



Joint Statement on behalf of the Pathfinders for Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies at the High-level Political Forum, July 2025

Presented by H.E. Mr. Juan José Quintana Aranguren, Deputy Permanent Representative of Colombia to the United Nations on July 21, 2025, during the general debate of the ministerial segment of the 2024 High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) and the High-level Segment of ECOSOC (*Watch Video*). This statement was facilitated by the Permanent Missions of Colombia and the Republic of Korea to the United Nations.

Colleagues: The world is at an inflection point. We are living through a period of disruption, characterized by compounding [crises](#), [megatrends](#), intensifying geopolitical tensions, [inequality](#), and war.

From violence to food and energy insecurity, climate change and mass displacement, crippling global debt, and a [justice gap affecting billions](#), the impact is both universal and deeply unequal. Of the 1.1 billion people living in acute multidimensional poverty, [40% are in conflict-affected countries](#).

Multilateralism and the credibility of global institutions are under extraordinary strain, official assistance is falling, and the frameworks that once unified international action, including the SDGs, are being questioned as the UN undergoes major reforms.

Governance at all levels is stretched, testing its capacity to respond, adapt and deliver for people and planet. At the same time, democracy itself faces growing threats, as misinformation, polarization, and the rise of political extremism exploit social divides and undermine trust in institutions.

The question is not if we are at a turning point, but how we will respond.

Despite challenges, we know that progress on the SDGs is possible, and that peace, justice, equality, and inclusion are not just aspirational, but possible, with links and dividends across development, economic, and security priorities, including as related to this year's SDGs under review. For example:

Violence is a public **health** issue, with far-reaching effects on physical and mental well-being. To this end, there is a [14-year](#) life expectancy gap between the most and least violent countries. Similarly, [29% of people suffer health problems due to poor access to justice](#). Conversely, inclusive institutions are key to public health, and tackling the root causes of inequality through a [social-determinants-of-health](#) approach is key to advancing the SDGs and building more

resilient and healthier societies.



More equal societies also have better growth rates, benefiting not only the most vulnerable, but all members of society. On this, investing in healthcare, housing, and women's access to labor markets can unlock significant and **inclusive economic growth**. [Closing the gender gap could give the global economy a 7 trillion dollar boost](#).

Similarly, equitable **justice** systems foster gender equality, and [gender-equal societies](#) support a stronger rule of law. [Countries with gender-equal legal codes score higher on access to justice rankings](#), with [women's access to decision-making correlated with lower levels of gender-based violence](#), as well as broader societal peace dividends.

And on **oceans**, inclusion, accountability and anti-corruption enhance [marine and coastal protection](#), [promote fisheries sustainability](#), and support [climate adaptation](#) and resilience. [Improved women's representation in ocean-related decision-making](#) strengthens community livelihoods and supports a sustainable blue economy.

But peace, justice, equality and inclusion not only enable broader development priorities, they are also cost-effective, critical in today's landscape. Even in places deemed generally peaceful, violence can cost upwards of [10% of a country's GDP](#), while [\\$1 spent on conflict prevention could yield up to \\$103](#) in savings.

Targeted investments in violence prevention and access to justice can deliver hard economic returns several times the initial outlay. Governance and institutions are key to [de-risking private and public investment](#), enabling multi-stakeholder cooperation and attracting the necessary capital, with proper regulations, to drive equitable transformation at scale.

The SDGs are badly off track, and there are no silver bullets. Yet peace, justice, equality and inclusion offer actionable approaches to, and solutions for, progress across the SDGs and a means to rebuild trust in institutions and governance. To this end, VNRs and VLRs increasingly highlight the role of SDG16 in advancing national and local priorities.

Behind every statistic are people and communities who are struggling and who deserve to live lives free from fear, insecurity, and injustice.

As we face rising threats to democratic norms and an alarming resurgence of far-right extremism in many regions, our commitment to democratic values, human rights, and pluralism must remain unwavering. In this regard, strong, [accountable and democratic institutions are essential to counter extremist narratives](#) that gain space through the spread of fake news, and to protect communities from hate, division, and the erosion of civil, political and social rights.

Going forward, we must be inclusive, involving all stakeholders and especially civil society, if we want to continue to bring this from global to local. Cross-regional coalitions like the Pathfinders and the Justice Action Coalition are examples of inclusive and effective multilateralism.



We must bridge divides and strengthen solidarity by investing in people to realize their full potential, investing in institutions to deliver services fairly, and in investing systems that uphold cohesion and a social contract grounded in peace, justice, inclusion, and equitable governance.

In short, and in this critical period for people and for multilateralism, **we must meet the moment.**

