

Remarks by Larry Attree, Head of Policy, Saferworld at the UN Sustainable Development Summit 2015 during 'Interactive Dialogue 5 – Building effective, accountable and inclusive institutions to achieve sustainable development'

Your excellencies, honoured delegates,

Conflict and violence are high and rising. 2014 was the deadliest year since 1989. It witnessed six more armed conflicts than 2013. One in every 122 of the world's people is now a refugee.

Pakistan hosts over 2.5 million refugees; Turkey has 1.6 million. Lebanon now hosts more than 1 refugee for every 4 residents. Algeria, Ethiopia and Chad each host double the number of refugees as France or the UK.

Conflict is a cancer with no place in a healthy world. It affects us all wherever it occurs, but worst of all it affects and traps the poorest and most vulnerable.

In peaceful, wealthy nations, the public reads these headlines and fears the growing instability. People's compassion has prompted a reaction to the crisis. But this reaction has remained shallow and short term. Minor adjustments to national interests, a slight increase in refugee quotas, occasional interventionism, militarism. As the media peddles a relentless narrative of fear, we hear that terror requires us to forget what we know about what causes conflict. In the face of violence, we witness the reinforcement of strongmen and their police and armies, while civil society space shrinks around the world. We see a world of nations acting in the individual, short term interest and not the collective, human interest.

But this model of security cannot stand. Leaders need to focus not only on the symptoms but on the causes of the problem. The destructive force of violence has not provided a solution to the problems of Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Afghanistan, Yemen, South Sudan, Mali. Their people cry out for us to heed the lessons painfully learnt by past generations: that violence, corruption, injustice and authoritarian rule beget suffering and instability that only peacemaking tools can overcome. Those suffering people, and all of us, need a generational vision that speaks to the roots of our deepest problems.

This is why Agenda 2030 has potential. Freedom to speak out, the right to participate in decision making, action on corruption and the flow of dirty money away from those who need it, access to justice and legal identity, a commitment to end violence, action on inequality, in every walk of public life, for every person – most importantly, for the world's women. These are the priorities people have told us about when asked what kind of world they want their children to live in. They need peace as they need clean air, water and food.

For the world's nations to hear them, and to commit to building more peaceful, just and inclusive societies, as enshrined in Goal 16 and across the 2030 Agenda – well, this took a lot of effort. For defining a holistic, preventative peace agenda as an integral part of development and sustainability, I would like to congratulate not only those who championed this - so many worked for this across government and civil society from every corner of the world – but also those who were open about their misgivings, and who worked painstakingly to articulate an agenda that all nations could agree on. This agreement has never been more desperately needed.

But let us remember that we haven't achieved anything yet. We need four things:

1 Flexibility – to define the priorities in each context, we need open and inclusive consultations where we keep listening to the people, including the most marginalised.

2 Unflinching support – To build bridges and find alternatives to conflict and violence that put people first. To generate the data on these sensitive topics that matches the ambition of the agenda. We want all stakeholders to make public their plans to move ahead on Agenda 2030 in the next 180 days.

3 Integrity – to make difficult changes for the common good even if this affects the profits, the popularity, the privileges of the few. To accept the voice and verdict of the public as the very first measure of the progress we have promised to deliver.

4 Togetherness - the house of multilateralism must be a home in which the world's people live in safety. They have nowhere else to go. Divided against itself, the house of multilateralism cannot stand. We cannot afford for nations to come together here only to compete each at the expense of the other. We cannot afford for development ministries to espouse motherhood and apple pie while our foreign and defence policies focus on maximising arms sales and our corporations evade taxes and abuse the environment. Nor can we afford to go on promoting prosperity at the expense of equality at the expense of sustainability at the expense of peace. All countries now need to contribute to a coherent agenda, where development simultaneously advances equality, sustainability, prosperity and peace. This agenda is not about one agency, one issue or cynical national interests. It is about what we can achieve together when we focus on the common good.

More than these four things, we need to get to work. Saferworld and many civil society organisations like us are with you, ready to galvanise political commitment, to help produce the data we need, to engage with and strengthen communities on the ground, to support lessons sharing. We pledge our efforts to help get peace, participation, people's security, gender equality, justice and integrity to come alive with and through your institutions.

Thank you.