fragile countries, offering context-rich, evidence-based policy recommendations.

SUMMARY OF THE SESSION:

The workshop introduced the **Peace Navigator**, an **AI-powered platform** developed by the Principles for Peace Foundation to support more **effective and principled peacebuilding**. The tool enables policymakers, practitioners, and multilateral actors to move beyond fragmented data and analysis, translating complex information into **actionable, principle-aligned strategies**.

At its core, the Peace Navigator brings the **eight Principles for Peace** to life - Dignity, Solidarity, Humility, Enhancing Legitimacy, Accountable Security, Promoting Pluralism, and Adopting Subsidiarity & Hybrid Solutions - by operationalizing them through **40 rigorously validated indicators** developed in partnership with the **Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP)**. Together, these indicators provide a structured and measurable framework to assess peace dynamics and guide decision-making toward more legitimate, accountable, and sustainable pathways for peace.

Unlike traditional metrics, the Peace Navigator aggregates **multidimensional data** from a variety of trusted sources, including Gallup Analytics, V-Dem, World Bank, and Freedom House, into **principle-based scores**. These scores deliver **country-specific insights without direct comparison**, allowing nuanced understanding of local peace dynamics. Visualizations, such as radar charts and trend lines, enable users to track progress over time, identify strategic entry points, and design interventions grounded in evidence rather than

GENEVA PEACE WEEK
12 YEARS

assumptions. By translating isolated data points into a coherent, principle-driven narrative, the platform supports informed decision-making and strengthens accountability.

The **AI component of the Peace Navigator is transformative**. It integrates and analyzes both **qualitative and quantitative data at scale**, enabling a **holistic understanding** of peace and conflict dynamics. **Advanced algorithms** continuously process and synthesize vast qualitative datasets, including over 50,000 webpages and 29,000 documents from 56 fragile and conflict-affected countries spanning more than 20 years, into **actionable intelligence**. The AI system **identifies emerging trends, detects vulnerabilities, and highlights shifts in conflict dynamics in real time**. This capability empowers decision-makers with **predictive insights**, supporting early warning, strategy recalibration, and targeted resource allocation in volatile and rapidly changing contexts. The AI layer also facilitates the integration of historical, political, and social context into the analysis, ensuring that recommendations are not only data-driven but also contextually relevant.

The presentation highlighted key global trends that illustrate the platform's **strategic value** in navigating complex peace and governance environments. While improvements were observed in areas such as **personal freedoms and reductions in homicide rates**, there were notable setbacks in **press freedom, political rights, and other critical domains**. Gains in personal freedoms and public safety were often enabled by targeted security sector reforms and community-based initiatives, which reduced everyday violence and increased perceptions of safety. In contrast, the decline in press freedom and political rights signals a consolidation of executive power and shrinking civic space, raising the cost of dissent and limiting pluralistic participation. These insights underscore the Peace Navigator's dual role as both a **measurement tool and a strategic compass**, guiding investments, fostering legitimacy, and enhancing the capacity of governments, multilateral agencies, and civil society to respond effectively to emerging challenges.

After the presentation, participants were invited to test the Peace Navigator. Five working groups were formed, each focusing on a different country: **Colombia, Myanmar, Somalia, Afghanistan and Yemen**. Participants engaged with the platform, interacted with the **AI chatbot**, and assessed the tool's functionality, ultimately validating the **practical utility of the Peace Navigator** in analyzing complex peace and conflict dynamics.

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26. Locally led action on climate, peace, and stability: experiences from Latin America, the Middle East, Central and South Asia

ORGANISERS: United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), Centro Agronómico Tropical de Investigación y Enseñanza (CATIE), Scientific Information Centre of the Interstate Commission for Water Coordination of Central Asia (SIC ICWC), Reforestation Initiative (LRI), International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD)

TOPIC: Local Actors and Local Communities

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- **Climate security is deeply context-specific** and manifests differently across countries and regions
- **Locally led, nature-based approaches offer a cost-effective way to address the complex links between climate change, peace, and security,** especially in fragile and conflict-affected regions.
- **Regional cooperation and community partnerships build resilience** and help scale solutions that respond to both environmental and social challenges.
- **Empowering local actors with resources and decision-making authority** strengthens ownership and sustainability of peacebuilding outcomes.
- **The EU–UNEP Partnership supports this by linking local experience to global policy discussions** and promoting continued exchange through the new Knowledge Hub.

SUMMARY OF THE SESSION:

The session "**Locally led action on climate, peace, and stability: experiences from Latin America, the Middle East, Central and South Asia**" was organized by the **United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)** under the **EU–UNEP Partnership on Climate, Environment, Peace and Security**, together with regional partners: the Centro Agronómico Tropical de Investigación y Enseñanza (CATIE), the Scientific Information Centre of the Interstate Commission for Water Coordination of Central Asia (SIC ICWC), the Lebanon Reforestation Initiative (LRI), and the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD). The session took place online on **16 October 2025** as part of **Geneva Peace Week 2025**.

The workshop gathered **90 participants**, including **65 external attendees** and **25 speakers and event supporters**, making it one of the most actively attended sessions of the week. Each breakout room hosted 10 or more participants, creating space for **meaningful exchanges and interactive dialogue**.

The session aimed to explore how **locally led and nature-based approaches** can respond to climate and environmental risks that **threaten peace and stability**, particularly in **fragile and conflict-affected contexts**. Opening remarks from Ms. Annika Erickson-Pearson, Lead of the Community of Practice on Environment, Climate, Conflict, and Peace (ECCP), set the stage for discussions on the **role of communities and local organizations in driving climate resilience**. Dr. Adam Day, Head of the Geneva Office at the United Nations University Centre for Policy Research, presented key insights from the **Nature-based Solutions for Peace policy report (2024)**, highlighting evidence of how **ecosystem restoration and sustainable resource management can contribute to peacebuilding**. Ms. Silja Halle, Programme Manager at UNEP, introduced the EU–UNEP Partnership, emphasizing its work to **strengthen locally led initiatives that bridge climate adaptation, environmental management, and conflict prevention**.

Participants then joined **two rounds of regional breakout discussions** to exchange experiences from Latin America, the Middle East, Central Asia, and South Asia. Regional facilitators and local actors presented examples of contextualised **climate–security challenges** such as water scarcity, land degradation, deforestation, and livelihood insecurity. They also shared **community-based responses using nature-based and participatory approaches** that link environmental restoration and climate adaptation with **social cohesion and conflict prevention**. The discussions highlighted how **inclusive local governance, ecosystem restoration, and regional cooperation** can reduce tensions and build trust among communities affected by climate pressures.

During the wrap-up, facilitators summarized key takeaways from their regions, emphasizing shared challenges and opportunities to **connect local practice with national and regional policy frameworks**. Ms. Silja Halle concluded the session by linking the discussions to the broader goals of the EU–UNEP Partnership and announcing the launch of the **Knowledge Hub for Locally Led Action on Climate, Peace and Security**, a new platform designed to host resources, case studies, and tools from across the partnership.

Participants expressed **positive feedback** throughout the breakout discussions and the closing plenary session, appreciating the **diversity of regional experiences** and the opportunity to hear directly from **local actors**. The event successfully demonstrated how **local leadership, community partnerships, and collaboration across regions are essential for building resilience and promoting peace through nature-based and community-driven solutions**.

27. Negotiating across the divide: from the frontlines to the diplomatic table

ORGANISERS: Centre of Competence on Humanitarian Negotiation

TOPIC: Armed Conflict and Humanitarian Action

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- The session explored how **mediation and humanitarian negotiation intersect in complex crises.**
- How to **uphold humanitarian principles during mediation**
- How parallel **negotiation tracks can support neutrality and impartiality.**
- The strong engagement confirmed **the value of practical simulation for understanding negotiation dilemmas and bridging perspectives** from field to diplomatic levels.

SUMMARY OF THE SESSION:

On **day 4** of the Geneva Peace Week 2025, the "**Negotiating across the divide: from the frontlines to the diplomatic table**" session was moderated by Joëlle and **Martin Albani, former Head of the Peace Mediation and Dialogue Sector in the EEAS**, with a good balance of presentations, simulations and interaction.

The event attracted **strong interest with over 35 participants (45+ at peak, with some early departures due to lack of space)** in the small conference room. While **few diplomats attended**, there was solid representation from **Geneva-based institutions** such as practitioners from the **UN Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund (WPHF), GCSP and the Geneva Water Hub**, as well as researchers from the **Geneva Graduate Institute**.

Despite different levels of knowledge about peace mediation and humanitarian negotiations, the participants were **highly motivated to participate in the negotiation simulation on the cases of Yemen and Sudan**. In the debrief, participants drew helpful conclusions on key dilemmas, including **how to uphold humanitarian principles**, the sensitive question of **timing and sequencing around ceasefire agreements**, and the potential value of using **parallel tracks of negotiation** to maintain neutrality and impartiality.

GENEVA PEACE WEEK
12 YEARS

28. Peacebuilding and Civilian Protection: Lessons from Darfur and Conflict-Affected Regions in Niger

ORGANISERS: Danish Refugee Council (DRC) and Nonviolent Peaceforce

TOPIC: Armed Conflict and Humanitarian Action

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- **Protection and peacebuilding are a continuous process** – civilians don't make a distinction between PB & protection, these are false siloes, there is a need to work through the different phases of conflict
- **What contributes to peace and protection? They are fundamentally connected** – factors contributing to both peace and protection – effective programming & needs to advocate for this

SUMMARY OF THE SESSION:

Drawing on field experiences **Nonviolent Peaceforce** and **DRC** shared lessons learned from South Sudan, Sudan, Ukraine and Niger showcasing how **inclusive community structures** and **early warning mechanisms** can **strengthen local peace structures and safeguard civilians**. Both organizations highlighted their ongoing commitments to **integrating peacebuilding and civilian protection**, two areas often treated separately. The session was moderated by Lisa Müller-Dormann, Global HDP Advisor. DRC, represented by Freek Harmans, and Line Brylle, Global Peacebuilding Advisor, presented experiences of peacebuilding programming from Darfur and Niger to showcase the links between peacebuilding and protection of civilians. Non-Violent Peaceforce represented by Felicity Gray, Global Head of Policy and Advocacy, Nonviolent Peaceforce and Bakitha Steven Guet, Senior Policy and Advocacy Officer, Nonviolent Peaceforce South Sudan presented a focus on advocacy needs and experiences from their Civilian Protection work in South Sudan and Ukraine.

During the workshop, DRC shared lessons from the PREVENIR programme, funded by the Dutch Ministry in Niger and across the wider Sahel region. By working alongside **community and insider mediators**, the programme helps address both the immediate triggers of violence and the **deeper structural causes of conflict**, contributing directly to the **protection of civilians** and the creation of safer, more resilient communities.

Key lessons learned from DRC's work on Durable Solutions in Darfur further underscored the critical importance of **community-led approaches to peacebuilding**. **Effective interventions rely on existing community structures and trusted local leaders**, who often remain influential even when formal authorities or military command change. **Peacebuilding and protection are inherently linked**. Local mechanisms like Peace and Reconciliation **Committees** not only mediate conflicts to prevent violence but also identify and address

GENEVA PEACE WEEK

12 YEARS

protection concerns, **directly enhancing civilian safety**. **Engaging communities at every stage** of a project, ensures inclusivity, strengthens trust, and improves outcomes across sectors. Furthermore, ensuring **all groups, including displaced and nomadic communities, are included** is essential to maintain legitimacy and prevent tensions.

Nonviolent Peaceforce complemented these insights with their approach via **protective accompaniment in highly volatile settings**, including in South Sudan and Ukraine. They further highlighted their work at the global level in terms of **advocacy**, to enable flexibility as well as cross-temporal efforts of both protection and peacebuilding response, while supporting existing local structures and actors effectively.

The group work brought together participants and experts to assess and discuss the role of external actors in these processes, effective mechanisms for advocacy as well as ensuring **inclusion and ownership at local level**. These exchanges emphasized the need for **multi-sectoral** (including linking peacebuilding, economic recovery and mental health among others), **community-led efforts** as well as **local partnerships**.

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29. Poetry as Peace Praxis: Narratives of Hope from the Sahel

ORGANISERS: Sahel Scribes Poetry Club (SSPC), Naija Poetry Fest Community (NPF), Connected Development (CODE), Mentminds, Arewa Peace Ambassadors Forum

TOPIC: Narratives and Storytelling for Peace

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- **Poetry is a powerful nonviolent tool for healing**, identity expression, and social connection in conflict-affected communities.
- **Youth across the Sahel are actively using creative expression to process trauma,** challenge harmful narratives, and build bridges across divides.
- **Multilingual storytelling**—Hausa, Fulfulde, Kanuri, Yoruba, Igbo, Chichewa, English, and French—creates inclusive spaces where participants feel seen, heard, and valued.
- **The session demonstrated strong regional participation,** with over 100 youth exploring how creative arts can complement peacebuilding practices.
- **Breakout rooms encouraged co-creation of poems on coexistence**, justice, freedom, tolerance, and general peace.
- **The blend of panel discussions, spoken word, video exhibitions, and group writing** proved effective in engaging diverse audiences.
- **Collaboration between grassroots youth groups and international platforms** like GPP strengthens global–local dialogue on peacebuilding.

SUMMARY OF THE SESSION:

The session **"Poetry as Peace Praxis: Narratives of Hope from the Sahel"** brought together young poets, **peace advocates**, and creatives from across Nigeria, the Sahel region, and other African countries to explore how **storytelling** can support **peacebuilding** and **community resilience**. The workshop highlighted the role of **poetry** as both an emotional outlet and a **strategic tool for fostering understanding** in conflict-affected contexts.

The session opened with welcoming remarks and an insightful introductory message by **Sahel Scribes Founder and President Abdulmalik Yahya**, emphasizing that in the Sahel where conflict, displacement, and climate stress shape daily realities, **creative expression has become a quiet but powerful form of resistance**. Poetry, as framed by the organisers, functions as **memory, healing, and activism** all at once. Then a spoken word performance in Hausa and English, by Sajuda Mahmud, set the emotional tone and grounded the audience in lived realities from the region.

The panel discussion featured a teen parliamentarian, Hon. Safiya Alkali Ajikolo and Godson Osarenren, Lead Convener, Naija Poetry Fest, who shared experiences on how **storytelling promotes peace at the grassroots level**. They explained how poetry helps young people **confront trauma, challenge negative stereotypes, and reclaim agency** in environments where their voices are often ignored. The importance of **multilingual expression** was strongly emphasised, with reflection on how **indigenous languages preserve identity and deepen community connection**.

A short video exhibition in Yoruba and English, titled "Peace Like a River" followed, reinforcing themes of **hope and emotional resilience**. Participants were then divided into four breakout rooms focusing on:

- **Coexistence and Understanding**
- **General Peace**
- **Tolerance**
- **Justice**

Each breakout room, facilitated by experienced poets and peacebuilders, guided participants through the **co-creation of 50 peace poems** around these selected themes. This hands-on segment encouraged collaboration and allowed youth from different regions to share personal stories and cultural perspectives, coming up with a **manuscript**.

Returning to the main room, the second video "Canvas of Freedom" was screened. An **open mic session** followed, where participants presented their freshly written poems alongside other personal pieces. The open mic reflected the **linguistic and cultural diversity of the Sahel**, with performances delivered in English, Hausa, and Arabic.

The session concluded with closing reflections highlighting how **creative expression can be integrated into peace education, community dialogue, and youth engagement programmes**. Participants were encouraged to continue writing, sharing, and using their voices to **build bridges** in their communities.

Overall, the workshop demonstrated how **poetry can transform pain into purpose and conversation into connection**. It affirmed that young people across the Sahel are not passive observers of conflict but **active creators of hope and peace**. The collaborative nature of the event—supported by both local organisations and the **Geneva Peacebuilding Platform**—positioned storytelling as a **vital component of inclusive, youth-driven peacebuilding**.

GENEVA PEACE WEEK

12 YEARS

30. Practical, Nonviolent Approaches to Interrupting Violence

ORGANISERS: Nonviolent Peaceforce

TOPIC: Armed conflict civilian protection and humanitarian action

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- **Unarmed Civilian Protection (UCP) shifts the security paradigm from protection through force** to mutual protection grounded in nonviolence, presence, and relationship-building.
- **Engaging directly with field practitioners from Iraq and South Sudan allowed participants to connect theory with real-world experiences**, which deepened understanding of how UCP methods are applied in active conflict zones.
- **Active learning through group exercises and case studies helped participants explore practical ways to interrupt cycles of violence** and create safer spaces for civilians.
- **Peace can be built through human connection and collective courage, and nonviolent strategies** such as UCP remain essential for transforming conflict and sustaining long-term protection efforts.

SUMMARY OF THE SESSION:

Our workshop focused on practical, **nonviolent methods** to interrupt cycles of violence through **Unarmed Civilian Protection (UCP)**. We brought together colleagues from our country offices, along with **Community Protection Team members** from Iraq and South Sudan, with the intention of providing a space for participants to engage directly with **practitioners implementing UCP strategies** on the ground. The small conference room was packed with groups of people sitting on the floor between the tables, most of them staying throughout the workshop, which demonstrated the interest people had in the topic.

The workshop was moderated by NP's Global Head of Programming, Huibert Oldenhuis, who began by explaining UCP as a methodology that shifts the security paradigm from force protection, which relies on the use or threat of force, to **mutual protection**, which focuses on creating safety through **nonviolence, proximity, engagement, relationships, and acceptance**. Participants were then given two prompts for discussion: one on the use of nonviolence as a way of addressing modern conflict, and another on balancing the risks faced by communities in conflict with the discomfort experienced by UCP practitioners. The prompts immediately sparked a lively debate among participants about the role of nonviolence and the levels of risks that peace practitioners should lean into or not.

This initial discussion helped participants reflect on their own understanding of nonviolence as well as divergent opinions within the group, which in turn allowed our moderator to introduce the **core components of UCP**. Each participant received a sheet outlining **UCP methods, objectives, principles, and stages**, illustrating how it serves as a **proactive approach to**

GENEVA PEACE WEEK

12 YEARS

interrupting cycles of violence and creating safer spaces for civilians affected by conflict.

Participants were then divided into small groups. Each group received playing cards featuring the **six UCP methods** presented, and they were asked to apply them to **two real-world case studies**, one based on experiences from Iraq and the other from South Sudan. They discussed how they would implement UCP to interrupt violence and strengthen the security of civilians. This activity offered a unique opportunity for participants to engage directly with our **community team members**, who joined each group to share how they navigated these situations in real life, explaining the methods they used and the reasoning behind them.

After the group work, the discussion opened up to the wider room. NP's field practitioners shared their **personal experiences and insights**, answering questions from participants. Their testimonies reflected the **courage and commitment of local civilians who protect their communities without weapons**, relying instead on **solidarity, communication, and mutual respect**. Bringing these voices directly to Geneva was incredibly important and while there is a lot of talk in the peacebuilding and humanitarian community to centre the voices of communities, this is often not followed through in reality or efforts are given up after encountering hurdles; interpretation was provided throughout to ensure **accessibility and facilitate meaningful dialogue**.

Ultimately, the session reinforced a powerful message carried by the work of NP: **peace can be built through human connection, courage, and cooperation**. **Nonviolent strategies are not only possible but essential** for transforming the dynamics of conflict and protecting lives, even in the most challenging environments. The session concluded with an invitation for participants to continue their learning through **NP's UCP Academy and Changemakers Project**, both of which were launched on the day. Various people approached NP staff after the session with additional questions or sharing positive feedback.

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31. Reclaiming Identity; a pivotal stage in continued reconciliation for fractured communities.

GENEVA PEACE WEEK
12 YEARS

ORGANISERS: World Evangelical Alliance (WEA), Peace and Reconciliation Network (PRN), Musalaha – A Vision of Reconciliation, Healing Hearts Transforming Nations , ONE Coaching & Conflict Management, Kuki Inpi Manipur (KIM)

TOPIC: Confidence Mediation and Trust Building

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- **Reclaiming Identity is a decisive moment in reconciliation,** requiring intentional engagement and narrative transformation.
- **Real-life case studies provided tangible examples** of how reconciliation can be pursued in diverse conflict and post-conflict contexts.
- **Faith-based approaches offer unique and powerful tools for healing** and transformation, and faith-based participants were inspired for their own work.

Participant Reflections:

- **Many found the workshop inspiring due to the real-life cases** and the participatory format.
- Several noted that unlike other sessions which felt like lectures or seminars, **the workshop offered real-life solutions and scenarios.**
- **The integration of a faith-based focus was especially appreciated**, as it added depth and relevance to the reconciliation process.

Commitments and Follow-Up:

- **Participants expressed interest in applying identity-based reconciliation methods** in their own communities.
- **Plans were initiated for future collaboration** with Musalaha and certain workshop participants.
- **Certain individuals have also begun to work with the Peace and Reconciliation** Network based on their past and current work in Kosovo with post-conflict peacebuilding and trauma healing issues.

SUMMARY OF THE SESSION:

Structure of the Workshop:
The workshop was designed to be **interactive**, balancing **presentations** with **group work** and **facilitated discussions**. It included:

- Introductory presentations on Musalaha's **reconciliation stages**
- **Expert testimony** via video from Healing Hearts Transforming Nations (**HHTN**)
- **Group strategy sessions** using **real-world case studies**
- Sharing of actual **methodologies** and **outcomes** from **conflict zones**

Key Topics and Themes Discussed:

- The concept and significance of **Reclaiming of Identity** in **reconciliation**
- **Identificational confession** as a **transformative tool**
- Case studies from **Manipur (India), South Africa, and Israel**
- The role of **narrative, memory, and choice** in **identity transformation**

Innovative Methods and Approaches Used:

- Use of **expert video testimony** to demonstrate **lived experience** and **methodology**
- **Group strategizing** based on **real-life conflict scenarios**
- **Comparative analysis** between participant strategies and **actual outcomes**
- **Integration** of **faith-based** and **communal healing practices**

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32. Taking the law out of the books: Simulation on respect for IHL as a tool for peace negotiation

ORGANISERS: Jean Pictet Competition, ICRC

TOPIC: Armed conflict civilian protection and humanitarian action

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- The simulation inspired by the Jean Pictet Competition explored the role of **IHL in peace negotiations**.
- The exercise fostered **collaborative dialogue** and produced **high-quality outcomes** in a short time.
- It generated strong **interest in this type of learning exercise**, including among executive-level professionals.
- A presentation by the Centre of Competence on Humanitarian Negotiation enriched the event, highlighting the value of **negotiation expertise**.

SUMMARY OF THE SESSION:

As part of **Geneva Peace Week**, a **dynamic simulation exercise** was held to explore the role of **IHL in peace negotiations**. Inspired by the **Jean Pictet Competition**, the event brought together 22 participants from diverse backgrounds, filling the room to capacity and reflecting strong interest in the intersection of **law and diplomacy**.

The event started with a presentation of the Jean Pictet Competition, by Marie-Louise Tougas, member of the CCJP and ICRC legal Advisor, followed by a presentation the pedagogical demarche behind the Jean Pictet Competition, by Pr Xavier Philipe, Sorbonne Université, and the methodology, principle and challenges of **humanitarian negotiations**, by Hala El Khoury, from the **Center of Competence on Humanitarian Negotiation**.

The **simulation** was built around a fictional preparatory meeting for **peace negotiations** between two belligerent states. Four entities were represented: the two states in conflict, a **humanitarian organization**, and a **regional organization**. Participants were divided into four groups and received tailored instructions, including four agenda items each party wished to promote—one of which was shared with another group. After 20 minutes of internal preparation, the negotiation phase began, facilitated under the auspices of Switzerland, with the goal of agreeing on a **common agenda of four to six items**.

Despite the diversity of profiles and the fact that most participants had not met before, the exercise was conducted with **professionalism and seriousness**. The quality of the arguments presented and the **collaborative spirit** demonstrated were particularly noteworthy. Participants engaged deeply with the legal and political dimensions of peace negotiations, highlighting the **relevance of IHL** in shaping outcomes that respect **humanitarian principles**.

In conclusion, the simulation proved to be both **engaging and impactful**. It demonstrated the value of **experiential learning** in promoting understanding of **IHL and its application in peace processes**.

33. Time to Speak! Civil Society Voices for Peace at the Second World Summit for Social Development

ORGANISERS: United National Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD), Society and Culture Interdisciplinary Research Spotlight, University of Warwick, Warwick Interdisciplinary Research Centre for International Development, University of Warwick (WICID)

TOPIC: Human Rights

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- **A clear need emerged to account for different views** and contexts when designing sensitisation campaigns and lobbying.

- **This is essential to ensure that civil society voices are heard** at the Second World Summit for Social Development and beyond.
- Participants agreed that: **It is time for civil society to speak**, and to do so in ways **that recognise inequality, power, and the collective agenda for social development for all.**

SUMMARY OF THE SESSION:

Taking place shortly before the **Second World Summit for Social Development**, we took time in this workshop to reflect on the intersection between **peace and social development**. Both the **Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development**, made in 1995 following the First World Summit on Social Development, and the **Doha Political Declaration**, made in the run up to the WSSD2, acknowledge that **social development cannot be achieved without peace and vice versa**. In this policy context UNRISD's working paper **Inclusive Peace for Social Development: Priority Areas for the Second World Summit for Social Development**, launched at the GPW25, argues for an **inclusive approach to peace** in order to achieve socio-economic development which enhances wellbeing for all.

At the workshop we heard from two of the early career co-authors, Denise who spoke about **education and gender in Latin America and the Caribbean**, and Marianne Antunes de Oliveira who spoke about **women's participation in peacebuilding in Brazil**. Following the two presentations, the workshop participants – from academia, civil society and multilateral institutions – selected two focus themes: **women and security**; **youth engagement and empowerment**. The participants together brainstormed key progress indicators, key stakeholders, and key ways to hold decision-makers to account.

During the discussions about **women and security** the workshop participants highlighted the need for **targeted sensitisation and education campaigns**, the need for **coalition building** in the wider population, and the need for **frequent high-level lobbying** to philanthropists, donors and governments. During the discussions about **youth engagement and empowerment** the workshop participants highlighted the importance of **youth in leadership and decision-making roles**, the need for **mentoring and mental health support**, the importance of **transparency for accountability**, and the need to **reach communities and families beyond youth representatives**.

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34. Youth at the Negotiating Table: A Decade After UNSCR 2250 - Advancing Meaningful Inclusion in Peace and Security

ORGANISERS: Global Youth Caucus on SDG16 (SDG16 GYC), Migration Youth and Children Platform (MYCP), and the Major Group for Children and Youth (MGCY), International Association of Youth and Students for Peace (IAYSP) and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

TOPIC: Children and Youth

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- **Institutionalize youth participation** across peace mediation processes through formal and sustained mechanisms, including advisory functions, consultative platforms, and representation within negotiation and implementation structures.
- **Advance meaningful rather than symbolic inclusion**, ensuring that youth contributions inform agenda-setting, decision-making, and monitoring throughout the peace continuum.

GENEVA **PEACE** WEEK

12 YEARS

- **Integrate displacement and mobility dimensions** into peacebuilding strategies by recognising the agency, expertise, and lived experiences of displaced youth as essential to conflict prevention, social cohesion, and durable peace.
- **Promote intergenerational and cross-sectoral dialogue** to strengthen the interface between mediators, policymakers, and youth peacebuilders, fostering trust, accountability, and shared ownership of peace outcomes.
- **Employ simulation-based and experiential learning methodologies** to analyse negotiation dynamics, identify entry points for youth engagement, and generate context-sensitive recommendations.
- **Ensure continuity and follow-up mechanisms** that translate youth engagement into institutional commitments and reinforce the implementation of the Youth, Peace and Security agenda at local, national, and international levels.

SUMMARY OF THE SESSION:

This workshop brought together over twenty participants, including students, UN representatives, government officials, and INGO delegates. It explored how displaced and conflict-affected **youth meaningfully engage in peace mediation processes**. Moderated by Ejona Icka (IAYSP), the session opened by framing the **Youth, Peace and Security (YPS) Agenda** (UNSCR 2250 (2015)). The agenda recognizes young people as **essential partners in sustaining peace**, underlining that they are not only beneficiaries but **active contributors**. It also emphasizes that **meaningful partnerships** ensure that all stages of peace processes, from mediation to implementation, reflect **youth perspectives**.

The introduction contextualized the YPS framework while highlighting that **youth participation in peace processes remains limited** a decade later. **Structural barriers persist**, and many youth—especially those affected by **migration and displacement**—remain **symbolically rather than substantively engaged**, or excluded entirely from decision-making spaces. **Forced displacement** is not only a humanitarian concern but a **sociopolitical factor** that influences the success of reconciliation. Engaging **displaced youth in mediation and dialogue** grounds peace efforts in the **lived realities of affected communities**, strengthening outcomes' legitimacy and durability.

Speakers Marisa Leon Gomez Sonet from Refugees Seeking Equal Access at the Table (**RSEAT**), Mariyum Areeb Amjad from **HIVE Pakistan**, and Joost van der Zwan from **UNDP** shared how **youth inclusion can transform peacebuilding practice**. They underlined how **genuine inclusion enhances legitimacy, fosters dialogue, and supports prevention and resilience**. Marisa highlighted the need for **institutional frameworks** that embed **refugee and displaced youth** within **formal decision-making processes**, drawing on R-SEAT's experience in designing **structured participation models** with states and multilateral partners. Mariyum emphasized the central role of **youth as peacebuilders within their own communities**, describing how **youth-led and decolonial approaches** transform social divisions, rebuild trust and strengthen inclusion from the ground up by integrating intersectionality, interfaith dialogue and indigenous resilience. Joost reflected on UNDP's experience in promoting **youth participation in governance and peacebuilding**, noting that **systematic engagement of young people reinforces prevention, strengthens social cohesion, and contributes to more sustainable and nationally owned peace processes**.

GENEVA
PEACE
WEEK
12 YEARS

Participants then engaged in a **simulation exercise** set in a fictional country affected by protracted conflict, displacement, and fragile negotiations. Working in groups, they role-played government representatives, mediators, civil society actors, and youth delegates to identify **strategies for integrating youth perspectives into a national peace process**. The discussions revealed tensions between **urgency and inclusivity** and the influence of **power dynamics on youth engagement**. Despite these challenges, participants converged on several strategies: creating **youth negotiator roles** to accelerate dialogue, establishing **youth-led monitoring bodies**, ensuring **displaced youth representation in advisory structures**, and promoting reintegration through education, skills development, and employment.

The session concluded with a collective call to move from **advocacy to implementation** within the YPS agenda. Participants emphasized that achieving **meaningful inclusion requires institutional transformation and sustained political commitment**. Advancing the YPS framework in **displacement-affected contexts** demands stronger linkages between **peacebuilding, mediation, and migration**, ensuring that **youth engagement is context-specific and structurally anchored**. The session reaffirmed that **displaced youth are not peripheral voices but essential actors in shaping, negotiating, and sustaining peace**.

GENEVA PEACE WEEK
12 YEARS

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