



# General Assembly

Distr.: General  
29 November 2022

Original: English

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## Seventy-seventh session

Agenda item 14

### Culture of peace

## Promotion of a culture of peace\*

### Report of the Secretary-General

#### *Summary*

In the present report, submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution [76/68](#), the Secretary-General presents an overview of actions undertaken by Member States and the United Nations system to promote a culture of peace, focusing on the main trends and issues, scaled-up activities and progress made during the period from May 2021 to April 2022.

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\* The present report was submitted after the deadline so as to include the most recent information.



## I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 76/68 on follow-up to the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report to the Assembly at its seventy-seventh session on actions taken across the United Nations system and by Member States to implement the Programme of Action and to promote a culture of peace and non-violence. Since 2014, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has coordinated the preparation of the report and has done so for the present report with contributions from 28 United Nations entities.<sup>1</sup> The report covers the activities of the United Nations entities working in partnership with Member States to promote a culture of peace and non-violence during the period from May 2021 to April 2022.

2. A culture of peace, leveraging intercultural and interreligious dialogue, where universal humanity is recognized across its diversity and conflict between and within Member States is resolved without violence, is central to the founding mission of the United Nations. There has been growing recognition within the United Nations system of the centrality that a culture of peace and dialogue plays in supporting its aims of security, development and equality for all. Indeed, the pursuit of peace is inextricably linked to the realization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals. It is an area of work also positioned to reflect the interlinkages between peace, development, humanitarian work and human rights. As Member States consider how to deal with emerging risks from war to climate change to broadening inequalities and economic disruption, the work of the United Nations on a culture of peace can be seen as a natural support for the New Agenda for Peace and its role to promote peace and prevent conflict, outlined in the report of the Secretary-General entitled “Our Common Agenda”, issued in response to the UN75 Declaration, which included a call for reinvigorated multilateralism with the United Nations at its centre.

3. It is a critical time to harness the existing knowledge and experience of promoting a culture of peace and dialogue, given increasing conflicts at the State and inter-State levels. The war in Ukraine alone is affecting an estimated 16 million Ukrainians, who are in need of support and protection. It is affecting women and men in different ways and is exacerbating pre-existing inequalities owing to the disruption of global supplies of food, energy and other key resources. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has reported on many protection concerns, including gender-based violence, conflict-related sexual violence, child protection and human trafficking. Moreover, early projections indicate that, should the war be prolonged, up to 90 per cent of the Ukrainian population could face poverty and extreme economic vulnerability that would significantly jeopardize its access to

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<sup>1</sup> Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, International Organization for Migration, International Telecommunication Union, Office of the Envoy of the Secretary-General on Technology, Office of the Secretary-General’s Envoy on Youth, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, United Nations Alliance of Civilizations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Department of Global Communications, Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, Development Coordination Office, United Nations Development Programme, Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, United Nations Environment Programme, United Nations Human Settlements Programme, Office of Counter-Terrorism, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect, United Nations Population Fund, United Nations University, United Nations Volunteers programme, World Intellectual Property Organization and World Tourism Organization.

human rights, especially economic and social rights.<sup>2</sup> Amid multiple interrelated crises, the Secretary-General created the Global Crisis Response Group on Food, Energy and Finance.

4. The United Nations response to rising inequality and discrimination, including the growth of xenophobia, misogyny, antisemitism and Islamophobia, has included the creation of the United Nations Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech, the establishment of the Permanent Forum on People of African Descent,<sup>3</sup> the Secretary-General's call to action for human rights, and the UNESCO Global Call against Racism and its Global Forum against Racism and Discrimination.

5. With the close of the International Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures (2013–2022), the year 2022 marks an important moment for the United Nations to reflect on and strategize regarding the future direction of its work to promote a culture of peace and interreligious and intercultural dialogue.

## II. Current challenges

6. The present report is written at a time of instability and crises affecting efforts to promote a culture of peace and interreligious and intercultural dialogue. The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has had a huge human cost, including more than 6.5 million deaths as at mid-September 2022,<sup>4</sup> while exacerbating income inequality within and among countries and existing inequalities across a range of axes, including those related to the economy, health, education, race and ethnicity, disability, age and gender.

7. The pandemic has seen an increase in violence against women,<sup>5</sup> effectively rolling back progress. With regard to the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in 2023, there is a need to renew and expand frameworks and standards for preventing and addressing violations of diverse rights and freedoms, including those relating to violence against women, hate speech and harassment of all kinds. One of the strengths of promoting a culture of peace and dialogue is the ability to look holistically and act in those areas. For example, eliminating domestic violence is an indispensable stepping stone to building a culture of peace. That is included in the report of the Secretary-General entitled "Our Common Agenda", specifically the proposal that the United Nations system develop an emergency response plan for the eradication of violence against women and girls.

8. Growing global fragility and insecurity have arguably contributed to a fertile environment for political and social instability and armed conflict. This reality has been borne out in multiple contexts globally, both within and between Member States, over the past year. Increased confrontations between major global economies have the potential to shape the international agenda for years to come. Bold action is required, along with work to address the consequences of military coups in several countries and the continuation of long-standing conflicts in the Middle East and Africa. The detrimental impact of the conflict in Ukraine on human rights and

<sup>2</sup> For more information, see [www.undp.org/press-releases/every-day-delayed-peace-will-accelerate-freefall-poverty-ukraine-warns-undp](https://www.undp.org/press-releases/every-day-delayed-peace-will-accelerate-freefall-poverty-ukraine-warns-undp).

<sup>3</sup> See General Assembly resolution 75/314.

<sup>4</sup> Data from the World Health Organization, COVID-19 Dashboard. Available at <https://covid19.who.int/> (accessed on 5 December 2022).

<sup>5</sup> Ramya Emandi and others, *Measuring the Shadow Pandemic: Violence against Women during COVID-19* (United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Women Count, 2021).

security, as well as sustainable development, requires peacebuilding, dialogue and integrated action to shore up just political and economic infrastructure and governance.

9. The climate crisis provides another significant contextual factor to consider when promoting a culture of peace and interreligious and intercultural dialogue. While the need to cut emissions at a large scale was acknowledged at the twenty-sixth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change,<sup>6</sup> there was also a sense that the collective political will was not enough<sup>7</sup> to overcome contradictions and bring about collaborative plans ambitious enough to meet such targets. The catastrophic impact of climate change on ecosystems in marine and terrestrial areas, from coral reefs to mountains to polar regions, is already being felt, imposing additional strains on the most vulnerable groups and creating environments conducive to social conflict. The effects of climate change have led to changes in species interactions, affecting the structure and functioning of ecosystems, in turn threatening food security and other components of human well-being, eroding livelihoods and resulting in abrupt and large-scale displacements. The cascading interconnections are known to fuel conflicts systemically, especially if large-scale interventions are not implemented rapidly and effectively to aid the most vulnerable. The challenges emerging from climate change, nature loss and pollution, as well as the lack of cooperation at the highest level, require urgent and coherent responses. Approaches grounded in robust scientific evidence in these areas that promote and enhance multilateral solutions must be at the centre of a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach if meaningful progress is to be made in this decade.

10. Although the digital space deserves particular consideration as a platform for promoting a culture of peace and dialogue, it also provides space for and accelerates the spread of disinformation and hate speech. Such benefits and risks were amplified in relation to the pandemic and attempts to address it. Where the pandemic served to accelerate innovative and inclusive uses of technology for connecting, working and providing services when physical proximity and travel were not possible, it also accelerated the spread of disinformation. While the positive developments are seen as a step forward in accessibility, the digital divide grew wider, given that the positive developments were not equally available to all,<sup>8</sup> with specific regard to education and health care. During this period, the work of the joint project of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) known as Giga was accelerated to connect schools around the world to the Internet, while the Department of Global Communications implemented its Verified initiative to slow the spread of COVID-19-related misinformation. In the report of the Secretary-General on the road map for digital cooperation: implementation of the recommendations of the High-level Panel on Digital Cooperation, the ambitious goal of achieving universal connectivity by 2030 was set as one of eight priority areas for action.<sup>9</sup> In seeking to promote a culture of peace, attention to the digital sphere will be vital in the coming decade, including through the forthcoming Global Digital Compact, which the Secretary-General hopes will be adopted by Heads of State and Government at the Summit of the Future, to be held in September 2024.

<sup>6</sup> See the Glasgow Climate Pact and other decisions at <https://unfccc.int/decisions>.

<sup>7</sup> See [www.un.org/en/climatechange/cop26](http://www.un.org/en/climatechange/cop26).

<sup>8</sup> United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, "COVID-19 pushes more government activities online despite persisting digital divide" (New York, 2022).

<sup>9</sup> See document [A/74/821](#).

## Box 1

**Safeguarding the digital sphere towards building a culture of peace and dialogue**

At the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) General Conference held in November 2021, the Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence was adopted. It is the first recommendation of its kind, an important global milestone towards shaping the rule of law in the digital world. Artificial intelligence is already pervasive in daily life. However, issues of significant bias and threats to privacy, dignity and agency require action to ensure that artificial intelligence develops in an ethical and constructive way going forward. The recommendation, unanimously adopted by the 193 UNESCO Member States, provides a framework for safeguarding values, including human rights, diversity and peace, as well as principles such as proportionality, fairness and privacy, and offers tangible guidelines to shape the development of artificial intelligence in an effective and ethical way. Building a future that is sustainable and just, according to common standards to guide scientific and technological progress and to accompany the digital transition, is the ambition of the recommendation.

11. Action in favour of a culture of peace contributes directly to Goal 16. However, beyond that, work in this area arguably has a much wider role to play in the post-COVID-19 recovery and within larger goals of the United Nations, including the renewal and reform of the United Nations system itself. There is a growing consensus that efforts to build more inclusive and resilient communities will require a new social contract in which systemic inequalities, including cultural and identity-based grievances, are meaningfully addressed before they lead to conflict and violence. This requires processes that enable both the healing of past injustices and prevention of the emergence of social violence at all levels in the future, whether verbal or physical. Equally, there is strong recognition that, as a result, integrated solutions for constructing and sustaining peace are essential. In this regard, the promotion of a culture of peace and interreligious and intercultural dialogue remains underexploited in its role of building more sustainable societies and, more broadly, in supporting upstream efforts towards peace as a foundation for advancing the Goals.

### **III. A culture of peace in COVID-19 recovery efforts and in supporting conflict prevention, sustaining peace and sustainable development**

#### **A. Coordination and leadership to strengthen the promotion of a culture of peace**

12. The confluence of multiple intersecting crises over the reporting period reinforced the need for inter-agency coordination and leadership to foster a culture of peace. As global geopolitical conflicts have placed pressure on the normative, structural and individual foundations needed for inclusive communities, United Nations entities have been compelled to find new forms of integrated, multilevel action in favour of a culture of peace. To meet the challenges, a range of diverse impactful actions has been taken to establish and reorient collaborative, system-wide strategies, often leveraging the innovative potential of digital technologies.

13. Efforts towards a culture of peace continue to be strengthened through actions to reinforce the normative standards supporting inclusion and human rights. UNESCO has been leading the process to develop and adopt a newly revised version of the Recommendation concerning Education for International Understanding, Cooperation and Peace and Education relating to Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms of 1974. An extensive consultation process has been undertaken, aimed at the submission of the revised recommendation at the forty-second session of the UNESCO General Conference, in 2023. Likewise, the High-Level Officials Meeting organized by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in December 2021 led to the identification of 20 key priorities for implementing the Global Compact on Refugees, many of which help to enable a culture of peace, including: (a) facilitating more systematic, inclusive and meaningful refugee participation in forums and processes in which strategies are being developed or decisions are being made that influence their lives; (b) improving cooperation to address root causes and build peace in countries of origin; and (c) making better use of combined humanitarian, development and peace capacities to achieve the objectives of the Compact. Similarly, the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate continued to urge States to further develop their programmes and initiatives to enhance dialogue and understanding both online and offline, pursuant to Council resolution 1624 (2005), in the knowledge that the promotion of intercultural dialogue and understanding is a key element in an effective and comprehensive response to the threats of terrorism and violent extremism.

14. In line with practice from previous years, the United Nations system has served as an important convening space to craft coordinated strategy in favour of a culture of peace. Building on the Global Call against Racism of 2020, UNESCO presented its Roadmap against Racism and Discrimination, a holistic vision to address discrimination through education, culture and scientific cooperation. A flagship of the Roadmap, the UNESCO Global Forum against Racism and Discrimination was established as a yearly event to bring together the voices of various stakeholders to address the issue, and its second edition was held in Mexico in November 2022. Similarly, the twenty-first session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, held in May 2022, addressed a wide range of issues relating to Indigenous Peoples, including conflict resolution, access to justice, and truth and reconciliation, and provided direction for the International Decade of Indigenous Languages (2022–2032), which was recently proclaimed by the General Assembly.<sup>10</sup>

15. The work of various inter-agency networks have provided internal convening opportunities for more coordinated action towards a culture of peace. UNESCO joined the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) as Co-Chair of the United Nations network on racial discrimination and protection of minorities in 2021, bringing together 20 United Nations entities to determine an operational strategy. Likewise, the Inter-agency Task Force on Religion and Development continued to meet regularly to coordinate the engagement of the United Nations system with faith-based organizations, connecting United Nations entities with more than 700 faith-based non-governmental organization partners working on the national, regional and global levels. In a similar vein, UNESCO adopted the Khiva Process, a new platform initiated by Uzbekistan in October 2021 to strengthen cooperation and multilateralism among Member States in Central Asia that was developed from successful work to date on the legacy of the UNESCO Silk Roads Programme.

16. Actions were reinforced to support national leadership of initiatives in favour of a culture of peace during the reporting period. The Economic and Social

<sup>10</sup> See General Assembly resolution 74/135.

Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) facilitated all-inclusive technical dialogues for recovery and peace in Libya and the Syrian Arab Republic, and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) supported the Government of Mali in establishing a national forum for religious actors with the aim of strengthening dialogues on peace and stability. Similarly, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the Government of Colombia cooperated on the implementation of the country's peace agreement. UNDP supported the Government of Kyrgyzstan in developing legislation on religious freedom and countering extremist activity, while the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) supported the Government of Pakistan in developing a strategy for the engagement of young people in the civic and political arena. UNFPA worked with the Interreligious Council of Bosnia and Herzegovina to build a network of 50 youth peer peacebuilders from different ethnic and religious communities.

17. Similar efforts have supported the development of regional leadership capacities, with the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, along with other United Nations agencies, supporting the League of Arab States in developing a regional strategy on the youth, peace and security agenda, recognizing the important contribution of young people to shaping a culture of peace. The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) launched, with the Regional Women's Lobby for Peace, Security and Justice in Southeast Europe, the Regional Academy for Women Leadership and Mediation<sup>11</sup> to build capacities and encourage young women in leadership and mediation roles with a focus on politics, decision-making, peacebuilding, and COVID-19 response and recovery.

#### Box 2

##### **Convening and coordinating global action against hate speech**

The Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect has played a key role in the implementation of the United Nations Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech during the past year. The Office provided technical support for the consideration of content for General Assembly resolution 75/309 on promoting interreligious and intercultural dialogue and tolerance in countering hate speech. The resolution was adopted with a significant level of support and marked an important milestone in countering hate speech globally, including its mandate for the first International Day for Countering Hate Speech, 18 June 2022. Under the Plan of Action, the Office has supported the development of context- and country-specific plans of action, including by supporting Member States in addressing and countering hate speech. In October 2021, the Office organized, jointly with UNESCO, a multi-stakeholder forum on addressing hate speech through education, as well as an interministerial conference on education as a tool to address such speech. Convening high-level stakeholders across sectors, in May 2021, the Office organized a round table with social media companies, civil society organizations and United Nations entities to galvanize and coordinate action to address online hate speech.

18. Valuable progress was made in advancing various strategic and financial instruments to reinforce United Nations coordination and leadership within the area of a culture of peace. The Peacebuilding Fund, administered by the Department of

<sup>11</sup> See <http://rwlsee.org/2020/12/on-the-launching-of-the-regional-academy-for-women-leadership-and-mediation-rawlm-by-the-rwlsee/>.



Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, financed a wide range of activities, approving a record \$195 million in new programming in 2021. The work was carried out across 31 countries, and Member States in particular welcomed the Fund's delivery of gender-responsive targets, which received 47 per cent of investments. The efforts of the Development Coordination Office to reinvigorate the resident coordinator system are also of note, which continued to provide opportunities for the transversal integration of a culture of peace within the planning of United Nations entities at the country level and which reinforced analytical and coordination capacities to that effect through strengthened capacities within the offices of resident coordinators. The efforts were aligned with the aim of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Strengthening Programmatic Integration of improving cross-pillar coherence and collaboration. Likewise, the United Nations Volunteers programme continued to make a system-wide contribution to work in the area, deploying 10,921 volunteers globally in 2021, many of whom were focused on peacebuilding and dialogue. The deployments have been an important means of boosting diversity among United Nations personnel and of fostering specific engagement with marginalized groups, within as well as outside the United Nations system.

## **B. Knowledge and evidence to bolster the promotion of a culture of peace**

19. The promotion of a culture of peace relies on the existence of a strong foundation of knowledge and evidence to both understand and direct operational needs, priorities and strategies. A lack of investment in knowledge and data systems relating to a culture of peace continues to present challenges to efforts to promote such a culture as an operational strategy within the work of the United Nations system. On a positive note, there are signs of platforms and networks being mobilized, often leveraging community and Indigenous knowledge. As detailed below, progress has been made in applying knowledge to enhance policy and practice in favour of a culture of peace and in broadening the accessibility of knowledge of and data on a culture of peace. Nevertheless, and as is clear from the details provided in the present report, further investment in knowledge is needed to clarify core concepts related to a culture of peace, as well as direct operational investment in it as an approach.

20. An important body of research has emerged in which the contribution of actions to build a culture of peace for preventing hate speech, violent extremism and conflict is explored. The United Nations University produced context-specific and wider work in the area, including the report entitled *Rule of Law and Sustaining Peace: Towards More Impactful, Effective Conflict Prevention*,<sup>12</sup> which provides an exploration of how United Nations rule of law support contributes to lowering the risks of violent conflict; a study that provides an examination of digital transformation and governance systems;<sup>13</sup> a report that provides an exploration of the difference between inclusion and gender sensitivity in peace mediation;<sup>14</sup> and research on managing exits from armed conflict.<sup>15</sup> Similarly, UNDP produced a study on the factors driving violent extremism, as well as a guidance note on the use of online data to prevent violent extremism and address hate speech.<sup>16</sup> The ITU report on measuring digital

<sup>12</sup> Available at <https://collections.unu.edu/view/UNU:8342>.

<sup>13</sup> Available at <https://egov.unu.edu/research/e-governance-and-digital-transformation-in-guinea-bissau.html#outline>.

<sup>14</sup> Available at <https://collections.unu.edu/view/UNU:8668>.

<sup>15</sup> Available at <https://cpr.unu.edu/research/projects/meac.html#outputs>.

<sup>16</sup> Available at [www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2022-05/UNDP-Guidance-Note-Risk-Informed-Utilization-of-Online-Data-for-PVE-and-Addressing-Hate-Speech.pdf](http://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2022-05/UNDP-Guidance-Note-Risk-Informed-Utilization-of-Online-Data-for-PVE-and-Addressing-Hate-Speech.pdf).



development<sup>17</sup> provided a valuable benchmark of key information and communications technology indicators and an examination of how the digital divide could contribute to a lack of understanding of cultural differences. Likewise, UNESCO, with the Institute for Economics and Peace, advanced existing work to produce the data-led Framework for Enabling Intercultural Dialogue that is presented in a new report entitled *We Need to Talk: Measuring Intercultural Dialogue for Peace And Inclusion*,<sup>18</sup> which promises to make an important contribution to supporting concrete strategies to advance a culture of peace. In the Asia-Pacific region, UN-Women, in partnership with Ridgeway Information and with contributions from the organization Girl Security, developed Navigating Disinformation,<sup>19</sup> a free online e-learning module that is aimed at validating and amplifying the voices of girls, women and gender minorities in online interactions and at helping users to identify, challenge and stop the distribution of hate speech and misinformation.

21. Knowledge collected through participatory processes with Indigenous communities and marginalized populations can help to bolster their critical contribution to promoting a culture of peace, in particular against the backdrop of their disproportionate exposure to environmental, social and security risks. The UNESCO Local and Indigenous Knowledge Systems programme advocates the inclusive recognition of such knowledge systems and initiated community-based research in six African countries (Burkina Faso, Chad, Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda and United Republic of Tanzania) during the reporting period. The programme emphasizes conflict-sensitive adaptation and peacebuilding between pastoralists and farmers, as well as between followers of different faiths. The Urban Planning and Infrastructure in Migration Contexts project of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) has worked to incorporate migrant communities and their specific circumstances and needs into urban planning processes and is currently being piloted in Cameroon, Egypt and Jordan. Similarly, in Colombia, UNODC has contributed to a strategy aimed at supporting specific marginalized ethnic communities, incorporating Afro-Colombian philosophies of life and ways of understanding therein and processes of discussion and validation with the groups involved. UNESCO has worked to develop the Youth As Researchers initiative in response to the COVID-19 pandemic by supporting young people in creating meaningful and robust evidence relating to the challenges faced in that regard, in particular relating to psychosocial impacts. Its findings were shared with policymakers at a conference held in March 2022.

22. Important work has been carried out during the reporting period to strengthen the creation and sharing of knowledge specifically for policymaking in favour of a culture of peace. For example, UNDP published guidance on integrating mental health and psychosocial support into peacebuilding, emphasizing the need to strengthen connections between work on religion, mental health and psychosocial support, as well as on preventing violent extremism. OHCHR, jointly with the Equitas International Centre for Human Rights Education, has published a compendium of good practices in human rights education that, building on research and mapping work, is aimed at supporting sound decision-making and implementation in the area.

<sup>17</sup> Available at [www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Statistics/Documents/facts/FactsFigures2021.pdf](http://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Statistics/Documents/facts/FactsFigures2021.pdf).

<sup>18</sup> Available at <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000382874?posInSet=1&queryId=da3e7273-bff0-484d-81db-3adfb646359e>.

<sup>19</sup> See <https://unw.thinkific.com>.

## Box 3

**Drawing on evidence and data to guide proactive action for peace**

In partnership with the Peace Research Institute Oslo (Norway) and Uppsala University (Sweden), the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) developed a violence early warning tool for the Arab region.<sup>a</sup> With the use of machine learning technologies, the tool predicts the probability of State-based<sup>b</sup> deadly violence up to 36 months in the future. It generates monthly forecasts at the national and subnational levels across Western Asia to enhance preparedness and provide early warnings, allowing for early or pre-emptive action by national and international institutions. In addition, the forecasts have several thematic submodels that provide entry points to understand how certain predictors, such as drought and climate variables, might interact with other known root causes or drivers of violence. Based on a human security approach that draws on data from myriad conflict-related themes specific to the Arab region, the technology can facilitate the understanding of the challenges faced by countries and communities by identifying hotspots of emergencies and monitoring the impact or effectiveness of policy interventions over time. It can, in turn, support a more integrated connection between early warning and policy responses.

<sup>a</sup> See <https://risks.unescwa.org/>. The geographical coverage of the tool comprises the membership of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, as well as Djibouti, namely: Algeria, Bahrain, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, the State of Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, the Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates and Yemen.

<sup>b</sup> State-based deadly violence refers to fatal intra-State or inter-State violence fought to seize or keep control over a government or over a territory, in which at least one of the parties involved is a government of a State. It includes attacks by armed groups and terrorist organizations against government targets, such as government and embassy buildings, military posts, government officials, soldiers and police officers. It also includes military action, such as air strikes or other armed violence exercised by a government against another government or armed group. Civilian fatalities associated with actions against military targets are included. Fatalities in events involving civilians exclusively are not included.

23. Efforts to render knowledge related to a culture of peace accessible, and to increase outreach regarding research in this area, have been enhanced. Digital platforms have continued to be developed and used as a mode for knowledge-sharing. Operating at multiple levels, they range from those designed to inform and promote understanding for all to those aimed at technical or strategic leadership. Examples include the UNESCO Interactive atlas of cultural interactions along the Silk Roads and its Knowledge Bank, as well as the UNDP launch of a research portal on prevention of violence extremism.<sup>20</sup>

### C. Developing capacities to promote a culture of peace

24. There is broad acknowledgement that communities, practitioners and decision makers at the local, national, regional and global levels need to be equipped with the capacities, including skills, technical knowledge and tools, to promote and benefit from a culture of peace. Given the diverse range of factors that enable the promotion

<sup>20</sup> See <https://pveportal.org/research-products/>.

of a culture of peace and dialogue, there are many areas of work that can support the development of the capacities needed to make effective policy and practice. Throughout the reporting period, considerable work was conducted to train and equip stakeholders at the regional and global levels with such capacities, together with the engagement of States and government institutions, community and religious leaders, and communities, families and young people.

25. Various United Nations entities have undertaken a wide range of efforts, working with government officials and representatives to enhance the diverse set of institutional capacities that can support a culture of peace. ESCWA developed a conceptual framework aimed at continuing to enhance the knowledge of high-level stakeholders in the Arab region regarding the impact of climate-related risk factors on the outbreak of violence.<sup>21</sup> UNODC, through its Programme on Safeguarding Sport from Corruption and Crime, has supported over 7,000 representatives of criminal justice authorities and sports organizations, including the International Olympic Committee and the Fédération Internationale de Football Association, by organizing over 200 activities to address corruption and crime risks that can undermine the role of sport as an enabler of sustainable development and promoter of a culture of peace. UNODC has also worked to support measures designed to bolster institutional transparency and accountability at the national level, including in the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Haiti. The Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs organized and carried out high-level online training sessions on religion and mediation, with the objective of helping participants to hone and apply their analytical and process design skills in their work addressing conflicts in which religion plays a role.

26. In the same vein, in Indonesia, UN-Women promoted awareness and expanded the reach of the Peace Villages,<sup>22</sup> a community-based initiative aimed at preventing violent extremism by enhancing women's leadership and participation and focusing on their potential role as peace agents. In Azerbaijan, UN-Women and the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, in partnership with the Government, put forward a plan for a series of intergenerational forums on women, peace and security to raise awareness about gender mainstreaming in post-conflict reconstruction, access to sustained and legal livelihoods, women's participation in spheres of decision-making and advocacy for endorsement of the country's national action plan on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000). In Iraq, UNODC worked to address the negative perceptions and attitudes that justice professionals, law enforcement officers and community leaders may have towards children and young people affiliated with, or recruited and exploited by, terrorist and violent extremist groups. In that context, five workshops featuring 110 criminal justice practitioners were organized on topics such as attitudes and behaviours of children and adults, international law, rehabilitation and reintegration, and disengagement from violence.

27. Beyond the support provided to governmental actors, United Nations entities have also worked closely during the reporting period to support the development of capacities among educational, civil society and faith-based organizations recognized for their critical function in shaping attitudes and building skills to advance a culture of peace. Towards that end, in Somalia, UNDP has delivered training and capacity-building workshops, in partnership with the federal ministry of religious affairs, to train 218 religious leaders on Islamic principles of conflict resolution and mediation. Of the participants, 78 per cent stated that they had become more knowledgeable about extremist views, and 76 per cent stated that they were more aware of how to

<sup>21</sup> Economic and Social Council for Western Asia, "Understanding the potential linkages between climate change and conflict in the Arab region", 2021.

<sup>22</sup> <https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2022/03/peace-village-review-and-scoping-study>.

address such views, including how to counteract them with a healing approach. In the Philippines, UN-Habitat developed a peace and development framework, which focused on empowering and capacitating partner communities to prevent violence and transform conflicts by using local peacebuilding mechanisms through people-centred processes, and on delivering conflict-sensitive and conflict-transformative shelter and livelihood services in Marawi City. Aligned with the framework, 1,120 people were trained on peace education, dialogue and facilitation. In addition, 60 advocates, 30 mediators and 30 educators for peace have since been involved in resolving issues in the resettlement sites. In Brazil, UNESCO developed a tool kit to support teachers in including the ideals of a culture of peace in the school curriculum and is conducting online courses for education authorities in its implementation. Furthermore, the World Intellectual Property Organization carried out a range of online training and workshops aimed at supporting women entrepreneurs from indigenous and local communities to strengthen their economic integration as a means of addressing key insecurities, which serve as common drivers of conflict.

28. Activities carried out by United Nations entities have also continued to address specific capacity-building needs vis-a-vis the promotion of a culture of peace within conflict or post-conflict settings. The Food and Agriculture Organization has continued its work to promote a culture of peace in the context of protracted crises and conflicts in rural areas of various countries through its 7,500 Dimitra Clubs. The Clubs are community-led informal groups made up of women and men of different ages, socioeconomic backgrounds, abilities and ethnicities and serve to address community concerns through processes of reflection, participation and action. The configuration of the Dimitra Clubs, which spread across 14 countries, enables social inclusion and the participation of the most marginalized in decision-making regarding peace processes and inter-ethnic dialogue. Together with the Government of Colombia, the International Organization for Migration is implementing the Weaving Lives and Hope programme for conflict-affected communities and survivors. Through psychosocial support and mental health activities, as well as activities to create alternative local development activities, the programme is aimed at enhancing the resilience of conflict survivors, building a culture of peace, reducing violence and strengthening family relationships.

#### Box 4

##### **Transformative power of art and culture towards peace and intercultural harmony**

The Art Lab for Human Rights and Dialogue of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization is an innovative project bringing together diverse disciplines and practitioners to harness and witness the transformative power of the arts in vulnerable and conflict-affected contexts. The Art Lab includes four strands of work: (a) bringing together practitioners spanning disciplines, including artists, humanitarians and journalists; (b) piloting artistic interventions in vulnerable contexts, such as with ex-members of Boko Haram in Chad during the reporting period; (c) sharing and presenting artistic interventions online; and (d) producing a framework for ethical practices in support of human rights and dignity with the Office of the United Nations High Commission for Human Rights. In October 2021, the Organization was requested to develop a plan to mainstream arts and culture across United Nations programmes.

29. Greater impetus has also been placed on working to enhance the capacities of young people to promote a culture of peace. In March 2022, on the International Day

for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, UNESCO welcomed over 1,500 students and teachers from around the world to a special edition of its Master Class Series against Racism and Discrimination. Whether in person or online, participants were engaged in activities aimed at empowering them to become youth champions in their own schools in promoting intercultural dialogue. The UNESCO Story Circles methodology has also been adapted and used to engage youth for social cohesion in six South Asian countries (Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal and Sri Lanka). In Sri Lanka, UNFPA brought together young people from different ethnic and religious backgrounds to discuss interreligious and inter-ethnic harmony and sexual and reproductive health and rights. UNFPA also provided training on social cohesion and positive communication skills. In addition, it co-created a youth-peer training programme on peacebuilding with youth peacebuilders from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia and Kosovo,<sup>23</sup> to overcome problematic elements of the legacy of the past, including promoting transformative attitudes around gender, ethnic and cultural identities. UN-Women supported the design and implementation of national action plans for the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) in several eastern and southern African countries, and worked with the Committee on Women and Family Affairs of Tajikistan on the implementation of its national action plans for the implementation of the resolution, within the framework of a project on the theme “Empowering youth for a peaceful Tajikistan”, implemented jointly with UNDP and the United Nations Children’s Fund. UN-Women also developed, together with the Peacebuilding Fund, a regional programme on youth and peacebuilding for the Western Balkans and organized, jointly with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, a training programme on peace and security for women peace negotiators in Chişinău and the Transnistria Region.

#### **D. Advocacy and strengthening of shared values to promote a culture of peace**

30. At the foundation of successful efforts to promote a culture of peace are shared values and a common commitment to human rights. Unrest and global conflict provide evidence of grave threats to systems of shared values and commitment to human rights. In the light of the situation, communicating and advocating such values and rights becomes increasingly important so that awareness and commitment can be strengthened among all communities. The digital sphere continues to be an important arena for action, in which new and existing tools and approaches can be integrated, if not already employed. While a wide range of activities has been undertaken by United Nations entities to advocate the values and approaches that are recognized as being helpful in advancing a culture of peace, more remains to be done, in particular in terms of promoting a culture of peace throughout digital mediums, including within the development of the Global Digital Compact.

31. The commemoration of International Days remains an important way of drawing attention to, and expanding the outreach concerning, the values and principles associated with a culture of peace. The Department of Global Communication and its 59 field offices coordinated and enacted activities in relation to the observance of the International Day of Peace, the International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust, the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade, the International Decade for People of African Descent and the inaugural International Day for Countering Hate Speech. With their global reach, these activities serve as vehicles to raise awareness about and

<sup>23</sup> References to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of Security Council resolution 1244 (1999).

promote a call for action towards shared goals, values and messages of peace, human rights, respect for diversity, non-violence, social inclusion and equality. For example, the online International Youth Observance of the International Day of Peace in 2021 was viewed 33,000 times and, most importantly, 89 per cent of surveyed participants reported that they had learned more about actions they could take to promote peace, equity and sustainability.

32. Other United Nations entities also conducted activities to increase awareness and promote action towards shared goals and values. For example, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific hosted, in collaboration with the Ambassador of India to Thailand, a screening of a documentary on Mahatma Gandhi and his principles based on peace; UNESCO hosted an international photo contest on the theme “Youth eyes on the Silk Roads”; UNDP presented an online exhibition in Thailand on the theme “You Me We Us”, celebrating the country’s ethnic diversity; and UNODC and the International Organization for Migration hosted an online event, PLURAL+ Youth Video Festival, which was focused in 2022 on fostering understanding between cultures and religions, preventing xenophobia and promoting solidarity during the COVID-19 pandemic. As the UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador for Peace and Reconciliation over the past 10 years, Forest Whitaker received the 2022 International Peace Honours Prize in recognition of his work.

#### Box 5

#### **Global communication campaign #forSafeWorship**

The United Nations Alliance of Civilizations has led the global communications campaign #forSafeWorship, as recommended in the United Nations Plan of Action to Safeguard Religious Sites on the theme “In unity and solidarity for safe and peaceful worship”. As part of the campaign, multimedia stories could be submitted about personal connections to religious sites. The project was aimed at celebrating the universality of such symbols as shared humanity, history and traditions. Through a dedicated website ([forsafeworship.org](https://forsafeworship.org)), more than 130 submissions from around the world were received, and the campaign generated 7.6 million impressions on social media. The campaign was aimed at generating synergies with the United Nations Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech and highlighted the challenge of maintaining broad-based stakeholder commitment to ensure that the Strategy and Plan of Action was sustained and enhanced over the medium to long term.

33. Valuable advocacy also takes place through the focus provided by high-level events and the publication of key reports and strategies. The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean convened the fifth Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development and launched a report that served specifically to address key issues behind the realization of a culture of peace, including the rights of young people of African descent and the inequality they face. UNESCO also organized, in September 2021, an online conference on countering online disinformation and hate speech to foster peace, which was aimed at bringing together stakeholders to discuss the critical role that social media plays in promoting peace and enhancing access to information.

34. Creating spaces for mutual learning, exchange and dialogue is critical to forging and strengthening advocacy around shared values. Towards that end, UNFPA carried out work on intergenerational dialogues in the Gambia, in order to foster social cohesion and prevent migrant stigmatization, and organized an intergenerational dialogue on peace and religious diversity in Brazil to mark the twentieth anniversary

of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action. UN-Women organized online consultations on the theme “Looking beyond 2020: advancing Women, peace and security in eastern partnership countries”, at which 50 women and youth civil society representatives from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine brought attention to the discrimination and human rights violations faced by women human rights defenders, the need to ensure their protection, and the importance of contributing to diversity and inclusiveness.

35. At the local, national, and international levels, it is essential to work constructively with the media in different ways to promote the sharing of messages promoting peace and intercultural harmony. During the reporting period, UNODC worked on ethical and non-discriminatory media reporting in the State of Palestine, in particular in relation to gender justice and ending violence against women and undertook partnership work with the Media Development Centre at Bir Zeit University and the Ministry of Women’s Affairs Media Network. In a related activity, carried out in the Syrian Arab Republic, UNFPA worked with the ministries of information, health and religious affairs, as well as media partners, on a national campaign on the prevention of gender-based and domestic violence in the context of social isolation and distancing as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Department of Global Communications organized an online training course for editors, correspondents, media managers, publishers, communication lecturers and information managers on combating hate speech to build a culture of peace in Nigeria. The United Nations Mission in South Sudan facilitated media campaigns in Western Equatoria State to counter hate speech and negative ethnic identity narratives, including to foster peaceful coexistence.

## **E. Partnerships for the promotion of a culture of peace**

36. As indicated in the previous four sections of the present report, partnerships are central to building a culture of peace, both within and beyond the United Nations system. The very nature of dialogue between diverse cultures and religions requires individuals, communities, organizations and nations to come together to work in partnership. During the reporting period, there were several important examples of partnerships between Governments, civil society, donors, international organizations, regional bodies and various social groups. However, there remained a lack of reporting on efforts to coordinate strategic partnerships related to work that promotes a culture of peace, underscoring the continued need to invest in systematized and integrated governance of partnerships in this regard across the United Nations system and beyond.

37. Faith-based organizations continued to be important actors in efforts to promote a culture of peace, and important support was provided by United Nations entities to support their work. In order to foster greater collaboration with religious leaders in the build-up to the Global Refugee Forum 2023, UNHCR and Religions for Peace established the Multi-Religious Council of Leaders. The main objectives of the Council are to strengthen the collective efforts of religious leaders representing a diversity of faith and regions in addressing the root causes of forced displacement. Following its establishment in 2021, members of the Council made individual commitments to support forcibly displaced people by promoting peace and advocating for inclusion through greater access to education, housing and mental health services. In 2022, they committed to working towards the elimination of statelessness in support of the UNHCR #IBelong Campaign and to strengthening interreligious communication initiatives with faith communities in order to stand in solidarity with refugees, promoting peaceful coexistence.



38. UNDP continued its engagement with the African Council of Religious Leaders – Religions for Peace, which brings together national networks of religious leaders from Africa. UNDP participated in the fourth General Assembly of the African Council of Religious Leaders – Religions for Peace, at which discussions were held on the challenge of preventing violent extremism in Africa and the role of religious leaders in addressing the challenge. UNDP also established a new partnership with the Global Interfaith Network for People of All Sexes, Sexual Orientations, Gender Identities and Expressions. The partnership is aimed at supporting progressive faith leaders in Africa to challenge hatred and discrimination against sexual and gender minorities in the region. The partnership was launched with an Africa regional dialogue held in December 2021, during which faith leaders convened to discuss the roles of progressive faith leaders in promoting human rights for all, including lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex people, within government structures and policymaking processes.

39. In a similar activity, in Lebanon, UNODC forged a new partnership with Caritas Lebanon to assist vulnerable migrant workers since the provision of support for this community had decreased following the explosion of a large amount of ammonium nitrate stored at the Port of Beirut in 2020. The efforts involved providing health, educational and humanitarian support to migrant families, providing psychological support, training social workers and supporting youth-led organizations to implement cultural events for the migrant community. Most notably, efforts supported the organization of a cultural day that served the purpose of integrating migrant workers into the local community in Getaoui, Beirut, through enhancing cultural awareness. People from the local community and migrant workers exchanged collective and personal cultural stories, which provided a transformative learning experience that helped to foster empowerment and self-confidence and expanded the participants' understanding of their surrounding environment. The two initiatives raised awareness about community issues and conflict resolution. In addition, the International Organization for Migration implemented a project on the theme "Contributing towards sustainable peace in the coast region of Kenya: Mombasa, Lamu, Kilifi and Tana River", with the Coast Interfaith Council of Clerics Trust, in partnership with the United States Agency for International Development. The project involved over 11,000 participants, including religious and local leaders, national and county governments, and civil society organizations, with the aim of facilitating sustainable conflict mitigation and a transition to peaceful relations.

**Box 6**

**Partnerships with faith-based organizations to promote a culture of peace through environmental action**

The initiative Faith for Earth of the United Nations Environment Programme was created to inspire and empower faith organizations and their leaders to advocate for protecting the environment. During the reporting period, the Programme undertook key actions that helped to promote collaboration within a broad range of faith-based partners. Actions included carrying out a consultative process that engaged over 250 Islamic institutions, scholars and organizations in the goal to develop a charter addressing the universal threat of climate change.

40. Entities of the United Nations system have continued to advance important partnerships with subregional and local bodies to promote a culture of peace. Under the HAYA Joint Programme in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, UN-Habitat worked with local women and girls, university students, the Palestinian Housing Council, the

Ministry of Local Government and the Khan Younis Municipality to create a safe and inclusive public space in which women and girls could engage in social and physical activities. Likewise, the International Coalition of Inclusive and Sustainable Cities of UNESCO has continued to play a crucial role in promoting intercultural dialogue, most recently contributing to the Youth Boot Camp for Inclusive and Sustainable Cities, among a range of other related activities.

41. Partnerships provide the means through which complex challenges related to the promotion of peace can be addressed. The enabling power of partnerships has been emphasized even more powerfully in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. The shift to a more prominent online component in professional and personal spheres and the widening of the digital divide requires large-scale initiatives such as the Child Online Protection project of the International Telecommunication Union. Launched in 2008, this multi-stakeholder effort within the Global Cybersecurity Agenda framework serves to bring together partners from diverse sectors to create a safe and empowering online experience for children globally. During the reporting period, the working group on Protection through online participation was launched, with the aim of focusing on children's rights online and addressing issues of participation and protection.

#### **IV. Conclusion and recommendations**

42. **Key efforts to promote a culture of peace and interreligious and intercultural dialogue are essential for tackling the root causes of violence and conflict. In order to enhance the effectiveness of such efforts, it is critical to embrace holistic approaches that address the cross-cutting dimensions of peacebuilding, humanitarian action, human rights and development. As outlined in "Our Common Agenda", a culture of peace must be based on a better understanding of the underlying drivers that sustain conflict, an idea that will be developed further through the Secretary-General's "New Agenda for Peace".**

43. **The world is currently facing multiple, interlinked crises. Violence and unrest afflict several parts of the world. Urgent action is required to restore peace and build trust between nations and peoples. Moreover, the instability and damage brought by the impact of the climate crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic make putting the promotion of a culture of peace and dialogue through integrated, holistic approaches at the centre of decision- and policymaking more pressing than ever.**

44. **The present report also comes at an important moment for reflection, as the International Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures 2013–2022 comes to an end. Now is the time to take stock of what was achieved during the decade of work and to plan strategically for the future, in particular with regard to the promotion of a culture of peace. Member States have the opportunity to reflect on what is needed to take forward the promotion of a culture of peace as a common priority of the United Nations system.**

45. **The impacts of efforts to promote a culture of peace and dialogue unfold gradually, involving complex and interlinked phenomena, and require sustained financial and political commitment from Member States and donors. As the United Nations embarks on the next decade of work in this area, there is a need for renewed political and financial commitments, recognizing the foundational nature of peacebuilding within the context of the Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda.**

46. The digital sphere and its ongoing transformation have been highlighted as a key arena for global action on building a culture of peace and dialogue between diverse peoples. The Global Digital Compact, which could be adopted as part of the Summit of the Future, to be held in 2024, should give consideration to peacebuilding and dialogue in the protection of rights in the digital space and in accelerating digital access, most importantly by providing a vision of how technological innovation will be harnessed to create a shared digital future.

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