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UN Secretary-General Endorses Peacebuilding Fund's Peacebuilding Priority Plan (PPP) for Sri Lanka in Meeting with Country's President (UN Peacebuilding Support Office, 2016)

Shifting perspectives for peace: Citizen inclusion in Asia and the Pacific

In April 2016, our Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific and the UNV Field Unit in Sri Lanka joined the UN Country Team to work with the UN Peacebuilding Support Office and the Government of Sri Lanka to develop and coordinate the implementation of the Peacebuilding Priority Plan (PPP). □ □ □

On this **International Day of Peace** we celebrate the [Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs) as the "Building Blocks for Peace".

The SDGs were unanimously adopted by the 193 Member States of the United Nations on September 25, 2015, marking the development roadmap for the next 15 years. These goals are vital to achieving peace in our time, as development and peace are interdependent and mutually reinforcing and therefore must be addressed simultaneously.

Unfortunately, it has been a tumultuous year for "peace". We have witnessed grave acts of

violent extremism around the world, the horrors of the continued Syrian crisis and the largest refugee emergency since World War II, as well as the depressing increase of rhetoric set to divide communities along racial and religious lines.

However, since the adoption of the SDGs, we have also seen hope in the emergence of new perspectives and commitments to peace, with the UN sustaining a system-wide effort to effectively integrate sustainable peace perspectives in peace and development programmes and policies at country, regional and global levels.

First, in September 2015, peace was explicitly included into the Sustainable Development Agenda with Goal 16, aiming towards “peaceful and inclusive societies”. This finally framed peace as a valuable, measurable and reachable goal.

In October 2015, a landmark [Security Council resolution](#) on women, peace and security reaffirmed and strengthened the understanding of the substantive contribution and connection between women’s participation and inclusion and a lasting peace and security.

Then, in December 2015 the UN Security Council unanimously adopted [another resolution](#) which recognizes the key role young women and men play in safeguarding international peace and security, and calls upon Member States to set up the necessary mechanisms to create an enabling environment for young people to contribute to the resolution of conflicts and the prevention of radicalization.

Finally, at the end of April 2016, the Secretary-General’s call for a radical strategic shift from a culture of reaction to a culture of prevention is captured in the [resolution for Sustainable Peace](#).

These resolutions specifically show the importance of the inclusion of **all citizens** in peace-driven activities. The mandate of the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme is oriented towards the engagement of citizens in societal transformations and reconciliation, both crucial for the creation of peaceful and inclusive societies.

For example, volunteerism improves cooperation, dialogue and community participation, which makes it an indispensable tool in preventing conflict and violent extremism, and thus to build peace. As the UNV Regional Peace and Citizen Security Programme Specialist for Asia and the Pacific, one of my tasks is to develop and promote citizen engagement in peace and security in the region.

As an example, in April 2016, our Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific and the UNV Field Unit in Sri Lanka joined the UN Country Team to work with the UN Peacebuilding Support Office and the Government of Sri Lanka to develop and coordinate the implementation of the [Peacebuilding Priority Plan \(PPP\)](#).

The PPP is an important document in Sri Lanka’s post-conflict journey. It sets the tone and

guides programming and policy focus for the next three years. Citizens' participation takes up an important part of this plan, which includes the need to create dialogues at every level to build consensus on policies of reconciliation, as well as to mediate tensions.

The SDGs are designed to 'leave no one behind'. The very nature of volunteerism is a vehicle for all generations to participate in their own development, strengthen social cohesion and build trust within communities. By promoting individual and collective action, sustainable peace and development becomes not only for people, but led by people.

Not long ago I read a quote from an unknown author that stated: "Why do we only rest in peace? Why don't we live in peace too?" The time to shift our perspectives around peace is now. Peace is not only a destination but an action. Citizens, their communities and governments, country to country, regional bodies to global bodies, all stakeholders are called to engage in Sustainable Peace for Development. The SDGs mark the path, it is up to us to get there.

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Sustainable Development Goal: [SDG 17: Partnerships for the goals](#)