



UNITED NATIONS
GENEVA

DCAF Geneva Centre
for Security Sector
Governance



Joint UNOG-DCAF-UNU Seminar

Towards the Summit of the Future: Leveraging Security Sector Governance as a Tool for Rebuilding Trust in the Social Contract

Concept Note

The UN Common Agenda highlights the increasing breakdown in trust in institutions due to real and perceived deficits in service delivery. Evidence shows that countries with higher levels of trust in institutions are more resilient, and better able to manage challenges such as the recent Covid pandemic.¹ Building trust in institutions to deliver services and peacefully address grievances is also vital to advance a more deliberate approach to the prevention of conflict and violence.² Against this background, both the Common Agenda and the New Agenda for Peace call for a renewed social contract between members of society and the state, anchored in human rights.³

The New Agenda for Peace includes a dedicated recommendation on accelerating the “implementation of proven development pathways that enhance the social contract and human security”.⁴ One often neglected driver of such pathways is engagement with the security sector. Indeed, by virtue of its role in protecting the population, and often as the first interaction that people experience with the state, the security sector can play an important role in building trust in public institutions and strengthening the social contract. However, when security (and justice) actors are abusive, corrupt, and act with impunity due to weak or absent oversight and accountability, they can fuel grievances and weaken the social contract.⁵ Moreover, in the absence of equal security delivery across regions, social contracts may develop that run parallel to the state, such as with non-state armed actors or customary institutions, thus further undermining social cohesion.⁶

There are two key challenges to leveraging security sector governance as a tool for renewing the social contract. First and foremost, the security sector needs to be perceived as an integral part of the public sector which is subject to the same accountability and oversight as any other component, and as such, factored into broader discussions on strengthening the social contract. Support to nationally-driven reforms of the security sector should thus be perceived as an integral part of efforts to promote

¹ UN, “Our Common Agenda”, Report of the Secretary-General, 2021, p. 24.

² UN, Our Common Agenda Policy Brief 9, A New Agenda for Peace, July 2023, p.10.

³ The Common Agenda outlines three foundations for a renewed social contract: i) trust; ii) inclusion, protection and participation; and iii) measuring and valuing what matters to people and the planet.

⁴ UN, Our Common Agenda Policy Brief 9, A New Agenda for Peace, July 2023, p. 20.

⁵ UN Common Agenda, p. 25.

⁶ UNDP, Forging Resilient Social Contracts: A Pathway to Preventing Violent Conflict and Sustaining Peace, Summary Findings, 2018, p.25.

sustainable development and peace and security. Second, there needs to be better clarity on how to leverage security sector governance as a tool for renewing the social contract. Where should the focus be placed? What are the potential pitfalls? What lessons can be identified from experience on the ground?

This seminar will seek to highlight how security sector governance can be leveraged as an important tool for advancing the New Agenda for Peace, and the UN Common Agenda more broadly, thus providing Member States and broader communities with recommendations for the Summit for the Future. It will reflect on the following questions:

- How can a renewed thinking on the social contract help to advance the New Agenda for Peace and the UN Common Agenda?
- What role does the security sector play in contributing to a renewed social contract in societies? What lessons exist on how to best leverage good governance of the security sector as a tool for strengthening the social contract and building trust?
- How can these lessons inform the development of national prevention strategies called for in the New Agenda for Peace? What other avenues for strengthening the social contract through a security sector governance lens can be considered in relevant discussions at the Summit of the Future?

Tentative Programme

Opening: 10:00-10.15

- H.E. Ms. Tatiana **Valovaya**, Director-General, UNOG
- H.E. Ms. Nathalie **Chuard**, Director, Ambassador, DCAF – Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance

Keynote speaker: 10:15 – 10:30

- H.E. Ms. Nada **Al-Nashif**, Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights

Panel and discussion: 10:30-12:00

Moderator: Vincenza **Scherrer**, Deputy Head of Policy and Research Division, DCAF

- Ms. Leila **Zerrougui**, former Special Representative of the Secretary-General for MONUSCO, and for Children in Armed Conflict
- Dr. Adam **Day**, Head of UNU Geneva Office
- Hon. Ms. Florence **Kajuju**, Chairperson of the Commission on Administrative Justice, Republic of Kenya
- Mr. Christophe **Pradier**, Security Sector Reform Officer and Team Leader for Knowledge, Research & Guidance, UN Security Sector Reform Unit

Closing of the event: 12:00