

This call to action brings together the collective voices of member states working to accelerate the implementation of SDG16+ targets for peaceful, just and inclusive societies. The call to action was prepared under the leadership of the Permanent Mission of Costa Rica to the UN in New York.



Despite remarkable achievements like the adoption of the 2030 Agenda in 2016, the 75th anniversary of the United Nations finds a multilateral system under pressure, and societies marked by polarization, uneven concentrations of wealth and power, gender inequalities and insecurity both inside and outside of conflict zones. More than half a million people die from violence each year; half of the world's children and at least a third of women are victims of violence; and more than five billion people lack access to justice. Even before the pandemic, the Secretary-General identified the erosion of trust in institutions and the rule of law as a major risk for peaceful, just and inclusive societies.

The COVID-19 pandemic is reinforcing such trends and exposing challenges in all countries' economic, social, and political fabric. It has obliterated ten, twenty, or in some cases thirty years of development efforts. The current economic shock, the deepest since WWII, fuels rising inequality, exacerbates grievances and increases the risk of violence and exploitation, such as human trafficking and modern slavery. In particular, the pandemic has had adverse consequences for women and girls' rights risking reversing hard-won gains made over the past decades.

At the same time, there is unprecedented public support and strong expectations for bolder national and global action for the protection of human rights, for democratic, inclusive and participatory governance, the prevention of violence, equal access to basic services, and the eradication of discrimination which opens the space for new transformative policies and progress. Human rights, peace, justice and inclusion must be the foundation for reset and recovery efforts to ensure more resilient and just societies and more responsive institutions in the future. Action to deliver on the goals and targets of SDG16+ is now more urgent than ever.

As a group of countries working to build more peaceful, just, and inclusive societies, building on the **Call to Action of September 2019**, and the **"Act Now for SDG16+"** launched this year by over 100 international, regional, national and local stakeholders around the world, we renew our commitment to work together with the UN system, other international and regional organizations, International Financial Institutions, civil society, the private sector, philanthropists, parliamentarians, and local authorities to deliver on the SDG16+ targets and redouble our efforts to promote peaceful societies, provide justice for all, and build effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions at all levels while ensuring that no one is left behind. Only with strong and accountable institutions as well as high levels of trust therein, can our response to the pandemic be effective.

Peaceful Societies

Achieving the goal of halving global violence over the next decade is both essential and feasible but will require developing and implementing evidence-based approaches; targeting hotspots where insecurity is high or growing; and investing in and coordinating with local governments and networks, community and civil society organizations, and businesses. Systematically applying a psychosocial lens to sustaining peace efforts can help counter social disintegration, not least due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the mitigating measures, and help to support efforts to build and sustain peace. We have more knowledge and tools to end violence than ever before, and therefore commit to prioritize and scale-up concrete and practical solutions to reduce multiple categories of violence by 2030, including violence against children and sexual and gender-based violence.

Just Societies

To resolve the justice problems created by the effects of the pandemic, including unemployment, evictions, bankruptcy, and debts, we need to put people at the center of justice. Ensuring equal and inclusive access to justice is therefore key. Emergency measures must be legal, necessary, proportional, non-discriminatory, and time-bound and the distribution of recovery packages need to be fair and transparent and shaped in collaboration with community leaders and grassroots actors. People-centered justice services are necessary to protect people from violence, respect their rights and dignity, root out structural injustices, build the resilience of the poor and those in vulnerable situations (from A/RES/70/1, Goal 1; 1.5), combat corruption, make societies more inclusive and give everyone a fair chance in the economy.

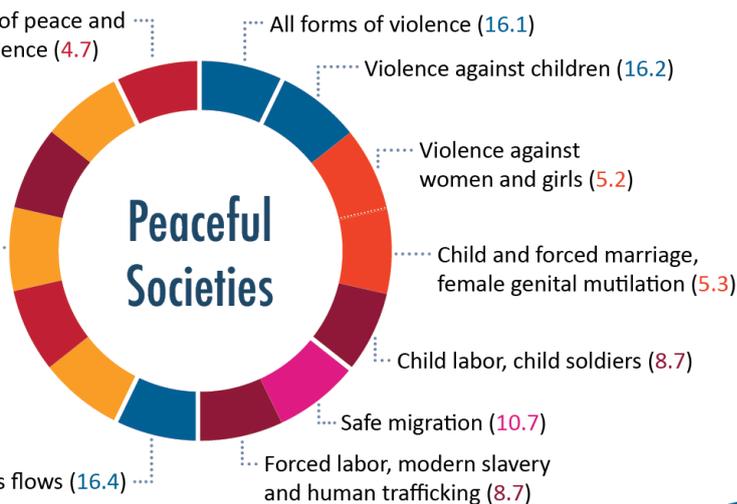
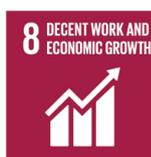
Inclusive Societies

The race to save lives, develop a vaccine, and generate global economic recovery presents a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to tackle structural inequalities and achieve the central promise of the 2030 Agenda to leave no one behind. Recovery from COVID-19 requires a whole-of-government and a whole-of-society approach, where everyone contributes fairly and the cost does not fall disproportionately on those who can least afford it. Fair, transparent, equitable, efficient, and timely access to and distribution of preventive tools, laboratory testing, reagents and supporting materials, essential medical supplies, new diagnostics, drugs, and future COVID-19 vaccines, must be available to all. Without transformative policies to promote equality and inclusion in the COVID-19 recovery, there is a risk of entire countries, and the most disadvantaged individuals and groups within countries, being left behind. We seek to forge a new social contract adapted to future challenges of technological divides and sustainable economy transitions, through transparent and accountable political economic and social institutions, increased investment in public services, educational and employment opportunities accessible to all, and the protection of civic space.

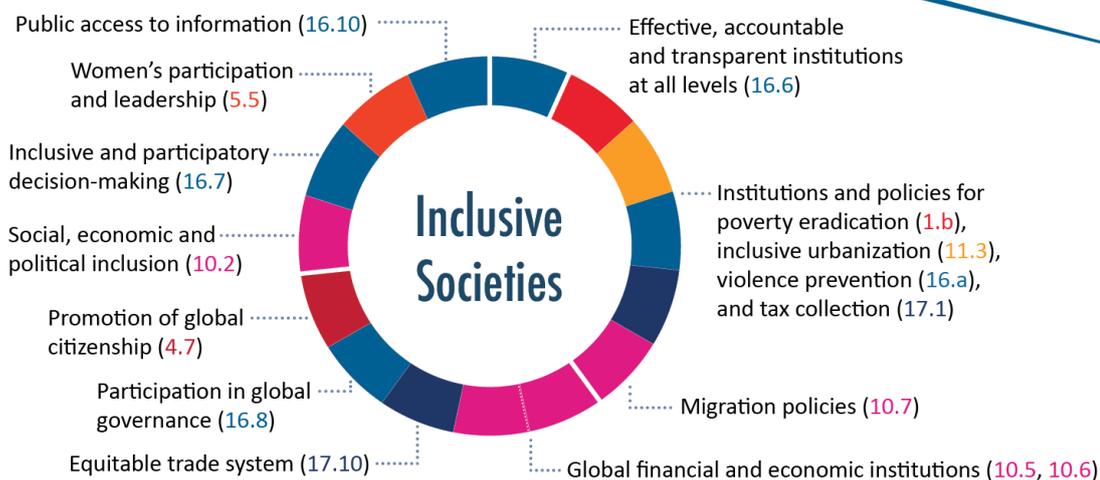
The SDG16+ targets are enablers to reach other goals of the 2030 Agenda, laying the foundation for sustainable development. Although all countries face challenges in their implementation, they are especially important for reaching the countries, communities, and people who are at risk of being left behind. We must focus on the interrelated issues of peace, justice and inclusion when responding to the UN Secretary-General's calls for a global ceasefire and to "build back better" with human rights at the forefront.

The limited implementation of the SDGs, and in particular SDG16 for strong and accountable institutions, is catching up with us and has contributed to severe socio-economic impacts of the pandemic. It is evident that had we invested more in SDG16 and other SDGs our collective response to the pandemic would have been more efficient. We must do better as we try to get back on track to achieving the SDGs.

As we commemorate the 75th anniversary of the United Nations, we reiterate our commitment to multilateral action in addressing global challenges and responding to the demand of our citizens for greater ambition to build a more just, equitable, peaceful and sustainable future.



We are determined to foster peaceful, just and inclusive societies which are free from fear and violence.



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