



# SDG 16 CONFERENCE

## Peace, Justice & Inclusive Societies



# SDG 16 as a compass for navigating intersecting crises

30 May – 1 June 2023 | Rome, Italy

## The Conference

The 2023 SDG 16 Conference addressed the role of SDG 16 in navigating the intersecting crises the world is facing and helping to achieve peace and sustainable development. It brought together a range of panelists and participants, including ministers and senior government officials, heads of United Nations system entities and other multilateral organizations, and representatives of civil society, youth, academia, the judiciary, and media to address the following themes:

- Promoting the United Nations' New Agenda for Peace;
- Restoring trust in public institutions; and
- Promoting participatory decision making to accelerate transformative action: food systems and climate change.

## Key messages

Across the three themes addressed by the conference, speakers and participants highlighted the following insights on SDG 16's catalytic effect in addressing some of the most significant crises facing the world today and helping to achieve peace and sustainable development.

- SDG 16 is both a standalone goal and an enabler and accelerator of all other SDGs. It is at the heart of what makes the 2030 Agenda transformative, and it can play a vital role in addressing multiple global crises including conflict, lack of trust in public institutions and climate change. The causes and effects of these crises – and the actions needed to address them – are interconnected and deeply rooted in issues of human rights, justice, equity, inclusion, accountability, and good governance.
- SDG 16 can help build a future where violent conflicts are prevented rather than managed, and where resources are invested in development rather than destruction. Participants called for proactive investment in addressing root causes of conflicts such as inequality, injustice and exclusion; ensuring the participation of women, young people, Indigenous Peoples and other excluded groups in peace processes; and promoting multistakeholder partnerships for conflict prevention, resolution and reconciliation at local, national, regional and international levels.



**United Nations**

Department of  
Economic and  
Social Affairs



Creating a Culture of Justice  
International Development Law Organization



Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
and International Cooperation

- Restoring trust in public institutions is a prerequisite for renewed social contracts that underpin inclusive and sustainable societies. Participants emphasized the need to enhance the capacity of public institutions to deliver responsive and inclusive services to all. This requires investing in the public sector, building the capacity and skills of public servants and empowering citizens and communities to exercise their rights.
- Transparency and accountability are of the utmost importance to ensure that public resources are effectively spent. Participants noted that fiscal transparency has proven positive effects on budget credibility, the capacity of governments to access finance, the effectiveness of public services and their responsiveness to people's needs.
- Harnessing the "missing funds" stemming from illicit financial flows will be critical for implementing the SDGs. Participants shared that combatting corruption at national and international levels, including by building on existing instruments such as the UN Convention Against Corruption, is critical to ensure that public resources are effectively spent, including in the context additional financing for sustainable development.
- Strengthening the rule of law and access to justice can catalyse progress across the 2030 Agenda. Participants considered that this will require transitioning to people-centred approaches that emphasize better use of data and evidence, innovating service delivery, and utilizing diverse pathways to justice with a focus on improved outcomes for the end users. Empowering people and communities to claim their rights and participate in policymaking can generate transformative actions such as strengthening land governance, increasing food security, preventing environmental degradation, and climate justice. Fair and effective policies and mechanisms are needed to balance the interests of current and future generations.
- Women's equality and empowerment is both a human right and a prerequisite for peace and sustainable development. Participants underlined that action at many levels is urgently needed to repeal gender-discriminatory laws; to increase women's representation in all institutions, from company boards to parliaments and judiciaries, and from higher education to public institutions; to advance women's economic participation and inclusion, through special measures, economic empowerment, access to finance, and social protection; and to devote the planning and resources required to stop violence against women.
- The scale, complexity and interconnectedness of challenges necessitates multidimensional, "whole of government" solutions. This requires better use of official and unofficial sources of data and evidence, strengthened future planning and increased policy coordination and coherence across all 17 SDGs. Participants observed that national efforts are needed to better monitor all relevant aspects of SDG 16, from budget credibility to the inclusiveness of public institutions to corruption to access to justice. Efforts to develop futures thinking work best if they are embedded in governments' regular ways of working, as this helps mobilize political will and increase ownership. While led by the center of government, planning should empower all parts of government departments to create ownership and buy-in.
- The inclusive use of digital technologies can drive transformative change. Participants highlighted that priority must be given to developing digital literacy, building critical digital infrastructure and people-centered digital services, while urgently addressing risks to privacy, freedom of expression, discrimination and human rights. These issues should be considered by the intergovernmental process to elaborate a Global Digital Compact.
- Changing the trajectory of SDG 16, and ultimately the 2030 Agenda, requires urgent collective action on a global level. Participants concluded that multistakeholder partnerships among governments, multilateral institutions, the private sector, civil society and other stakeholders are needed to generate political will and financial support and convert it into concrete actions. The inclusion, contribution and leadership of women and young people and right holders such as Indigenous Peoples are critical and must be supported through dedicated measures. By engaging with diverse stakeholders as partners, governments can foster "whole of society" approaches that prioritize shared goals, collective problem-solving, and mutual accountability and help lay the foundations for a more peaceful, just and sustainable future.

