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Culture of peace

Promotion of a culture of peace and interreligious and intercultural dialogue, understanding and cooperation for peace

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

In the present report, submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolutions 73/126 and 73/129, the Secretary-General sets out an overview of activities undertaken by relevant United Nations entities to promote a culture of peace and interreligious and intercultural dialogue. The report also contains an update on the work undertaken in that regard, highlighting the progress made, key trends and issues, as well as measures taken at the national level to scale up efforts. As the lead agency for the International Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures (2013–2022), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization has prepared the report, in cooperation with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat and other relevant United Nations entities.

I. Introduction

1.   In its resolutions 73/126, on the follow-up to the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace, and 73/129 on the promotion of interreligious and intercultural dialogue, understanding and cooperation for peace, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit to it at its seventy-fourth session a report on actions taken by Member States and United Nations entities in implementation of the resolutions.

2.   In the past two decades, there has been broader consensus and engagement across the United Nations system to fostering and sustaining peace through intercultural and interreligious dialogue. The designation by the General Assembly of the year 2000 as the International Year for the Culture of Peace was a catalyst for international consensus on promoting a set of values, attitudes, traditions, behaviours and lifestyles based on respect, non-violence and the promotion of human rights. This was further consolidated with the Assembly's proclamation of 2001–2010 as the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World and declaration of the year 2010 as the International Year for the Rapprochement of Cultures. Momentum was sustained with the proclamation of 2013–2022 as the International Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures, whose priority areas provide an overarching framework for activities carried out by the United Nations system in this area. In the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted in 2015, the interdependence of peace and development is a common thread across the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, specifically Goal 16, with its commitment to peace, justice and strong institutions.

3.   The global landscape features demographic and technological transformations that have created both new opportunities and challenges for building and sustaining peace. The shifting transnational nature of advances in information and communications technology, migration and climate change have generated both opportunities and risks. The global youth population (those between 10 and 24 years of age) is now 1.8 billion, with many of them living in low-income countries. Bringing people together across traditional borders and divides has spurred new ways of communicating, creative expression and sharing information.

4.   Today's plural and diversified world is also increasingly volatile, however. The proliferation of communication platforms and channels has provided fertile ground for discrimination, hatred and xenophobia to flourish. The destabilizing surge of violence and conflicts in recent years has posed significant barriers to inclusive and sustainable development, eroding democratic institutions and depriving millions of their security, resources, rights and opportunities. This is felt most notably in low-income countries, where poverty is exacerbated by conflicts that are increasingly complex and protracted, often perpetuated by non-State actors, with civilians often being the majority of victims. Moreover, crises fuel the fragmentation and weakening of governance and law and order, thereby undermining the potential for peacebuilding and allowing instability and impunity to thrive. The threat of violent extremism and terrorism is spreading. Addressing the root causes of violence and conflict to further prevent crises and the relapse into conflict requires the commitment of Governments and whole societies, as well as multifaceted strategies, including structural reforms that would enable progress to be made in achieving the 2030 Agenda.

5.   The changing nature of conflict also means that previous approaches to peacebuilding no longer work as well as they might have in the past. More comprehensive, integrated and preventative approaches are required. Preventing the entry or relapse into conflict contributes to greater economic prosperity, breaking the cycle of vulnerability, building the resilience of communities and institutions,

maintaining development gains and advancing the implementation of sustainable development plans, including inclusive economic growth. The current global context and increased focus on crisis prevention has underscored the need to better equip people with the tools and skills to manage ethnic, religious and cultural diversity, nurture social cohesion and address crisis risk factors.

6.   Reflecting this shift, the focus on crisis prevention, sustaining peace and achieving the 2030 Agenda has been evident across the United Nations system and in Member States' activities during the reporting period, April 2018 to May 2019. Similarly, the United Nations system mobilized around key events that underscored relevant principles. Commemorations for the seventieth anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Year of Indigenous Languages (2019) shone a light on the importance of inclusion in peacebuilding and dialogue, whereby vulnerable, marginalized and underrepresented groups are systematically included. Underpinning these efforts has been the pledge made in the 2030 Agenda to leave no one behind and the ongoing quest to mainstream the realization of human rights.

II.   Promoting mutual understanding and reciprocal knowledge of cultural, ethnic, linguistic and religious diversity

7.   To broaden awareness and deepen knowledge of the history of the African continent and its diaspora, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) partnered with the Pan African Federation of Filmmakers, the Film Foundation and the Cineteca di Bologna in launching the African Film Heritage Project, with a view to restoring and preserving 50 African films of historical, cultural and artistic significance. In the context of the International Decade for People of African Descent (2015–2024), the United Nations Department of Global Communications continued to promote public awareness of and respect for the contributions of people of African descent to societies, through several special events and multimedia material. In pursuance of reflection on the conditions for sustainable reconciliation and peace in post-slavery societies, in 2018, UNESCO organized two international seminars on healing the wounds of slavery.

8.   Ongoing for more than 30 years, with 40 participating countries, the second phase of the UNESCO Silk Roads Project was launched through the development of the Silk Roads Online initiative and an Interactive Atlas of Cultural Interaction along the Silk Roads, with a view to engaging a global audience, deepening scholarship and building links between people from different communities on those routes. An international photo contest on the theme "Youth eyes on the Silk Roads" held in 2018 attracted contributions from over 6,000 young people from more than 100 countries along the historic Silk Roads and beyond. The promotion of regional dialogue and exchange based on the cultural heritage of the Silk Roads was underscored at the Conference on Dialogue of Asian Civilizations held in Beijing in May 2019. Among the Conference outcomes was an agreement, signed between UNESCO and the Government of China, to offer research grants to young researchers working on issues related to the Silk Roads. In 2019, to further enhance regional cooperation and promote research and knowledge production on intercultural and interreligious dialogue in Central Asia, UNESCO and the authorities of Kazakhstan signed an agreement to establish an international category 2 centre under the auspices of UNESCO for the rapprochement of cultures.

Box 1

Post-conflict recovery of the city of Mosul

The UNESCO initiative "Revive the spirit of Mosul" was launched in February 2018 with the overarching objective to promote social cohesion and peace through an integrated approach to the recovery of the devastated city of Mosul, Iraq.

Mosul is a centuries-old centre of knowledge and exchange in the Middle East, embodying the pluralistic identity of the Iraqi people. From 2014 to 2017, the city was severely damaged when the city was gridlocked by violence, limiting and removing spaces of expression and dialogue. More than 3 million people were displaced and 8.7 million were left in need of humanitarian assistance in Iraq. Infrastructure and institutions were left in ruins, educational and cultural activities were disrupted and over 20 cultural and religious sites were destroyed.

With the support of the United Arab Emirates, the European Union, Germany, Japan, the Netherlands, the government of Flanders, Belgium, Hungary and Italy, UNESCO is working with the Government and people of Iraq to revive the social and cultural vitality of the city. Activities are centred on three core priorities: recovering damaged cultural heritage; improving access to high-quality education and reinforcing educational systems; and revitalizing places of social, cultural and intellectual significance. UNESCO is coordinating international efforts to revive the city's cultural institutions, libraries and museums and to restore its unique urban heritage. Similarly, it is working to deliver the educational tools to reconcile fractured communities and build the resilience required to resist the push and pull factors associated with violent extremism. Central to those efforts is engagement in dialogue with civil society, notably young people, through initiatives to facilitate trust and participation in the future of the city.

9. Hosted by the Government of Azerbaijan in partnership with UNESCO, the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations, the United Nations World Tourism Organization, the Council of Europe and the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the fifth World Forum on Intercultural Dialogue was held in Baku in May 2019. It centred around three core themes: the management of diversity; youth and intercultural leadership; and displacement and human security. In particular, the Forum sought to hone its impact as a platform for catalysing concrete action, using innovative formats and devising ambitious outcomes to be achieved through new strategic collaborations. Held in parallel, the third Academic Forum on Intercultural Dialogue of the UNESCO university twinning and networking programme and the Network on Interreligious Dialogue for Intercultural Understanding was focused on the governance of religious diversity and bringing together UNESCO chairs, external experts and the United Nations inter-agency network on religion and development.

10. Some 40 per cent of the estimated 6,700 languages spoken around the world are in danger of disappearing, most of them indigenous languages. To raise awareness of the role of indigenous languages as a precious resource for enriching a culture of peace and enhancing social cohesion, the Department of Global Communications joined UNESCO and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs to promote the International Year of Indigenous Languages. The Department of Global Communications also set up an "Indigenous media zone" at the eighteenth session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, from 22 April to 3 May 2019, thereby providing indigenous media organizations with a dedicated space for interaction and facilitating their coverage of the session.

11.   Combatting exclusion, discrimination, racism, xenophobia and related intolerance was the objective of several policy initiatives launched during the reporting period, with a focus on education. In two policy reports of the United Nations University (UNU) Institute on Globalization, Culture and Mobility, entitled *The European Migrant Crisis: Psychology, Conflict, and Intergroup Relations* and "Addressing racism through fact-based education and fact-based policies", the Institute provided recommendations on addressing intergroup conflict and migrant integration and racism in the European Union. Guidelines for policymakers, jointly launched in 2018 by UNESCO and the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, were focused on building the resilience of young people to antisemitic stereotypes and ideologies. Following the International Conference on Education and the Holocaust in 2017, nine Holocaust education projects were implemented in 2018 for students and educators, which extended to a range of historical contexts and locations, including South Africa, Indonesia, Ukraine's past and Namibia.

12.   Despite many examples of the crucial nature of intercultural dialogue to building cohesive societies and sustaining peace in diversity, there is insufficient evidence and data on what is needed to make it successful. Developed in partnership with the Institute for Economics and Peace, the initiative of UNESCO for gathering and mobilizing data on the enabling environment for effective intercultural dialogue is aimed at building the evidence base with a view to enhancing policymaking to support and reinforce the enabling conditions for intercultural dialogue to be successful. The conceptual and technical foundation for the initiative was developed through extensive research, including a comprehensive scoping study, in consultation with expert partners, including the World Bank, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the Council of Europe, the Nordic Culture Fund and numerous academic institutions. The information gathered thus far is currently being consolidated into a report, which will guide the collection, analysis and presentation of data going forward.

13.   Reflecting a growing awareness of the importance of heritage protection for global security, UNESCO built on resolutions adopted in recent years by the Security Council to combat attacks on cultural heritage, halt the illicit trafficking of cultural goods and counter the financing of terrorism, together with the promotion of counter-terrorism narratives and communications. As part of efforts to engage young people in heritage protection, UNESCO scaled up its efforts under the "Unite for heritage" (#unite4heritage) campaign by developing counter-narratives to violent extremist propaganda, anchored in human rights, in response to attacks against cultural heritage in Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic.

III.   Supporting reconciliation and peace efforts through intercultural dialogue

14.   Tolerance, pluralism, respect for diversity, inclusion, dialogue among civilizations and the enhancement of interreligious and intercultural understanding and respect among peoples were recognized as important elements in promoting cooperation in combating terrorism and countering violent extremism. Panellists of the workshop on the implementation of the Declaration on the Right to Peace, held in Geneva on 14 June 2018, emphasized that the role of dialogue, tolerance, mediation, assistance and cooperation in the implementation of the mandates of the special procedures mechanisms of the Human Rights Council should be reinforced. The emphasis on prevention has generated a shift towards more integrated actions for peacebuilding and sustainable development and greater recognition of the

interlinkages, confirming the need to address the peace-development nexus to achieve social cohesion, inclusive sustainable development and peaceful societies.

15. During the reporting period, the Peacebuilding Fund supported peace and reconciliation efforts through intercultural dialogue in 29 countries. In parallel to the withdrawal of the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands, the Peacebuilding Fund supported the Government and national stakeholders in building and sustaining peace by launching dialogues at the national and provincial levels, including women's and youth summits, to strengthen social cohesion in preparation for the general elections held in April 2019. It also supported cross-border dialogue initiatives between Burkina Faso, Mali and the Niger, Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia, El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan and Burundi and the United Republic of Tanzania to increase community engagement and trust-building and strengthen borders and human security.

16. Building on the recognition that external mediation in countries at risk of conflict may not always be possible or desired by countries, and that homegrown peace is more durable, greater emphasis was placed on insider mediation and, in that connection, on nurturing the appropriate skills for mediation and dialogue. In that regard, in carrying out the joint programme of UNDP and the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs on building national capacities for conflict prevention, in partnership with the European Union, particular focus was placed on the involvement of insider mediators in dialogue processes. The final three-year phase that concluded in May 2018 resulted in 84 dialogues and consultations, ranging from community-level to regional and national-level dialogues, in nine countries involving 4,555 people. In evaluations of the trainings in Malawi and Togo, notable increases in the number of women acting as active mediators were reported and, in the case of Yemen, it was reported that mediators in local interreligious conflicts had improved safety and security.

17. The fact that women are active agents in building peace continued to be highlighted, in particular in the context of coordinated efforts that united the competencies of various United Nations entities to enhance the role of women in peacebuilding. In a cost-effectiveness study on women-led local conflict-prevention initiatives carried out by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and the Peacebuilding Support Office, the grass-roots "peace huts" initiative in Liberia was identified as a model for the safe mediation of local disputes, overseeing the police and justice services, preventing gender-based violence and supporting its victims, as well as raising community awareness of peacebuilding priorities. United Nations Volunteers partnered with the Peacebuilding Support Office and UN-Women to empower women in national and local dialogues within existing peacebuilding initiatives in Guatemala, Kyrgyzstan, Liberia, Papua New Guinea, Sierra Leone and Sri Lanka. The activities were complemented by the launch of the community of practice on gender-responsive peacebuilding on the United Nations Volunteers eCampus platform, in order to enable knowledge-sharing among the countries. In recognition of the crucial role of women in sustaining peace in South Sudan, the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO) together with the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) are implementing a Peacebuilding Fund project to boost access among rural women to land and provide them with forums in which to discuss and address challenges related to land rights.

18. The UNU Centre for Policy Research led the research project entitled "Limits of punishment: transitional justice and violent extremism" in partnership with the Institute for Integrated Transitions and supported by the Department for International Development of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, which included case studies from Iraq, Nigeria and Somalia. The project set out a framework

for developing alternative responses for individuals accused of association with violent extremist groups. The Centre also led a project on children and extreme violence, in conjunction with the Governments of Luxembourg and Switzerland, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, aimed at addressing knowledge gaps on how and why children become associated with, are used by and leave non-State armed groups in contemporary conflicts. Subsequent round table meetings were held with Iraqi policymakers and the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1373 (2001) concerning counter-terrorism was provided with a briefing on the research findings in the context of its meetings on the guiding principles on foreign terrorist fighters, and children and terrorism.

19. UNESCO continued its efforts to implement Security Council resolutions 2250 (2015) and 2419 (2018) on youth and peace and security and the Secretary-General's plan of action for the prevention of violent extremism, adopted in 2016. It has implemented an inclusive and participatory multisectoral approach to the socioeconomic integration of young people through its programme for the promotion of peace and sustainable development by strengthening youth competencies for life and work in the Sahel in Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Chad, the Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Mauritania, the Niger and Senegal. The programme includes activities ranging from building the capacity of trainers and teachers to enable learners to acquire the basic knowledge and values relating to living together, building the capacity of young people, with a focus on social and economic integration, the promotion of inclusive education policies for disadvantaged groups and the production of the online news programme Journal Rappé. The initial phase of the UNESCO programme was funded by the Office of Counter-Terrorism under the Integrated Assistance for Countering Terrorism initiative of the Group of Five for the Sahel.

Box 2
United Nations-wide efforts to boost youth engagement in peacebuilding

Across the United Nations system, efforts were undertaken to empower young people in working together to spearhead social change, participate fully in the development of their societies and foster a culture of peace.

Youth participation in peacebuilding increased during the reporting period, with several activities responding to Security Council resolutions 2250 (2015) and 2419 (2018), on youth and peace and security.

In September 2018, at the "Youth 2030" event, the Secretary-General launched a United Nations youth strategy, aimed at expanding action at the global, regional and country levels to address the needs, build the agency and advance the rights of young people.

Grounded in the 2030 Agenda, the strategy contains a number of priority areas for United Nations action across the three pillars of the Organization's work, including security, a dedicated priority on peace-building and resilience-building that seeks to support young people as catalysts for peace and security and humanitarian action.

At the meeting of the Women, Peace and Security Focal Points Network, held in Namibia in April 2019, a Youth Peace Lab was held that engaged young women in identifying barriers and solutions to the inclusion of young peacebuilders. Young people identified the need to be invited into spaces, to be listened to and respected. They also highlighted that access to information, youth networks and the use of technology, including social media, were critical in promoting and supporting the active engagement of women and young people in peace and security. In Colombia, some 4,200 girls, boys and adolescents participated in peacebuilding processes in nine

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departments and 22 municipalities through the UNICEF "Somos paz" strategy, strengthening their own skills, as well as those of their families and communities, and leading 105 local reconciliation initiatives. UNICEF also worked with the Truth Commission to develop some methodologies to guarantee the participation of children and adolescents in the meetings for the truth. Taking forward the Compact for Young People in Humanitarian Action, launched in 2016, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) office in Jordan partnered with United Muslim Relief on youth capacity-building in humanitarian action to empower youth in humanitarian settings and qualify young trainers in their communities.

The joint UNESCO-Office of Counter-Terrorism project on preventing violent extremism through youth empowerment in Jordan, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia, jointly funded by Canada, is aimed at enhancing local youth-driven initiatives through an inclusive, multi-disciplinary and participatory approach across education, culture, communication and information to prevent violent extremism. Since its launch in April 2018, the project has reached over to 2,500 young people through capacity development and training workshops, seminars and international conferences and the elaboration of knowledge products such as studies, toolkits and publications, 5 of which are under elaboration.

The United Nations Alliance of Civilizations continued to support youth-led organizations promoting intercultural understanding by funding six projects in Asia and Africa through its Youth Solidarity Fund. The 2018 programme of the Fund was implemented with the support of the Government of Finland, comprising six grants of up to $25,000, as well as technical support for project implementation. The projects, ranging from developing a peace education curriculum in Sri Lanka to countering hate speech in the Central African Republic, reached 3,745 direct beneficiaries and 329,167 indirect beneficiaries.

A full overview of actions taken on youth and peace and security will be provided in the first report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolutions 2250 (2015) and 2419 (2018), to be issued in 2020.

IV. Building a framework for commonly shared values to foster social cohesion

20.   Celebrations marking the seventieth anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights were mobilized across the United Nations system through events across all pillars in knowledge-sharing and advocacy. The Dag Hammarskjöld Library published an online exhibit about the relevance of the Universal Declaration in the modern world, highlighting 30 key documents that convey essential ideas and concepts in international human rights law for achieving a culture of peace. In the lead up to Human Rights Day, on 10 December, more than 2,000 people from 125 countries participated in the "Add your voice" video campaign of the Department of Global Communications. An exhibit was also on display at Headquarters bringing to light the little-known, yet essential, roles of women delegates in drafting the Universal Declaration. The first UNESCO Art Lab dialogue with world artists on human rights was held at UNESCO headquarters in December 2018, in cooperation with the Théâtre National de Chaillot. The Art Lab brought together dancers, choreographers, musicians, performers and visual artists from different regions in an open dialogue on how artistic creativity can contribute to defending human rights and human dignity. To celebrate both the seventieth anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration and World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development, on 21 May, UNESCO hosted an event at its headquarters

on broadening access to culture. The event brought together the Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights and actors from the museums sector and the technology industry who explored contemporary challenges, including the deliberate attacks against culture and artists, the intersection of multiple forms of discrimination, refugee crises and rapid urbanization that have placed cultural diversity increasingly at risk.

21. Human rights principles are also at the heart of the International Coalition of Inclusive and Sustainable Cities, a global network of over 500 member cities across the world, which has continued to promote inclusion, diversity and living together by developing inclusive policies and programmes. The Coalition collaborated with the International Observatory of Mayors on Living Together to develop guidelines for city policies on living together. Ongoing efforts include the development of toolkits to tackle discrimination, based on lessons learned from municipal practices, and the ongoing partnership with the European Coalition and the Marianna V. Vardinoyannis Foundation to empower city authorities to promote the inclusion of refugees and migrants.

22. Public open spaces in the world's cities play a vital role in social and economic life by providing a place where people can interact and come together across cultural, ethnic and other barriers. This was the impetus behind the creation by UN-Habitat of a place to play project in Wadi al-Jawz, East Jerusalem, which offered local residents the opportunity to actively participate in the design of public spaces where whole communities can interact, increasing a sense of inclusion, safety, well-being and overall quality of life for the neighbourhood's 25,000 residents. Similarly, by developing a public space in Naba'a, Beirut, UN-Habitat addressed emerging conflicts within the host and refugee communities; creating safe and meaningful spaces where diverse voices and communities can be heard and valued can help to drive forward social cohesion and advance peacebuilding goals.

23. United Nations entities continued to broaden their engagement in global frameworks with faith-based actors as key players in conflict-resolution and peacebuilding. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights continued the implementation of the "Faith for rights" framework, aimed at reaching out to persons belonging to religions and holding beliefs in all regions of the world, with a view to enhancing cohesive, peaceful and respectful societies. UNDP is an active member in global frameworks and partnerships to foster interreligious and intercultural dialogue and mutual understanding, including the International Partnership on Religion and Sustainable Development, the Advisory Group to the Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers and the Global Steering Committee for the Implementation of the Plan of Action for Religious Leaders and Actors to Prevent Incitement to Violence that Could Lead to Atrocity Crimes. UNICEF is increasingly engaged with religious leaders as key influencers for combating the sexual exploitation of children online, including contributing to the Interfaith Alliance for Safer Communities Forum steering committee. A guide for faith-based organizations to combat online child sexual exploitation was shared at the Interfaith Alliance for Safer Communities Forum, held in Abu Dhabi in November 2018, attended by 450 global religious leaders, non-governmental organizations and heads of industry. The multi-stakeholder movement "We protect" of the Global Alliance to End Child Sexual Exploitation Online has also gained the commitment of 85 Governments, 20 industry representatives and 24 civil society and religious organizations to combat online child sexual exploitation and abuse.

24. Religious and community leaders were also integral actors in local dialogues to support the eradication of female genital mutilation and other harmful practices through community consensus. As part of a joint UNFPA-UNICEF programme in Egypt, community dialogues on female genital mutilation were held with national partners and religious leaders, resulting in two public declarations made with the active participation of 2,215 families. Those efforts also had policy implications, with

the Government of Egypt including provisions for the abandonment of female genital mutilation and ending child marriage in its national strategy for childhood and motherhood for the period 2018–2030 and for mainstreaming the harmful practices agenda in the national child protection system. Moreover, as a result of the partnership between UNICEF and the United States Agency for International Development for the empowerment of girls, a female genital mutilation response was incorporated into trainings for judges and prosecutors in the country's 23 governorates.

Box 3
Engagement with faith-based actors

UNFPA has a long-standing commitment to engaging with faith-based leaders to secure transformative outcomes for the lives of girls and women, working in conjunction with other United Nations entities and as part of community partnership-building and outreach. Among the activities, UNFPA coordinates the Inter-Agency Task Force on Engaging Faith-Based Actors for Sustainable Development, comprising 20 United Nations entities, and hosting a database of over 500 partner faith-based organizations. In 2018, the Task Force joined with Member States to host 15 interfaith seminars and consultations on aspects of social cohesion. It also launched a multi-faith advisory council, bringing together 35 global faith-based non-governmental organization partners who agreed to work in cooperation with the United Nations to advance social cohesion and upholding human rights.

In crisis contexts, women and girls are often disproportionally affected by gender-based violence, including child marriage, and sexual and domestic violence. The UNFPA office in Syrian Arab Republic currently supports 44 safe spaces for women and girls, a family protection unit and community well-being centres across the Syrian Arab Republic to address the needs of women and girls for culturally sensitive sexual and reproductive health services, counselling and vocational training. UNFPA is also working with the Government to build the capacities of religious leaders to deliver messages that support sexual and reproductive health, advocate against gender-based violence and promote social cohesion and community resilience.

V. Disseminating the principles and tools of intercultural and interreligious dialogue through high-quality education and the media

25. Intercultural competencies can be a crucial tool for sustaining peace and contributing to inclusive development. In the UNESCO manual for developing intercultural competencies through story circles, to be published in 2019, a structured yet flexible methodology for developing intercultural competencies in both formal and informal contexts is set out. The manual has been piloted in all regions and is aimed at promoting increased tolerance, empathy, reflexivity and understanding among 500 participants in the story circles. Similarly, the UNESCO *Writing Peace* manual, which is geared towards teaching young people about cultural diversity through the entry point of contemporary writing systems, was launched in Côte d'Ivoire and Morocco in 2018, and Egypt in 2019, as part of an ongoing pilot and dissemination initiative using the manual and involving more than 2,250 primary and secondary school students in 42 countries.

26. To ensure equitable and high-quality education for refugees, UNESCO and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees jointly contributed to the expert group on implementation of the Djibouti Declaration on Refugee Education

of 2017. In its recommendations, the second meeting of the task force of education experts on the implementation of the Declaration, held in Addis Ababa in July 2018, called for the incorporation of refugees into national education systems by 2020 and the inclusion of adult, non-formal and special needs education, as well as peacebuilding and conflict sensitivity in the curricula of the States members of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development. To support the integration of migrants and refugees into host countries' labour markets, the global initiative on a Qualifications Passport for Refugees recognizes refugees' qualifications who no longer have their diplomas and certificates in their possession.

27.   Grounded in a long-term preventive approach, United Nations entities supported educational programming to build learners' resilience to, and mitigate the drivers of, violent extremism. UNESCO produced a policy brief on effective activities for preventing violent extremism through education in 2018, in which good educational practices in preventing violent extremism are outlined, aimed at better supporting policymakers and donors in appropriate programming. It was complemented by workshops on preventing violent extremism through education, global citizenship and peace education, including training for policymakers and teacher trainers in East and West Africa, Central and South Asia and South-Eastern Europe. Similarly, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) education for justice initiative engaged with over 50 experts and academics from Africa and the Middle East, Central Asia, Latin America and South and South-East Asia to develop the initiative's series of university modules on counter-terrorism. The modules include teaching students about the United Nations approach towards interreligious and intercultural dialogue and their contribution to promoting social cohesion, peace and development, including in efforts on counter-terrorism, preventing violent extremism and promoting fundamental freedoms.

28.   Education initiatives broadened in scope to encapsulate the principle of justice and building effective, accountable and inclusive institutions, thereby directly contributing to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals 4 and 16. The joint UNESCO-UNODC initiative on global citizenship education for a culture of lawfulness, launched in 2018, pools the expertise of the two organizations to assist education professionals in designing and implementing educational interventions that equip learners with the knowledge, attitudes and skills to constructively and responsibly engage in society. In that regard, the two entities jointly published a policy document setting out a guide for policymakers on strengthening the rule of law through education and are currently developing two related toolkits focused on primary and secondary level education. The UNODC Global Programme for the Implementation of the Doha Declaration contributes to building a culture of peace by promoting a culture of lawfulness across its four components: judicial integrity; education for justice; prisoner rehabilitation; and youth crime prevention through sports. As part of those activities, the Office launched its Global Judicial Integrity Network in April 2018, bringing together more than 680 judges from around the world. It also continued working with several countries on measures to prevent radicalization and violence in prisons and to support prisoner access to education and vocational programmes.

29.   Educational initiatives have also sought to reinforce the local relevancy of the principles of a culture of peace through the provision of contextual and adaptable tools. In 2018, UNESCO produced an advocacy document on the local contextualization of global citizenship education and its core principles of respect for diversity, solidarity and a shared sense of humanity. Similarly, in 2019, the United Nations System Staff College launched its first online course on an introduction to sustaining peace, the result of the collaboration between the Peacebuilding Support Office, the Development Coordination Office and the inter-agency standing committee, to provide a thorough grounding in the concept of sustaining peace and

its application in different settings and contexts. Ongoing collaboration between United Nations agencies and intergovernmental organizations on peace and human rights education took place through the regular meetings of the international contact group on citizenship and human rights education convened by the Council of Europe and in the context of the World Programme for Human Rights Education, which concludes its third phase in 2019.

30. While technical literacy is a powerful and crucial competency in a technology-driven society, enabling people to think critically about the deluge of information that confronts them has emerged as a prerequisite skill. UNESCO continued to develop and disseminate its media and information literacy curriculum and other educational resources to empower people with competencies in media and information literacy to access, search, evaluate, use and contribute to information and media content critically and responsibly. The European Union-funded youth empowerment programme on media and information literacy as a response to preventing hate and violent extremism was launched in Jordan in 2019. Policy dialogues on the issue of online radicalization were similarly the focus of a series of high-level international conferences and regional meetings to raise awareness about the related ethical issues.

31. The media's corresponding responsibility in shaping public perception was underscored through activities to strengthen quality journalism and media reportage. In 2018, the UNU Institute on Globalization, Culture and Mobility produced a baseline study on the responsible coverage of migration, which addresses xenophobia and the role of the media in shaping perceptions of migrants. UNESCO brought together media professionals, media regulatory bodies, researchers and representatives of victims' associations at the conference on the media in the face of terrorism, held at its Paris headquarters in November 2018, to discuss how journalists can report on terrorism without playing into terrorists' hate-mongering and divisive narratives. At the national level, UNESCO supported the Syrian Centre for Media and Freedom of Expression to build the capacities of the Syrian media to identify and limit the diffusion of hate speech, together with the Hate Speech and Incitement to Violence Observatory.

Box 4
Multi-stakeholder cooperation to combat hate speech online

The rise of hate speech online is a salient example of the challenges associated with the virality and reach of information in the digital age. In recent years there has been an increased prevalence of hate speech online. Often rooted in, and generated by, intolerance and hatred, it undermines democratic values, social stability and peace. Hate speech also sits at the juncture of freedom of expression and individual, group and minority rights and brings into question concepts of dignity, liberty and equality. Moreover, the transnational ambit of the Internet calls for cross-jurisdictional cooperation regarding legal mechanisms to combat hate speech.

During the reporting period, efforts continued on the elaboration of the United Nations strategy and plan of action on combating hate speech, launched in June 2019, with a view to coordinating efforts across the United Nations system and in cooperation with Member States, private companies, civil society and the media as a joint responsibility. Based on human rights, the strategy provides guidance on combatting the drivers of hate speech and reducing its societal impact. In accordance with the strategy, the measures taken will be in line with international human rights norms and standards, particularly the right to freedom of opinion and expression.

Under the strategy, United Nations entities are called upon to promote intercultural, interfaith and interreligious dialogue and mutual understanding and to raise awareness about respect for human rights, non-discrimination, tolerance and understanding of other cultures and religions, as well as to promote the realization of gender equality, including in the digital world.

32.   Between January 2017 and June 2019, 207 journalists were killed, including 117 in countries not experiencing armed conflict, and, of the 1,010 such killings recorded by UNESCO in the past 12 years, 89 per cent of cases remain unresolved. As the United Nations agency with the mandate to promote freedom of expression and the safety of journalists, UNESCO supports Member States by coordinating the implementation of the United Nations Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity and monitoring Sustainable Development Goal target 16.10 at the country level to ensure access to information and protect fundamental freedoms.

33.   The right to freedom of expression, including artistic and creative expression, is critical to the development of vibrant and democratic cultures. It has the power to illuminate, interrogate, provide respite for the disempowered and contribute to transformational social change. Within the framework of the World Press Freedom Day celebration held at the African Union headquarters in Addis Ababa in 2019, the importance of freedom of artistic expression was celebrated, including through the participation of 26 press cartoonists, convened by the Cartooning for Peace association. UNFPA partnered on the launch of the book entitled *Empowering Women through Painting: Jordan*, showcasing 88 women artists' interpretations of empowerment through their art. The UNFPA office in Jordan partnered with the private sector to shed light on gender-based violence through an online cartoon competition on the empowerment of women. In one month, the campaign received 167 submissions globally, with 17,835 users accessing the online platform. Highlighting the power of jazz as a beacon for freedom, creativity and a universal language of peace, the International Jazz Day celebration on 30 April 2019 comprised two weeks of jazz performances and educational outreach programmes in cities across the host country of Australia.

34.   The Internet has evolved from an information-exchange platform to become the backbone of modern business, services and infrastructure, comprising an estimated 3.2 billion users worldwide. Despite the immense transformational power and societal benefits stemming from its use, technology remains inherently vulnerable. In order to achieve better national preparedness and improve international cooperation on cybersecurity, several countries have continued building national cybersecurity frameworks. Having already worked with countries in that domain, the International Telecommunication Union partnered with an additional 14 entities in 2018 to produce an adaptable reference guide for countries to aid in their understanding of the purpose and content of a national cybersecurity strategy and how to develop one. With a view to boosting the level of global cybersecurity, the Global Cybersecurity Index continued to measure the commitment of countries to cybersecurity based on factual information in five main areas: legal; technical; organizational; capacity-building; and national and international cooperation. The Index supports countries in identifying areas for improvement in their own approach to cybersecurity and harmonizing their practices with those of other countries. In 2019, the Index reported on results from 155 participating countries, an upward trend from 105 participating countries in 2015.

VI. Fostering intercultural dialogue for sustainable development and its ethical, religious, social and cultural dimensions

35. Compared with previous years, United Nations bodies increasingly reported on their participation in joint coordinated efforts, platforms and networks that pool the expertise of United Nations agencies to advance equitable sustainable development. Since 2000, the United Nations Global Compact has grown to become the largest corporate sustainability initiative in the world, calling upon companies to align their operations and strategies around 10 principles in the areas of human rights, labour, environment and anti-corruption efforts. Currently the alliance counts more than 9,500 companies and 3,000 non-business signatories based in over 160 countries and nearly 70 local networks. Throughout 2018, 10 human rights-based round tables of chief executive officers took place or were scheduled across the world as part of the Global Compact's local networks. Building on the United Nations peace and security architecture and development system reforms, the joint programme of UNDP and the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs on building national capacities for conflict prevention continued its work in strengthening the political and development pillars of the United Nations through initiatives in various countries around the globe. At the conference in preparation for the 2019 session of the high-level political forum on sustainable development on the theme "Peaceful, just and inclusive societies: Sustainable Development Goal 16 implementation and the path towards leaving no one behind", held in Rome in May 2019, high-level decision makers, practitioners and experts discussed different national approaches to dialogue and how dialogue can be harnessed as an effective tool for nurturing inclusive and just societies. During the conference, UNESCO and UNDP jointly hosted a discussion on promoting dialogue and reducing insecurity, and the ongoing work of UNESCO with the Institute for Economics and Peace to measure the enabling conditions for effective intercultural dialogue was discussed in view of strengthening United Nations system-wide action in mediation and reconciliation.

36. As an active participant in United Nations system-wide actions for gender equality and the empowerment of women, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change secretariat has reinforced its collaboration with intergovernmental organizations for a more gender-responsive environmental agenda by mainstreaming gender considerations into various climate change thematic areas and through initiatives that celebrate women's leadership in climate action. As part of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) gender partnership, an online training programme on gender equality and the environment was launched as a result of cooperation between, among others, the Convention, the United Nations Institute for Training and Research, the GEF small grants programme, FAO, the International Fund for Agricultural Development, the United Nations Environment Programme and the secretariat of GEF. FAO continued to implement the community-driven approach of the Dimitra Clubs to facilitating rural people's empowerment through community mobilization, dialogue and collective action, with a specific focus on women and young people. In Yemen, FAO is supporting the participation of women and youth groups in dialogue with local tribal leaders to advocate for the resolution of water-related conflicts and support gender-responsive community reform efforts. Gender equality and the empowerment of women was also the focus of a UNU Institute for the Advanced Study of Sustainability policy brief issued in 2018, in which UNU explored the varied and intersecting challenges to achieving gender equality in all areas covered by the Sustainable Development Goals. In 2018, the World Tourism Organization published *Tourism for Development, Volume II: Good Practices*, in which the ways in which tourism can effectively contribute to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is considered. It draws on data from global consultations and features 23 case studies from around the world.

37.   Faith-based actors and organizations can be crucial stakeholders in development, especially at the local level, by building trust around common objectives. In January 2018, the United Nations Environment Programme strategy on engaging with faith-based organizations, "Faith for Earth initiative", was launched to engage with faith-based organizations as key partners in achieving development outcomes. Its three overarching goals, grounded in policy leadership, financing and knowledge-based decision-making, are largely dependent on mobilizing local communities through fostering interfaith cooperation in environmental management. The strategy was vetted by a global meeting organized during the United Nations Environment Assembly with 40 representatives of organizations representing 10 faiths.

Box 5
Indigenous peoples are integral to climate change solutions

Indigenous peoples comprise less than 5 per cent of the world's population, yet they are responsible for safeguarding 80 per cent of its biodiversity. They are increasingly threatened owing to a range of factors, including exclusionary policies, lack of recognition and rights protection and the impact of climate change. Indigenous knowledge is a valuable resource on traditional ways of observing global climate change and adaptation measures developed over time.

The local communities and indigenous peoples platform was first mandated by the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in 2015 to deliver three core functions related to knowledge, capacity for engagement and climate change policies and actions. The platform witnessed significant progress when, after three years of development, a working group was officially established by the Conference of the Parties in December 2018 to operationalize the platform. The working group aims to scale up consideration of the experiences of local communities and indigenous peoples in an inclusive, long-term and impactful space, in which communities on the frontline of climate change effects can fully participate in and accelerate global efforts to mitigate and adapt to climate change. The platform includes a governance structure, half of whose members are indigenous representatives. The process leading to the decision was unique for the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in that it directly engaged indigenous peoples in the negotiations.

VII.   Conclusions and recommendations

38.   Peace is at the heart of the Charter of the United Nations and all that United Nations system organizations do. The concept of a culture of peace is grounded in the understanding that peace is fragile and that the pursuit of peace must be a constant process. Peace is something that all actors must work hard to secure every day and everywhere. Over the decades, that idea has expanded from traditional notions of security to accommodate new challenges to forging peaceful societies, including increased social injustice, the exponential speed of communications, violations of human rights, the normalization of hate speech, the climate crisis, the threat of terrorism and the potential disruptive influence of artificial intelligence. At the same time, age-old challenges to peace continued, or even increased, including violence against women and a rise in violent conflict. While there has been encouraging headway made in a number of areas, the journey towards a culture of peace and sustainability has not progressed as far as envisioned – indeed, levels of violent conflict have risen over the past three decades. In the wake of 20 years of international agreements, initiatives and actions committing to that vision, today's global

landscape demonstrates that we are not keeping pace with long-standing or new challenges.

39. There is some hopeful news, however. Demographic and technological transformations not only generate new challenges and risks, they also create new opportunities for building and sustaining peace. The initiatives detailed in the present report are attempts to seize opportunities that have arisen. They contribute in large measure to the larger global effort to fulfil the promises contained in the Charter of the United Nations and, more recently, in the 2030 Agenda, including most notably the pledge to leave no one behind.

40. A culture of peace is inseparable from the realization of human rights, respect for diversity and fairer societies. As part of that effort, it is important to strengthen the defence of peace in the minds of women and men. In that spirit, it is encouraging to see an increasing number of actions to support the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 16 as well as strengthened awareness about the importance of the cross-cutting and interlinked nature of Goal 16 for achieving the other Goals. Education initiatives undertaken during the reporting period were endeavours to address the root drivers of conflict and intolerance and encapsulated the principle of justice in programming. Celebrations in 2018 of the seventieth anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights were testaments to the vitality of those rights and reiterated the principles of universality, interdependence and indivisibility, equality and non-discrimination upon which the Universal Declaration was founded.

41. Hate speech is an attack on tolerance, inclusion, diversity and the very essence of human rights norms and principles. More broadly, it undermines social cohesion, erodes shared values, can lay the foundation for violence and is an impediment to the cause of peace, stability, sustainable development and the fulfilment of human rights for all. Hateful and destructive views are enabled and amplified exponentially through digital technology, often targeting women, minority groups and those who are the most vulnerable. But efforts are under way to combat that scourge, including the new United Nations strategy and plan of action on combating hate speech and proposals set out by the High-Level Panel on Digital Cooperation. The recent emergence of volunteer groups that are organizing to counter harassment and hate online is an illustration of the potential for collaboration. The Christchurch Call to eliminate terrorism and violent extremist content online and the Plan of Action to Safeguard Religious Sites are also important developments.

42. One main challenge as we strive to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals is building more preventive and inclusive approaches that ensure the participation of women, young people and vulnerable, marginalized and underrepresented groups. Leaving no one behind must be a priority for peace. As societies become more multicultural, multi-ethnic and multireligious, we must invest more in social cohesion, recognizing that diversity is a richness, not a threat. Inclusive policies and institutions are central to preventing fraying of the social fabric that could erupt into crisis. Each community should feel that its identity is respected, while, at the same time, that it fully belongs to society as a whole. The International Year of Indigenous Languages provided a framework for United Nations system-wide activities that shed light on matters affecting indigenous persons, in particular their role in peacebuilding and social cohesion. Efforts to broaden stakeholder engagement, boost youth participation and promote intercultural dialogue were accorded high priority during the reporting period.

43. There was more emphasis placed on recognizing and understanding the local context, in both United Nations and national dialogue processes. United Nations entities reported on their continued engagement with faith-based actors, together with

the increased involvement of local mediators in conflict resolution. Harnessing civil society groups as key actors in the promotion of dialogue and a culture of peace can generate multiple dividends through their role in addressing challenges both online and offline and building community resilience.

44. Given that the International Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures is coming to an end in 2022, it is timely to consider how we can sustain the momentum gained during the International Decade. Initiatives to ensure the systematic collection of data, good practices taken by Member States and the development of triggering mechanisms through systems of alert could be envisaged. Moreover, integrated and inclusive actions at the local, national, regional and international levels should be anchored in solid evidence and data to build an understanding of the conditions needed for dialogue to be effective. The world is at a critical juncture, and it is vital to continue to scale up efforts towards achieving a culture of peace and attaining the vision set out in the Charter of the United Nations and the 2030 Agenda.

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