

2021 16+ Forum Costa Rica Annual Showcase

CONCEPT NOTE



6 – 9 December 2021
San José
Costa Rica





What is SDG 16+?

From access to justice and the rule of law, to inclusion and participatory decision-making, the reduction of violence and the promotion of peace, Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16 resonates across societies universally and the 2030 Agenda as an indivisible whole. SDG 16+, which includes Sustainable Development Goal 16, its related 2030 Agenda targets for peaceful, just and inclusive societies and links to other UN agendas, such as Sustaining Peace, offers a catalytic opportunity to fully realize the 2030 Agenda. As an integrated and mutually-reinforcing whole, SDG 16+ delivers on the promise of societies that are free from fear and violence. It embodies a transformative and catalytic shift – that peace and sustainable development are mutually reinforcing and dependent.

With 2020 marking the start of the Decade of Action for the Delivery of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals, and given the fact that SDG 16 (among other SDGs) was reviewed for the first time at the High-level Political Forum (HLPF) in 2019 under the theme of Empowering People and Ensuring Inclusiveness and Equality, and will be reviewed again in July during HLPF 2021, it is critical to maintain and build upon the momentum created by the SDG Summit in September 2019. It is also critical for all relevant

stakeholders to help ensure that SDG 16+ implementation is not forgotten amidst the health crisis created by the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic is highlighting and exacerbating a number of issues and challenges directly related to SDG 16+, from a rise in domestic violence to a decrease in inclusion, particularly vis-à-vis the engagement of non-state actors in the response to the pandemic, which will quickly come to the fore as soon as the health crisis has subsided. Within this context, furthering SDG 16+ implementation is critical now in order to help limit the impact of such challenges.

Furthermore, with Costa Rica having presented its second Voluntary National Review in July 2020, this 4th Annual Showcase offers an opportunity to channel and direct attention generated at UNHQ to impact on the ground, particularly considering the effect that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on SDG 16+ implementation at all levels.

What is the 16+ Forum?

Launched in April 2016, the 16+ Forum is a multi-stakeholder platform and partnership of 12 member states, the g7+ and WFUNA, designed to share and amplify best practices in SDG 16+ implementation at regional, national and local levels, and across a wide community of stakeholders – governments, civil society, the UN, regional and international organizations, academia and the private sector. The 16+ Forum's partner member states include Australia, Costa Rica, Czech Republic, Denmark, Georgia, Guatemala, Peru, Sierra Leone, Sweden, the Republic of Korea, Timor-Leste and Tunisia.

In short, the 16+ Forum provides a platform to demonstrate SDG 16+ in policy and practice, through multi-stakeholder partnerships and universally across countries and contexts. Through gatherings, events and publications, it facilitates dialogue, learning and exchange among stakeholders. Its flagship global gathering, the



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16+ Forum Annual Showcase, brings together 250+ policy makers, practitioners and thought leaders from over 45 countries focused on the policy and practice of advancing peaceful, just and inclusive societies.

What is the 16+ Forum Annual Showcase?



In September 2016, the 16+ Forum announced the Annual Showcase, a collective undertaking to showcase SDG 16+ in action- what implementation looks like, how to go about it, and lessons learned to take forward. Held on a yearly basis, the Annual Showcase takes place in a 16+ Forum member country and opens with a focus on the host country and a flagship theme, while then broadening the lens to include a variety of country and regional contexts.

The inaugural Annual Showcase was held in the fall of 2017 in Tbilisi, Georgia, bringing together representatives of governments, civil society, the UN, academia and the private sector.

The second 16+ Forum Annual Showcase was held in Freetown, Sierra Leone from 7-10 October 2018, and featured a regional-level focus through the participation of regional and sub-regional organizations such as the Mano River Union, the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding and ECOWAS.

Bringing additional regional diversity to the Annual Showcase with Timor-Leste as host, the third Annual Showcase, which was held in Dili from 11-

14 November 2019, also highlighted practical synergies with other major international frameworks, including the Human Rights and Climate Action, as well as the Women, Peace and Security Agendas, further adding to the push for SDG 16+ at home and abroad. (Previously, in Georgia, links were made between SDG 16+ and the Open Government Partnership, of which Georgia was then Chair. In Sierra Leone, links were made between SDG 16+ and the New Deal, of which Sierra Leone is Chair). With the expected participation of the wider GRULAC region, and given Costa Rica's track record as a champion of peace, interlinkages will be drawn out to the 2020 Review of the UN's Peacebuilding Architecture, among other frameworks, throughout this fourth SDG 16+ global gathering.

With wide-ranging participation of governments, local and international civil society organizations, members of the UN system, regional and international organizations, the private sector and academia, the Annual Showcase provides a yearly opportunity to highlight steps taken at regional, national and local levels towards SDG 16+ implementation, inclusive of challenges, successes and solutions. From field visits to panel discussions, this four-day, innovative and interactive conference brings together a diverse group of stakeholders and champions.

Holding the Showcase at the country-level, whether in Georgia, Sierra Leone, Timor-Leste or Costa Rica, orients participants towards implementation, sustainable impact and continued efforts to advance peaceful, just and inclusive societies well into 2030 and beyond.



Why Costa Rica?

Costa Rica's commitment to advancing SDG 16+ implementation at all levels, and the nation's impressive experiences in fostering a strong culture of peace will further serve to build upon the momentum generated throughout 2019 by the first quadrennial review of the SDGs, as well as the first official review of Goal 16 specifically. Having presented its 2nd VNR in July 2020, hosting the 4th 16+ Forum Annual Showcase in Costa Rica reinforces the importance of national-level monitoring and implementation linked to VNRs. As such, the 2021 Annual Showcase will offer an opportunity to channel and direct attention generated at UNHQ to have an impact on the ground, particularly considering the effect that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on SDG 16+ implementation at all levels.

Costa Rica managed to configure, shortly after the independence process, an incipient government system based on the liberal democratic model, at the same time that a large sector of medium and small producers persisted in the economic productive sphere. Towards the end of the 19th century, the holding of periodic elections was consolidated, giving a more democratic character to the State, which gradually incorporated important social demands, such as the creation of an extensive system of public schools, and the introduction of important public health and social security measures in the first half of the 20th century, all of which cemented the country's social stability.

In 1948, Costa Rica emerged from a civil war to become one of the only nations to abolish its military and systematically redirect national resources toward education and health, social welfare and environmental protection, consolidating a Social State of Law. Today, Costa Rica is ranked high on the Global Peace Index¹, very high on the Positive Peace Index², and number 12 (of 156 nations) in the 2019 World Happiness Report³.

The respect attached to the rule of law, as well as to peace, recognized by their Constitutional Court as a human right, has allowed Costa Rica to be among some of the most consolidated liberal democracies⁴, and one of top five countries with the highest levels of Representative Government in the world⁵. As a reflection of its national policies, including the 1997 Law on Peaceful Conflict Resolution which institutes the right of every person to an adequate education for peace, Costa Rica has established such practices in areas of its foreign affairs.

As the host country of the University for Peace, Costa Rica has been a long-standing promoter of dialogue, mediation and peacebuilding in international conflicts. The Declaration of Perpetual, Active and Unarmed Neutrality of 1983 has informed Costa Rica's international relations policy to promote peace, justice, solidarity and collaboration among its members.

Nonetheless, Costa Rica's democracy and social fabric are not yet immune to challenges, including political polarization, a fragmented party system and the infusion of religion into politics. Additional challenges relate to changing demographic landscapes, shrinking labor opportunities, persistent levels of poverty and high levels of income inequality.

The deterioration of social cohesion and trust in political institutions creates social, political and economic tensions which may lead to democratic setbacks. Democracy is under strong pressure around the world. Increasing socio-economic disparities have fueled citizen unrest and a lack of trust in the ability of democratic institutions to cope with people's demands and crises such as those caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, the spread of misinformation and hate speech coupled with these challenges make for the perfect breeding ground for populism.

In this context, it is critical to be able to "recover better." Building peaceful, just and inclusive societies and achieving SDG 16 in particular are needed more than ever in order to ensure a democratic whole-of-society response to the pandemic, and to maintain and sustain social cohesion and trust in institutions.

The 16+ Forum Annual Showcase will give Costa Rica the opportunity to become the best "testing ground" or "high-quality laboratory" on advancing innovative ways to implement SDG 16. It is an opportunity for the country to show leadership, receive support and advance domestic solutions globally. As a champion of peace, this will also allow Costa Rica to share best practices with other nations that are facing similar challenges.

¹ <http://visionofhumanity.org/app/uploads/2019/06/GPI-2019-web003.pdf>

² <http://visionofhumanity.org/app/uploads/2019/10/PPR-2019-web.pdf>

³ <https://s3.amazonaws.com/happiness-report/2019/WHR19.pdf>

⁴ <https://www.y-dem.net/en/news-publications/democracy-reports/>

⁵ <https://www.idea.int/sites/default/files/publications/the-global-state-of-democracy-2019.pdf>



The Overarching Landscape and What We Will Achieve

With 2020 having marked the start of the Decade of Action for delivery of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals, and with only nine years left in the Agenda, the 16+ Forum, along with the wider SDG 16+ community, will continue to work to maintain and build upon the momentum created at HLPF and the SDG Summit in 2019. This is particularly important given the lack of progress globally on SDG 16+ implementation, with progress on peaceful, just and inclusive societies falling short over the course of the first four-year cycle of the 2030 Agenda. As mentioned above, more than two-thirds of the world population are unable to access justice, and the UN-World Bank report entitled *Pathways for Peace* estimates that by 2030, more than 50% of individuals living in poverty will be found in countries characterized by high levels of violence.

Such trends have been exacerbated by the health crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, and progress on SDG 16+ implementation risks being put on hold despite the integral role the 16+ framework can play in the recovery process. The pandemic has caused a major shift in governance structures and systems generally, as well as structural and increasingly systemic challenges to SDG 16+. It has also highlighted the fragility of state institutions around the world, as governments have failed to keep the virus under control. This, coupled with the shrinking of civic space that accompanies lockdowns and restrictions, has led to a further erosion of public trust fueled by rising inequalities. As such, the recovery from COVID-19 and the socio-economic impacts it has had on global citizens will undoubtedly define the coming years. Within this context, the SDG 16+ community must work together to ensure sustained advocacy and proactive engagement at all levels both during and well beyond the pandemic.

Amidst a sea of dynamic multilateral agendas, UN General Assemblies and Political Forums, the 16+ Forum and its Annual Showcase offer a continued and complementary focus on SDG 16+ implementation at the country level. With the 4th Annual Showcase taking place in Costa Rica in December 2021, diverse stakeholders will be able to take stock of the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on peaceful, just and inclusive societies around the world, while again returning to a focus and commitment to national level implementation. The pandemic has highlighted the fact that all countries, even the most developed, have work to do in achieving peaceful, just and inclusive societies characterized by strong and accountable institutions.

The Showcase will also provide stakeholders with an opportunity to analyze and highlight the progress on SDG 16 presented at HLPF in July and to take forward recommendations from the VNRs. With the decision to have SDG 16 reviewed again at HLPF 2021, it is evident that it is a crucial Goal, and one that everyone must work towards achieving. Within this context, it is imperative for the SDG 16+ community to come together to advance SDG 16+ action and implementation.

By bringing together various communities and stakeholders working on SDG 16+, the 16+ Forum, particularly through the Annual Showcase, is building the community of practice and strengthening our collective efforts to ensure that no one is left behind during the recovery process.

Conference Outcomes

The Annual Showcase aims to highlight the how, what, when and who of SDG 16+ implementation, thereby encouraging its implementation across a greater number of contexts while bringing best, multi-stakeholder practices to the fore. Specifically, the Costa Rica Showcase will:

- Involve civil society, academia and the private sector in SDG 16+ advocacy, monitoring and implementation, and subsequently draw out interlinkages not only across the 2030 Agenda, but also to other frameworks and agendas through capacity-building workshops.
- Drive home the importance of impact and locally-led processes through government and non-government field visits.
- Link the global conversation with national, subnational and increasingly regional partnerships and implementation.
- Continue to build a movement for SDG 16+ at the local, national and regional level, beyond 2021 and for the duration of the 2030 Agenda.
- Underline and demonstrate the importance of prioritizing SDG 16+ in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic and utilizing the SDG 16+ framework as the foundation for reset and recovery efforts at all levels in order to build more resilient societies and strengthen institutions.
- Enlarge the pool of best practices and solutions in SDG 16+ implementation at all levels, thereby strengthening the global SDG 16+ community's collective knowledge moving forward.
- Deliver an Outcome Document, to be submitted as official input to HLPF 2021, to complement follow-up and review efforts. The Outcome Document aims to capture the most salient best practices and lessons learned, as well as key policy take-aways across countries and contexts. Links to the Georgia, Sierra Leone and Timor-Leste Outcome Documents can be found [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#), respectively.



Conference Themes

Previous Annual Showcases have featured one flagship theme, with two secondary themes, to ensure that the full breadth of Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies is addressed throughout the discussions.

With Costa Rica as host, the 2021 Showcase will open under the theme of **Building Peace through the Rule of Law, Inclusion and Good Governance**. It will address these challenges under the SDG 16+ framework, also broadening the scope across countries and contexts to discuss how to build political cultures based on compromise, public trust, social welfare and a strong regard for the rule of law, in order to achieve sustained peace.

Within the theme, interlinkages across SDG 16+ issues will be drawn out, as well as the universality of SDG 16, its related targets for peaceful, just and inclusive societies across the 2030 Agenda, and its links to Sustaining Peace. In addition to the themes, independent case studies, research and frameworks will be presented, again focusing on practical steps and inclusive processes needed to reach meaningful and sustainable implementation.

There will be a focus on SDG targets 16.3 (Promote the rule of law at the national and international levels), 16.6 (Develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels), and 16.7 (Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels).

Three cross-cutting issues will also be reflected, namely: (i) gender and youth, (ii) environment and just transitions and (iii) education and innovation.

Additional sessions will focus on topics such as the importance of collecting robust data, the need to bridge the gap between formal and informal systems and processes, the benefits of investing in local solutions and locally-led development processes, and the utility of framing politically contentious issues such as human rights violations through the prism of SDG 16+.

Given the far-ranging impact that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on people's lives and on sustainable development throughout the world, the issues surrounding the health crisis and the ensuing recovery phase will feature throughout discussions. More specifically, direct links will be drawn out between the pandemic and socio-economic issues that have been affected, including civic and human rights as well as gender and youth inclusion and empowerment, in order to demonstrate that the SDG 16+ framework can and should act as a roadmap for recovery.

Throughout discussions, the issues of sequencing, policy prioritization, inter-governmental coordination and multi-stakeholder partnerships will also be featured. For all plenary and break-out sessions, a variety of country, regional and global contexts will be discussed. As these themes are linked in practice, overlap will be present in interventions and experiences shared.

Conference Format

The 2021 Costa Rica Annual Showcase will be comprised of a 4-day conference (6 – 9 December). As part of each Annual Showcase, a Capacity-building Workshop is held with civil society organizations to strengthen their understanding of SDG 16+ and how to effectively engage on SDG 16+ advocacy and implementation at local, national and regional levels. In Timor-Leste, a Capacity-building Workshop for private sector representatives was held for the first time, and given the central role corporations are playing in addressing the income inequality gap in Costa Rica through the adoption of inclusion policies and strong public-private partnerships, the 2020 Annual Showcase will also feature a Private Sector Workshop, which will run parallel to the Civil Society Workshop.

Field Visits to government institutions and civil society organizations are conducted on the second day to further demonstrate SDG 16+ in practice.

The Main Conference consists of Plenary and Breakout Sessions, highlighting the host country's experiences in advancing SDG 16+, as

well as those of other countries present. Through each component of the Annual Showcase, the importance of multi-stakeholder partnerships, inclusion, and local and national ownership is emphasized.



Conference Participants

With 250+ participants from over forty-five countries, the Annual Showcase highlights how global rhetoric can, and has, translated into implementation across contexts.

Government: governments will be requested to propose one representative from capital (or otherwise relevant location in-country) and one representative from the diplomatic mission to the UN. The aim is to have government participants that are knowledgeable about what is being done on SDG 16+ in their country, able to share and build upon such experiences, and return better equipped for future related policies and implementation. Members of the 16+ Forum will be core participants along with representatives from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Worship of Costa Rica and a number of other key Ministries.

Civil Society: civil society representatives form a critical component of the Showcase. Outreach efforts will ensure that local, national, regional and international civil society representatives are able to attend and contribute throughout the Showcase. While the majority will be from Costa Rica, the Showcase provides a useful platform to bring the larger SDG 16+ CSO community together, from grassroots to global organizations. Principal international civil society organizations will include the Pathfinders for Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies, the Global Alliance for Reporting Progress on Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies, the TAP Network, the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict and the Civil Society Platform for Peacebuilding and Statebuilding, among others.

United Nations System: the UN Resident Coordinator and members of the Country Team, as well as UN representatives from the Global Alliance for Reporting on Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies and UNDP HQ are anticipated to participate. Additional UN representatives from a more regional level or HQ may also participate, lending various levels of expertise to discussions.

Intergovernmental/Regional Organizations: with the inclusion of a regional angle to the Annual Showcase, the number of representatives from intergovernmental organizations such as the G7+ and the Open Government Partnership has increased in recent years. This year, organizations such

as the Inter-American Institute of Human Rights and the Inter-American Institute of Cooperation for Agriculture will be invited. International financial institutions such as the World Bank and the International Finance Corporation, as well as the Inter-American Development Bank and the Development Bank of Latin America will also be invited.

Private Sector: national representatives from the private sector, including from local businesses and the entrepreneurship community, will be invited and are anticipated to attend. Given Costa Rica's particular focus on creating more inclusive corporations to address the increasing income inequality throughout the country, and the role of such corporations in Costa Rica's sustainable development more generally, the 16+ Forum will aim to engage both small and medium enterprises, as well as multi-national and international corporates and businesses is anticipated, possibly in coordination with the UN's Global Compact.

Academia: representatives from national academic institutions have participated in all three previous Annual Showcases, featuring most prominently in Timor-Leste given the nation's large youth population. In 2021, professors and students from the University for Peace are expected to participate, thereby highlighting the link between education, development and sustaining peace.

Participants from across all sectors will also include experts on specific thematic issues and SDG 16 targets. For instance, representatives from the national Anti-Corruption Commission are invited to attend every year. Target 16.3 has also featured prominently throughout the first three Showcases, with Ministers of Justice sharing in their knowledge and experiences alongside justice-focused organizations such as Namati and the Task Force on Justice. In 2021, the 16+ Forum will once again strive to bring in a number of experts on topics such as human rights, security sector reform, transparency and accountability, as well as ecological resilience, among others.



Our Principles

Inclusivity – bringing together governments and civil society from local, national and international levels, the UN, regional and international organizations, the private sector and others, we promote learning, exchange and partnership through inclusivity. Any Member State is welcome to join the 16+ Forum. Civil society and other stakeholders are integral, with equal opportunity to present their contributions alongside Member States.

Solutions-oriented – action and implementation at all levels has to match the ambition of the SDGs. Recognizing that one size does not fit all, the project will seek to foster mutual learning between different national and regional contexts, in a view to support global implementation.

Complementarity – the 16+ Forum is intended to complement and support the follow-up and review framework of the 2030 Agenda, as well as other SDG 16+ initiatives and partners within the UN Community. The 16+ Forum promotes a whole-of society approach and so further welcomes collaboration with all stakeholders.

National Ownership and Awareness Raising – recognizing the broad scope of issues covered under SDG 16+ and the wider 2030 Agenda, the Annual Showcase and other 16+ Forum activity will be grounded in national ownership. This fits closely with the principles underpinning implementation, follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda as a whole.

Universality - mirroring the universality of the 2030 Agenda, participation in the 16+ Forum will be balanced with representation from around the globe. Each year, the Annual Showcase will aim to rotate to a different region, ensuring participation of diverse stakeholders, multilateral cooperation and highlighting SDG 16+ implementation within varied contexts.

In sum, the 16+ Forum, through its Annual and complementary initiatives, contributes to the SDG 16+ community of practice, while strengthening and building the movement for peaceful, just and inclusive societies.

Sixteen Plus Forum

The 16+ Forum is comprised of 12 member states, the g7+, and WFUNA, as the Forum's Secretariat:



The Permanent Mission of Australia to the United Nations



The Permanent Mission of Costa Rica to the United Nations



The Permanent Mission of the Czech Republic to the United Nations



The Permanent Mission of Denmark to the United Nations



The Permanent Mission of Georgia to the United Nations



The Permanent Mission of Guatemala to the United Nations



The Permanent Mission of Peru to the United Nations



The Permanent Mission of the Republic of Korea to the United Nations



The Permanent Mission of Sierra Leone to the United Nations



The Permanent Mission of Sweden to the United Nations



The Permanent Mission of Timor-Leste to the United Nations



The Permanent Mission of Tunisia to the United Nations

