Promoting Peace Through Sustainable Development Goals

What Role for FOCAC?

*Anna Moller-
Loswick,
Thomas Wheeler,
Richard Smith and
Showers Mawowa*

Abstract: After two years of discussion, UN member states have finally agreed on a new set of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which will replace the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and establish a global development framework for the next fifteen years. The SDGs which were

Anna Moller-Loswick is Policy Officer at Saferworld, 28 Charles Square, London N1 6HT, UK. E-mail: amollerloswick@saferworld.org.uk. Thomas Wheeler is Conflict and Security Adviser at Saferworld. E-mail: twheeler@saferworld.org.uk. Richard Smith is Conflict Transformation Researcher, Strategist and Process Facilitator based at the ACTION Support Centre in Johannesburg, Liesbeek House Park, River Park, Gloucester Road, Mowbray, Cape Town 7700, South Africa. E-mail: richard@asc.org.za. Dr. Showers Mawowa is Research and Development Manager of the Southern African Liaison Office (SALO), and post-doctoral fellow at the Department of Political Sciences, University of Pretoria, Liesbeek House Park, River Park, Gloucester Road, Mowbray, Cape Town 7700, South Africa. E-mail: mawowa@salo.org.za.

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formally adopted at the UN Sustainable Development Summit on 25 September 2015. The Common African Position (CAP) calls for the SDGs to give adequate attention to peace and security, acknowledging the inextricable links between peace, security, stability, and development. While China has acknowledged the importance of peace for development, it initially voiced some skepticism over whether the issue should be addressed explicitly through the SDGs. Nonetheless, China has committed to coordinating its position with that of African countries and has now accepted the inclusion of Goal 16, which aims to promote peaceful and inclusive societies. Indeed, China has already expressed its strong support for African peace and security as an enabler for development in other forums. This paper demonstrates how many of the commitments made in the last Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) Action Plan (2013–2015) in fact overlap with many of the peace-related targets in the draft SDGs. This suggests that the upcoming 6th FOCAC meeting in South Africa in December 2015 could be an opportunity to discuss how the next Action Plan can serve as an implementation mechanism for the SDGs, particularly with regard to their focus on peace.

Keywords: Sustainable Development Goals; Forum on China-Africa Cooperation; development aid; peace and security.

The 2030 Agenda: Strengthened Approach to Sustainable Development

The Current State of Play

The global debate on what development framework will replace the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) has come to an end. After two years of discussion, a finalized text of the 2030 Agenda, previously called the post-2015 development agenda for Sustainable Development, was concluded at the United Nations Headquarters and formally adopted at the UN Sustainable Development Summit on 25 September 2015. During the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, Rio+20, in 2012, UN member states adopted an outcome document, with the mandate to develop a set of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that would be integrated into the 2030 agenda. It also stated that the new development framework should integrate the economic, social, and

environmental dimensions of sustainable development in a comprehensive manner.¹

On 25 September 2015, the international community adopted a new development framework which aims to be much more ambitious and transformative than the MDGs. Unlike the MDGs, the SDGs are set to be universal in nature and can be applied to all countries.

Furthermore, while it is widely admitted that the MDGs have made a significant contribution to development, they have also been criticized for being donor-driven, overly technical in their approach, and lacking in crucial dimensions in the development.² In contrast, the 2030 Agenda aspires to catalyze action on a much wider set of issues with an effort to encourage a more integrated and transformative approach to development. The 17 SDGs proposed by the UN Open Working Group (OWG) in July 2014, as well as their accompanying 169 targets, formed the basis of the new development framework, which was formally adopted in September 2015.

The Importance of Focusing on Peace in the SDGs

Poverty eradication and development gains cannot be sustained under conditions of violent conflict and insecurity. Evidence shows that violence and insecurity undermine development and MDG attainment.³ Strikingly, nearly all the countries that are unlikely to meet a single MDG by the end of 2015 have been affected by high levels of violence.⁴ In this sense, reducing violence and insecurity matters most to the world's poorest people who are

¹United Nations General Assembly, "Future We Want—Outcome Document," United Nations Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform, <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/futurewewant.html>.

²Claire Melamed and Lucy Scott, "After 2015: Progress and Challenges for Development," (London, U.K.: Overseas Development Institute, March 2015), p 2, <http://www.odi.org.uk/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/7061.pdf>.

³See, for example, "World Development Report 2011: Conflict, Security, and Development," (Washington D.C.: World Bank, 2011), p. 69, which states that the development deficit in fragile and conflict-affected and recovering states "account for 77 percent of school-age children not enrolled in primary school, 61 percent of the poverty and 70 percent of infant mortality."

⁴OECD, "Fragile States 2014: Domestic Revenue Mobilisation in Fragile States," (Paris, France: Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2014), p. 17, <http://www.oecd.org/dac/governance-peace/conflictandfragility/docs/FSR-2014.pdf>.

increasingly left behind in conflict-affected countries. The countries that the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) defines as “fragile” are currently home to 43 percent of the world’s population living in absolute poverty. If business as usual continues, it is estimated that by 2030, 62 percent in extreme poverty will be living in countries at risk from high levels of violence.⁵ Although the African continent has become more peaceful, it still suffers from the developmental consequences of violence and insecurity. The African Development Bank has stated that:

...armed conflicts have been the single most important determinant of poverty and human misery in Africa affecting more than half the continent’s countries during the 1980s and 1990s.⁶

Leaders from Africa and China have reaffirmed the importance of peace, including at the 68th Session of the UNGA (United Nations General Assembly) in September 2013, which was focused on the MDGs and the new development framework. For example, President Zuma of South Africa argued that “development and security are two sides of the same coin,”⁷ with leaders from Liberia, Cote D’Ivoire, Nigeria, and other African countries making similar points. China’s Foreign Minister Wang Yi agreed in his speech with the UNGA, stating that:

In advancing the development agenda, we must cherish peace as we do our eyes. War has made tens of millions of people homeless, reduced infrastructures to rubble, and brought decades

⁵OECD, “States of Fragility 2015: Meeting Post-2015 Ambitions—Highlights,” (Paris, France: Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, March 2015), p. 9, <http://www.oecd.org/dac/governance-peace/conflictandfragility/docs/FINAL%20States%20of%20Fragility%20Highlights%20document.pdf>.

⁶African Development Bank Group *et al.*, “The MDG Report 2013: Assessing Progress in Africa towards the Millennium Development Goals,” (New York: United Nations Development Programme, October 2013), p. 4, <http://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/MDG/english/MDG%20Regional%20Reports/Africa/MDG%20report%202013%20summary.EN.pdf>.

⁷Jacob Zuma, “The Post-2015 Agenda: Setting the Stage!” Statement at the general debate of the 68th session of the United Nations General Assembly, September 24, 2013, <http://gadebate.un.org/sites/default/files/gastatements/68/ZA.en.pdf>.

of hard work to naught. To uphold peace is the purpose of the UN Charter as well as the precondition for the MDGs.⁸

Proverty eradication and development gains cannot be sustained as violence and insecurity reign.

It needs to be remembered that violence and insecurity are universal issues with a negative impact on people's lives worldwide, not solely in states currently affected by armed conflict.⁹ For instance, the murder rate in South Africa in 2014 was around five times higher than the 2013 global average.¹⁰ South Africans — along with Venezuelans — are also the least likely to say that they feel safe

walking home at night; in a Gallup poll from 2012, nearly 75 percent had this sense of insecurity.¹¹ It is important to note that poor and marginalized people everywhere are often the ones most affected by violence and insecurity. There is a close relationship between higher poverty rates and violence in South Asia with conflict being concentrated in the regions with a lower per capita income compared to the national average in India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, and Bangladesh.¹²

People around the world recognize these realities. In fact, protection against crime and violence ranks among the top six development priorities

⁸Wang Yi, "Peace, Development and Cooperation Must be Moved Forward Instead of Backward," remarks at the opening plenary meeting of the United Nations Special Event to Follow up the Efforts Made to Advance the Millennium Development Goals, September 25, 2013, http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/pdf/China_GA_Spec_Event_25Sept13.pdf.

⁹Geneva Declaration Secretariat, "More Violence, Less Development: Examining the Relationship between Armed Violence and MDG Achievement," (Geneva, Switzerland: Geneva Declaration Secretariat, September 13, 2010), p. 4, <http://www.genevadeclaration.org/fileadmin/docs/MDG.Process/MoreViolenceLessDevelopment.pdf>.

¹⁰"Factsheet: South Africa's Official Crime Statistics for 2013/14," (Wits, South Africa: Africa Check, 2014), <http://africacheck.org/factsheets/factsheet-south-africas-official-crime-statistics-for-201314/>.

¹¹Steve Crabtree, "Venezuelans, South Africans Least Likely to Feel Safe," Gallup, May 13, 2013, http://www.gallup.com/poll/162341/venezuelans-south-africans-least-likely-feel-safe.aspx?utm_source=COUNTRY_ZAF&utm_medium=topic&utm_campaign=tiles.

¹²Ejaz Ghani and Lakshmi Lyer, "Conflict and Development – Lessons from South Asia," World Bank Economic Premise No. 31 (Washington, D.C.: World Bank, September 2010), pp. 2–3, <http://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/6224435.pdf>.

in the My World Survey, in which nearly eight and a half million people have voted.¹³ In addition, freedom from fear is a declared aspiration for all people around the world, guaranteed by Article Three of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.¹⁴

How Peace is Addressed in the SDGs

Peace implies much more than just the absence of physical violence. While often the search for peace is seen as an end to armed conflict or the enforcement of stability, for many peace-builders the absence of physical violence is only the shallow beginning of a much longer-term peace-building process. A deep or “positive” peace includes changes in the attitudes of conflicting parties and the transformation of the systemic and structural elements that form part of the reasons why the tensions that are present in every society spill over and become violent. Acknowledging and transforming structural violence, including the systems responsible for marginalizing and excluding sections of society and the historical and contemporary causes of poverty, inequality, and underdevelopment, is key to understanding how peace and development imperatives are inextricably linked. Pillar 5 of the CAP acknowledges the need to address the root causes of conflict; to tackle economic and social inequalities and exclusion; to strengthen good and inclusive governance; to fight against all forms of discrimination; and to forge unity in diversity through democratic practices and mechanisms.

A wide range of issues that are necessary to create a holistic “positive peace” which is sustainable over the long run and goes beyond dealing with the symptoms of violent conflict and insecurity are outlined in Table 1.¹⁵ These issues include transparent and accountable governance, decision-making, tackling corruption, promoting access to security and justice, addressing external factors such as flows of arms, drugs and illicit financial

¹³United Nations Global Survey Database, “My World Analytics,” <http://data.myworld2015.org/>.

¹⁴The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, <http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/>.

¹⁵“The Impact of Conflict and Violence on Achieving Development,” Saferworld Issue Paper 1 (London, U.K.: Saferworld, November 2012), <http://www.saferworld.org.uk/resources/view-resource/709-issue-paper-1-the-impact-of-conflict-and-violence-on-achieving-development->.

Table 1. Key Peace-related Issues and Targets

Key Issues for Peace	Key Targets
Reducing violence and making the public secure	16.1 significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere 16.2 end abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence and torture against children
Voice and participation in decision-making	16.7 ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels 16.10 ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements 10.2 by 2030 empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status
Ending impunity and ensuring access to justice	16.3 promote the rule of law at the national and international levels, and ensure equal access to justice for all 16.b promote and enforce non-discriminatory laws and policies for sustainable development 16.9 by 2030 provide legal identity for all including birth registration
Transparency, accountability and controls on corruption	16.5 substantially reduce corruption and bribery in all its forms
Addressing the external stresses that lead to conflict	16.4 by 2030 significantly reduce illicit financial and arms flows, strengthen recovery and return of stolen assets, and combat all forms of organized crime
Fair access to social services and resources	1.4 by 2030 ensure that all men and women, particularly the poor and the vulnerable, have equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to basic services, ownership, and control over land and other forms of property, inheritance, natural resources, appropriate new technology, and financial services including micro-finance
Shared economic growth and opportunities for decent livelihoods	8.5 by 2030 achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value 8.6 by 2020 substantially reduce the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training
The ability of states to manage revenues and perform core functions effectively and accountably	16.6 develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels

(Continued)

Table 1. (Continued)

Key Issues for Peace	Key Targets
Ensuring equality between social groups – especially between men and women	5.1 end all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere 5.2 eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation 5.5 ensure women’s full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic, and public life 10.1 by 2030 progressively achieve and sustain income growth of the bottom 40% of the population at a rate higher than the national average

resources, as well as seeking to reduce levels of violence. Many of these issues are captured in the twelve targets within Goal 16, which aims to:

[p]romote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.

However, other important drivers of conflict are addressed elsewhere in the framework. For example, Goal 5 focuses on gender equality. The norms and values that underpin gender inequality often drive and perpetuate conflict.¹⁶ Indeed, the Institute for Economics and Peace has demonstrated that countries that are less peaceful also have lower levels of gender equality.¹⁷ Other types of inequalities are also important. For example, a large body of evidence demonstrates that horizontal inequalities between social groups — including economic, political, and social inequalities — can exacerbate

¹⁶Hannah Wright, “Masculinities, Conflict and Peacebuilding,” (London, U.K.: Saferworld, October 2014), <http://www.saferworld.org.uk/resources/view-resource/862-masculinities-conflict-and-peacebuilding-perspectives-on-men-through-a-gender-lens>.

¹⁷The Institute for Economics and Peace, “Structures of Peace: Identifying what Leads to Peaceful Societies,” (Sydney, Australia: Institute for Economics and Peace, 2011), <http://www.isn.ethz.ch/Digital-Library/Publications/Detail/?ots591=0c54e3b3-1e9c-be1e-2c24-a6a8c7060233&lng=en&id=136294>.

grievances and eventually lead to conflict.¹⁸ Many goals and targets across the framework seek to address this issue, directly or indirectly through a focus on inclusive development.

Apart from curbing physical violence, the SDGs aim to promote “positive” peace by addressing the root causes of violence and insecurity.

Table 1 illustrates how many of the key issues necessary for a positive peace are captured across the new framework’s goals and targets, creating opportunities for taking a preventive, holistic, and developmental approach to reduce violent conflict and insecurity. Indeed, the fact that such a range of root drivers are addressed across the framework demonstrates how the SDGs are distinct from other global peace and security initiatives which have tended to focus on the symptoms of conflict or violence, for example through the

use of UN Security Council (UNSC) resolutions or the deployment of peacekeepers.

Global inequalities and their historical roots, including through colonialism, are one of the underlying areas of tension that have informed some of the differences in approach to the SDGs that have emerged during the international negotiating process. The overarching global systems and structures that inform global governance and regulate trade and financial flows have also come under fire during the negotiating process. Many developing countries have emphasized the importance of addressing the democratic deficit at the global level and countering the skewed manner in which existing systems benefit those who already wield significant power. As such, targets have been included to reduce inequalities between countries and to increase the representation of developing countries in systems of global governance. Even if it is unlikely that at this juncture the SDGs — which form part of a voluntary development framework — will significantly alter the overarching systemic and structural status quo, it is positive that these issues are starting to be debated.

¹⁸Henk-Jan Brinkman, Larry Attree, and Saa Hezir, “Addressing Horizontal Inequalities as Drivers of Conflict in the Post-2015 Development Agenda,” (London, U.K.: Saferworld, February 2013), <http://www.saferworld.org.uk/resources/view-resource/725-addressing-horizontal-inequalities-as-drivers-of-conflict-in-the-post-2015-development-agenda>.

Steps Moving Forward

With an agreement on the 2030 Agenda — which includes a strong focus on peace in Goal 16 and across other elements of the framework — discussions are now increasingly turning to issues of securing greater buy-in to the SDGs by governments and other stakeholders as well as broader matters of implementation. On the former issue, some member states, including China, have voiced concerns over the inclusion of issues related to peace within the SDGs. More work will be required to address their concerns in order to ensure genuine political buy-in and avoid of a pick-and-choose approach to the goals and targets. On the issue of implementation, the SDGs will largely be implemented at the national level, with different countries taking context-specific actions to meet the targets. Nonetheless, support from the international community and cooperation between states will be necessary if all countries are to be able to meet them. A new global partnership for development will need to recognize that underdevelopment has a long history, rooted in forms of colonialism and imperialism. Acknowledging and addressing development needs is the collective responsibility of all countries, and this must include efforts to mitigate all international factors that inhibit development.

Although a new global partnership for implementing the 2030 Agenda is necessary, the many existing global initiatives to build more peaceful societies should not be overlooked. The FOCAC Action Plan counts among these initiatives and provides a great opportunity to advance many of these peace-related targets in the 2030 Agenda. Indeed the limitations of a nation-state approach to sustainable development and durable peace makes these forms of international cooperation an essential element of an effective program aimed at taking the SDGs forward. Tapping into and unleashing the potential of international cooperative partnerships, especially among blocs of developing countries, will be essential if we are to realize the potentially transformative effect of a new development trajectory.

China and Africa's Positions on the 2030 Agenda

China and Africa's Commitment to Coordinate their Positions on the 2030 Agenda

African countries have agreed on the CAP on the post-2015 development agenda, which broadly guided their collective engagement in negotiations. The CAP is also aligned with the African Union's Agenda 2063, which sets

out a longer-term vision for development in Africa. As a country with growing international influence and a large stake in global development, China has played a relatively active role in discussions in New York. Aside from participation in the wider Group of 77 at the UN, China and Africa also agreed to work together to formulate a new development framework. In the 5th FOCAC Beijing Action Plan (2013–2015), the two sides called on the international community to build consensus on the post-2015 agenda.¹⁹ Also on the sidelines of UNGA in September 2013, China and African states agreed to “strengthen coordination and cooperation on the post-2015 development agenda.”²⁰

There is strong foundation between China and African in implementing the SDGs over the next 15 years.

The foundation for further cooperation is evident in several ways. First, the two sides have cooperated through FOCAC since 2000 with the purpose of promoting development cooperation.²¹ Second, China has demonstrated a clear commitment to strengthen development ties with Africa. High-level leaders and officials such as President Xi Jinping have made mutual development the focus of bilateral visits to African countries.²²

China has also agreed to increase its aid, and to expand investment and finance cooperation with Africa.²³ Third, South-South cooperation between China and Africa has been seen as a contribution to MDG

¹⁹“The Fifth Ministerial Conference of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation: Beijing Action Plan (2013–2015),” Paragraph 3.4, Forum on China-Africa Cooperation website, July 23, 2012, <http://www.focac.org/eng/zxxx/t954620.htm>.

²⁰“Joint Communiqué of the Third Round of Political Consultations between Chinese and African Foreign Ministers,” Chinese Foreign Ministry website, September 23, 2013, http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjdt_665385/2649_665393/t1080313.shtml.

²¹“FOCAC ABC,” Forum on China-Africa Cooperation website, April 9, 2013, <http://www.focac.org/eng/lttda/ltjj/t933522.htm>.

²²“Xi Jinping Wraps up Africa Trip in Congo,” BBC News, March 30, 2013, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-21979122>.

²³“Declaration of Sharm El Sheikh of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation,” Forum on China-Africa Cooperation website, November 12, 2009, <http://www.focac.org/eng/dsjbzjhy/hywj/t626388.htm>.

attainment — this flourishing cooperation can be further expanded upon in order to meet the SDGs over the next 15 years.²⁴

Similarities and Differences Between Africa and China's Positions

There was a lot of convergence between Africa and China's positions during the negotiations on the 2030 Agenda. In the position papers the CAP²⁵ and "China's Position Paper on the Development Agenda beyond 2015" in 2013,²⁶ poverty eradication is identified as the overarching goal of the new development framework. The two papers also agree on priorities such as social progress, inclusive economic growth, and strengthening global development partnerships. In their positions, China and Africa also adhere to the principles of mutual respect, mutual benefit, win-win cooperation, and respect for diversity in development models.²⁷

However, China and Africa's positions differ slightly. Although both sides uphold the principle of Common but Differentiated Responsibilities (CBDR), Africa puts more emphasis on the growing importance of South-South cooperation and would like to explore this area of cooperation further, working with a range of different development partners,²⁸ while

²⁴Helen Lei Sun, "Understanding China's Agricultural Investments in Africa," Occasional Paper No. 12 (Johannesburg, South Africa: South African Institute of International Affairs, November 2011), p. 5, http://www.saiia.org.za/doc_download/45-understanding-china-s-agricultural-investments-in-africa.

²⁵African Union, "Common African Position on the Post-2015 Development Agenda," March 2014, <http://www.africa.undp.org/content/dam/rba/docs/Reports/RBA-common-position.pdf>.

²⁶"China's Position Paper on the Development Agenda Beyond 2015," Chinese Foreign Ministry, website, September 22, 2013, <http://www.safpi.org/news/article/2013/chinas-position-paper-development-agenda-beyond-2015>.

²⁷Chen Jimin, "The Evolving Dynamic of China-Africa Relations," *The Diplomat*, May 16, 2014, <http://thediplomat.com/2014/05/the-evolving-dynamic-of-china-africa-relations/>.

²⁸United Nations Economic and Social Council and African Union, "Ministerial Statement at the Eighth Joint Annual Meetings of the African Union Specialized Technical Committee on Finance, Monetary Affairs, Economic Planning and Integration and the Economic Commission for Africa Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development," March 30–31, 2015, http://unohrlls.org/custom-content/uploads/2015/05/com2015_draft-ministerial-statement_rev9_mrr.pdf.

China has argued that “North-South cooperation should continue to serve as the main channel of development financing” and that “South-South cooperation is a supplement to North-South cooperation.”²⁹

China still views itself as a developing country with its own domestic challenges and is reluctant to be seen as a donor which should make concrete commitments on aid to the same degree as developed countries. In addition, China has tended to envision a narrower development framework, which focuses on the three core pillars of development,³⁰ while Africa has committed itself to a more ambitious agenda, which includes issues of human rights, good governance, rule of law, and peace and security.³¹

In realizing the
SDGs, China
advocates enhanced
North-South
cooperation as the
basis while Africa
emphasizes
South-South
cooperation.

As noted, China and Africa have both demonstrated that they acknowledge the strong link between peace and development. The fifth pillar on peace and security in the CAP acknowledges the “importance of peace and security in Africa and in the world, and the inextricable links between development and peace, security and stability.”³² Various African states called for a strong focus on peace in the OWG and have actively supported Goal 16. Despite an initial reluctance to embrace Goal 16, at the 11th OWG session, South Africa stated that

...[a]chieving stable and peaceful societies should be considered as an important part of sustainable development. What is significant is the relationship between

²⁹“China’s Position Paper on the Post-2015 Development Agenda,” Chinese Foreign Ministry website, May 13, 2015, http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/zxxx_662805/t1263455.shtml.

³⁰Wang Min, “Statement by Troika of China, Indonesia and Kazakhstan on Cluster 8 of Focus Areas on 10th Session of SDGs OWG,” <http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/8127china8.pdf>.

³¹African Union, “Common African Position on the Post-2015 Development Agenda.”

³²African Union, “Common African Position on the Post-2015 Development Agenda,” p. 3.

peaceful, stable and non-violent societies, as well as rule of law at all levels and respect for human rights and development.³³

Once an initial set of 17 Goals had been agreed, South Africa sought to protect the delicate compromise that had been reached, with its public positions on Goal 16 also influenced by its role as Chair of the G77.

Initially, China was also more skeptical about the inclusion of these issues. During the opening negotiations of the OWG, it noted several concerns with regard to such an explicit focus on peace at the goal level. In particular, China argued that the SDGs should focus solely on the three dimensions of sustainable development — the economic, social, and environmental pillars — as mandated by Rio+20 in 2012. In this regard, it was argued that underdevelopment, poverty, and inequality are key drivers of conflict, so these issues should be prioritized in the SDGs — they would, in turn, lead to peace and so there was no need to focus on it as an explicit development outcome. Furthermore, it was argued that peace and security are already being addressed in other institutions and forums that are more suitable for dealing with peace and security related issues such as the UN Security Council and Peace building Commission (PBC).³⁴ Finally, Beijing was also concerned that the sovereignty of countries could be violated if the SDGs include a focus on internal affairs.³⁵

Nonetheless, as dialogue increased on this issue, with concerns and misconceptions being addressed, China showed greater flexibility. At the 10th Session of the OWG, China stated that it:

... acknowledge[s] the importance of peaceful and non-violent societies, rule of law and capable institutions and their linkage

³³"South Africa's Intervention on Focus Area 16: 'Peaceful and Inclusive Societies, Rule of Law and Capable Institutions,'" 11th Session, UN Open Working Group, <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/9710southafrica.pdf>.

³⁴Endah Murniningtyas, "Conflict Prevention, Post-conflict Peacebuilding and the Promotion of Durable Peace, Rule of Law and Governance," Statement on behalf of China, Indonesia, and Kazakhstan at the Eighth Meeting of the OWG on SDGs, February 3–7, 2014, <http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/6340indonesia3.pdf>.

³⁵See China's statement during the UN General Assembly's Thematic Debate on Ensuring Peaceful and Stable Societies, April 24, 2014, <http://webtv.un.org/meetings-events/index.php/watch/part-2-ensuring-stable-and-peaceful-societiesgeneral-assembly-thematic-debate/3505168372001>.

with development, which create an enabling environment for sustainable development.³⁶

In addition, at the 12th and 13th Sessions of the OWG, China was open to put a number of peace-related targets into a merged Goal called “Means of implementation, enabling environment for sustainable development and strengthening institutions,” combined with Goal 16 and Goal 17. This included targets on violence reduction, corruption, organized crime, illicit flows of arms, finance, drugs, wildlife, as well as inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making, although only in general terms and without quantitative targets or set time frames. Although China cautioned against target language on political and civil freedoms, rule of law and human rights during the negotiations in its final position paper on the post-2015 development agenda³⁷, it recognizes that it is important to:

...modernize the national governance system and governance capacity, comprehensively promote the rule of law, protect human rights, and create a good social environment conducive to development

Despite China’s changing position in the OWG has shifted, whether officials prioritize a focus on peace with regard to implementation of the agenda remains an open question. An examination of China’s relations with Africa suggests there is some room for optimism.

A Shared Commitment to Peace in Africa

How China has Committed to Promote African Peace and Security

Over the past few years, issues related to peace in Africa have gained priority on the agenda of China-Africa relations. The support for the promotion of peace and stability in Africa has been voiced at the highest political level in China. During President Xi Jinping’s tour of Africa in March

³⁶Wang Min, “Statement by Troika of China, Indonesia and Kazakhstan on Cluster 8 of Focus Areas on 10th Session of SDGs OWG.”

³⁷“China’s Position Paper on the Post-2015 Development Agenda.”

2013, he promised that China would remain a reliable partner of Africa, stating that:

China will continue to uphold the principle of peace, development, co-operation and mutual benefit, and dedicate itself unswervingly to safeguarding world peace and promoting common development.³⁸

This promise was echoed by Premier Li Keqiang during his four-nation tour in Africa in May 2014, when he said that China was ready to support African countries in upholding peace.³⁹

The FOCAC process has been a key forum for specific agreements on African peace and security. Peace was identified as one of the five key areas for deepened cooperation in former President Hu Jintao's speech at the opening ceremony of the 5th FOCAC meeting in July 2012. He stated that the Chinese and African people shared a desire to seek peace and development and recognized the need to "promote peace and stability in Africa and create a secure environment for Africa's development," which China would contribute to.⁴⁰ In the latest FOCAC Action Plan (2013–2015) which emanated from this meeting, China and Africa stated that they:

...shared the view that the challenges confronting peace and security in Africa are increasing and reaffirmed their commitment to strengthen cooperation in policy coordination capacity building, preventive diplomacy, peacekeeping operations and post-conflict reconstruction and rehabilitation on the basis of equality

³⁸"China will be Africa's All-weather Friend and Partner: Chinese President," *Xinhua News*, March 30, 2013, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/china/2013-03/30/c_124522273.htm.

³⁹He Wenping, "Helping Africa Build Up its Security Capacity Serves Global Interests," *China-US Focus*, January 16, 2015, <http://www.chinausfocus.com/foreign-policy/helping-africa-build-up-its-security-capacity-serves-global-interests/>.

⁴⁰"Chinese President's Speech at Opening Ceremony of Fifth Ministerial Conference of Forum on China-Africa Cooperation," *Xinhua News*, July 19, 2012, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/china/2012-07/19/c_131725637.htm.

and mutual respect to jointly maintain peace and stability in Africa.⁴¹

The Action Plan outlines a large number of commitments on enhanced cooperation including support to post-conflict reconstruction, the development of the African Peace and Security Architecture, and the creation of the "Initiative on China-Africa Cooperative Partnership for Peace and Security," which will provide the African Union (AU) with support for its peace-support operations.⁴²

These issues look set to stay on the agenda: China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi has expressed that the maintenance of regional peace and security is one of the three key areas in which he expects China-Africa cooperation to be enhanced as a result of the next FOCAC meeting in South Africa.⁴³

China's commitment to African peace and stability is mainly driven by its desire to be perceived as a responsible great power which promotes peace overseas.

China's growing engagement in Africa's peace and security challenges has been driven by a number of factors. National interests certainly play a role: the protection of increasing numbers of Chinese citizens and deepening economic interests on the continent has become a higher priority for Beijing. However, more broadly than this, China's leadership has been explicit about the need for China to be seen as a responsible great power which is concerned with promoting peace overseas along with other global public goods.⁴⁴ Furthermore, African states themselves have encouraged China to deepen its engagement, thereby addressing concerns in Beijing about

⁴¹"The Fifth Ministerial Conference of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation: Beijing Action Plan (2013–2015)," Forum on China-Africa Cooperation website, Paragraphs 2.6.1 and 2.6.2, July 23, 2012, <http://www.focac.org/eng/zxxx/t954620.htm>.

⁴²*Ibid.*, Paragraph 2.6.3.

⁴³"Wang Yi Talks about Expectation on 6th FOCAC: Enhance 'Three-Aspect Support' on China-Africa Cooperation," Chinese Foreign Ministry website, April 14, 2015, http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/zxxx_662805/t1256317.shtml.

⁴⁴"Full text of Hu Jintao's speech at BFA annual conference 2004," *People's Daily Online*, April 23, 2004, http://en.people.cn/200404/24/eng20040424_141419.shtml.

adherence to the policy of non-interference. Indeed, deepening engagement on African peace and security issues is increasingly seen as a means to strengthen relations.⁴⁵ Finally, there is a broader recognition in China that efforts to promote mutual development between China and Africa cannot ignore matters of peace and security, and that mutually beneficial cooperation will need to include a focus on these matters from a development perspective.

China's Actions to Meet Its Commitments

China's practical engagement in the promotion of peace and stability on the African continent has increased over recent years, ranging from the deployment of peacekeeping troops to direct mediation efforts. China's contribution to the United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) has included both logistical support and troop contribution. For example, Beijing has contributed 170 combat troops to the UN peacekeeping mission in Mali, provided US\$1 million in assistance to the AU to support its mediation and coordination efforts in the Mali conflict,⁴⁶ and deployed a Chinese infantry battalion of 700 troops to South Sudan to assist the UN peacekeeping mission there.⁴⁷ Over 1,800 of the 2,000 Chinese peacekeeping troops deployed around the world are stationed in Africa. In fact, China has deployed the largest number of peacekeeping forces among the permanent members of the UN Security Council.⁴⁸

In addition, China is part of the international naval operation to combat piracy off the coast of Somalia and has participated in anti-piracy patrols by sending ships and by taking part in joint exercises, including in

⁴⁵Thomas J. Wheeler, "Peace through Prevention: Practical Steps for Deepening China-Africa Security Cooperation," *African East Asian Affairs*, Issue 3 (September 2013), <http://aeaa.journals.ac.za/pub/article/view/111/63>.

⁴⁶Yun Sun, "Xi Jinping's Africa Policy: The First Year," Africa in Focus blog (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, April 14, 2014), <http://www.brookings.edu/blogs/africa-in-focus/posts/2014/04/10-jinping-africa-policy-sun>.

⁴⁷David Smith, "China to Send 700 Combat Troops to South Sudan," *Guardian*, December 23, 2014, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/dec/23/china-700-combat-troops-south-sudan-africa-battalion-un-peacekeeping>.

⁴⁸"Spotlight: China's Peacekeeping Contribution to UN Missions in Africa Shows Growing Sense of Responsibility," *Xinhua News*, March 27, 2015, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2015-03/27/c_134104184.htm.

the Mediterranean Sea.⁴⁹ China has also supported the operationalization of the African Standby Force (ASF).⁵⁰ In the field of diplomacy, China has supported mediation efforts in the South Sudan conflict by regional organizations such as the Inter-Governmental Authority for Development (IGAD).⁵¹ China's Special Envoy for Africa, Ambassador Zhong Jianhua has traveled frequently to Africa to mediate the South Sudan issue⁵² and Foreign Minister Wang Yi visited Addis Ababa in January 2014 to meet with rebel and government officials and called for an immediate cessation of hostilities in South Sudan.⁵³ Responding to crises, elsewhere, China also provided funding for the humanitarian response to the crisis in the Horn of Africa in 2011,⁵⁴ sending humanitarian aid and medical personnel to support international efforts to tackle the Ebola outbreak in West Africa.⁵⁵

Indeed, it is argued by Chinese officials and scholars that China's engagement on African peace and security issues extends beyond reactive and hard security approaches — such as the deployment of peacekeepers — to actions that will help address the root causes of conflict. Promoting economic growth has been seen as one such contribution. Shen Guofang, then China's deputy permanent representative at the UN, argued that because poverty leads to instability, the longer-term objectives of promoting sustainable peace must be:

⁴⁹"Chinese Navy Squadron Completes Indian Ocean Exercises," *Guardian*, February 4, 2014, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/feb/04/chinese-navy-squadron-indian-ocean>.

⁵⁰African Union Press Release, "Commissioner Chergui Concludes Official Visit to China; Launches AU-China Strategic Dialogue for Peace and Security in Africa," November 3, 2014, <http://www.peaceau.org/uploads/press-release-commissioner-cherqui-concludes-official-visit-to-china-launches-au-china-strategic-dialogue-for-peace-security-in-africa.pdf>.

⁵¹"China Supports IGAD's Mediation Efforts on South Sudan," *Xinhua News*, January 12, 2015, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/china/2015-01/12/c_133913931.htm.

⁵²Yun Sun, "Xi Jinping's Africa Policy: The First Year."

⁵³*Ibid.*

⁵⁴Claire Provost, "Update: Aid for the Food Crisis in the Horn of Africa—Get the Data," *Guardian*, October 24, 2011, <http://www.theguardian.com/global-development/poverty-matters/2011/aug/01/drought-food-crisis-africa-data>.

⁵⁵Mark Anderson and Lucy Lamble, "Ebola Outbreak Response: A Breakdown of the Key Funding Pledges," *Guardian*, October 9, 2014, <http://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2014/oct/09/ebola-outbreak-response-breakdown-key-funding-pledges>.

... the eradication of poverty, the development of the economy as well as a peaceful and rewarding life for people in post-conflict countries and regions.⁵⁶

Looking at official Chinese discourse on the roots of conflict in Sudan, Chinese scholars argue that the belief that reducing poverty reduces conflict is based on China's own experience of attempting to bring stability to its own restive frontier regions.⁵⁷ China's economic engagement on the African continent has increased rapidly in recent years – China's investment in Africa grew from US\$ 210 million in 2000 to US\$3.17 billion in 2011.⁵⁸ Trade shot up from just US\$10 billion in 2000 to US\$210 billion in 2013.⁵⁹ In addition, Africa was among the top recipients of Chinese foreign aid⁶⁰ — totaling \$6.4 billion in 2013 — which covers areas such as education, transport, communication, and health.⁶¹ It is argued that China is promoting not only development in Africa, but long-term peace through win-win economic cooperation. While the reality on the ground may be much more complex — with the type of economic growth mattering more for peace than whether it happens at all⁶² — this emphasis on economic

⁵⁶Zhao Lei, "Two Pillars of China's Global Peace Engagement Strategy: UN Peacekeeping Operations and International Peacebuilding Operations," *International Peacekeeping*, Vol. 18, No. 3 (June 2011), pp. 344–362.

⁵⁷Jiang Hengkun, "China and the Darfur Crisis: Chinese Perspectives," Paper presented to the China-Africa Civil Society Forum on Peace and Development, Beijing, June 2–4, 2010.

⁵⁸Yun Sun, "China's Aid to Africa: Monster or Messiah?" Brookings East Asia Commentary (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, February 2014), <http://www.brookings.edu/research/opinions/2014/02/07-china-aid-to-africa-sun>.

⁵⁹"China Sees Africa Trade Evolving beyond Natural Resources," BBC News, June 10, 2014, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-27774200>.

⁶⁰Yun Sun, "China's Aid to Africa: Monster or Messiah?"

⁶¹Lowy Institute for International Policy, "Chinese Foreign Aid," <http://www.lowy-institute.org/issues/chinese-foreign-aid>.

⁶²See, for example, Ivan Campbell *et al.*, "China and Conflict-Affected States—Between Principle and Pragmatism," (London, U.K.: Saferworld, January 2012), <http://www.saferworld.org.uk/resources/view-resource/612-china-and-conflict-affected-states>; see also Daniel Large, "Between the CPA and Southern Independence: China's Post-Conflict Engagement in Sudan," Occasional Paper No. 115 (Johannesburg, South Africa: South African Institute of International Affairs, April 2012).

development demonstrates recognition of a more holistic approach to prevent conflict and build sustainable peace.

Linkages Between FOCAC and the Peace Aspects of the 2030 Agenda

It should first be noted that discussions on China's existing commitments to African peace and security could be used to help address the concerns about the inclusion of peace in the SDG framework which were raised by China in past negotiations. While China has now accepted Goal 16, in line with the common position of Africa, addressing lingering concerns will be crucial for developing buy-in for implementation. The following concerns could be addressed:

- *The sovereignty of countries shall not be violated.* The proposed SDGs are about how individual countries can help themselves and not about what the international community can impose on them. The SDGs are non-binding in nature and their implementation will take place at the national level, with requests for support defining engagement in these countries by other states. Also commonly agreed between states, the FOCAC process has similarly outlined general areas for China to support African countries without a threat to their sovereignty.
- *Focus should be placed on the three pillars of Rio+20.* Although there is consensus that the post-2015 agenda should be framed by the three pillars of Rio+20, the intention was not for these to be used to delimit the new development framework, which will reflect a broader conception of sustainable development. The inclusion of a focus on peace and security within the FOCAC is explicitly framed in reference to enabling and promoting development in Africa.
- *The mandate of the existing peace and security architecture must not be violated.* Just as FOCAC commitments on African peace and security do not undermine other processes on the continent or globally, the SDGs can complement the wider peace and security architecture. Furthermore, the inclusion of peace is not about reconfiguring existing institutional responsibilities but about mainstreaming a preventative approach *within* development.

More specifically, existing China-Africa commitments in the current FOCAC action plan overlap significantly with a number of goals and targets that promote peace in the proposed SDGs.

Particularly notable are the various commitments that would promote Goal 16 on peaceful and inclusive societies. For example, the launch of the "Initiative on China-Africa Cooperative Partnership for Peace and Security" and the ambition to strengthen cooperation in preventative diplomacy and post-conflict reconstruction and rehabilitation⁶³ would serve as means to achieve progress on Target 16.1 on reduction of violence, as well as Goal 16 as a whole. Another example is the commitment to increase cooperation in the field of law research, legal services, training of law professionals, and the mechanism of non-judicial settlement of disputes,⁶⁴ which could potentially help advance SDG Target 16.3 on the promotion of the rule of law and equal access to justice for all.

Transnational threats such as illicit flows of arms, finance, and drugs have a negative impact on the stability of many countries and, ultimately, on sustainable development. It is therefore encouraging to see that China and Africa have committed to cooperate in order to address these issues in the FOCAC action plan. They have, for instance, agreed to combat illegal trade and circulation of small arms and light weapons, and fight transnational organized crime.⁶⁵ This provides opportunities for cooperation in order to achieve the SDG Target 16.4 to "significantly reduce illicit financial and arms flows, strengthen recovery and return of stolen assets and combat all forms of organized crime."

SDG Target 16.7 seeks to "ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels," which can be linked to the FOCAC action plan commitment to support African countries in "strengthening democracy and good governance."⁶⁶ Global governance structures have also come under scrutiny in the discussions that have arisen around this target. In particular the UNSC reform has been raised as an important issue and, while not yet a deal-breaker in the compromise that

⁶³"The Fifth Ministerial Conference of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation: Beijing Action Plan (2013–2015)," Forum on China-Africa Cooperation website, Paragraphs 2.6.1 and 2.6.3, July 2012, <http://www.focac.org/eng/zxxx/t954620.htm>.

⁶⁴*Ibid.*, Paragraph 2.4.4.

⁶⁵*Ibid.*, Paragraphs 2.6.1 and 2.6.2.

⁶⁶"The Fifth Ministerial Conference of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation: Beijing Action Plan (2013–2015)," Forum on China-Africa Cooperation website, Paragraph 2.6.2, July 2012, <http://www.focac.org/eng/zxxx/t954620.htm>.

has been reached, the composition and rules within the UNSC will still form an important element of the global negotiating process and will require further attention. Discussions around this could form part of the FOCAC agenda.

A more holistic vision of peace — incorporating both preventive and developmental approaches — needs to be adopted to address the root causes of conflict in Africa.

Meanwhile, Target 16.10 includes a focus on fundamental freedoms while the Action Plan calls for “strengthened dialogue and exchanges in the area of human rights and reaffirmed respect for the principle of universality of human rights.”⁶⁷

Nonetheless, there are certain SDG target areas that are not represented in the FOCAC Action Plan such as “substantially reduce corruption and bribery in all its form” and “end all forms of violence against women and girls.” Furthermore, while the FOCAC Action Plan has a strong focus on economic growth, addressing inequality and the need for inclusive growth and develop-

ment are not explicitly addressed. The 6th FOCAC could present an opportunity to address these gaps to ensure that China-Africa cooperation reflects the wider 2030 agenda.

Indeed, a more holistic vision of promoting sustainable peace and preventing conflict is reflected in the SDGs. The current FOCAC Action Plan focuses largely on hard security or diplomatic responses to existing conflicts in Africa, such as the deployment of peacekeepers or the use of mediation.⁶⁸ These tools will remain crucial in reducing violence and promoting Goal 16 as a whole. Nonetheless, the next FOCAC action plan could try to articulate a more holistic vision of peace which takes a preventive and developmental approach to address the root causes of conflict in Africa. This would include not only a focus on the need for inclusive, representative, and accountable politics, but a focus on economic development which reduces marginalization and inequality.

⁶⁷Ibid., Paragraph 3.8.

⁶⁸Ibid., Paragraphs 2.6.5 and 2.6.1.

Policy Implications

Above all, since FOCAC action plans have laid out a set of action-orientated commitments by China, these existing FOCAC commitments to African peace and security demonstrate that efforts to promote peace through the SDGs need not be contentious. They can be used to help deliver on the SDGs as an implementation mechanism of South-South Cooperation. Given that the SDGs are focused on outcomes, cooperation mechanisms such as the FOCAC can help deliver implementation through a focus on tangible actions to meet these outcomes. Efforts to create a more rules-based and equitable world order may prove useful in addressing systemic and global drivers of insecurity and conflict. In this regard, the FOCAC itself and South-South cooperation can, with the right leadership and vision, help create an international environment conducive to building more peaceful and inclusive societies.

Furthermore, tangible cooperation on peace under the next FOCAC can now be reported on as a contribution to the SDGs at the international level. Before, only specific aspects of China-Africa cooperation could be linked to the MDGs, but the SDGs will allow for China to consider wider aspects of its engagement with Africa — including on peace and security — as direct contributions to global development. The opportunity presented by the FOCAC to better understand the AU Agenda 2063 and to find ways of aligning the longer-term developmental goals of China and Africa and exploring how a FOCAC action plan could contribute to these long-term goals, using the SDGs as a stepping stone, also holds much potential.

Finally, the SDGs will allow for a developmental approach to addressing conflict given that efforts to address issues such as inequality or unequal and exclusive economic growth are highlighted across the document. China and Africa could draw on this approach for the articulation of a more holistic and preventive approach to promote peace in the next FOCAC agreement. The large number of linkages between peace-related targets in the SDGs and the current FOCAC Action Plan (2013–2015) suggest that synergies do exist between the objectives, as distinct as they are, of the two international processes. This demonstrates that there is room for specific commitments in the next FOCAC action plan to be linked to Goal

16 and other peace-related targets in the SDGs. The next FOCAC action plan could address gaps between the SDGs and the current action plan. Specifically, a focus on violence against women and corruption in the next action plan would increase coherence between efforts to promote peace in FOCAC and the SDGs.