

SDG 16 High-Level Conference
Peace, justice and inclusive societies for Sustainable Development
Statement by the Group of Friends of Security Sector Reform

Your Excellencies, dear colleagues,

Recalling our 2024 statement on security sector reform (SSR) and sustainable development, the 2023 ‘Political declaration of the high-level political forum on sustainable development’ and ‘Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)’, we continue to underline that “Sustainable development cannot be realized without peace and security; and peace and security will be at risk without sustainable development”. We consider security sector reform (SSR) and governance as vital for supporting sustainable development, particularly during transitions, and in conflict-affected and post-conflict countries.

Conceptually we have agreed that security and development are two sides of the same coin – such as in the Security Council and the General Assembly. In this regard, it is fundamental to appreciate the nexus between peace and development broadly, and how these impact on each other. It is for this reason that we highlight the role and relevance of security sector reform and governance as a foundation for stability and peace, social and economic development, as well as in attaining Sustainable Development Goal 16 (SDG 16) in post-conflict societies.

We reiterate that a representative, responsive, efficient, professional, and accountable security sector without discrimination and with full respect for human rights and the rule of law, is the cornerstone of peace and sustainable development, and is important for conflict prevention, peacebuilding and sustaining peace. The process of reforming the security sector, which might be longer, is aimed at restoring State and institutional authority, legitimacy, and rebuilding or generating trust of citizens and all relevant national stakeholders.

However, one of the main challenges with attaining the SDGs is financial resources. The Secretary-General recognized this in his 2022 Report on Strengthening Security Sector Reform, that a *shrinking fiscal space and increased debt servicing, exacerbated by the COVID-19 crisis, have further reduced the financial resources available to the most fragile Member States for security sector reform.*

Therefore, there is a need for concerted efforts to address these economic challenges by governments with the involvement of international financial institutions, international and regional development institutions, and donor partners, as appropriate.

We recommend that States, especially those in transition and post-conflict settings, bolster their commitment to security sector reform. Alongside this, the Security Council and the Peacebuilding Commission can play critical roles in supporting these reforms, which uphold nationally determined and led peacebuilding and conflict prevention efforts. Successful security sector reforms can also support political and social stability, which in turn allows for sustainable development to thrive.

We also encourage the United Nations to continue in its efforts to strengthen and cultivate partnerships with regional arrangements on matters concerning security sector reform and governance.

And finally, we continue to call on Member States to support the recommendation of the 2020 High-Level Panel on SSR to “Expand the scope of the SSR debate and ensure that it benefits from perspectives and experiences of the organisation’s vast and diverse membership, including the General Assembly, the Peacebuilding Commission, and the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).” In this respect, more regular and inclusive discussions on SSR within the General Assembly, ECOSOC, the UN Security Council and the Peacebuilding Commission, are needed.