

GENEVA  
peacebuilding  
PLATFORM

## What next for Peacebuilding in Geneva? Priorities for 2020

Report of the 2020 Annual Retreat of the Geneva Peacebuilding Platform

Geneva, 12 March 2020, 8:30-14:00

Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies  
Auditorium Jacques-Freymond  
Parc Barton

The Geneva Peacebuilding Platform is a joint project of five institutions:



## Introduction

This report draws together key observations from the Geneva Peacebuilding Platform's Annual Retreat 2020. It focuses on the prospective priorities for peacebuilding in 2020 and themes for the GPP's community curation.

Every year, the retreat brings together the Platform's Advisory Board, its Steering and Management Committees and guests to discuss the evolution of Platform activities and to brainstorm about new ideas and opportunities to advance peacebuilding. This year, 30 participants joined a new interactive and inclusive event design that proved to be successful in delivering a more targeted, half-day retreat.

Background information for the retreat included the [Overview of the 2020-2021 Programme](#) the [Activity Report 2019](#) as well as a progress update on community curation in the run up to Geneva Peace Week 2020. Please refer to Annex 1 for the retreat's agenda and Annex 2 for the list of participants.

### 1. Priorities for Peacebuilding 2020

The retreat asked participants to share their observations about upcoming issues or priorities for peacebuilding in 2020. Included among the main points raised by the Advisory Board are the following points:

- **Environmental issues and the relationship between climate change, peace and security** is a priority concern for many peacebuilding actors. Critical questioning about the current growth-driven and consumption-based global economic model might offer different development possibilities, including those relating to renewable energies and energy transition. There are also ways in which tools used by peace actors, e.g. for early warning and prevention, can be applied to leverage big data to map and monitor climate change and stress-induced conflict.
- **The peace and security concerns facing Europe** are growing across multiple dimensions and need to be addressed head-on by international peacebuilding actors. Increased militarization and clamping down on domestic freedoms in some countries are of concern in some European countries. Extremist and populist politics are on the rise, while polarization and political divides are leaving little space for bridge-building and mutual understanding.
- **There are significant opportunities for mainstreaming peacebuilding approaches within international institutions**, even those not traditionally known as 'peacebuilders'. Applying a 'peace lens' to all aspects of international work includes integrating conflict-sensitive approaches and ongoing reflection on

'Do No Harm' in practice. Peacebuilding actors would be well-placed to help organizations mainstream peace-responsive approaches in their workplace and their operations. Furthermore, effective and values-based leadership education at senior and team levels could make a real contribution to peacebuilding efforts more widely. The 'peace lens' may also be relevant for other actors including the private sector, labour institutions, and health workers.

- **There is an opportunity for International Geneva to lead the global discussion on the connections between arms control and peace**, both in theory and practice. The collective expertise of UN, NGO, and governmental representatives could together influence multilateral approaches to impact arms control, drawing on ongoing advocacy and research, including on human rights, and on disaggregated tracking of violent deaths at global, regional and national levels.
- **There is an opportunity to increase policy and research focus on urban peace**, and what this means across different constituencies. Local-level peace innovations have much to offer that might be shared and adapted elsewhere, with local and municipal leaders representing great sources of knowledge that may be regionally and internationally relevant.
- **The linkages between human rights and peacebuilding** are becoming more explicitly defined and should be seized upon – with peacebuilding and human rights increasingly seen and articulated as mutually reinforcing lenses. Human rights serve as both an early warning signal for conflict and part of the peacebuilding solution. Concerns about the shrinking spaces for human rights defenders and civil society need to be urgently addressed.
- **The potential for digital technology** to advance peacebuilding objectives, change perspectives, and facilitate outreach to communities is great and can be mainstreamed across current peacebuilding practice.

## 2. Thematic Areas of Focus for GPP Community Curation

After the exploratory conversation on the priorities of peacebuilding in 2020, the retreat formed working groups about how such priorities should be advanced in practice. Five themes stood out:

- Environment, climate, conflict, and peace
- Peacebuilding in Europe
- Mainstreaming peacebuilding
- Arms and peace
- Urban peacebuilding
- Human rights and peacebuilding

Additional themes included health and peace, leadership in peace, digital peace, and defence budgets/economies. Increased coverage of peacebuilding work and the impacts to peacebuilding of covid-19 were also raised. While some participants expressed a strong interest to advance discussions on these additional themes, it was agreed to focus the breakout conversations on the five themes listed above.

### **Environment, Climate, Conflict, and Peace**

- The primary aim of this track is to facilitate and build a “Road to Geneva,” in advance of the June 2021 Environmental Peacebuilding Association Conference that will be hosted in Geneva. This will include pre-convenings to define the thematic scope of the Conference, potential publications, and a presence at GPW20.
- The general goal of the pre-convenings, the Conference, and this working group is to establish a common dialogue between the three fields of environment, climate, and peacebuilding. Further aims of the conference are to develop actionable steps and political asks that will advance the aims of this subfield.
- The next meeting of this working group will be scheduled in April, and invitations will be circulated to a much wider circle of Geneva stakeholders.

### **Peacebuilding in Europe**

- A critical, grassroots, and self-reflective approach would be applied to examining contemporary peace concerns in Europe. The track should be cross-disciplinary and seek to integrate cultural and artistic methods.
- Actors beyond the ‘usual suspects’ of peacebuilding will be approached to participate and share learning and practices, including religious leaders, community workers, artists and filmmakers. Local initiatives in Geneva will also be invited.
- Topics of interest include migration, preventing violent extremism and return of families, countering hate-speech and xenophobia, governance and security (e.g. Ukraine), democracy and elections.
- MA students of the IHEID Capstone Global Security Track will also be invited to conduct research on ‘Conceptions of Peace and Security in Contemporary Europe’ in order to answer the following questions: How is ‘peace’ conceived in Europe in 2020 and how does this relate to the practice of peacebuilding? What are the main political and security debates relevant to contemporary notions of peacebuilding in Europe today? What are the main fault lines and opportunities for peacebuilders to consider in their work?
- A first meeting of this track will be planned in April, with invitations circulated to a selected number of potentially interested actors.

## **Mainstreaming peacebuilding**

- 'Peace responsiveness' and conflict sensitivity analysis need to be integrated into institutional processes. Staff at all levels should be trained and supporting in 'building peace' in all aspects of their daily work.
- Institutions need to learn a new language to understand the relationship between peace and the core institutional goal and how peace approaches can be mainstreamed.
- Breaking these silos is critical but there is nuance that has yet to be worked out, from military peacekeeping missions, to interpersonal dialogue, to stability and beyond.
- Generating evidence and measuring change are important, as will be setting realistic targets in an organization. Incremental change is important and can contribute momentum that builds commitment.
- Peace work is more qualitative and involves compromises and judgement calls. GPP might offer a space for community reflections on institutional activities through a 'peace lens' (Do No Harm and beyond).
- GPW20 could reflect on how organizations take up the peace commitment within their own cultures. Having an open exchange within the sustaining peace agenda and the HDPN might spur useful debate on what might be realistic and what might work or not.

## **Arms and peace**

- Arms and peace discussions must move beyond their focus on conventional DDR and weapons management, particularly in complicated conflict situations. Potential entry-points include how this work is translated into operational practice, and innovative proposals that reach beyond the state-to-state level.
- The urban context is also of particular relevance here. The toolkit on what has been done in urban contexts to address arms is fairly limited, particularly when it comes to scalable or transferrable approaches.
- This group acknowledges a generalized concern about militarization or securitization of the peacebuilding space. It proposed a topic for reflection: what are the implications of engaging with law enforcement or security-sector actors?
- The group also posed an important question for consideration: Why is this topic not more of a focus of current peacebuilding organizations?
- Outputs of this group include plans for GPW20 discussions, and a list of new actors to engage.

## **Urban peacebuilding**

- The recent launch of the Geneva Cities Hub represents a prime opportunity to engage with the existing thematic expertise of Geneva in health, technology, and safety to bring new ideas to the table.
- Urban initiatives are often targeted towards mega-cities, and this group recognized the opportunity and importance of engaging with small and medium-sized cities.
- Next steps for this theme include convening open sessions on what the core component of urban peace is, and how the work of different actors will relate to it. From these consultations, different “packages” can be developed for different types of stakeholders (media, education bodies, etc.)

## **3. Way Forward**

The 2020 Annual Retreat occurred as the covid-19 pandemic was beginning its spread throughout the world. Since then, the tremendous consequent disruption to established global and national systems have become evident. Now more than ever, the leadership and expertise of the international peacebuilding community are needed. The networks, knowledge and skills we collectively hold are exactly those which are most needed in times of crises, and which can serve the foundations upon which more peaceful outcomes to this crisis can be built.

Going forward, the Platform offers its convening space to share knowledge and to accompany peacebuilding actors across the world as we confront the emerging challenges. The nascent community tracks that were discussed during the retreat represent possible spaces to continue collaboration and will be part of the process of programme development for [Geneva Peace Week 2020](#).

## **Annex 1 - Agenda**

9:00 Opening: The new 2020-2021 Programme

9:15 What priorities and opportunities for peacebuilding in 2020?

Tour de Table: From your perspective, what are the key upcoming issues or priorities for peacebuilding in 2020? What are the topics, regions or peacebuilding contexts that you think are relevant to include into Geneva Peace Week 2020?

10:15 Break

10.45 Table discussions: Community curation in the run-up to GPW20

Aim: The table discussions should identify opportunities for collaboration on specific issues in the run-up to and during GPW20. Guiding questions for each table:

- Why is the issue, region or peacebuilding context important? Why now?
- What could be the focus of an event or event series during GPW20?
- What organizations or individuals could be key stakeholders for a curated process or GPW20 event?
- What could be a potential outcome of a curated track or GPW20 event?

12.00 Feedback from table discussions

12.30 Stretch break and lunch set-up

12.45 Lunch-time open forum on upcoming opportunities for peacebuilding

13.45 Coffee & farewell

## **Annex 2 - List of participants**

Andrea Aeby, Counselor, Peace & Security, Section Global Affairs, Permanent Mission of Switzerland

Jason Aplon, Post-conflict/ Peacebuilding Advisor, International Organization for Migration (IOM)

Philippe Baudin-Auliac, Chief, Political Affairs and Partnerships Section, United Nations Office at Geneva (UNOG)

Silvia Cattaneo, Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining

Rudi Coninx, Senior Policy Adviser, World Health Organization (WHO)

Vincent Defourny, Director, UNESCO Geneva Liaison Office

Samuel Emonet, Director of Operations, Justice Rapid Response (JRR)

Annika Erickson-Pearson, Community & Communications Coordinator, Geneva Peacebuilding Platform

Nicolas Florquin, Research Coordinator, Small Arms Survey

Florence Foster, Representative for Peace and Disarmament, Quaker United Nations Office (QUNO)

Kathryn Gichini, Events and Administration Coordinator, Geneva Peacebuilding Platform

Simon Gimson, Vice-President and COO, Interpeace

Rainer Gude, Co-Director, Initiatives of Change Switzerland

Heloise Heyer, Conflict Sensitivity Lead, PeaceNexus Foundation

Annika Hilding Norberg, Head Peace Operations and Peacebuilding, GCSP

David Jensen, Head of Programme, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

Pavel Kabat, Chief Scientist, World Meteorological Organization (WMO)

Keith Krause, Director, Centre on Conflict, Development and Peacebuilding (CCDP), The Graduate Institute (IHEID)

Anna Leissing, Head of Swiss Platform for Peacebuilding KOFF, Swisspeace

Sacha Meuter, Head of Research and Policy, Fondation Hirondelle

Federico Negro, Head of Coordination Support Unit for Peace and Resilience, International Labour Organization (ILO)

Sarah Noble, Director External Relations, The New Humanitarian

Roberto Paganini, Programme Specialist, UNDP Crisis Bureau

Cara Priestley, Programme Assistant, Quaker United Nations Office (QUNO)

Daniel Reimers, Research Assistant, Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance (DCAF)

Maude Roure, Head of Programmes, Kofi Annan Foundation

Claudia Seymour, Focal Point, Geneva Peace Week, Geneva Peacebuilding Platform

Jos Verbeek, Special Representative to the UN and the WTO, World Bank Group (WBG)

Achim Wennmann, Executive Coordinator, Geneva Peacebuilding Platform

Jonathan Woolley, Director, Quaker United Nations Office (QUNO)

## **About the Geneva Peacebuilding Platform**

The Geneva Peacebuilding Platform is a knowledge hub that connects the critical mass of peacebuilding actors, resources, and expertise in Geneva and worldwide. Founded in 2008, the Platform has a mandate to facilitate interaction on peacebuilding between different institutions and sectors, and to advance new knowledge and understanding of issues and contexts related building peace. It also plays a creative role in building bridges between International Geneva, the United Nations peacebuilding architecture in New York, and peacebuilding activities in the field. The Platform's network comprises more than 4'000 peacebuilding professionals working on building peace directly or indirectly. The Platform provides policy-relevant advice and services, ensures the continuous exchange of information through seminars, consultations, and conferences, and facilitates outcome-oriented dialogues on peacebuilding practice.