



A Network of People
Building Peace

**Supporting Local Infrastructures for Peace Post COVID-19:
The Role of an Integrated Peacebuilding-Development Approach**
*A dialogue for
the South Asia, South-East Asia, Pacific and North East Asia*

**OPENING REMARKS BY SHARON BHAGWAN ROLLS
CHAIR OF THE GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP FOR THE PREVENTION OF ARMED CONFLICT**

Ladies and gentlemen,

At GPPAC, we believe that conflict prevention and peacebuilding efforts have to involve and often be led by local peacebuilders – who are often at the centre of peace and security action as first responders within communities. As such, infrastructures for peace at the regional and national levels need to be developed in partnership with civil society if we are serious about achieving sustaining peace at the local level.

What do I mean when I say “we at GPPAC”?

The Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC) is a global network of local peacebuilders. We bring together over 200 civil society organisations active in the field of conflict prevention and peacebuilding, and it is these local members who lead our network. As my fellow colleague Gus Miclat mentioned once, “Being part of GPPAC helps us to magnify our struggle [...] and allows our voices to be heard in global and regional arenas. At the same time the local experiences give meaning to this global network. We are a network of locals, we share and learn from the experiences in different regions.” Even today, we get to learn from each other as we bring the experience of 4 GPPAC regions: South Asia, South East Asia, North East Asia and the Pacific.

In these regions, GPPAC members work to support peace processes and facilitate community dialogues; address root causes of socio-economic inequalities and drivers of conflict, violence and extremism; address climate change and other crises; and build



A Network of People
Building Peace

stronger and more resilient inclusive communities through peace education, gender justice and other means. For us, peacebuilding is a critical part of development work, humanitarian action, transition contexts, and everyday life.

I would like to focus on three priorities for GPPAC that we would like to put on the table for this discussion:

Partnerships are one of the critical aspects of our work because we believe that peace could be sustained and conflict can be prevented only when we have “all hands on deck,” including diverse local peacebuilders, regional organisations, UN partners, Member States, among others. This means not only coming together but also redesigning the table in a way that provides the recognition of and respect for comparative advantages of all groups.

Partnerships are the very infrastructures on which local peacebuilders rely the most. When all relevant actors use their comparative advantages and work together, such partnerships bring peace into communities. For us, in the Pacific, such partnerships around peace and security have started about a few decades ago and have been bolstered by the global policy frameworks such as the 1995 World Conference on Women in Beijing that provided an opportunity for multi-stakeholder dialogue in the Pacific. This dialogue continues today on a variety of issues across the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus.

Today, we are presented with another opportunity that brought us all together to bolster meaningful partnerships – the 2020 Peacebuilding Architecture Review – which recently concluded with the adoption of the Resolution 2558. What this Review clearly demonstrates is that peacebuilding is no longer a responsibility of selected intergovernmental partners working in support of Member States. It is the responsibility of us all, and we have to become more intentional in the ways partnerships are built and power dynamics are divided. Today is the great opportunity to see what this could look like in practice.

Strengthening the regional approach to sustaining peace is another priority for us as a network that operates regionally. At GPPAC, we have outlined a number of opportunities at the regional level. First, regional partnerships bring peacebuilding “closer to home”. Regional approach encourages norm setting on peacebuilding and transformation of global norms and



A Network of People
Building Peace

standards to the regional contexts. Second, regional approaches bring complementary capacities together. In the Pacific, we welcome the establishment of the Pacific Humanitarian Pathway that supports regional response to the crisis of climate change. We are however yet to determine how other regional frameworks, including the Women, Peace and Security Agenda, can be integrated and cross-linked. Finally, regional action trumps isolation created between people in the region by encouraging ongoing dialogue. The challenge is how to bring everyone together, including people based in the most remote islands and how to develop communications channels that allow for appropriate information-sharing for prevention and response.

We have seen progress by both ASEAN and the Pacific Islands Forum, in partnership with the UN, in strengthening action on prevention and supporting some modalities of civil society engagement. Further strengthening of these partnerships, including in other subregions, could serve as a useful foundation for accelerated peacebuilding action.

In the last couple of years, we have noticed a clear interest from the UN System to shift the decision-making power from the global to the regional and sub-regional levels and ensure that action on sustaining peace sees impact at the field level. For local peacebuilders, it is a very welcoming development. The dialogue and discourse that is taking place at the UN Headquarters is an important part of the process. It helps raise visibility and perhaps to some extent influence policy-making. In the Pacific, South Asia, North East Asia, we need this visibility to be able to build partnerships and advance our work.

However, the impact of the global conversations at the field level is very minimal. Any local impact is almost always driven by individual commitments of actors who move from one position to another. Therefore, the utmost importance for us is to have a regional dialogue that will continue in a systematic and organised manner. One of the positive initiatives that has been currently developed at the global level in support of the regional community engagement is the UN system-wide Community Engagement Guidelines. This resource outlines the steps in which we can be more intentional about regional partnerships between the UN and civil society. This is one area of concrete action we can look at today.



A Network of People
Building Peace

Finally, human security is a critical framework to be integrated in peacebuilding action. Human security approaches in peacebuilding remain ad-hoc and depend on individual commitment. Otherwise, the general response is “business as usual”. Militarised and securitised responses to the challenges to peace continue to prevail across all four regions and beyond. It is especially so in the context of COVID-19, where surveillance methods and mobilisation of security forces are employed to track COVID-19 patients.

In this, we draw on the linkages between human security and women, peace and security (WPS) agenda. We rejected the idea that the WPS Agenda is the one that only serves to open political spaces for women’s participation and bring attention to women’s needs in conflict. While it is a critical resource to recognise and address the unique needs of women, we see and advance the WPS as a critical framework to transform security approaches towards the security of the people in all their diversity. In the Pacific, we have been successfully advancing the WPS principles to integrate human security principles in the Boe Declaration on Regional Security. And we know that integrating human security in peacebuilding is a process and placing human security at the centre of analysis has its implications for the assessment, planning, implementation and evaluation of peacebuilding initiatives. It has implications to understanding who is at the table and what evidence we pay attention to. This is yet another area we can dive in today to see what and how infrastructures for peace at the regional and national level could support local peacebuilding action

I hope that these ideas helped to generate and frame some thinking ahead of our breakout group discussions.