

Toward

Victim-Centered

Change

Key Messages on Integrating Transitional Justice into Sustainable Peace and Development

The international policy community recognizes that transitional justice is an important element of sustainable peace and development agendas. Legacies of serious and massive human rights violations create specific challenges for societies in preventing the recurrence or onset of violent conflict and in improving people's well-being. Efforts to address the causes and consequences of such violations can therefore help to close the global justice gap, especially in countries affected by systemic violence, repression, and marginalization.

Within the framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, transitional justice can contribute to Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16 on peaceful, just, and inclusive societies, SDG 5 on gender equality, SDG 10 on equality, and SDG 17 on partnerships. The UN Human Rights Council, the UN Security Council, and regional actors, such as the African Union and European Union, have increasingly acknowledged this contribution.

Despite this recognition, transitional justice often remains inadequately understood and integrated into policies and practices at the international, regional, national, and subnational levels to promote development. Transitional justice's potential to bring about actual change is far from fully realized. In terms of support, implementation, and sustained engagement with the reforms that it can catalyze, transitional justice often falls short as an element of development.

The 2023 report of the Working Group on Transitional Justice and SDG16+, *Toward Victim-Centered Change: Integrating Transitional Justice into Sustainable Peace and Development*, calls for a more strategic approach to integrating transitional justice into sustainable peace and development. It aims to inform policy discussions at the 2023 SDG Summit and beyond. The report encourages states, regional actors, international organizations, and civil society at all levels to consider the following key messages, while always keeping sight of the inherent value of addressing violations from a human rights perspective.

- Continue to reiterate the relevance of transitional justice to the SDG framework—including to issues of access to justice, rule of law, inclusive institutions, violence prevention, corruption, education, access to information, gender equality, and equality—and the specific pathways through which transitional justice can make a difference. This includes by increasing agency, empowerment, social trust, and inclusion and addressing and transforming the structural causes or drivers of serious violations.

- Further emphasize an approach to transitional justice that enhances its contribution to sustainable development. This can be achieved to the extent to which it is designed and implemented as context specific, comprehensive, victim centered, participatory, gender sensitive, innovative, politically feasible, transformative in its ambitions, and adaptive to the cross-cutting issues of mental health and psychosocial support and access to information.
- Better integrate transitional justice into development agendas by establishing links in practice and policy. This includes the provision of social services, infrastructure, livelihood projects, and psychosocial support to victims and affected communities within a reparative justice framework as well as the incorporation of goals and progress related to truth commission recommendations, reparations, and the needs and priorities of victims into development plans and reporting processes.
- Make a more convincing case of the value of further integration of transitional justice and development—drawing on conceptual links, data and evidence of impact, and examples of the relationship between violations and structures, while also acknowledging the political obstacles to change in the form of resistance and backlash that may misleadingly frame transitional justice as inherently in opposition to peace and development.
- Strengthen collective action and shared political agendas among victims' groups and networks, civil society actors, and broader social and political movements to generate the advocacy, mobilization, agency, and support needed to both address immediate harms and transform structures of exclusion and inequality toward inclusion and equity.
- Further incorporate transitional justice into responses at multiple levels—local, national, regional, and global—and through both formal and informal institutions to more effectively address the scope and complexity of development problems such as displacement, sexual and gender-based violence, and psychosocial harm.
- Adopt a long-term, inter-generational perspective on the monitoring, operationalization, and impact of transitional justice to maintain the support and engagement necessary to enhance its role in bringing about meaningful change and preventing a recurrence of the past, including through implementation of truth commission recommendations and a sustained focus on reparations for victims and affected communities.

The Working Group on Transitional Justice and SDG16+ operates as part of the Justice Action Coalition (JAC), an international policy platform that champions equal access to justice for all and works to close the global justice gap. The Working Group's 2023 report is one of the JAC's 10 deliverables in 2023. Convened by the International Center for Transitional Justice, the Working Group brings together civil society, national governments, regional actors, and international organizations to mobilize support for the 2023 Justice Appeal, which calls for the reestablishment of trust and the renewal of the social contract, by coordinating data and evidence, promoting learning and exchange, and strengthening support for people-centered justice. The Working Group emphasizes the importance of focusing on those who find it hardest to access justice, including victims of massive human rights violations, and examining local and national practices and measures that maximize the value of transitional justice.