

Statement by ASG Montiel on Readiness of the UN system to react to initiatives on dynamic interaction of cross-cutting issues related to disarmament, non-proliferation, sustainable development

**Monday, January 23, 2017, from 15.00 to 17.00 hrs
Conference Room 8**

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased and honoured to attend this brainstorming session organised by the Permanent Missions of Belarus, Kazakhstan, Suriname and UNDP.

For us in DESA this is a great opportunity to promote new ideas and initiatives to contribute to a universal push for sustainable development through an interdisciplinary dialogue within the UN system and beyond.

Particularly from the perspective of the relationships between development and disarmament initiatives.

Let me start by highlighting that the adoption of the 2030 Agenda represented a great victory for multilateralism.

The Agenda makes it clear that transformative change is needed in countries at all income levels.

In developing countries, especially least developed countries this will mean eradicating extreme poverty, ending hunger, addressing gender equality, empowering women and providing universal access to education, health care, clean energy, water and sanitation.

The new, universal Agenda commits to leaving no one behind.

Developed countries face the challenge of bringing the SDGs into the mainstream of policy making, not confining them to the domain of development cooperation.

In developed countries the universal SDGs are also applicable to reducing domestic poverty rates and inequalities, shifting towards sustainable patterns of

consumption and production, and contributing meaningfully to tackling climate change.

As you know, the work of the United Nations rests on three pillars: peace, human rights, and development.

Therefore, Peace and sustainable development are inextricably linked. They reinforce each other: peace cannot be maintained without sustainable development, and at the same time sustainable development cannot be achieved and preserved without peace.

In turn, Agenda 2030 explicitly recognizes the link between peace and sustainable development.

SDG 16 is entitled “Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels”.

Unfortunately, the world remains affected by enhanced risks of armed actions, including by non-state actors, potential catastrophic terrorist attacks and new technologies that, if misused or abused, could cause mass destruction and disruption.

Conflict prevention and sustainable development are mutually reinforcing concepts. In this context, disarmament is the link to both peace and development.

Spending on arms diverts resources from other needs, while potentially contributing to instability and conflict which can establish a vicious cycle perpetuating misery and violence.

Nuclear weapons continue to pose an existential threat to humankind. At the same time, new technologies may usher in disruptive weapons, whether in the realm of so-called cyberwarfare or artificial intelligence.

But we should not forget that small arms and light weapons remain the number one killer in countries afflicted by conflict and violence. Controlling the inflow of light weapons into potential conflict zones remains an imperative.

Strengthening the institutions that provide foundation to the peaceful resolution of conflicts – from the village level to the international arena – is crucial. We need a renewed commitment to multilateralism and international cooperation.

The consideration of the relationship between disarmament and development in the UN is not new. This has been a permanent concern of member states for decades. The debate has seen many controversies. Progress in the eyes of many has been relatively slow. Member States in the different UN fora could do more. UN entities will continue to be ready to support as it will be required by Member States.

Lets remember that in 1987, from August 24 to 11 September the UN held in New York the 1st International Conference on the relationship between disarmament and development.

We can also mention the Report of the Group of Governmental Experts on the relationship between disarmament and development produced in 2004 as document A/59/119.

The interesting fact is that the main content of the final document of the conference and the report as well as many other related debates during the last decades remain valid even today.

In that sense, we know disarmament policies and processes could among other issues, help to

- facilitate a decrease in military expenditure;
- impede the development of and spending on new weapons; and
- diminish the risk, incidence, and severity of armed conflicts and armed violence.

The expectation exists that these efforts improve stability and help free up resources for sustainable development. In turn, development policies and processes can help to:

- eradicate poverty;

- promote economic growth and stabilize economies and states;
- create conditions of increased security and well-being;

All of this is particularly important when we realize the financial demands to ensure successful implementation of the Agenda 2030.

Let me finalize by saying that When it comes to disarmament, there is a need for bold leadership. We need leadership committed to a logic that puts universal sustainable development as the highest priority.

In that sense our acknowledgement to the Governments of Belarus, Kazakhstan and Suriname for their leadership in organizing this brainstorming as a contribution to the meeting to be hosted tomorrow by the PGA on sustainable peace and the 2030 development agenda.

Thank you.