Building Resilience and Sustaining Peace in the West Asia – North Africa Region

Regional reflections
4-5 October 2016 - Amman, Jordan

Chair's summary

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To inform policy discussions taking place at the UN and in other international fora on the outcomes of the recent UN reviews on peace and security with experiences and perspectives of the regional and country level, the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation (the Foundation), in collaboration with the West Asia North Africa (WANA) Institute, hosted a workshop on 4-5 October 2016 on building resilience and sustaining peace. [1] *The objective was to facilitate the engagement of practitioners in the WANA region on these issues in order to identify changes needed for improving international support, in particular by the UN, to local initiatives aimed at building resilience and sustaining peace in the region.*

Participants included staff from different UN entities, civil society organisations and national government representatives. Recognizing the diversity of the WANA region and unique history and challenges facing individual countries, thematic discussions were contextualised with experiences from Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Somalia, Syria and Yemen. The event was conducted under Chatham House rule.

This Chair's summary reflects the main issues discussed during the workshop clustered in seven areas: Contextual realities; the impact of migration on resilience; the need for conceptual clarity; rethinking organisational approaches; coherent and adaptable methodologies; national ownership and inclusivity; and strategies for supporting the Sustainable Development Goals. It also includes a detailed summary on discussions focused on youth engagement in the WANA region attached as Annex A.

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[1] This workshop was the third in a series of regional consultations conducted by the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation on the UN's new sustaining peace agenda. Previous events were held in Accra, Ghana (April 2016) in partnership with the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre (KAIPTC) and in Kitwe and Lusaka, Zambia (September 2016) in partnership with the Dag Hammarskjöld Institute for Peace and Conflict Studies (DHIPS) at Copperbelt University.

Introduction

The seminar was opened with a welcome statement by HRH Sumaya bint El Hassan on behalf of her father, HRH Prince El Hassan Bin Talal, Chairman of the WANA Institute, and in her own capacity as President of the Royal Scientific Society (RSS) where the event was being hosted. Princess Sumaya spoke about the need for long-term thinking and planning as well as moral courage to address the enormous challenges facing the region in terms of energy, food and natural resource depletion, exacerbated by climate change and migration. Following her statement, the Swedish Ambassador to Jordan, H.E. Eric Ullenhag, spoke about the importance of embracing conflict as an inevitable force that brings opportunity and praised Jordan's open response to the recent waves of refugees from Syria. Finally, Henrik Hammargren, Executive Director of the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation, highlighted the pertinence of the seminar's topic and the imperative for the UN to refocus its core mandate as articulated in its founding charter, to save future generations from the scourge of war. Mr. Hammargren emphasised the urgency of reforms within the UN's systems and structures if the Organisation is to remain a reliable actor and to be able to support sustainable peace in the WANA region.

Summary of the discussions

Guided by the overarching question of what is needed to support implementation of the recommendations from the 2015 reviews of the UN's work on peace and security, including those legislated in parallel resolutions SCR 2282 and A/RES/70/262, and to sustain peace in the WANA region, a number of key themes emerged.[2]

1. Contextual realities: acknowledge the saturation and fragility of the region

Several contextual factors were identified that challenge sustainable development and stability in the WANA region. Those mentioned below were considered to have particular relevance for the UN's engagement in the region.

WANA, a term for the region preferred by many who consider MENA (Middle East and North Africa) to be outdated and geographically ambiguous, includes a highly diverse set of countries that vary widely in their histories, political systems, economic and social developments, ethnic and religious compositions and natural resource reserves, among other factors. As important as recognizing the distinctness of each country in devising strategies for building resilience and sustaining peace is understanding the interlinkages between different national contexts and their conflict dynamics. While conflict analyses typically identify connections and relationships between conflict factors and actors in neighboring countries or the larger region, programming or operational strategies rarely take a broader approach, with cross-border or multi-country initiatives conducted on an ad-hoc and limited basis. **Linkages between different contexts and conflicts within the region should be more clearly factored into UN country strategies and responses as part of a regional framework.**

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[2] The full text of the resolutions can be found at www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/2282(2016)

Equally important is recognition that the region has a history, going back several decades, of multiple overlapping violent conflicts that have killed and wounded hundreds of thousands, that have triggered mass displacement of people and that have devastated local infrastructure, economies and social fabric. **The legacy of these conflicts, and the factors that led to their outbreak, must be recognised as a difficult political reality for the region.** This includes the long-term and unresolved issues connected to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that have persisted and intensified over more than 70 years and caused spill-over effects. One of the most direct impacts is that of Palestinian refugees (over 5 Million registered with UNRWA), most of whom have either been displaced for decades or were born into displacement, and for whom a resolution to their tenuous situation seems intangible in the near future. The protracted situation facing these refugees has had and continues to have serious effects on political discussions, economic and social developments, national identity and reconciliation processes, humanitarian assistance and peace in the region.

The 5-year-old war in Syria, resulting in millions of refugees fleeing to countries in the region already hosting large displaced populations from Palestine and Iraq, has added a new layer to an already overburdened situation and has raised questions about the **risk of regional implosion.**

Finally, **the role of regional and sub-regional organisations in sustaining peace raises a challenge in the WANA region and will need to be further explored** in response to the recent resolutions that call for the international community to build close strategic and operational partnerships with diverse stakeholders. In the past the engagement of the African Union (AU) in the region has been complicated and the role of the League of Arab States (LAS) has largely been dismissed. Notable efforts are already underway to strengthen cooperation and dialogue between the UN and the AU. These should be recognized and supported. Similar attention should also be given to the LAS with consideration for its interest in further developing its own architecture, along with an Arab Peace and Security Council.

> ### Box 1: Is the UN Peacebuilding Commission relevant for WANA?
> Created in 2005 as an inter-governmental advisory body with the mandate to advise on integrated strategies for peacebuilding, focus international attention on post-conflict reconstruction and institution building efforts and improve coordination and predictable resources for post-conflict recovery, the PBC has to date not engaged in any contexts in WANA, nor has it been requested by any country in the region to do so. The reasons for this are disputed and include objections by Security Council members, notably the P5, and the argument that the region receives sufficient political attention internationally. It is worthy to note that several countries in WANA, including Lebanon, Libya, Somalia, Sudan and Yemen, have received funding through the UN Peacebuilding Fund (PBF). Given the disconnect between the PBF's portfolio and the PBC's work this has not translated into any substantive engagement with the Commission.

2. Recognise the powerful force of migration on resilience and sustainable peace
The recent high level meeting on addressing large movements of refugees and migrants at the opening of the 71st Session of the General Assembly that led to the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, reaffirms that discussions on development, peace and security in the WANA region must be linked to policy processes addressing issues of migration. The needs

and concerns of refugees, migrants and host populations are central and must be fully integrated into any peacebuilding strategy.

The past few years have seen developments toward the creation of different resilience frameworks that examine various factors that allow host countries to absorb large influxes of migrants or displaced persons. These typically gauge impact on the economy, infrastructure, access to natural resources and the environment but rarely apply a peacebuilding perspective. The New York Declaration makes an important commitment, to "ensure that all aspects of migration are integrated into global, regional and national sustainable development plans and in humanitarian, peacebuilding and human rights policies and programmes" [3]. Over the coming months and years policy makers from signatory countries as well as UN staff must ensure that these aims are realized and demonstrated at the operational level. **The artificial separation that is maintained between providing humanitarian assistance and peacebuilding efforts, to forcibly displaced persons and other vulnerable populations, also needs to be challenged**, acknowledging the sensitivity of the political dimensions involved.

> **Box 2. The need for greater inclusivity in building peace in Yemen**
> In Yemen there are more than 3 Million people displaced due to the ongoing violent conflict. These persons are at the receiving end of humanitarian assistance to meet their basic needs but should not merely be regarded as a passive vulnerable group. Rather, they must be part of the political framework and peace process if it is to lead to a lasting resolution to the conflict and transition to sustainable peace.

It has taken several years, and for some policy makers there is still reluctance, to acknowledge that **the current migration and refugee situation is long-term and requires long-term strategies rather than short-sighted and reactive responses.** Over the past two years Jordan has started to integrate its humanitarian response strategy into a national development strategy known as the Jordan Response Plan. This is a positive example and should be supported with a stronger, more proactive strategy to sustain peace.

Without underestimating or trivializing the strain that the large influx of refugees from Iraq and Syria has been placing on the region, there should be a move to recognize the economic potential of displaced people and greater efforts placed on trying to enable and channel their economic energies. Understanding that social dynamics of migration are inextricably linked to economics of migration should provide incentive to prioritize efforts in managing economic integration and promote efforts that allow displaced persons to work without threatening local employment. **The narrative around migration should be changed from one of burden to one of opportunity**, a shift that has started to take place in Jordan, with the needs of communities rather than migrant or host at the centre.

3. Conceptualisation: a call for clarity
In order for the UN's new sustaining peace agenda to have the transformative effect it intends - and for it to complement and reinforce implementation of the 2030 Agenda - information

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[3] Resolution A/71/L.1 (2016) OP 47.

on what it encompasses needs to be widely communicated to and by a broad spectrum of actors at the regional, national and local levels. International actors have a role to play in supporting strategies for promoting information about the next steps in various policy processes and what can be expected by whom with regard to implementation.

There is also a need to provide more conceptual clarity on what sustaining peace means in practice and how the UN intends to relate this conceptual framework to other peace and security efforts, in particular peacebuilding, peacekeeping and prevention of violent conflict as well as stabilisation. To assist actors at different levels to fully understand their potential role in moving the core concepts into praxis and what concrete actions should be taken and within what time frame, recommendations ought to be de-coded or elaborated. For genuine change to be initiated, information cannot be left to trickle down from the top (whether that be UN HQ or national capitals) but will need to be communicated through multiple channels with various levels of detail and instruction or clarification. Information flows also need to move from local communities up so policy makers can gauge and respond to the needs of different stakeholders for effecting real change.

Such a communication strategy must be linked to a larger process to articulate and put in motion reforms needed to realise the new sustaining peace agenda, and in doing so disseminate clear messages on how policy changes will affect different parts of the UN system and their engagement with other international actors at the regional and national level. This effort should be viewed as an opportunity to highlight concrete examples of how peace is possible, drawing attention to where things are working and which approaches have proven successful, and providing an example of what the sustaining peace agenda ought to look like in operation. Acknowledging the truth in the observation about the international community that "we're so afraid of cookie-cutter approaches that we're not doing enough lessons learned," **greater efforts and resources should be placed on identifying, building on and, where appropriate, replicating effective interventions and conditions for sustaining peace.**

The parallel UN resolutions of April 2016 recognise that sustaining peace "encompasses activities aimed at preventing the outbreak, escalation, continuation and recurrence of conflict," putting an end to the focus on post-conflict. While welcomed, this conceptual change does not resolve challenges in understanding and programming actions for prevention. The counter factual dilemma around not being able to measure prevention, as well as methodological challenges to applying results based approaches, must be faced head on with greater intensity to **ensure that greater effort and resources are put into peacebuilding efforts with a preventive function.**

4. Rethink organisational roles among international actors
Amidst the discussions on reforms needed to heed the findings and recommendations coming out of the recent UN peace and security reviews and in light of the 2030 Agenda on sustainable development, the UN should recognize its role in setting the standards for and fostering the norms that underpin its work. As part of this process it may be appropriate in certain contexts for the UN to let go of some aspects of implementation of peacebuilding programming, strengthening its diplomatic role and transforming itself to more of a network structure that draws on and provides a platform for other actors. **The strength and capacity of local civil society in the WANA region should be better recognized and utilized.**

Peacebuilding, unlike humanitarian and development efforts, has not been successful in organizing or mobilizing support and this is evident also in the WANA region where there is no coordination mechanism or structure to promote coherence between diverse actors engaged in sustaining peace. The UN can and should play a greater role in providing this platform for pursuing a comprehensive approach to sustaining peace and in fostering strong partnerships with national and regional actors in this endeavour. **Reform processes within the humanitarian system could offer valuable lessons and experience in implementing the changes called for by the sustaining peace resolutions.** Examples include a) the cluster system as a model for ensuring more coherent, consistently prioritised and well-managed efforts to sustain peace and b) consolidated planning and analysis efforts with clarified standards for measuring success.

5. Implementing strategies: Develop coherent but adaptable methodologies
Strategies to build and sustain peace require mechanisms that allows for regular and frequent reflection, re-assessment and adjustments. Much of peacebuilding involves social change, which demands an adaptive approach over a long period of time and an engagement of diverse actors, not only as a best practice but as an essential ingredient for sustainability. In revising its policies and implementing a new framework to sustain peace, UN agencies and the system as a whole need to ensure that there is adequate consideration given to creating processes that facilitate reflection on whether interventions are having the outcomes they intend. Civil society actors have an important role to play in providing this input and are likely to do so more constructively through open and mutually supportive channels. UN country teams, having experience implementing the fit for purpose agenda, need to acknowledge that **supporting the SDGs and sustaining peace will demand a lot more adaptation and flexibility at country level**.

To be responsive to national realities and changing dynamics requires ongoing evaluations and adequate resources to implement them properly. For this, and to ensure that policies are informed by rigorous data collection and analysis, **greater efforts to build the capacity of local and national actors to gather and process this data is needed**. Recognizing that there is inconsistency in the quality and availability of data in the WANA region, as in many parts of the world, critical attention must be paid to the accuracy of figures and the challenges of capturing the durability of peace being built with data. It is therefore crucial that statistics or matrices are complemented with qualitative evidence for what has worked and not worked, given that elements of peacebuilding cannot be captured in numbers, and that the methodologies for collecting data on peacebuilding are carefully assessed.

Funding structures, policies and instruments have the potential to drive coordination and coherence or to drive competition and fragmentation. They can further encourage and support peacebuilding with a long-term vision that emphasizes strengthening local capacities or reinforce short sighted efforts that rush to show quick, typically unsustainable, results that are implemented by external actors. **Donors and policy makers who inform how funding decisions are made need to be mindful of the impact at the country level from how resources for peacebuilding are channelled and adjust to ensure they are in line with the new sustaining peace agenda.**

6. Recognise national ownership: Realise Inclusivity

National ownership is often equated with government ownership and used interchangeably with local ownership. In practice, peacebuilding initiatives require broad-based local ownership to succeed, with multi-layered participation in design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. Recognising that national ownership needs to rest with the national government, the international community has the responsibility to actively promote open, inclusive and ongoing dialogue between government and diverse stakeholders and to promote the right of citizens to be heard. Civil society has a particularly important role to play in this process and itself acts as an invaluable force for ensuring that the needs and interests of women, youth, religious and traditional leaders, among other groups are on the agenda.

Inclusive dialogue is most effective if it takes place at multiple levels and aims to deepen understanding, promote tolerance, increase awareness and strengthen vertical relationships that connect decision makers at the national level with every day experiences in local communities. More and new actors must be considered and brought more explicitly into peace processes, including non-state armed groups, multi-national private companies and civil society (both national and international as well as groups of actors that may not be organised into a formal entity but rather formed as movements or alliances).

Youth participation in peacebuilding needs to be given greater emphasis, with young people not just consulted through workshops and consultations but included in decision making. The role and potential of youth and youth organisations in building sustainable peace was recognised at the highest international level with the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution (SCR) 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security (December 2015) and its implementation should be a critical priority **for WANA**, where **the growth of the youth population ought to be recognized for the invaluable resource it presents**. The international community needs to take greater steps to remove the barriers youth face to participating in peacebuilding and be more proactive in reaching out to this group of stakeholders.[4] Interventions framed as part of strategies to counter or prevent violent extremism (C/PVE), often targeting youth, need to recognise the potential of alienating the very group they are trying to engage, particularly given its rather specific focus on Islam.

In implementing SCR 2250 there are lessons that can be learned from the experience of SCR 1325 on women, peace and security. Despite improvements in promoting women and girls in peace processes over the past 15 years, there still is a need for greater integration of this issue into UN strategies and programming. **For youth as well as women, full participation in peacebuilding processes should be framed as part of a rights-based approach**. To strengthen its credibility on this topic, the UN itself will have to take greater strides in promoting women internally to positions of senior leadership as negotiators and Heads of Missions.

Among factors that lead to exclusion from participation in peacebuilding, unemployment is high on the list, particularly among youth, where it is further seen as a risk factor for radicalization and as a driver of migration. **Greater employment opportunities are needed to fight instability and to increase the potential for building peace**.

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[4] A more detailed summary of the discussions on youth engagement in sustaining peace in WANA is provided in Annex A.

7. Build resilience to promote sustainable peace: implementing and supporting the SDGs

Momentum for action on implementing the SDGs in WANA is low. Where discussions are taking place there is a prevailing sense that pursuing all goals simultaneously is unrealistic so prioritization among the 17 will be necessary. Recognising that national governments must take the lead in driving implementation, UN actors in country have shown little initiative in pushing the agenda forward. Despite resounding agreement about the importance of Goal 16 for the region there is deep skepticism within international and national civil society circles about how much can be expected in advancing peaceful and inclusive societies, access to justice and transparency through the SDGs, coupled with a concern that an overemphasis on that goal over others could prove detrimental to the overall agenda. **Promoting resilience is considered an alternative or complementary route to achieving the objectives of Goal 16,** with the international community providing incentives and technical support for progress as well as promoting regional cooperation.

Strengthening resilience and building peace in WANA calls for convergence of initiatives that support social and economic change with cooperation around environmental issues such as addressing natural resource scarcity, development of alternative energy sources and adaptation to climate change, with scientific institutions considered as valuable prospective partners. Implementation of the 2030 Agenda provides a possible framework to promote this effort as well as to integrate peacebuilding into national development plans, ensuring that resources are allocated to efforts required to sustain peace. The explicit connection made in the 2030 Agenda between sustainable development and peace and the emphasis in the UN's sustaining peace agenda on the need to address root causes also encourages an examination of critical development issues such as pockets of poverty, high unemployment and unequal access to social services through the lens of conflict prevention.

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Annex A: Youth engagement in the WANA region

On 4-5 October 2016 the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation and the West Asia – North Africa (WANA) Institute hosted a regional consultation in Amman, Jordan, on building resilience and sustaining peace in the WANA context. In addition to a dedicated session focused on youth engagement in the region, the role of youth in promoting more peaceful and inclusive societies was an integrated theme throughout the two-day workshop. Participants included a broad spectrum of actors working in the WANA region, including civil society, national and international governmental organisations and academia.

The importance of engaging youth and youth organisations in peace and decision-making processes was emphasised in December 2015 with the adoption of United Nations (UN) Security Council Resolution (SCR) 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security. Parallel resolutions passed in the UN Security Council (SCR 2282) and the General Assembly (A/RES/70/262) in April 2016 on the UN Peacebuilding Architecture (PBA) and SCR 2242 on Women, Peace and Security, further underscore the importance of youth participation and reaffirm the role of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) to strengthen youth engagement in peacebuilding. SCR 2250 in particular mandates the Secretary-General to complete a Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security. This Study is currently being undertaken by lead author, Graeme Simpson of Interpeace, and an Advisory Group of Experts, supported by an Inter-agency Working Group on Youth and Peacebuilding.

In an effort to feed into the Progress Study, the conversation in Amman highlighted the importance of including youth to build peace and stability in the WANA region and was contextualised within the experiences of participants working in various country contexts, including Libya, Iraq, Jordan, Somalia and Lebanon. Participants identified the challenges that youth face in engaging in their communities, as well as opportunities for strengthening youth participation and ownership in peace processes.

Challenges to youth engagement

Youth represent a variety of backgrounds and perspectives and face varying degrees of challenges in making their voices heard within their communities. Their experiences in a given society are affected by a multitude of factors, including gender, ethnicity and socio-economic status, resulting in some youth being more marginalised than others. The challenges that young women encounter require special attention through the implementation of lessons learned from SCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security and programming that links efforts to implement SCR 2250 with SCR 2242 in order to ensure that there is more long-term strategic thinking in how to engage them as women and not only as youth. Recognising the diversity of young women and men and their perspectives, participants identified the following challenges to their engagement in the WANA region.

Youth are often defined as either perpetrators or victims of violence rather than as agents of peace. Such a narrative can have detrimental effects on the confidence of youth to raise their opinions and concerns and to become constructive members of society. While various national and international projects often bring in youth and work on youth issues, young people are often not given leadership positions in these processes. In some cases, youth are

engaged as a strategy to counter/prevent violent extremism (C/PVE), which only reinforces the narrative of young women and men as perpetrators of violence and further alienates them from their communities. In other instances, the inclusion of youth is a strategy to give actors more legitimacy in their work. Programmes are implemented for youth rather than by youth.

Many youth are disillusioned with their political leaders and systems. They are frustrated by the time and bureaucracy it takes for action to be taken by Governments. Because young people in the region do not believe that things can change, they are less likely to become involved in political discussions and processes. In some instances, this disillusionment can also contribute to youth, both educated and uneducated, organising themselves in militias and joining violent extremist groups.

Young women and men face a lot of pressures when it comes to joining violent extremist movements. In southern Iraq, youth are often told that it is their duty to join these groups and defend their country. Young people who instead decide to work for peace can face opposition from their peers because they are doing something different. Youth who join violent extremist movements are often highly educated but are disillusioned and/or face difficulties in gaining employment and carving out a space for themselves in society. Coupled with these grievances, educated youth have the necessary skills and are more likely to have access to financing to wage an effective campaign.

Young people in the region face high unemployment rates. Youth, both educated and uneducated, often face difficulties in gaining employment due to the lack of jobs, corruption and nepotism among employers. Many young people are more reluctant to work in the private sector because of the lack of stable incomes and benefits, preferring to work in the public sector, which does not have enough employment opportunities. Unemployment contributes to young people's low self-esteem and fuels feelings of disenchantment and uncertainty about their futures. Unemployment can lead to youth joining violent extremist groups, but also to emigrating their home countries to seek employment elsewhere.

There is a lack of awareness and understanding of UNSC 2250 and other resolutions among youth and the general population. The majority of youth activity takes place at the very local, grassroots level. Many youth have their own ideas for how to participate in peace processes, but are unable to take advantage of the legitimacy SCR 2250 offers and use it as an advocacy tool, with the full support and backing of the international community and Governments.

The lack of understanding, trust and cooperation between youth and older generations prevents young people from being able to engage, from the local level up. Traditional norms within the region view the role of those with more experience and age as providing guidance to and making decisions for the community. Youth are not given a space to voice their opinions but are expected to remain silent. At the same time, young women and men are increasingly having less and less respect for their elders and decision making processes. This breakdown of the social contract, coupled with the availability of small arms, creates a perfect recipe for small, petty disagreements, to escalate into violence. While conflicts in the region, particularly at communal levels, are often carried out by youth, it is traditionally the

elders that try to facilitate peace without actually communicating with the young people involved. This perpetuates an intergenerational gap, in which youth often find themselves stuck between the traditional values and expectations of generations before them and embracing more modern ideals.

Traditional and formal educational programmes in the region do not encourage critical thinking, active participation and peace education. The education system should be a primary channel to promote the engagement of young people in their communities and provide them a space to voice their perspectives. However, a focus on rote memorisation and assumptions that the teacher is always right have fostered an environment in which independent thinking is not sufficiently valued.

Strengthening youth participation

To address these challenges, participants identified some opportunities for strengthening youth engagement in the region, highlighting examples of what has worked well from their own work and could be built upon going forward. While it is important to develop strategies that aim to engage the youth population as a whole, including those who are well educated but unemployed, flexibility is required in thinking about different strategies that could be employed to reach those youth that are more marginalised. To engage a diversity of young people and to encourage interaction between various sectors of the youth population, creative methods such as theatre, arts, games and music are instrumental.

Change the narrative of youth from perpetrators or victims of violence to agents of peace through consistent promotion and messaging of positive stories and examples. Advancing the idea that young people can and do promote peaceful and inclusive societies is key to strengthen self-confidence among youth and increase their participation. In doing so, it is important to recognise that there are individual youth who participate in violence in the region. In engaging with these persons, understanding what motivates them to participate in these types of activities is key to developing relevant strategies. Changing the discourse of youth within the C/PVE debate is also needed. Young women and men should be engaged because they are a resource for peace and not as a preventative strategy to counter violent extremism. Also critical to changing the narrative is facilitating intergenerational dialogue to promote greater understanding, mutual respect and collaboration between youth, their families and leaders. In a small community outside of Tripoli, for example, elders began to engage youth once they saw the effect that violence between youth had on the community. This engagement led to a drop in the number of conflicts between young people and a reduction in community violence.

International actors and Governments should provide effective opportunities for youth to take ownership in peace processes, from engagement in municipal political structures to national peace negotiations and decision-making. While there has recently been a lot of attention by national and international actors on the role of youth in the region, these actors tend to have a workshop with young people and then leave without any follow up. Long term programming that focuses on providing youth with leadership roles and platforms for engagement is critical. Youth offer new and innovative ideas for building more peaceful and inclusive societies. Students at Jordan University, for example, set up a mock government

and cabinet to make policy decisions, which were then submitted to the Government. Peace and development organisations should capitalise on this energy and creativity by providing safe platforms on which youth can raise their voices and serve as leaders within their communities and in national peace processes.

Youth centres that allow young people to connect and build off each other's ideas and link their initiatives to national and international processes can serve as an invaluable platform for participation. The creation of youth advisory councils—as seen in some Iraqi communities—within local, national and international governmental structures to ensure that youth issues and perspectives are brought into broader policy discussions in a structured way are needed.

Youth engagement at the local level should be particularly recognised and strengthened, ensuring that their voices and perspectives are fed into national and international processes. Young people often participate in initiatives geared towards their own communities and are more likely to see concrete results from their efforts at the grassroots level, boosting their self-confidence and increasing the likelihood that they will continue to participate. However, youth still face challenges in the form of traditional views on the role of young people in society and in linking their efforts to national and international processes. Peace and development organisations should adopt, where relevant, local tribal traditions in programming, encouraging traditional leaders to engage young people and facilitate the coordination of local, national and international efforts and initiatives.

The UN and other international actors should promote awareness of SCR 2250 throughout the region. It is important that all youth, in urban and rural areas, from various socio-economic backgrounds and education levels, are made aware of SCR 2250 and how it provides legitimacy to their activities. In addition to launch events and seminars, training opportunities would allow youth to understand and develop strategies for how to use SCR 2250 to strengthen youth participation in their communities. Communication between UN headquarters and regional and country offices on this and other key peacebuilding resolutions is also needed to ensure that actors on the ground are aware of these processes.

Private sector enterprises should support and invest in youth, engaging them as stakeholders and partners when designing business strategies. More is needed to ensure that private sector jobs are available and attractive to young people. Local and national governments should provide support for education programmes that develop the skills needed to work in the private sector, adequately address issues of corruption and nepotism and promote policies that create more private sector jobs with better wages, stability and benefits. Financial and technical support, as well as mentorship from the business community, for micro-enterprises and businesses started and owned by youth is also needed.

Governments should reform and revitalise education systems to promote youth ownership and leadership. While overall access to primary and secondary education has improved across the region, marginalised groups including young women face particular challenges in accessing education and gaining employment. There is a need to promote more independent and critical thinking and participation within schools. Peace education models

that bridge divides by promoting dialogue, mutual respect, social harmony and reconciliation between groups should be integrated in curricula, from primary to university levels. Initiatives bringing youth from host and refugee communities together through games and reconciliation programmes have also proved very successful. Peer-to-peer education allows youth who are already engaged to provide trainings and serve as mentors for other young women and men.

International donors should ensure transparency in the provision of aid and provide financing to youth organisations and initiatives, from urban to rural areas, based on need. Funding structures require a better understanding of how youth are already engaging in their respective countries. While youth organisations and NGOs are present in larger cities, the majority of youth initiatives take place in local communities and municipalities and only require modest sums of money to implement. Redirected and increased funding is therefore needed for grassroots projects.

The role of social media

The role and power of social media on youth participation in violence and peacebuilding were repeatedly raised during the session. Lacking sufficient political space, many young people in the region have turned to social media. However, these online platforms can limit youth participation in that programmes are designed in a way that uses social media without having to actually speak to youth face to face. Because social media is an uncontrolled space, conversations are not always constructive. There have also been incidents of youth being threatened with violence for expressing their opinions online. Social media can provide young women with a platform to openly express their views, but they face particular risks of abuse and threats for participating in online debates or opinion sharing.

With proper oversight by law enforcement and the companies that provide these platforms, mindful not to bolster censorship, social media can serve as a very positive medium for raising awareness and promoting dialogue and collaboration between various groups. These platforms allow youth to express their opinions and become involved in policy discussions and peace processes. Peace and development organisations should harness these positive elements of social media in a more strategic way, thinking about how to use and follow up such initiatives within long-term programming. They should also be accompanied by sustainable projects on the ground that actively engage youth in their communities and promote cooperation.

Going forward

Findings from the discussions in Amman will be shared with the Steering Committee and Advisory Group for the Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security ahead of regional youth consultations for the Progress Study in Amman on 4-6 December 2016.

Recognising the importance of youth participation in sustaining peace, the Foundation's Strategies for Inclusivity: Strengthening the engagement of youth in sustaining peace project looks at ways to support youth participation and leadership in the implementation of SCR 2250 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), as well as SCRs 2242 and 2282 and A/RES/70/262. The objective of this project is to support the PBC and other actors in

ensuring that the engagement of youth is a priority in building sustainable peace. The Foundation will continue to facilitate consultations with a variety of stakeholders on the engagement of young people and bring a variety of perspectives to policy discussions in New York and other fora. The Foundation will also make an effort to include youth in broader discussions on a variety of themes related to peace and development.

The Foundation is conducting case study analyses on youth participation in Tunisia, Myanmar and Liberia. Findings from these studies will be collated into a synthesis report presenting observations across cases and identifying strategies for how the PBC can fulfil its mandate to ensure the inclusion of youth in peacebuilding. The case studies will also feed into the Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security by highlighting ways in which youth are involved in peace processes and by developing recommendations for strengthening this engagement.

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