

Zero or hero?

What does the 'zero draft' of the world's new development framework do for peace?

Key points:

1. The **importance of peace for achieving sustainable development** and as a desirable outcome in itself is strongly – and rightly – affirmed. This includes a crucial **focus on the causes on violence, insecurity and injustice and leaving no one behind** – both in the narrative and the goals and targets.
2. However, a **much more inclusive vision of action and ownership** is needed for this framework to have credibility and make a difference in the real world outside the negotiation chamber. Similarly, the **role of third parties in data production and monitoring** needs to be more strongly affirmed.
3. The draft document should also go further in **recognising the more multipolar global order, and in promoting a renewal in multilateral partnership and trust**.
4. Despite brave attempts to present the agenda more succinctly, the post-2015 **agenda still lacks a public face**. Member States must think creatively about how to communicate the post-2015 development agenda so that millions of people engage with it and give it real momentum.
5. The document fails to resolve the outstanding question: **when will each target be considered met? And further tweaking to cut repetition and uphold existing standards remains necessary**.
6. The vision for **development financing fails to engage with the peace agenda**: it should acknowledge the risk of doing harm and the need to support peacebuilding.
7. Member States should **reject a coercive approach to peace and remove target 16a**.

Introduction

In these informal comments, Saferworld looks at the ['zero draft' of the post-2015 development agenda](#) – an ambitious vision for action, distilling years of consultation and negotiation that has engaged millions across the world. At a time when violence is spiralling and destroying the lives of millions of people, this briefing reviews the draft global development agenda from a peacebuilding perspective – asking what is positive, what can be improved and what needs to be taken out?

1. What is positive?

- ✓ Throughout the Declaration the **importance of peace for achieving sustainable development** and as a desirable outcome in itself is strongly affirmed. At the very outset, the preamble declares that this is an agenda “that also seeks to strengthen universal peace in larger freedom”. The nine-point summary of the agenda also includes a specific reference to “peaceful, safe, just and inclusive societies” and the need to “promote safe and inclusive cities and human settlements” – highlighting the interlinkages between peace and other parts of the sustainable development agenda. Paragraph 12 also underlines that “Spiraling conflict, violence and extremism, humanitarian crises and a growing migration challenge threaten to reverse much of the development progress made in recent decades”.
- ✓ Most significantly, Paragraph 28 unequivocally states that “sustainable development cannot be realized without peace,” highlighting that human rights, the rule of law and accountable institutions are “fundamental requirements” for the achievement of sustainable development. The paragraph also includes a very welcome **focus on the causes on violence, insecurity and injustice** such as corruption and poor governance, before emphasising a need for a preventative approach to violence and insecurity. This narrative explaining the coherence of the issues brought together under Goal 16 is a useful reference point that should safeguard the agenda from those who have questioned why the various targets of Goal 16 make sense as a coherent peacebuilding vision.
- ✓ Recalling the analysis of the [key issues and what works in addressing them](#) that we set out in 2012, it is important to keep reaffirming that **Goal 16 – taken alongside Goal 5 on gender equality, and other**

goals and targets promoting equality and youth employment – does cover most of the key peace, justice and governance issues that it should.

- ✓ The **strong emphasis on 'Leave No One Behind'** is also good for peace. The “pledge that nobody will be left behind” (Paragraph 4) is reinforced by a clear commitment on disaggregation of data in the ‘Follow-up and Review’ section (3e). A commitment to leave no one behind is also a commitment to engage in contexts affected by high levels of violence, where an [estimated 75% of people living in extreme poverty will be living by 2030](#).

2. What can be improved?

- A **much more inclusive vision of action and ownership** is needed for this framework to have credibility and make a difference in the real world outside the negotiation chamber. Paragraph 43 states how “Our journey” to realise the post-2015 development agenda will involve “Governments, Parliaments, local authorities, business and the private sector, the scientific community and academic community, civil society and ordinary citizens” before concluding that “millions... will own, this agenda”. However, elsewhere, the zero draft shies away from affirming that all stakeholders – not just the state – must be equal owners of the framework and active agents in its implementation. Significantly, the ‘Implementation’ and ‘Follow up and Review’ puts Member States firmly in control of the agenda, and a relatively exclusive-sounding model of ‘national ownership’ (rather than, say local, broad or democratic ownership). Significantly, reviews will be ‘voluntary’, and ‘shall be state-led, involving Ministerial and other relevant high-level participants’. This falls well short of the progressive, inclusive approach that tomorrow’s world will expect and require. If this really is “a call for action to change our world,” the zero draft needs to include more language on an inclusive vision of action and ownership so that other stakeholders are empowered to act.
- Relatedly, **the role of third parties in data production and monitoring** needs to be more strongly affirmed. Paragraph 39 of the introduction does commit “to scaling up substantially public-private cooperation to exploit the contribution made by a wide range of data”. However, this commitment does not go far enough, and is weakened in Paragraph 12 of the ‘Follow-up and Review’ section (“An annual SDG Progress Report will be prepared by the UN Inter Agency and Expert Group on SDG indicators, based on data from national statistical systems”). The language should be modified here – ideally to read “based on data from national statistical systems *and third parties*”.
- **The agenda still lacks a public face:** The preamble of the zero draft presents what could be termed the “5P’s”: People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace and Partnership (with echoes of the UN Secretary-General’s [“six essential elements”](#): People, Dignity, Prosperity, Justice, Partnership and Planet). This is supplemented by the inclusion of a nine-point summary of the agenda. These efforts to present the 17 goals in a manner that the public can engage with are indeed essential. However, political hackles aside, neither the “5P’s” or the nine-point summary have quite replicated the communicative ‘magic’ of the MDGs. In short, the zero draft has not yet solved the communication challenge yet (and is itself rather longer than desirable). Member States must think creatively about how to communicate the post-2015 development agenda so that millions do indeed engage with it and give it real momentum as a force for global change.
- Despite strong language on peace, the declaration **fails to highlight the need to address transnational threats** such as flows of arms and illicit finance. These aspects of the peace agenda demand action from developed and developing countries alike, and thus warrant unequivocal affirmation in this global statement of intent.
- More generally, language on how inclusive development and **addressing inequalities between social groups will also contribute to peace and inclusion** could be included – highlighting how peace and development are interconnected.
- The zero draft **fails to solve the challenge posed by non-numerical targets** (i.e. when will each target be considered met?). This is a challenge across the framework and could undermine accountability for an alarming number of its ‘commitments’. [Saferworld](#) has argued that benchmarks could be set at national level based on inclusive consultations (somewhat mirroring what is set out in the illustrative follow up and review framework on page 32, which sets out a vision of ‘HLPF national voluntary presentations’ that involve inputs from a range of stakeholders at the national level). This process would provide an opportunity to engage with a wider constituency of stakeholders at the national level on an issue-by-issue basis. An important alternative to this would be to extend proposals for tweaking targets so that more targets are expressed in quantified terms.
- Relatedly, despite the known political challenges, the proposal to **bring targets into line with international agreements** could go further and the framework would still benefit from an attempt to

reduce repetition if member states can muster the trust in each other to strengthen the framework further before September.

- **Language on financing is not yet sufficiently consistent with the commitment to ensure the framework promotes peace.** Paragraphs 30 and 32 of the declaration and Paragraph 5 of the 'Means of implementation and the global partnership' section highlight how a range of financial resources will need to be mobilised to realise the ambitions of the post-2015 agenda. These sections should more clearly highlight how development financing can address the drivers of conflict, but can also have unintended – negative – consequences that need to be managed.
- The draft document's emphasis on a holistic approach to building **peaceful and inclusive societies is not adequately reflected in the plan for interactive dialogues** for the Post-2015 Summit in September: unhappily, 'peace' appears to have been dropped from the working title: 'Building effective, accountable and inclusive institutions to achieve sustainable development'.
- The draft document should also go further in **recognising the more multipolar global order, and in promoting a renewal in multilateral partnership and trust** – for which the post-2015 framework has the potential to provide a new foundation.

3. What needs to be taken out?

- × **Target 16a encourages coercive approaches to security:** Saferworld has consistently [cautioned against the inclusion](#) of target 16a, which commits to "building capacities at all levels... for preventing violence and combating terrorism and crime". It could lead to the securitisation of the peace agenda and fails to recall the stipulations in international law against unbalanced use of coercive capacities. Security Council resolutions 1963, 2129 and 2178 are all careful in demanding a balanced, preventative approach to terrorism that is particularly relevant to the SDG framework. For example, UNSCR 2129 observes that 'terrorism will not be defeated by military force, law enforcement measures, and intelligence operations alone' and underlines 'the need to address the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism' including 'the need to strengthen efforts for the successful prevention and peaceful resolution of prolonged conflict, and the need to promote the rule of law, the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, good governance, tolerance, inclusiveness to offer a viable alternative to those who could be susceptible to terrorist recruitment and to radicalization leading to violence'. Unless means of implementation targets are added that give equal weight to the preventative aspects of the peace agenda, Member States should reject a coercive approach to peace and unambiguously call for removal of target 16a.

About Saferworld

Saferworld is an independent international organisation working to prevent violent conflict and build safer lives. We work with local people affected by conflict to improve their safety and sense of security, and conduct wider research and analysis. We use this evidence and learning to improve local, national and international policies and practices that can help build lasting peace. Our priority is people – we believe that everyone should be able to lead peaceful, fulfilling lives, free from insecurity and violent conflict.

We are a not-for-profit organisation with programmes in nearly 20 countries and territories across Africa, Asia, the Middle East and Europe.

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