SDG 16 Peace justice and strong institution transcript

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**Introduction**

Everybody and wherever you are, today is another lecture of the introductory lectures for youth engagement. It focuses on 2030 Development Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals and today's the speaker will be Mr. Emanuele Sapienza who's a Policy Advisor on governance at the UNDP Global Policy Network and will be accompanied in this conversation by myself Lichia Yu, representing Center for Social Economic Development.

**Speaker**

A few background on Emanuele personal experience, he's personally based in Panama and prior to join the Hub in Panama. Emmanuele worked with UNDP's governance team in New York where he served as a Global Policy Lead for civic engagement and with UNDP's poverty group where he focused on issues of inequality and inclusion and before that he managed programs related to different aspects of governance in Nepal, Sri Lanka the Caribbean and West and Central America and besides working for the United Nations Development Program, Emmanuele has worked for several U.N interagency initiatives on human rights and he has also been working with the UNAIDS in Geneva for many years. He's a graduate of Bocconi University in Milan and also holds a master of science in development management from the center for complexity and change of the Open University in UK. His major interests are the evolving nature of citizen participation and the political economy of inequality. We could not think of any other person better than Emanuele to discuss SDG 16 with us.

**UNDP**

Before going into the subject matter, we will also use the movement to say a few words about United Nations Development Program through the use of this particular video.

**Video- Building A Better Future, UNDP**

**Q1a**

Thank you for introduce us this great film. So the today's topic and that will be looking at SDG 16 which is about peaceful, just and inclusive societies and I will give the floor to Emmanuele to speak on **why is it so important to have this particular SDG goals.**

And first of all thank you very much for having me and for reaching out to me for this important initiative, it is pleasure to be with you and have this conversation on SDG 16 and why it is important for Sustainable Development, I will see in what it is and why it is important.

**SDG 16**

Well first of all to say that as SDG 16 is about promoting peaceful and inclusive societies for Sustainable Development but also providing access to justice for all and building effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.

**A goal and an enabler**

As did you say for valuable in itself but also an enabler of all the other goals we need strong institutions, we need effective institutions and fair institutions in order to reduce poverty, to respond to climate change and soon and so forth.

**SDG 16, 1 and 10**

So as an example of the ways in which SDG 16 can impact other development goals not too long ago UNDP commission a systematic literature review and through this literature review found that some enabling aspects of SDG 16 especially transparency, accountability participation and inclusion have an enabling effect on key aspects of is the SDG 1 and 10 especially in social protection, equality opportunities and poverty reduction.

The study also found that a participation in accountability could respond to an increase in the poverty reduction effects of per capita GDP growth and also the transparency can impact inequality reduction, mainly via reduced corruption and a more equitable provision of different kinds of public goods. So that's in a nutshell a couple of reflections on the importance of SDG 16 for agenda 2030 overall

**Q1b**

So in a way it is important to consider SDG 16 not only from a sort of a clean and accountable institutional aspect but also bring out the financial or the economic impact of such institutions. And I think some studies in the past looking at how countries actually move from underdeveloped countries into a more advanced or even industrialized countries also sort of support this observation so in thinking about why this SDG 16 is so important I wonder whether you can tell us a little bit more **about the specific targets and also indicators that will be used to measure progress** in this regard.

**Targets**

Yes of course SDG 16 is very broad and that's just a reflection of the fact that institutions and governance systems affect so many spheres of life so it covers many targets. I'll just go over a few of them very briefly they're here in the slides.

As the targets range from reducing all forms of violence to ending abuse, exploitation, trafficking of children, promoting the rule of law, reducing illicit financial and arms flows, reducing corruption, developing effective accountable and transparency institutions, promoting inclusive participatory and representative decision making, broadening the participation of developing countries in global governance, providing legal identity for all, ensuring access to information, strengthening international cooperation around issues of violence, terrorism and crime prevention and promoting the development and enforcement of non-discriminatory laws.

So really abroad spectrum of targets and issues but all very of course interrelated and really part of an integrated package that as mentioned before. Really has to do with how a governance systems enable sort of fear exchange and fear mediation of different interests, different aspirations in society.

**Q2**

Yeah this goal is very comprehensive and it's very challenging and I know that the UNDP and yourself personally have been working in improving governance in different parts of the world and I wonder, **what is the current state of implementation and how much progress have been we being able to make?**

Okay so let me show an image, this is taken from the SDGs index project which is an initiative that is really tracking progress against all the SDGs and all the different targets around the world.

So this is a map that reflects the current state of implementation of SDG 16 and what we see here is not necessarily a very encouraging picture where the vast majority of countries are colored in red which corresponds to major challenges still remaining in implementation of SDG 16 and its targets.

However if we switch to friends what we see is that a majority of countries would not necessarily say a vast majority but a majority of countries are classified as moderately improving. So there is a positive trend I guess the challenge now for us, for all of us as citizens and as members of the international community is to see how we can build on this positive tendons let's call it this way and really accelerate it so that there's ambitious vision of events of Agenda 2030 can indeed be achieved by 25 by 2030 which is really not very far down the road.

Of course as mentioned before the goal is very broad, it includes a number of targets so this is very kind of initial analysis really would you require a much more granular discussion which we won't be able to have right now because of course trends in relation to different targets may look very different.

Maybe just as an example of the challenges that still remain these are some figures from the U.N Department of Economic and Social Affairs. They remind us that for instance there continue to be very significant issues around trafficking of children and child labor, there continue to be very significant challenges around corruption, developing a national human rights infrastructure around the world and also that these are data from 2020. For instance in 2020, the killings of human rights defenders have increased, have been very reported in 32 countries. Of course this is a wild under estimation but even within the constraints of this underestimation there was a significant increase of 18% from 2019 so still many challenges still a long way to go to ensure the realization of the goal but some positive developments as well some positive signs that we can try to be the another one.

**Q3**

Well the combined some of these facts and also combined with the trend analysis, it is worrisome. After all public institutions are there to protect the individual human rights and so the citizens’ rights in a society and I just wonder **what are the key challenges** that somehow making the progress of this important SDG goal not progressing as much as we would like to see.

**Challenges #1**

Sure well many different ways to think about this and to look at challenges so let me just mention a few that I think are especially relevant the first issues is really capacity, how we think about the capacity of state institutions to perform a complex range of tasks that are asked are expected of them in our very complex societies.

And there are different aspects to the issue of capacity of course some of it has to do with know-how and the processes and the design of processes and so on and so forth but a lot of it has to do with the financial resources underpinning the functioning of the state and this in turn has to do with the ability of the state to mobilize revenue through taxation the impact of terms of trade on national revenue, of course the issue of corruption among others.

**Challenges #2**

Another aspect is that in order to achieve SDG 16, we need responsive and accountable institutions but in order to promote responsiveness and accountability we need to ensure that the conditions are in place for what we call sometimes what we refer to more and more as active and informed citizenship right. So when it's from participation when it access to quality information and what we see around the world that faces of civic engagement are shrinking for a number of reasons and also that the information basis if you want of the public sphere is deteriorating. Again for a number of reasons which have to do among others with the crisis of news media, the manifold increase of opportunities for this information the hardening of eco-chambers and fragmentation of information existence and so on.

**Challenges #3**

And then finally maybe just to mention the challenge of international cooperation around SDG 16. On the one hand, democracy is actually there is a lot of evidence that supports this is a wildly popular concept if you look at the results of the world value survey, a vast and overwhelming majority of people around the world considers it very important to live in a country that is covering democratically. At the same time however this term and concept of democracy has become very loaded in international affairs and of course political sensitive in many ways and that represents a challenge for cooperation on some aspects at least of SDG 16 and obviously a signal as such a significant barrier to the progress.

**Q4**

Wow you really sort of highlighted the challenge in terms of how a state can run its own business in such a man in such a way that actually stimulate development or also Sustainable Development in terms of economy, in terms of environment and social. I could see why the progress it's not as expected especially thinking of poor countries or countries in constantly internal conflict or actually caught up in the war. But with that said, I would like to sort of to invite you to **give us a more positive note in terms of a good example that has been able to sort of overcome some of the challenges and actually bring some progress** especially when young people are concerned **what can they do, how can they make a difference.**

Sure well because the goal is so broad and there are so many aspects to this and the cross all countries so many inspiring groundbreaking very vary impactful experiences of engagement and very often on the part of young people. I just won't be able to do justice of the richness of experiences but perhaps one thing that I'd like to flag is an initiative that has been that was started by the Secretary General's Envoy on Youth which is the young leaders for Sustainable Development Goals. So every two years 17 young change makers are recognized for their leadership and contribution to a more sustainable world.

I have included the slides to the link, to the website of this initiative in the slide and then you'll be able to see many many examples of how young people have been having a very positive impact of different aspects of SDG 16 from things that come to mind, promoting access to justice in Liberia, to promoting more diverse participation of including participation of minorities in public life in Australia, too many other initiatives that are in my opinion extremely inspired and fantastic examples of what young people can do to support implementation passages expanded.

**Q5**

And step up to the core of the Secretary General to get engaged however one has to sort of start from somewhere. **Could you also give some advice to the young people** who are interested but who are also at the beginning stage of getting involved in the public matter such as SDGs at the local level. **What could they do to make a difference or to contribute to moving the SDG 2030 Agenda forward.**

**Key points**

Well so many again ways to think about this and entry points I guess the first thing is really get the facts try to document yourself and get information about the trends, the challenges, the opportunities, the root poses of different threats and there are many sources within the human system many but many of course also beyond.

Then in terms of getting involved there are so many ways in which one can get involved within communities that can have a global impact but also through different types of action of organizing or volunteering of advocacy but also I think it's important and I think and people can really play a very critical role in this.

Raising awareness of okay what the SDGs are but it's not so much about the SDG is really what the vision behind, the SDGs the vision of a more sustainable but more inclusive, more equitable future for all and really raise awareness of this vision different levels of society.

Bring new ideas into the debate on the SDGs on the future of development. And demand accountability the SDGs after all are a commitment that all governments made in 2015 so they're not an event agenda I think that's very important to stress and then then sometimes, it is forgotten they are not U.N. agenda, they are a member states agenda countries came together and said okay we're gonna do this because we think it's important I think it's valuable and we think it's actually not just important it's extremely needed and so I think it is important now for citizens and perhaps people have the greatest stake in this because it's really about the future to say “okay you said you were going to do this, how far how far are you? Really? and how are you planning to take things forward?” and just perhaps to conclude I guess it is easy sometimes maybe even more so as a young person to feel that politics and political affairs or something foreign and not necessarily a space where we're positive change can be promoted and enacted and sometimes that's the case.

But at the same time the political engagement is the only way in which positive change can be brought about, and politics can be many things certainly doesn't stop with voting. It certainly doesn't involve only standing for office, there are many ways to engage with political life, and I think politics desperately means active engagement of young people and Agenda 2030 as well so yeah these are some thoughts.

Well thanks Emmanuele because I think what you just said, it's a very thought provoking because first of all you suggested that young people should take interest to participate and to be informed in their participation so they could actually by discussing by sharing ideas with each other they could already find some ways to improve some of the local challenges that they are confronted with in their daily life. Because one of the things that you mentioned SDG 16 is about delivering public goods so I thought about water, education, roads, transportation, electricity and sort of the list. The list is endless. So to me I think in order to be engaged in the SDG 16, one of the things is to start to ask some questions how can we do it differently, how can we do it for more people that seems to me will be a good starting point.

Absolutely.

Yeah and I think we also should ask for your studies and your research papers concerning participation which is a very big topic and I thank you very much for joining us today to give your views and the insights into SDG 16, it helps us greatly to understand what this particular goal with its complexity and also implications. So I want to thank you once again for sharing your thoughts and your time with us thank you.

Thanks to you, it's been a pleasure.