

Do We Need a Global Convention of Common Principles for Building Peace?

Posted by Joan Russow

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By [Thalif Deen](#) - Reprint

Sweden's Minister for International Development Cooperation Peter Eriksson

STOCKHOLM, May 17 2019 (IPS) - When the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) concluded a three-day forum on "Peace and Development" on May 16, the primary focus was the daunting challenges threatening global security, including growing military interventions, spreading humanitarian emergencies, forced migration, increasing civil wars, extreme weather conditions triggered by climate change and widespread poverty and conflict-related hunger.

For many decades, said the Swedish Minister for International Development Cooperation Peter Eriksson, the rules of war were designed by the Geneva Conventions.

"Do we need to develop and adopt common principles for building peace?," he asked, before a gathering of more than 400 high-level policymakers, researchers and practitioners in the Swedish capital during the opening session of the sixth annual Stockholm Forum on Peace and Development

The United Nations, he pointed out, is currently implementing reforms for improved delivery on crisis response, sustaining peace and sustainable development while the World Bank has initiated the development of a new strategy for "Fragility, Conflict and Violence."

At the same time, the European Union (EU) is implementing its "Integrated Approach to Conflict and Crises" while the African Union (AU) is stepping up its "engagement beyond crisis response."

And the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development's Development Assistance Committee (OECD/DAC) has developed new recommendations on the Humanitarian-Development-Peace nexus.

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Are there sufficient mechanisms in place for bringing actors in crisis-response together with peace building and development actors? If not, what is needed?, Eriksson asked.

Jan Eliasson addressing the SIPRI Forum

Addressing the Forum, Jan Eliasson, chair of the Governing Board of SIPRI and a former UN Deputy Secretary-General, said over the past five years the Forum has shaped global discussions, developed innovative policies and built crucial bridges.

He said SIPRI has a Sahel programme focusing on local perspectives on peace and security, and local perspectives on international interventions in Mali and the region.

The Forum was co-hosted by SIPRI and the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

SIPRI, in cooperation with the UN World Food Programme (WFP), has been embarking on a project to better understand the linkages between food security and hunger and help improve the conflict-sensitivity of one of the most important crisis-response programmes, he noted.

“Our work on gender and social inclusivity in peace processes continues to move forward as we advance the knowledge-base and linkages between the SDGs.

SIPRI’s Deputy Director has joined the newly launched Lancet–Sight Commission, evaluating how health and gender equality contributes to peaceful, just and inclusive societies.

The global challenges can never be overcome in isolation but can only be tackled through dialogue and cooperation, Eliasson declared.

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Asked for a response, Susan Wilding, who heads the Geneva Office of CIVICUS, the global alliance of civil society organisations (CSOs), told IPS: “The answer to the Minister’s question should be yes, we do need to develop common principles for building peace.”

She said the OECD/DAC recommendations speak about ‘prevention always, development wherever possible, humanitarian action when necessary’ and the ‘humanitarian, development and peace nexus’.

But what they fail to take into account, especially with regards to the prevention portion, is the nexus with human rights.

“How can we expect to prevent conflict if we do not first focus on the prevention of human rights abuses? How can we expect to achieve the SDGs at a national level while human rights abuses and civic space restrictions prevail?,” she asked.

“If we do not start to see the link between human rights, civic space and the humanitarian, development and peace agenda, we will surely fail in our endeavours to reach any of the goals.”

Alex Shoebridge, Oxfam Novib’s Peacebuilding Advisor, told IPS that while the World Bank, the UN, and some donors have sought to reflect on and rework their contribution to building peace, there is a need for a more fundamental shift in international support.

Sustainable peace can only be achieved by locally-led efforts that are inclusive, interconnected, and go beyond Governments alone, he noted.

This is especially the case in contexts where Governments themselves are part of the conflict, as we see in an increasing number of contexts, including Middle Income Countries, Shoebridge pointed out.

“Women and young people must play a key role in shaping peaceful futures for their countries,

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and not be side-lined or involved in a tokenistic way.”

He said it also requires that external support to peacebuilding go beyond the project cycle and beyond technical solutions focussing on reform of state led institutions.

Research shows that it takes at least two decades for a country to emerge from and transform legacies of conflict. Conflicts are relational, with deep seated inequalities, historical grievances and negative gender norms sustaining and perpetuating conflicts between groups.

And 60 percent of conflicts take place in countries that have experienced conflict before, meaning that development and humanitarian assistance must do more to ensure peacebuilding outcomes are supported in the short, medium, and longer-term, he added.

“We can’t take our eye off the ball, when structural causes of conflict such as inequality and marginalization remain unaddressed,” declared Shoebridge.

comment by joan Russow

We could start with redefining what constitute security as true security; "common security"

“The US nuclear weapons are essential for our security” is the reason given, in Common Security a Programme for Disarmament.

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The Global Compliance Research Project has been working on an educational programme which includes: (a) Redefining “security” as common security. (b) Identifying threats to common security. (c) Placing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) --the most recent international expression of common security – within the context of international precedents. (d) Delineating some UN systemic constraints, which could be overcome, to achieve common security? (e) Making a modest proposal for a Universal Declaration of Common Security.

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REDEFINING WHAT CONSTITUTES TRUE SECURITY:

COMMON SECURITY

. “True security exists when all are secure, through common security.” (Olof Palme, 1982) whose objectives could be extended to include but not limited to the following:

(a) To achieve a state of peace, and disarmament; through reallocation of military expenses and delegitimization of war;

(b) To ensure the preservation, conservation and protection of the environment, the respect for the inherent worth of nature beyond human purpose, to reduce the ecological footprint and to move away from the current model of unsustainable and excessive overconsumption

(c) To enable socially equitable and environmentally sound employment, energy and transportation and the right to development,

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(d) To promote and fully guarantee respect for human rights including labour rights, civil and political rights, indigenous rights, social and cultural rights – right to food, to housing, to safe drinking water and sanitation , right to education and right to universally accessible not for profit health care system; right to water and sanitation

(e) To fulfill the Sustainable Development Goals.

(f) To respect the international rule of law, its instruments and the jurisdiction and decisions of the international Court of Justice