

Article36

Written evidence submitted by Article 36 International Development Committee inquiry on Sustainable Development Goals

September 2015

Summary:

- This submission concentrates on the implementation of Goal 16 on promoting peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development. In particular it focuses on target 16.8 to “Broaden and strengthen the participation of developing countries in the institutions of global governance”. It addresses Goal 5 with respect to women’s full and effective participation (target 5.5) in these global processes.
- There are various established linkages between disarmament/weapons issues and the pursuit of sustainable development (for example in the negative relationship between small arms proliferation and development, or the positive one between landmine clearance and post-conflict development).
- The equal participation of developing countries in the multilateral processes that set the rules for how these issues are dealt with on a global scale is therefore crucial.
- New analysis by Article 36, using data from the meetings of 13 multilateral forums over the last five years, shows clearly how developing countries are seriously underrepresented in these discussions, as are women and NGOs from developing countries.
- The UK government, through development assistance or the work of other departments, should take a role in supporting programmes that promote equal participation at these and other multilateral forums.
- The UK government should also support the consistent collection and monitoring of participation data, so that progress can be measured.
- Towards the implementation of target 16.1 to reduce violence and associated death rates, the UK should support, as a global standard, the transparent and systematic recording of every casualty of armed violence as an individual.

The SDGs, disarmament and multilateral processes

1. Article 36 is a UK-based not-for-profit organisation working to promote public scrutiny over the development and use of weapons. We are conducting research to map and analyse state and civil society participation across multilateral treaties and forums dealing with disarmament and weapons issues.¹ A selection of preliminary findings is given in this submission, with recommendations for steps that the UK government could take to address the issues raised by this evidence.
2. Goal 16 of the SDGs – to promote peaceful societies for sustainable development – includes the target (16.8) to “Broaden and strengthen the participation of developing countries in the institutions of global governance”. Goal 5 of the SDGs addresses the full and effective participation of women in political processes in target 5.5. The material below address the implementation of these targets with respect to

¹ Full findings will be published later this year. An initial review of participation data for processes addressing nuclear disarmament was published in May 2015. See Article 36, ‘The underrepresentation of low-income countries in nuclear disarmament forums’ available at <http://a36.co/1KmGqGC>

multilateral forums on disarmament, but may also be applicable to other international forums.

3. The linkages between various aspects of disarmament and the pursuit of development objectives have been analysed and raised at the international level over a number of decades. The UN General Assembly has passed several recent resolutions on the relationship between disarmament and development.² A Governmental Group of Experts reporting to the UN General Assembly in 2004 on the relationship between disarmament and development noted connections such as: the opportunity costs (in terms of financial, technological and human resources) of excessive military spending for development objectives, both in developing countries and globally; the importance of the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration of combatants, the collection and destruction of weapons and landmine clearance for post-conflict development; and the direct negative impact of the financing of armed conflicts on development.³
4. The equal participation of developing countries in the multilateral processes that set the rules for how these issues are dealt with on a global scale is therefore crucial. The UN General Assembly has also passed resolutions urging states and others “to promote equal opportunities for the representation of women in all decision-making processes with regard to matters related to disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control.”⁴ This is equally crucial to achieve in order to adequately address disarmament issues in a manner that promotes sustainable development.

Trends in the underrepresentation of developing countries and women in multilateral disarmament forums

5. Data on the participation of all countries at the meetings of 13 multilateral disarmament processes and forums⁵ between 2010 and 2014 shows a consistent pattern of the underrepresentation of developing country governments in discussions. There is a clear trend across all available data that the lower a country’s income band (using the OECD-DAC list of ODA recipients⁶):
 - The less likely it will be to send an official delegation to a meeting;
 - The smaller that delegation will be;
 - The less likely that country will be to hold an official role at any given meeting; and
 - The less likely that country will be to make an individual statement.
6. Fig 1 (overleaf) illustrates some of this data.

² See for example UN General Assembly resolution A/RES/69/56, December 2014

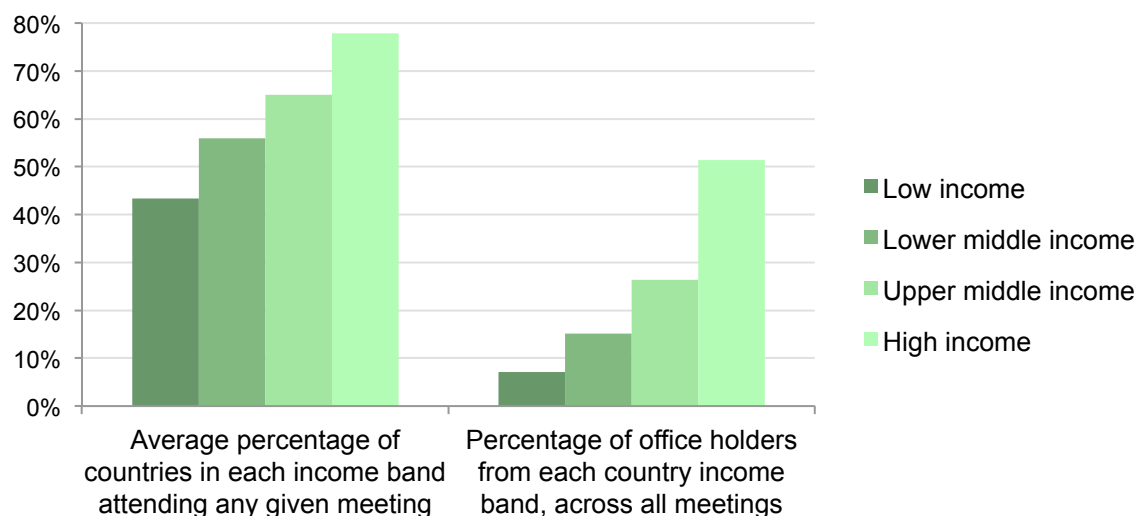
³ UN General Assembly document A/59/119, June 2004.

⁴ See for example UN General Assembly resolution A/RES/69/61, December 2014

⁵ The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty; international conferences on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons; meetings on the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty; the Biological Weapons Convention; the Chemical Weapons Convention; the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons; the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention; the Convention on Cluster Munitions; the Arms Trade Treaty; the UN Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons; the UN General Assembly First Committee; the Conference on Disarmament; and the UN Disarmament Commission.

⁶ OECD, ‘DAC List of ODA Recipients’, available at: <http://www.oecd.org/dac/stats/daclist.htm>

Fig 1: Trends in representation at multilateral disarmament forums: attendance and official roles across all countries



7. Women are also significantly underrepresented. For example, at any given meeting of the multilateral processes examined, only around a quarter of official country delegates are likely to be women, and less than a fifth of statements are likely to be given by a woman. Almost half of all delegations at any of these meetings are likely to be composed entirely of men. There was little observable change in these trends over the period of 2010-14.
8. Civil society organisations based in Global South or lower-income countries are, furthermore, less likely to attend and contribute than their counterparts from richer, Northern countries, the data shows.
9. Sponsorship to attend meetings, as well as expertise and capacity-building programmes to encourage more equal participation, are important to addressing these trends.⁷ However, in a number of the forums Article 36 studied, donor contributions to sponsorship programmes are falling, meaning fewer are able to benefit.
10. The above trends are significant: the harm caused by certain weapons and their proliferation to individuals, communities, economic and development objectives are often more urgent for developing countries. The full and equal participation of their governments and civil society is essential, in particular when discussions cover issues that affect them the most.

Recommendations for the UK:

11. The UK government, through development assistance or the work of other departments, should take a role in supporting programmes that promote equal participation at these and other multilateral forums (we note existing UK contributions in this regard). This should include addressing the participation of women,

⁷ See for example research conducted by the International Law and Policy Institute (ILPI): Torbjørn Graff Hugo & Kjølvi Egeland, December 2014, 'Jumping the Hurdles: Obstacles and Opportunities for Inclusive Multilateral Disarmament', Background Paper No. 13/2014, , available at: http://nwp.ilpi.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/BP13_2014-Obstacles-to-South-Participation1.pdf

developing countries and their civil society (as governments may not always effectively represent the interests of all individuals living in their territories, particularly those most affected by violence. Strong civil society voices can help to address this).

12. This support could include contribution to sponsorship or other economic support programmes. Additionally, it could include support to capacity building initiatives to build human and institutional resources in developing countries, including financing programmes run by international organisations or civil society.
13. The UK should also ensure to prioritise strong and proactive measures for the universalization of disarmament treaties it is party to, to ensure that the full participation of developing and affected countries in these forums is enabled.
14. In providing this support the UK should prioritise assistance to the lowest income countries and their civil society, who are most severely underrepresented, and to countries most affected by the weapons and issues under discussion in these multilateral processes.
15. Progress on implementation of the SDG targets relevant to participation in multilateral processes can be measured by analysing changes in participation data and trends over time. Specific indicators could be developed, for example percentage changes in representation that it would be desirable to see in 5, 10 and 15 years over the implementation period of the SDGs.
16. The participation data collected by Article 36 for this study had several limitations. For example, the same information was not consistently available across all meetings and forums – in particular data on gender – and in several cases was hard to find and time consuming to extract for analysis. The UK should therefore also support the consistent collection, publication and monitoring of participation data, and research into the impact of measures to address underrepresentation.
17. In order to do this, the UK could support official data collection and analysis by international organisations (including official bodies related to the multilateral processes), or data collection and analysis by civil society organisations that monitor these processes.
18. Finally, we note that towards achieving target 16.1 to “Significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere” robust, public information on direct deaths from armed violence will be required to assess changes. The UK should support the principle that every casualty of armed violence must be systematically recorded as an individual person. Every person who dies from armed violence should be promptly recorded, correctly identified, and publicly acknowledged. This is, fundamentally, crucial from a perspective of human dignity, but also vital to a range of processes that depend on the availability of such information. The UK can support the principle of recognising every casualty, and the practice of detailed, comprehensive and systematic casualty recording by: recognising the importance of casualty recording, including its significance to the protection of civilians and to justice, at an international level; joining with other states to call for such casualty recording to become an international standard; and supporting the casualty recording work of civil society, governments and international organisations – as well as improving its own practice in this regard, including where UK forces operate abroad.⁸

⁸ For more information on casualty recording, including known practices and evidence of impact, see www.everycasualty.org. Article 36 is a member of the Every Casualty Campaign.