

'Instead of responding to crises, we need to invest far more in prevention,' says UN chief

The imbalance between spending on conflict, and spending on peace, must be tackled head-on, Secretary-General António Guterres said Monday, urging the United Nations to rally all international actors “for our efforts across the peace continuum – from prevention, conflict resolution and peacekeeping to peacebuilding and sustainable long-term development.”

“Two years ago, the General Assembly and the Security Council came together to send a clear joint message: while Member States have primary responsibility for building and maintaining peace, we can all do more to strengthen the foundations of stability, wellbeing and cohesion,” he [told](#) an informal gathering of the Assembly where he presented his report on [Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace](#).

Noting that the UN must offer “coherent, comprehensive and integrated support, working with Member States and other partners, before, during, and after conflict,” he informed the room that his report puts these messages into practice.

He discussed how inclusive and sustainable development makes a critical contribution to conflict prevention.

“Sustaining peace is both a goal and a process that relies on building a common and cohesive vision of a society that takes the needs of all into account,” he stated, noting that “the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#) is our global path to a safer, more sustainable and resilient world.”

Sustaining peace is both a goal and a process – *Secretary-General Guterres*

Mr. Guterres stressed that gender considerations must remain front and centre in all efforts to sustain peace, noting that the importance and effectiveness of women’s leadership and participation in conflict prevention, resolution and peacebuilding are not in doubt.

“We need to increase women’s representation in a systematic and meaningful way that goes far beyond tokenism. Women must be in decision-making roles at all levels in national, regional and international institutions and mechanisms for the prevention and resolution of conflict,” he said.

The UN chief underscored that national efforts to build and sustain peace are more effective if they are inclusive.

“This must start from a shared understanding of the risks that a country or region faces, and of how we can support efforts by Member States to build resilience against these risks,” he stated.

He also argued that a failure to adequately finance peacebuilding would undermine other efforts to save lives, stabilize countries in crisis, alleviate suffering and protect the vulnerable.

Reminding the Assembly that the world is witnessing human suffering on a scale hard to comprehend, he noted that in the past 10 years, the international community had spent \$233 billion on humanitarian response, peacekeeping and hosting refugees.

“If the financial cost is unsustainable, the human cost is unbearable,” he maintained. “Instead of responding to crises, we need to invest far more in prevention. Prevention works, saves lives and is cost-effective.”

Mr. Guterres called the [Peacebuilding Fund](#) “a critical tool” to achieve this, urging all able to do so, increase the Fund’s resources to \$500 million annually.

He explained that other innovative financing solutions were also being explored, including web-based mechanisms and crowdfunding.

“These proposals should be seen firmly in the context of peace and security, and should not impact on funds for sustainable development in any way,” Mr. Guterres emphasized.

He expressed his hope the Assembly would consider the report at the [High-Level Meeting on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace](#) – from 24 to 25 April – and continue its efforts to make the UN system more effective.

Also addressing the informal meeting, General Assembly President Miroslav Lajčák, mentioned some of the calls made through 2016 resolutions.

“First, we called for a new approach,” he said. “For more capacity for peacebuilding and sustaining peace, on the ground.”

Second, he evoked the call for financing sustained peace, “Not for a month, or a year – but over the long-term.”

Thirdly, he turned to new partnerships in which national stakeholders are “in the driving seat.”

And, finally, for all to take place in a comprehensive, and integrated way.

Mr. Lajčák called the Secretary-General’s report “a strong guide on how we can go forward” and the High-Level Meeting an opportunity “to chart the course ahead.”