New York Roundtable: Human Rights, Prevention and Peace

Wednesday, 8 November 2023 from 10.00 – 12.30

Location: ECOSOC CHAMBER

Context and background

In 2023, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) launched Human Rights 75, a transformative initiative aimed at reinvigorating human rights on the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). The Initiative focuses on promoting universality, progress and engagement on human rights. The aim is to build momentum and support for a universal, solution-oriented approach that leverages the potential of human rights to help keep the peace, transform fractured societies, and prevent crisis. As the world transitions to a new order, it is imperative that voices advocating for human rights-based approaches resonate strongly. Human rights should always serve as a versatile tool, adaptable to various models, for preventing conflicts, resolving disputes, and fostering sustainable peace.

The culmination of the Human Rights 75 Initiative is a High-Level Event in Geneva on 11 and 12 December 2023. The event will include four thematic roundtables on the future of human rights and climate, development and economy, digital technologies, and peace and security. It is hoped that these roundtable discussions will, amongst other things, form part of the broader global conversation about the future of the United Nations as the Organization prepares for the Summit of the Future in September 2024.

To ensure that the Geneva High-Level Roundtable on the future of human rights, peace and security is relevant to, and informed by, the ongoing discussions taking place at United Nations Headquarters in the realm of peace and security, in particular in the light of the Secretary-General’s policy brief on a New Agenda for Peace, OHCHR is organizing this preparatory Roundtable on ‘Human Rights, Prevention and Peace’. The discussion will be framed around three topics including prevention, peace operations and inequalities.

Objectives:

- Highlight the contribution of human rights, actual and potential, to conflict prevention, peacekeeping, peace-making and peacebuilding.
- Facilitate a multidisciplinary dialogue among experts and stakeholders to share experiences, insights, and best practices and consider ways in which human rights could strengthen the effectiveness of the UN’s work on peace and security.
- Identify strategies and practical steps for advancing human rights as a central pillar in international efforts to maintain peace and security in accordance with the vision of the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as a contribution to the intergovernmental dialogue taking place in the lead up of the Summit of the Future.
Session outline

Opening Statements (30 minutes)

- Mr Volker Türk, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (confirmed)
- Ms. Rosemary DiCarlo, Under Secretary-General, Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (confirmed)

Moderator: Ilze Brands Kehris, Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights

Presentation of the three topics (30 minutes)

- Human rights and Prevention
  Introduced by Graeme Simpson, Director of Interpeace USA
  The Secretary-General has said that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is “perhaps the best prevention tool we have”. His Policy Brief on the New Agenda for Peace recommends the development of national prevention strategies to address different conflict drivers with human rights in their entirety, at the heart of these national prevention strategies.

- Human Rights and Peace operations
  Introduced by Leila Zerroughi, former SRSG and Head of MONUSCO, SRSG for Children and Armed Conflict, and judge of the Supreme Court of Algeria
  Human rights have been integrated into UN peace operations for many years. More recent initiatives have sought to leverage the value of human rights in guiding peace and security operations towards more effective outcomes by ensuring compliance with human rights.

- Human Rights and Inequalities
  Introduced by Kayum Ahmed, Assistant Professor, Columbia University.
  The Pathways for Peace report identified inequality as one of the key drivers of violent conflict. The 2030 Agenda is undermined by the imperative to “Leave No One Behind”. Yet, as the COVID-19 pandemic and global economic crisis has shown, the world, both within and between States, is increasingly unequal. Equality and non-discrimination are core human rights principles set out in the Universal Declaration.

Contribution from the audience (60 minutes)

Guiding questions:
1. What is the distinctive value of human rights in identifying and addressing the root causes of conflict? How can this be harnessed as part of national prevention strategies?

2. What lessons can be learned from successful peace and security initiatives that have effectively integrated human rights principles? How could the UN reimagine peace operations to more effectively address underlying root causes, support state institution-building, and build sustainable peace through human rights?
3. What would it mean for inequality to be recognized as a strategic risk to international peace and security? How can the peace and security pillar of the UN reinforce the 2030 Agenda practically, so that the Sustainable Development Goals are not undermined by conflict and violence? How can the universal values and norms of human rights be used to strengthen efforts for sustainable development and sustaining peace?

**Wrap-Up (10 minutes)**

**Audience**
Member States; UN Secretariat staff; representatives from civil society organizations, NGOs, and grassroots movements; experts in the fields of human rights, conflict prevention, peacekeeping; international and local media outlets.

**Outcome:**
A short summary note will be produced with suggestions and recommendations that would inform the discussions on the Future of human rights and peace and security on 12 December in Geneva.

**Webcast arrangements**
TBC

For further details, please contact James Turpin (turpin@un.org) and Murielle Tchouwo (tchouwo@un.org).

***