



International liaison, dialogue and research

Reg no: 2006/020285/08

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No. 4/2015

Peace and Security in the Post-2015 Development Agenda:



Progress and Prospects?

*By Showers Mawowa**

18 March 2015

Though the connection between peace and development is commonly acknowledged, the inclusion of peace and security in the emerging post-2015 development framework has been one of most contested propositions. The consensus around 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 targets including Goal 16 on “peaceful and inclusive societies” and provision of “access to justice” by the Open Working Group (OWG) of the UN General Assembly (UNGA) on the 29th of July 2014 and the subsequent endorsement of the SDGs by the UN Secretary General’s Synthesis Report of 4 December 2014, is a remarkable achievement for advocates of peace and justice issues in the post-2015 development framework. Within this context and in light of the ongoing marathon negotiations leading to the September 2015 UNGA meant to adopt a post-2015 development framework, this article reflects on progress and prospects towards the inclusion of peace and security goals and targets and implications beyond 2015.

Consensus on Peace and Security

There is consensus about the role of peace as *sine qua non* for human development. In 2013, while contributing to the 68th UNGA General debate, *The post-2015 Setting the Stage*, South Africa's president Mr Jacob Zuma said, "Development and security are two sides of the same coin. The best way to ensure both is through governance and the promotion of democratic values in all society". Two of the most influential input documents into the Post-2015 development agenda namely *Common African Position (CAP) on Post-2015 Development Agenda* and the *UN Secretary General High Level Panel Report on Post-2015 Development Agenda*, identify peace and security as one of the central must include elements for transformative post-2015 development framework. The *My World Survey*, to gather people's views on post-2015 identified "protection against crime and violence" among the top ten priorities of people surveyed worldwide.

This consensus is hardly surprising - "all seven of the countries which are unlikely to meet a single MDG by 2015 are countries that have been affected by high levels of violence"¹. However, in spite of this consensus, how peace and security issues should be framed in the post-2015 development framework has been subject to serious debate. Several concerns have been expressed.

So what were the concerns?

While peace and security matter, other states have raised concerns about bringing peace and security issues at the centre of a purely developmental discussion. Developing countries especially, have raised fear of securitizing development, encroachment of sovereignty and the possible use of peace as conditionality for development aid. Will funding for a peace and security goal compete with other goals for development finance? The intentions and sincerity of Europeans and other developed countries seen as the major proponent of the peace and security goal² has been questioned in light of their unwillingness to openly discuss global governance deficit and the global peace and security architecture³.

A major challenge in including peace and security has been scepticism about the measurability of peace. In order to monitor and evaluate progress, some have argued, all goals and targets must pass the technical test of measurability. For the South African government, though peace was accepted as important to development, this did not necessarily translate into a position in support of a goal on peace. "... the link is there and it is an important enabler. Issues related to rule of law, governance, peace and security, these are important enablers for the attainment of development. But how do they translate into goals and targets?"⁴

Of course, there are plausible arguments for and against a rigid insistence on measurability. Over fixation with measurability risks undermining the aspirational thrust of a global development framework by limiting goals and targets to only that which can be measured. Yet measurability is necessary to gauge progress.

Progress for Peace and Security in the post-2015 Agenda

Notwithstanding these concerns, the OWG after some painstaking negotiations managed to come up with SDGs that include a goal on peace and access to justice. This owed both to the momentum created by the

¹ OECD (2014) *Fragile States 2014: Domestic Revenue Mobilisation in Fragile States* OECD: Paris p 17, cited in AU, UNDP and Saferworld Briefing Paper,

Africa and the post-2015 development framework, Background note for the conference "Towards Regional and National Statistical Capacities for Measuring Peace, Rule of Law and Governance: An Agenda for the Post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals Framework" (Addis Ababa, 11-12 June 2014)

² Notes from the OWG 13 Feedback Webinar, July 29, 2014, by

³ Sunil Suri, SDGs, Why, What and How?, 2015 Primer, Global Governance.

⁴ Anonymous Official from the SA Government, October 2014.

UN Panel, CAP, extensive and relentless lobbying by civil society and some member states. Goal 16 states, “Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels”⁵.

To some extent the language in these goals and associated targets reflects an attempt to address the concerns about securitization of development. The Secretary General’s Synthesis report by and large endorsed the SDGs and underscored the need for the new framework to promote a broad, preventive, positive vision of peace founded on reduced violence, public safety, fair access to justice, livelihoods, resources and services, voice and participation, and anticorruption⁶. There is therefore strong momentum in support of the inclusion of peace and security in the emerging agenda.

The scepticism about measuring peace is now challenged by the existence and continuous development of many subjective and objective indicators to measure peace and governance issues. An example of this is the work being done by the Strategy for the Harmonization of Statistics in Africa (SHaSA), an AU initiative involving statisticians from several African countries.

Looking ahead, it is generally accepted that while the inclusion of strong language on justice, peace and governance in the OWG SDGs and the SG synthesis reports are significant, political obstacles lie ahead of the road to the UN Summit in September 2015.

Prospects for Adoption and Implementation of Goal 16

Since the UN stocktaking meeting in September 2014 resolved to adopt the SDGs report as the main document, there have been strong views among member states about the status of the SDGs. On one hand, the G77 countries have spoken strongly in favour of retaining all the 17 goals and 169 targets. This is a position that the Africa group in the UN has associated itself with⁷. On the other hand, some countries have argued for the opening of the discussion, with an extreme but minority view going as far as calling for reviewing of some goals and targets, while a sizable number have argued for the document to be subjected to technical proofing. In spite of these differing views, the weight of momentum suggests that SDGs will be retained as currently proposed in the OWG draft.

Countries such as South Africa, India and Brazil have been more willing to align themselves with the common G77 plus China and Africa position in spite of earlier reservations about including peace and security in the post-2015 development agenda. South Africa in particular has warned against opening the SDGs discussion arguing that this will jeopardise the delicate political compromises made during the SDG negotiations.⁸

It is against this backdrop that Goal 16, precarious as it was during negotiations is now almost set to make it into the post-2015 development framework. How this will relate to the existing global peace and security architecture is still unfolding. On their part, the post-2015 co-chairs namely Kenya and Ireland have made known intentions to host a discussion on the implications of the post-2015 development agenda for the UN system and its institutions, a signal that global governance and UN reform are still nagging questions. It is worth noting that the year 2015 is a watershed year, not only for the global development agenda, but equally important it coincides with the Peace Keeping Review and Review of the Peace Building Fund. It is the UN’s 70th year anniversary and there is pressure to see progress for UN reform.

⁵ Open Working Group Proposal for Sustainable Development Goals: Full report of the Open Working Group of the General Assembly on Sustainable Development Goals is issued as document A/68/970, available at <http://undocs.org/A/68/970>

⁶ UN Secretary General’s Synthesis Report, Paragraphs 31, 50, 52, 54, 78.

⁷ Statement on Post-2015 Issued by Zimbabwe on Behalf of the Africa Group, January 2015.

⁸ SA Government Official, January 2015

Conclusion

The inclusion of a goal on peace, security and justice, though significant, is only the first step. Global development must not only be sensitized to the challenges of attaining development in fragile and conflict situations but save as a modality for reducing conflict, by being deliberate about creating more equal and inclusive societies. With discussion moving towards implementation and domestication, there are questions about how binding will the post-2015 development framework be. There is an understandable degree of phobia for developmental universalism traceable to the hard lessons learned from the dismal outcomes of the one-size-fits-all approaches of yesteryear. But how can we avoid swinging from one dangerous extreme to another?

Accountability, monitoring and evaluation are important and the essence of a global development framework meaning that states will have to account to both domestic constituencies and to global peers and institutions. The UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) seen by some as having the global legitimacy to drive accountability, monitoring and evaluation at global level is currently under-resourced and under-capacitated. It is unlikely that the post-2015 framework will include anything close to the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), which despite its weaknesses is perhaps the most ambitious interstate mechanism for reporting and accounting on shared development objectives.

In the event of a nonbinding framework and where states maintain the discretion (rightfully so) to choose national priorities, what will they account for and to whom and what does that mean for the fragile peace and security agenda? While it is important for states to come up with priorities most relevant to their context, how can this be reconciled with the aspiration for an ambitious and universal global development framework? In essence, will or can goal 16 be universalized?



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**SALO would like to thank
the Southern African Trust and UK aid for their direct support**



and the Royal Norwegian Embassy, Pretoria; Irish Aid and the Embassy of Ireland, Pretoria; The European Union; The Olof Palme International Centre; and OSISA, among others, for their ongoing support of our Policy Dialogue Series.

