

Delivering SDG16

Thank you, Mark.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, it's a great pleasure to be here this evening to open this important event and discuss a bit about the progress made to accelerate the delivery of peace, justice and strong institutions as set out in Sustainable Development Goals 16+ and the 2030 agenda.

Excellent turnout today for representatives from Member States, the UN, civil society and the private sector to reflect the widespread recognition that SDG16 – and of course, the 36 targets alongside it that measure peace, justice and strong institutions – matter hugely in their own right. But they are also central to all of the goals. And if we don't deliver SDG16, we risk the entire 2030 agenda.

All countries face challenges in the implementation of SDG16 targets, including my own. These targets are crucial in order to leave no one behind. And a country without peace, justice and strong institutions just cannot deliver the most vulnerable in society.

The attendance this evening and the organisation of this evening is also a reminder of the central importance of partnerships. This event has been organized by the Global Alliance, the Pathfinders, the 16+ Forum, together with the UK, the Transparency, Accountability and Participation Network and LexisNexis. And one of our key tasks as partners is to reiterate the importance of us to SDG16, both for the UK and the world.

The fact is that Goal 16 is at risk of not being delivered. And tonight, I wanted to highlight some of the reasons why.

Firstly, on the importance of peace, it's estimated that more than half of the world's poor will be living in countries affected by high levels of violence and conflict by 2030.

Forced displacement has risen sharply since 2005 to 65.6 million people, many of whom are women and children.

Effective conflict prevention will save lives and of course, also deliver annual net savings globally of at least \$5 billion.

We need to significantly reduce all forms of violence to ensure that no one is left behind. That's why in 2017, the UK doubled its contribution to the UN's Peacebuilding Fund to help prevent conflicts and alongside that, we launched a national action plan for Women Peace and Security, which puts women and girls in the heart of the UK's work to prevent and resolve conflict, recognizing the importance of inclusion.

On justice worldwide, it's estimated that 1.7 billion people cannot access justice and cannot obtain solutions to their legal issues. And injustices are often hidden; one million children and one third of women are victims of

violence, and many of whom do not have a voice. The lack of justice not only affects individuals, it negatively influences growth and may foster violent conflict. It's estimated that these unresolved legal problems can reduce GDP growth by up to 3 percent.

The rule of law and access to justice are the foundations of economic and social development; peace, security and good governance are the building blocks of stable and successful societies. And linked to justice, corruption, we all know has a ruinous effect everywhere, but especially in developing countries where it can hamper reform and reduces the state's ability to deliver public services.

DFID is the only donor to use our ODA to address the UK end of corruption in developing countries. We follow the UK law enforcement efforts to recover and return money stolen from developing countries and purportedly to prosecute UK companies and nationals who pay bribes in developing countries. By 2018, over £783 million of assets have been confiscated or returned, and 30 companies and individuals have been convicted of corruption offenses. And we must continue that work to ensure that we see a true reduction in corruption that we all want to see.

And finally, the third part of the goal: stronger institutions. Many governments around the world are clamping down on civic space. The Civicus Monitor reports that civic space is being severely curtailed in 111 countries. Those organisations that are challenging corruption and abuse or standing up for their rights and the rights of others; they're the ones being hit the hardest. According to the International Centre For Not For Profit Law, 67 percent of the new civil society regulations proposed or enacted around the world since 2013 were restrictive, negatively affecting civil society organisations ability to register, to operate, to advocate and to receive funding. And we all know that civic space for inclusive development, tackling extreme poverty and ensuring that those on the margins of society are not permanently excluded without a voice.

And across the globe, as Mark says, the media is experiencing unprecedented challenges in its ability to operate. It's dangerous to be a journalist in all sorts of countries around the world, and global press freedom has declined to its lowest point in 30 years in 2016 and made unparalleled threats to journalists and to media outlets. Just last week, the UK held a media freedom conference to highlight the importance of a free media, which of course is integral to the delivery of SDG 16. And we hope that that conference generated significant momentum to shine a global spotlight on media freedom, changing political calculations and increasing the costs to those who are abusing it.

So I've wanted a series of challenges that we face if we're able to achieve SDG16+. I'm sorry if I paint a fairly depressing picture. We must speak the truth, though. We should not be pessimistic because by working together we can address these challenges. That's what tonight's event is all about.

We need a whole of society approach to SDG 16. It requires government, the UN, the World Bank and civil societies, media, private sector, NGOs, youth

organisations and others, all of you in this room, to work together.

As I've said, we're not going to be able to deliver the Global Agenda 2030 if we do not deliver SDG16 fully and that means facing a civil society, a strong media freedom access to justice, and respect for human rights.

This is the first High Level Political Forum to review SDG16+. The Voluntary National Review is an important process in itself. It helps us as Member States collect and analyse the data we need to inform policies at home to make the progress needed. And it provides us the chance to showcase progress and challenges – as so many Member States have done so well today. But the full delivery of SDG 16+ requires even greater ambition.

In the next 77 days, the first SDG summit provides an important opportunity to redouble our efforts. The President of the General Assembly has urged all countries to come to the SDG summit prepared to announce acceleration measures and specific, targeted next steps.

A call for accelerated action is at the heart of the political declaration for the summit, and a registry to capture these accelerator actions has recently been launched. The registry is open to all stakeholders, and we need work together and build momentum and reinforce the call to action.

And this process presents a real opportunity to make progress on SDG16+. A group of over 35 member states have already answered this challenge, with a joint-statement launched this week F to support accelerated implementation of the SDG16+ targets. And we should use this HLPF to likewise join the call for accelerated action at the SDG Summit.

I greatly appreciate the participation of all of the panellists and our facilitator Mark Thompson.

I know that the discussion tonight will help contribute to our mutual goals – the future of SDG 16+ is in all of our hands; it is our responsibility to deliver it fully.