



UN Meetings on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace, April 25–26, 2018, New York City

Attended by Servas members Jeanne Devine, Earlene Cruz, Radha Radhakrishna, Danielle Serres

Modern conflicts are complex and result in huge humanitarian crises: millions of refugees, half of whom are children, and increasing populations live in high-violence areas. Millions of youth live in unstable communities and increasingly distrust governments to resolve problems. The financial and humane costs of violent conflicts are enormous and sadly, as we now have the tools and technology to eliminate poverty, hunger, and gender inequality, regional conflicts and environmental degradation are undermining UN goals of peace and prosperity for all and leaving no child behind.

It was for this reason, that the UN called special meetings of 195 member nations and affiliated NGOs (non-governmental organizations) to create a new paradigm of peace-building – from addressing the consequences of conflicts to conflict prevention and sustainability of peace after conflicts have ceased.

Major outcomes included the need for **local, national and international partnerships to increase financial investments in prevention and sustainability**. The end of hostilities is the beginning of a long journey to overcome fear and suspicion, to build reconciliation processes that help victims build sustainable infrastructure, democratic governments, and open societies built on protection of human rights.

The need to **include women and youth** in a multi-pronged approach is urgent. Decisions must be made close to the ground recognizing local cultures and involving youth and women in development. *“Without development, there is no peace and without peace there is no development.”* Effective prevention can save billions. UN agencies can be drivers of peace, but local entities are the real stakeholders. Partnerships take time but are effective.

Peace is the responsibility of all countries, not just for our own peoples, but to our human society. Some speakers brought out problems with the UN structure, with 5 countries having veto power in the Security Council. These 5 countries are often directly involved in conflicts outside their borders and block actions needed to resolve conflicts. So-called civil wars are often proxy wars of the major powers.

In summary, prevention of conflicts is less costly than the humanitarian consequences of war. Critical issues are preventing conflicts and sustaining peace through building partnerships for financial investments and including women and youth in decision-making at all levels.

Servas, with members in over 100 countries, has the opportunity and responsibility to build peace. Building cultural connections and understanding the role of women and youth in decision making are crucial steps in the prevention of conflicts. We can actively discuss peace at get-togethers, build partnerships by inviting speakers of like-minded organizations, work to end poverty, hunger and inequality within our own communities. While hosting or traveling, let's share our experiences and ideas on how to cultivate this spirit of peace with our community.



SERVAS Reps. discuss UN meetings, Apr. 25, 2018