

Linking Peace, Justice and Development through Good Governance in the SDGs: the Role of Independent Oversight

Event report

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Geneva Peace Week

Event description

The 2030 Agenda acknowledges the central role of effective, accountable and transparent institutions in contributing to peace, justice as well as security and violence prevention in the context of sustainable development. Under Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16, all countries are responsible for delivering on their obligations to provide safety and justice for their populations. Central to this provision of safety and justice are the principles of good governance, namely that every state will need to redouble its efforts to ensure that public and national security, as well as the rule of law and justice more broadly, are provided in an effective, accountable and transparent manner.

Against this background, the panel discussion focused on the crucial role of independent oversight institutions in delivering peace and security, rule of law and justice, and the good governance ambitions of SDG16. Highlighting the catalytic and enabling nature of SDG16 for the wider 2030 agenda, representatives of independent oversight bodies showcased how their office's work contributes to SDG16.

National Human Rights Institutions, Ombudspersons, and similar bodies, by investigating complaints and rectifying grievances, play a crucial role in protecting and promoting human rights, strengthening the good governance of peace and justice institutions, and reducing violence and crime. Panelists shared experiences and lessons learned that illustrate the centrality of accountable and effective national security and justice sectors that operate within a framework of democracy and the rule of law for the 2030 Agenda - and the role oversight bodies play in pursuing that outcome.

Speakers

Mr. Julian Fleet, Permanent Observer, IDLO, Geneva

Amb. Thomas Guerber, Director, DCAF, Geneva

Ms. Ghizaal Haress, Ombudsperson, Kabul, Islamic Republic of Afghanistan

Dr. Roberto Herrera Cáceres, Ombudsperson, Comisionado Nacional de los Derechos Humanos, Tegucigalpa, Honduras

Ms. Faith Rotich, Legal Officer, Commission on Administrative Justice, Nairobi, Kenya (on behalf of Hon. Florence Kajuju, Chairperson, Commission on Administrative Justice, Nairobi, Kenya)

Moderated by:

Dr. Hans Born, Assistant Director and Head of the Policy and Research Division, DCAF, Geneva

Key takeaways

Linking Ombuds institutions to the 2030 Agenda and SDG16

The 2030 Agenda provides an important platform for independent oversight agencies such as ombuds institutions to hold countries accountable for their international commitments to sustainable development including provision of justice and the development of strong institutions. SDG16 in particular underscores the significance of strong institutions for the realization of peaceful, just and inclusive societies. To this end, it is essential that governments ensure the creation and strengthening of ombuds institutions as they promote justice and the rule of law and ensure that national institutions are effective, accountable and transparent. Moreover, effective and accountable institutions are key for the fulfillment of all the SDGs, which makes SDG16 not only an objective of the 2030 Agenda but also a key enabler for the realization of all the other goals.

Ombuds institutions' contributions to the realization of SDG16

Ombuds institutions promote access to justice and the rule of law by providing an affordable and accessible platform to the public for redress of administrative injustices, and alternatives to litigation that can be lengthy and costly. In doing so, they provide



a unique avenue for addressing citizens' grievances towards the government, foster popular trust into state institutions, and enhance the quality of public services.

In certain contexts, ombuds institutions can also contribute to bridging the gap between formal legal systems and the reality of the experience of the rule of law and the delivery of justice in peoples' daily lives. In this respect, ombuds institutions have the potential to foster bottom-up cultural changes by promoting access to justice, public participation, alternative solutions to conflicts and social audits.

The ability of ombuds institutions to operate as an early warning mechanism also plays an important role in ensuring effective, transparent and responsive public institutions. The competence of certain ombuds institutions to receive periodical reports of complaints and how they have been handled by public institutions functions as an avenue for the early detection of peoples' concerns. This permits the formulation responses to grievances within the population and can help to prevent the escalation of conflicts.

As independent oversight actors, ombuds institutions also contribute to tackling corruption and ensuing grievances within the population. Corruption represents an obstacle to good governance, justice and sustainable development, inflicting disproportionate impact on poor and vulnerable populations, as public money lost in corruption could instead be spent on education, health and sanitation systems, building roads and infrastructure, and other public services. This in turn can generate underreporting and fuel injustice in society and undermines the rule of law, accountability of state institutions and public security, which are all key elements for sustainable development. By ensuring transparency and the rule of law, and through the competence of certain ombuds institutions to investigate complaints in high-level political spheres, ombuds institutions play a central role in the fight against corruption and in the promotion of accountable and effective institutions as envisaged in SDG16.