

## SDG 16 Conference

### Plenary Session 3.2: “SDG 16 as a framework for moving the 2030 Agenda forward: key national and international actions needed to tackle global challenges

#### Intervento Amb. Stefano Stefanile

- Thank you and warm greetings to all from New York. I am very pleased to be part of this discussion and I will try to bring to the table the perspective of a Permanent Mission that participates, almost on a daily basis, in debates and initiatives related to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs. I will also try to take into account, as much as, possible the guiding questions that the organizers provided to the panelists.

*(How can progress on SDG 16 help tackle global challenges and accelerate the **realization of the 2030 Agenda?**)*

- The first of these guiding questions has to do with the **catalytic function of SDG16 vis-a-vis the other SDGs** and the overall implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Even though there is a tendency to consider each of the SDGs particularly important and overarching, one can safely say that SDG16 is indeed among the **most encompassing, pivotal and enabling SDG** of the entire 2030 Agenda.
- To prove this point, I tried to decompose and analyse the formulation of SDG16, not the concise version that is normally used (*peace, justice and strong institutions*), but the extended one that appears in the 2030 Agenda.
- The reason why I embarked in this exercise is that I have been lucky to be at the Rio+20 Conference in 2012 and then in New York in the

following years during the negotiations on the SDGs and I remember the extreme care and attention that was being put, at that time, into the formulation of each of the SDGs. Every single word was carefully pondered and scrutinized, as everybody knew it would have impacted on the perimeter and future implementation of each SDG.

SDG16 is about: *1) promoting peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, 2) providing access to justice for all and 3) building effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.*

If you look at each of these segments, you get a clear idea of the **particularly wide spectrum of issues** that are raised under this formulation and a sense of the **numerous interrelations** existing with the other SDGs.

**Peaceful and inclusive societies** evokes a number of crucial topics: reduction of international and domestic violence; tackling any kind of abuse; fighting exploitation and human trafficking, nationally and internationally, but also promoting equity, equality and non-discrimination.

**Access to justice for all** involves promoting the rule of law, tackling crime (including corruption and bribery as well as illicit financial and arms flows), combating terrorism and violent extremism.

**Effective, accountable and inclusive institutions** brings in the sphere of fundamental freedoms and human rights, including access to information, as a pre-requisite of democracy, and the fight against all sort of discrimination and inequality, not only at the level of domestic societies, but also with regard to international institutions. In this respect, it is interesting to note that the objective of fighting inequality refers also to the broadening and **strengthening of the participation of developing countries in the institutions of global**

**governance** (one of the indicators of SDG16 relates specifically to the proportion of members and voting rights of developing countries in IFIs). The expression “effective, accountable and inclusive institutions” also evokes the discussions on the **reform of the Security Council**.

- All in all, one can say that the **tripartite dimension** of the SDG16 describes the institutional and social environment where citizens can be protected, fulfilled and empowered in their rights and capabilities.
- This deconstruction exercise reflects pretty well the ample perimeter of SDG16 and its degree of impactfulness on the overall 2030 Agenda. This transpires also from the **high number of custodian agencies** which are responsible for different indicators in SDG 16 are: UNODC, WHO; DESA; OHCHR; UNDP; UNESCO-UIS; UNICEF; UNCTAD; UNODA; UNSD; and the World Bank.

*(How can SDG 16 assist in identifying initiatives at the national and international levels that speed up **recovery from COVID-19** and address new challenges for achieving the global goals?)*

- The second guiding question relates to the **interrelation of SDG16 with the pandemic crisis**, which was the main subject of Day 1 of this Conference. Having impacted, although in different ways, on all aspects of human life, COVID-19 has certainly not spared SDG16, which has also been hit hard. The list could be long: from the increase in certain types of violence and corruption activities to the deepening of inequalities, from the disruption of essential public services, including judiciary proceedings, to the heightening of social tensions, from the limitation of some political activities (large meetings, rallies) to the postponement of electoral processes.

- All this has made it more difficult to break the **vicious cycle between insecurity, injustice and inequality** to tackle the root cause of fragility, to remove the obstacles to development and to unlock the potential of each society, which are the main features of SDG16.
- It has been an **extreme stress test**, which has revealed how vulnerable our societies can be. At the same time and for the very same reason, the pandemic has dramatically **emphasized the importance of fundamental freedoms and rights, good governance and the rule of law**, proving that SDG16 must be **one of the guiding stars in promoting a better recovery** from the pandemic and in building resilience to future shocks and crises.
- And this is the moment, as many countries in the world are planning unprecedented levels of public investments to get out of the current crisis and devise their future. The Italian Parliament has just approved **Italy's Recovery and Resilience Plan**. It is a huge plan, mobilizing a macroscopic amount of funds, of which 210 billion coming from the EU Next Generation program. It is articulated around 6 main missions and includes lines of actions that are strictly related to the advancement of SDG16, such as the reform of justice and of the public administration.
- All the States that have the possibility to make such investments - and in Europe this has been crucially facilitated by the gluing factor of the European Union, have to seize this opportunity. Overall, it is also an opportunity **to rebuild full trust between the State and its citizens** and to **renew the social contract** at the heart of our societies.
- We cannot forget, however, that many States cannot rely on their own resources or on the solidarity of regional organizations they belong to. **International cooperation and assistance is key**. For

this reason Italy continues to promote the rule of law, access to justice, capacity building and legal empowerment, especially of the most vulnerable, as a thematic priority of our Development Cooperation. We do this in our bilateral programs, towards several developing countries, as well as in cooperation with relevant international organizations and institutions. As a concrete example of the latter category, I wish to mention **IDLO's "Investment Support Program in Least Developed Countries"**, developed in partnership with the UN and with the financial support of Italy and the European Union. This program supports the institutional and legal capacity of LDCs to attract and manage Foreign Direct Investments. So it goes to the core of SDG16 in terms of strengthening institutional capacity.

- In the context of our **Presidency of the G20**, we are also actively engaged in activities that are closely related to the promotion of justice and the rule of law. As recalled during one of yesterday's sessions of this conference, we are advancing the work on the fight against corruption, a key dimension of SDG 16, in the context of the G20 Anti-Corruption Working Group, with the objective to adopt "High Level Principles on Corruption related to Organized Crime". The upcoming UN General Assembly Special Session on the fight against Corruption, next June, will be a timely opportunity to achieve further global advancements in this crucial sector.

*(What are some of the most challenging issues pertaining to SDG 16 in **Voluntary National Review** and post VNR processes and how can these issues best be addressed (by governments, civil society and multilateral partners)?*

- Last point. One of the guiding questions is about **the most challenging issues pertaining to SDG16**, as resulted so far by the Voluntary National Reviews and which could come up again during the new presentations on SDG16 at the next HLPF in New York. It

seems to us that, among many others, the issue of **measuring the advancement in the SDG16** requires particular attention. The indicators elaborated by the UN Statistical Commission for the SDGs, including SDG16, are certainly effective, but their use requires adequate technical capacity, which is not always available. Here too international cooperation is needed to assist developing countries in strengthening their statistical capacities for effectively monitoring all SDGs, including SDG16. Also on this front, I would like to mention the support of our Development Cooperation to the Data4Now initiative, launched in 2019 by the Deputy Secretary General of the UN, which is consistent with this priority.

- I would conclude my intervention here. I look forward to listening to the other panelists and we also look forward to the final report on this SDG16 Conference in order to mainstream its results in the context of the **upcoming High Level Political Forum for Sustainable Development (HLPF)**.
- Thank you.