Geneva Peace Week 2022 Thematic Track Report

Peace is possible

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Geneva Peace Week (GPW) is an inclusive multi-stakeholder forum for open discussions across sectors and institutions. It emphasizes that each and every person, actor and institution has a role to play in building peace and resolving conflict. It recognizes that peacebuilding occurs in many different contexts and cuts across disciplines and sectors. In this sense, Geneva Peace Week breaks down professional silos in order to enable creative responses to violence, exclusion and insecurity. By synchronizing meetings and events on different topics related to the promotion of peace during one week, Geneva Peace Week maximizes synergies between organizations in Geneva and their international partners, focusing on the cross-cutting nature of peace.

The overarching theme of GPW22 is 'Peace is Possible'. GPW22 continued to build upon the thematic discussions that emerged in 2021, while creating spaces for contextualizing and discussing recent local and geopolitical developments, and how they impact the work of those working towards a more peaceful and just society globally. Geneva Peace Week 2022 started with a full opening day on Monday 31 October composed of five high level panels. Here are summaries of these events.

Peace is possible: A view from policy leaders

The day opened with a discussion between members of the Steering Committee of the Geneva Peacebuilding Platform that included Directors of its founding partners, namely the Geneva Graduate Institute's Centre on Conflict, Development and Peacebuilding (CCDP); the Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance (DCAF); the Geneva Centre for Security Policy (GCSP); Interpeace; and the Quaker United Nations Office, Geneva (QUNO).

Amb. Thomas Greminger, Director of the GCSP, stated that the Russian aggression against Ukraine is a crucial turning point for peace in Europe and the security order that has far-reaching implications. Such repercussions are among others the humanitarian cost with close to 8 million refugees in European countries but also the cost to civilian infrastructures in Ukraine. The Ukrainian government has estimated reconstruction costs around 750 million dollars. This international conflict will also have severe global economic implications: food and energy insecurity that will negatively affect peace and security over the globe. The embargo and sanctions taken by the international community against Russia will very likely create disruption of supply chains and therefore increase inequalities among local populations alongside a widespread political destabilization. The consequence of this breach of the economy will strengthen China and the United States dominance with other countries obliged to soon choose between these two powers to do business. There is a strong possibility that the world will move straight to a Cold War 2.0. Cooperative security will therefore be completely marginalized with security policy focusing on territorial defense thus challenging the

implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. A possible relaunch of an arms race might entail a disruption in dialogue and cooperation related to peace and security. There is a need for strong and effective multilateral discussions between international institutions. No business at all is not a solution. Switzerland's tenure as non-permanent state member (E10) at the UN Security Council in 2023-2024 could help bring the peace agenda to the fore.

Nozizwe Madlala-Routledge, Director of QUNO reminded the audience that we hear from reports in the war of Ukraine how women are specifically targeted for sexual violence and rape which are used as a weapon of war. Weaponization of identity is a key strategy to erode peace and to undermine social cohesion in order to divide people, whether it is race, ethnic origin, religion, gender or sexual identity. Racial injustice is also the lived experience of many people of color. Feminist leadership can therefore enables both men and women to attack a common enemy that is patriarchy/male domination. In the end, peace is merely the absence of war but the presence of issues such as allowing people to participate and deal with issues of diversity to achieve sustainable peace. To make peace possible, human security or people-centered security should be at the core of the peace agenda.

Mark Downes, Acting Director at DCAF mentioned the heavy focus on security, drowning the focus on the peace agenda in terms of policy attention and financing at the present time. How to balance over securitization with a continued focus on people-centered security will be one of the upcoming challenges in the current context. There has been a strong international reaction to the Ukrainian conflict that is creating a greater polarization and an isolationist security policy in Europe. Fundings increased on security budgets and will very likely impact peacebuilding fundings or Europe's external policy towards other conflicts or other situations of violence in the world. Beforehand the political understanding of security governance at the UN and across all regional organizations would be a need for checks and balances on how security is provided and funded such as a need for a space of dialogue around security, a role for civil society and a role for parliament. One of the challenges could be new alternative forms of security governance such as a top down approach that questions spaces for civil society, whether parliaments have roles to play, whether checks and balances are respected. There is a need for oversight and accountability regarding our security investments. Security governance is the key foundation on which political, social and economic development takes place. Security requires balance between effectiveness and accountability. It is a driver for peace and for development.

Simon Gimson, Vice-President and Chief Operating Office at Interpeace described Geneva as the city of optimism, thinking and doing. Peacebuilders sole objective is to create nonviolent management of the internal and inherent conflicts and tensions within

individuals. A disproportionate emphasis on the political solutions and not enough on other ways to achieve peace, security and stability but also the growth and development are an issue. We need to think about political actors not only for their potential to be disruptive and perpetrators of insecurity but also to be perpetrators of enduring peace. Social peace can be found first at the community level and is then brought to civil society organizations that bring people together. It has been demonstrated that civil society and local government leaders work well together as they are very responsive to problems they hear as first witnesses of day-to-day challenges. The feed up above is needed to reach sustainability: political issues must be addressed at the political ownership level. Indeed, changes need to be made at the political level to engage relevant national resources in the creation of national policies articulated into an international or regional space to successfully work. From a peacebuilding perspective, there exists the need to rethink stability because it is not only about the challenges of stabilization as we have seen in some cases such as Afghanistan or the Sahel region where peacebuilding actions did not work particularly well but a real need for strategic coherence where political actors are brought in an effective way to make peacebuilding efforts a success.

Prof. Keith Krause, Director of the CCDP recalled how peace operations do make a difference: they reduce the intensity and duration of violence, they help protect civilian lives and prevent displacement. It also improves the durability of peace settlements. The most important aspect of successful peace operations must take into account the local situation. The mantra of local ownership standalone might be counterproductive as it hands over responsibility. Peace settlements are embedded within and nourished by state-society relations. It involves empowering local groups through political activism and through knowledge, building the capability to hold formal institutions and power holders to account. To achieve that, there is a need to know and understand the language and the way in which these institutions operate. Power sharing and elections are an important element of it. It is a commitment to pluralist politics, the respect of minority rights. The Sustainable Development Goals capture the notion of just and inclusive peace societies that is a key notion to achieve enduring peace. The dichotomy of the international community versus the local context does not capture peace's reality as it is rather a cobweb of relationships. It is not only a top-down relationship where external actors collaborate only with power holders and national institutions but also a close work with civil society actors. Peace processes take an enormous amount of time. Donors, external actors, the UN and multilaterals tend to operate in a short term logic and they do it repeatedly. Time has come to recognize that peacebuilding operations are long term commitments sometimes between5, 10, 15 or up to 20 years to be successful.

Hope for the future: A youth perspective on peace

The day followed with story telling from young peacebuilders that shared their experiences from the lens of our four thematic tracks, namely, digital peace, environmental challenges, moving beyond securitization and rights and inequalities.

Artem Gladkykh, PeaceTech and Post-Conflict Reconstruction Project Manager at Essential Tech Centre at the EPFL took the floor first. His story started on the 24th February of this year at 4 a.m. with two massive explosions that made his apartment seemingly tremble from one side to another. it wasn't conceivable, lots of people didn't believe that it could happen in this way. During the first day, 160 cruise missiles struck the territory of Ukraine, with several impacts to the neighboring buildings just 100 meters away from his house. This situation forced him to flee and seek refuge in Switzerland where he joined the team of the essential tech centre and now runs the program which is solely focussed on the Ukrainian crisis and is called "PeaceTech and Post-Conflict Reconstruction". During the recent introduction of the Ukrainian recovery plan in Lugano this year and based on the continuous discussions with partners in Ukraine, the programme managed to identify 4 key dimensions: energy security, mine action, eco safety and health care. The lack of digital peace caused atrocities happening in Ukraine. From 2013, a massive social political polarization started, resulting in the so-called "Revolution of dignity". The Ukrainian country split into two with people that promoted so-called pro-russians values and those who were willing to be part of the European community. While conventional sets of weaponry are harmful, digital weapons are also very dangerous. His project will therefore focus on seeking the synergies with the existing flagship programme that is called the escalation of online polarization, a new initiative nurtured under the auspices of the Swiss Alliance of Base Tech. The main idea that stands behind this project is to decipher the exact level of online polarization on the web, by creating the online polarization index that will help people decipher the correct information.

The story telling continued with the testimony of Elsa Barron, Research Fellow at the Center for Climate and Security. The new era of insecurity is shaped and redefined by climate change which threatens the viability of life and communities on earth. As a consequence, it requires a new age of peacebuilding in response. The concept of climate change is not only reshaping security but is very much rooted in long-term structures of violence and inequality, namely the extraction of land, resources and bodies on our planet. During her research on Grassroots environmental peacebuilding approaches in Palestine she witnessed the following situation: The Nassar family, who owns a farm, is no stranger to structural and direct forms of violence and occupation that are related also to the environment such as cut-off to electricity and water, destruction of their crops, looming threat of eviction from their land. The family has a compelling vision

of peace that is rooted in their faith, family and community and hope for the next generation. They responded over decades to various forms of direct and structural violence on their land through sustainable and creative non-violent resistance to occupation. For instance, when electricity was cut-off to their land, they invested and created solar panels in order to become as sustainable and self-sufficient as possible. From an indigenous perspective, futurism is not just about looking to the next generations but is about connecting youth with generational and ancestral wisdom that is rooted in care for communities, respect for land and a vision of peace. Turning to generational wisdom and tradition rooted in non-violence creativity and resistance can be an hopeful way forward.

Bjørn Ihler, Co-founder and Director of the Khalifa Ihler Institute and Co-founder and Co-CEO of Glitterpill LLC shared with the audience his traumatic experience when in 2011 during a summer vacation, a far-right extremist and terrorist, Andrew Sperry, blew up the Norwegian government headquarters and attacked UTI summer camp where Bjørn and his friends, from the labour youth party, where staying. According to his perspective, there is a need to address the underlying tensions and conflicts within communities that view themselves to be in power. He worked closely with the Kofi Annan Foundation and young leaders from across the world trying to address the issues of peacebuilding as a means of countering radicalization into violent extremism in their own local communities. His work includes mapping events and incidents, and exposing networked behaviors across online platforms and communities. By understanding these network dynamics, the role of individual users and their bridging of online behaviors and offline events, his organization is striving to identify how these users and behaviors are connected.

The session closed with the speech of Yasmin Beldjelti, Human Rights & Refugees Programme Assistant at the Quaker United Nations Office. Since 1948 the Universal Declaration of Human Rights has been the international standard for human rights with as a core message, the inherent value of every human being and sets out a list of fundamental rights in the world regardless of their race, color, sex, language, religion, political or any other opinion. At an early age Yasmin realized that theory does not meet practice expectations. Being born in a mixed family and having resided in a dozen countries in Africa, Europe and the Middle East, she became sensitive to the multicultural tensions and socio-economic inequalities. Migration is a global act against inequalities when people move from places of conflict and poverty to places of peace and wealth. From spaces of no rights to spaces of rights, from the peripheries to the center. How we implement migration policies is critical for social cohesion in the future on a local and global scale. In humanitarian discourses, migrants are depicted as vulnerable and helpless victims while in contemporary security debates, migrants are portrayed as outlaws. Media further emphasizes the political imagination of asylum by

dehumanizing migrants and by depicting them as objects of threat to the nation-state. In many ways they are excluded from the law or abandoned by it. As their human and personal experiences become devalued, migrants and asylum seekers become abstract figures without a life story. Inclusivity contributes in promoting a society based less on competition for scarce resources, fear of the other but more on empowerment, self-determination, collective action and equal cooperation.

Making peace possible: What is "New" on the New Agenda for Peace ?

Organised by the Geneva Center for Security Policy (GCSP), this panel focused on the upcoming New Agenda for Peace that outlines six potentials areas, including but not limited to [1]:

1. Reducing strategic risks
2. Strengthening international foresight and capacities to identify and adapt to new risks
3. Reshaping responses to all forms of violence
4. Investing in prevention and peacebuilding
5. Supporting regional prevention
6. Putting women and girls at the centre

Over the years, the UN has separated itself from its core Charter, rendering many articles defunct or no longer respected that goes beyond Article 2(4) that reads: " All Members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state, or in any other manner inconsistent with the Purposes of the United Nations."[2] The UN is no longer morally consistent though the General Secretariat has an obligation to always abide by the Charter. This distancing has caused peace-making, that was the central focus of the original Agenda for Peace, to disappear. According to H.R.H. Prince Zeid Ra'ad Zeid Al-Hussein, President of the International Peace Institute and former United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, there is a need to restore faith in the Charter by including precision in peacebuilding processes that must include the whole spectrum of the emergence of conflicts such as misleading narratives or lies but not to only provide post-conflicts solutions such as building new infrastructures and forth.

The last Agenda for Peace dates back to 1992, a time characterised by optimism regarding our ability to use the Charter to create a better world. Arguably we are now navigating in a different environment. The New Agenda for Peace main attempt is to correct the worrying trends we observe today. These concerns include climate change

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[1] https://dppa.un.org/en/new-agenda-for-peace
[2] https://www.un.org/en/about-us/un-charter/full-text

and strains on multilateralism but should also resonate with the Youth, Peace and Security agenda. Reducing strategic risks, strengthening capacity to adapt and foresee new risks, supporting regional prevention and putting women and girls at the centre of policy processes are just some of the Secretary-General's priorities for the New Agenda for Peace. Member States and regional entities are currently being consulted for input by several UN agencies working on the New Agenda for Peace. Representation is a top priority for the General Secretariat, especially geographical representation of views. In addition, NGOs and think tanks should nudge the work of the Secretariat. "There cannot be one narrow set of voices helping to prepare this New Agenda for Peace" says Elizabeth Spehar, Assistant Secretary-General for Peacebuilding Support at the United Nations.

The GCSP, through the voice of its Director, Amb. Thomas Greminger, recalls that business as usual is not the way to go and would no longer function but that no business at all is also not the way forward. There is a need for a strong collaboration within the United Nations in the face of current challenges. International stakeholders witness aggressive nationalism with the logic of war that has the upper hand on peacebuilding processes. The UN initiatives to reinvigorate a peace agenda is therefore very timely but at the same time very challenging. New technologies are already transforming the way in which wars are fought. Prevention is therefore a key as we need to become better at using new technologies to build sustainable peace. There is also a need to strengthen our capacity for strategic foresight for anticipation and prevention of conflicts. Sustainable peace can only be achieved through collaborative approaches.

DCAF, the Geneva Center for Security Sector Governance, represented by Jolie-Ruth Morand, Project Coordinator at the Sub-Saharan Africa Division , brought a field perspective to the conversation with a focus on the Sahel region including Mali and Burkina Faso. In the process of rethinking the Agenda for Peace, the international community should learn from the mistakes done in the past and the way business is conducted. Those who face insecurity should be at the center of this process. How can they be represented, how will they be heard ? Practice has demonstrated that our current way of doing business is not efficient, there have been several coups in recent years in both Mali and Burkina Faso. It indeed takes time to adapt, adjust, understand the wider context and the root causes. Listening should lead to approaches that put local populations at the centre of the process rather than their representatives. "Finding solutions from the inside" and finding resilient people, who will continue to fight to ensure that good governance and human rights remain on the agenda with a people-centered approach.

The last input came from Dr. Adam Day, from the United Nations University Center for Policy Research in Geneva. Though the original version of the Agenda for Peace was

adopted at an amazing level of cooperation in the UN security council in 1992, today's reality, that is almost the "polar opposite" of the situation then, will prevent such effervescence to be recreated. The lack of inclusion in the multilateral system is probably the biggest issue. Small groups of powerful states instrumentalise the United Nations, though such crises as the Ukrainian war could prompt a shift. Dr. Day also mentions that in the light of recent events, nuclear weapons should be in the focus as the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) has held for decades but could come down very quickly.

Reshaping peace processes: Catalyzing collective change

Reshaping peace processes: Catalyzing collective change was a special event organised by the Principles for Peace initiative.

Opening Ceremony

The day closed with the official GPW22 Opening Ceremony with official addresses from Amb. Jürg Lauber, Permanent Representative of Switzerland to the United Nations and other International Organizations in Geneva and Tatiana Valovaya, Director-General of the United Nations at Geneva via video message.

Amb. Lauber recalled that the theme of the GPW22 may seem ambitious at a time of growing instability in international relations but has emphasized that the overarching theme "peace is possible" is not a vague or a naïve presumption. It is a requirement enshrined in the United Nations Charter and in international law. The international community is endowed with instruments and international organizations to forge this peace. Switzerland, through its diplomacy, works for peace, conflict resolution and as a facilitator of dialogue or a reliable and neutral mediator. In the recent past, Switzerland has supported 17 peace processes and facilitated ceasefires in 6 countries. In addition, the Swiss confederation offers training tools to other states in the areas of the rule of law, human rights, institution building and post-conflict reconstruction. As of 1st January 2023, Switzerland will have a seat of non-permanent members on the UN Security Council. The government has therefore identified 4 priorities as follows: building a lasting peace, protecting the civilian population, acting for climate security and strengthening the efficiency of the UN Security Council. During its tenure, Switzerland will highlight the contribution of Geneva actors for peace as it is home to 39 international organizations.

The panel followed with a conversation with Volker Türk, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, for his first public intervention since he took up his official functions on 17 October 2022. As an introductory remark, his Excellency reminds

us that the UN needs to work hard to overcome its internal silos, not to think of peace operations, development, human rights and humanitarian separately as they are all interconnected: one holistic endeavor we need to strive for. The human rights system is crucial as first early warning signals that something could potentially go wrong. For instance when neighbords no longer get along, the increase in violence against women or when young people who express their frustrations because they have no possibility to participate or assemble in different ways and means as seen during the Arba Spring, when civic space is repressed and issues of grievances are unaddressed like seen in the recent protestations in Iran. Marginalization exclusionary policies around the world, both in the global North and the global South lead to the dehumanization of the other which is the direct correlation between early human rights warnings and the absence of peace. The Office of the High Commissioner for Human in Geneva directly liaises with the peacebuilding support office (PBSO) and the peacebuilding commission in New York. The peacebuilding funds play a key role in supporting his office by financing field trip missions to meet civil society that promotes societal changes. Colleagues on the ground are essential to his mandate as they are knowledgeable about national human rights systems and civil society groups. PBSO (peacebuilding support office). This collaboration is important from a prevention perspective. Human rights are the glue that brings people together as it brings out the best in humanity.

The Ceremony ended with a panel discussion between Margot Wallström, Chair of the Environment of Peace initiative, former Swedish Minister for Foreign Affairsa and European Commissioner for the Environment and UN Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Hina Jilani, member of the Elders, lawyer and civil society activist, leading activist in Pakistan's women's movement and international champion of human rights (online) and Achim Wennmann, Director of Strategic Partnerships at the Geneva Graduate Institute.

Ms. Wallström started with a quote of the former American Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright, who said: "I'm an optimist who worries a lot". Peacebuilders are restricted by the overwhelming evidence of crises that are happening right now. We know what climate change is doing to our planet. There is a real threat on the use of nuclear weapons. It is no coincidence that peacekeeping missions take place in the countries most affected by climate change. Democracy is being under threat or undermined and its core pillars attacked. It restricts our thinking : we do not dare consider what kind of big changes would be necessary. Environment of Peace is an important project because we can demonstrate the link between climate change and security. To this extent, SIPRI, Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, produced a report with several recommendations on these matters.[3] Due to a deficit in

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[3] https://environmentofpeace.org/

governance, people do no longer trust their leadership as leaders do not show the necessary responsibility or accountability. A strong public opinion is needed regarding the investment in all our resources in military spending that now exceeds two trillion dollars.

Contemporary threats to security go far beyond wars between states. "Today peace can no longer be associated with the absence of war", says Ms. Jalani. All over the world communities are besieged with violence in the name of religion, ethnicity and rejection of diverse identities. Intolerance, hatred and extremism are destroying the values of humanity. It can become cherished ideas by a world shaken by experiences of mass, flagrant and systematic violations such as those resulting from apartheid, all forms of racial discrimination, colonialism or foreign domination or occupation. International accountability fora and mechanisms are in need of modifications to offer more effective means of accountability. In the case of the Russia-Ukraine War, while the International Criminal Court (ICC) can investigate war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide, under the current circumstances, the ICC cannot investigate the alleged crime of aggression. At the same time the international court of justice or the European court of human rights may have roles to play in the Ukrainian situation but cannot hold individuals accountable for crimes of aggression. The elders have therefore suggested the mandate of a new international or hybrid tribunal to investigate and prosecute the alleged crime of aggression in Ukraine to address this gap. It would be complementary to other procedures. Evidence gathering should begin immediately via an independent investigation.It is important to recognize that international accountability mechanisms like the ICC or any special tribunals need more support and resources to conduct investigations into alleged crimes committed by all parties to conflicts. We also have to make sure that the model of investigations or the means employed by these mechanisms are effective, transparent and accountable to the international community. Both the UN general assembly and the Human Rights Council should work in unity.

The situation of women in many parts of the world is also of concern: their rights are violated in the name of religion, they become vulnerable to prejudice, to exclusion and public repudiation, not only by state forces but also by social actors. The introduction of exceptions to the rule of law, through special legislation on security or against terrorism have affected the ability of national judicial systems to protect people from arbitrary actions and to hold perpetrators to account. A perception that security imperatives justify deviation from recognized standards of human rights is problematic. It encourages xenophobia, intolerance and hatred in many societies. Genuine representatives democracies are the solution with ample space for citizens to participate and with credible accountability systems. The respect for human rights is the first measure towards holding effective accountability.

From M. Wennmann perspective, universities also play a key role in peacebuilding efforts as places of learning and research. Research can help answer a call from society to help understand ongoing crises. It is also a place for discussion: due to the polarization on certain topics, there is the need for a trusted place where all conflicted views can interact. This is where Universities play a key role as moderators.

Given that European funds of most governments have been ransacked for military investments, one might wonder who is courageous enough to invest in peace in the current context of over securitization. There is for instance no private investors that are ready to invest for peace because the outcome is unsure, uncertain and is de facto a risky investment. Channels of communications between polarized communities should hence be at the heart of peacebuilding efforts to achieve sustainable peace.