



## BUILDING A CULTURE OF PEACE AT A TIME OF GLOBAL TURMOIL

FOGGS Open Consultation Monday #3, 9 December 2024

### Discussion Summary\*

*Overview • Key points raised • Ideas for action*

#### Overview

*Yoriko Yasukawa*, the Vice-President of FOGGS and moderator of the discussion, introduced the topic of building a culture of peace amidst global turmoil. She posed two questions for the participants to consider: how to make the world see peace as a viable alternative when leaders focus on violent solutions, and how to persuade parties in seemingly irresolvable conflicts to find common ground. To stimulate the discussion, Yoriko shared a brief interview she had conducted with *Gastón Aín*, an expert in mediation and conflict resolution.

*Gastón* identified three key challenges: the change in the nature of politics, the extreme levels of polarization, and the plummeting levels of trust in institutions. He noted that politics now involves alienating, dividing, and instrumentalizing hate to build a circumstantial majority, and that this has led to unprecedented levels of dehumanization, stigmatization, and verbal aggression. He also highlighted the psychosocial consequences of polarization, which are fraying the social fabric and creating optimal conditions for oversimplification of complex issues. He suggested a bottom-up approach, focusing on human relationships and avoiding simplistic or stigmatizing discussions. *Gastón* also highlighted the importance of recognizing the value of differing opinions and the role of NGOs in promoting respectful exchanges. He mentioned specific examples of NGOs in Germany and elsewhere that are working to foster dialogue and understanding between people with differing views.

The discussion that followed, with broad participation, explored the challenges of fostering a culture of peace in an era marked by polarization, inequality, and misinformation. Participants emphasized the need for both grassroots and systemic approaches to address violence and mistrust. Key themes included the role of education, empowerment of local peacebuilders, reforming global institutions like the UN, and combating militarization. The importance of creating new narratives centered on empathy, collaboration, and shared humanity was repeatedly highlighted. Actionable steps focused on improving public awareness, building institutional frameworks for peace, and amplifying grassroots solutions.

*\*AI-generated summary, edited for consistency. The text may not always reflect accurately the views expressed during the discussion. To ensure accuracy and full understanding of expressed opinions please refer to the recording of the open consultation, which is available here:*

<https://youtu.be/v2zbJoRrTrs>

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## Key points raised

### 1. **Changing Nature of Politics**

- Politics has shifted from building consensus to exploiting division and hate for power.
- This divisiveness fuels mistrust and hinders constructive dialogue.

### 2. **Polarization and Social Fragmentation**

- Increasing polarization erodes trust and impedes conflict resolution.
- Social media accelerates these trends through misinformation and dehumanization.

### 3. **Economic Inequality and Injustice**

- Inequality fosters violence by creating desperation and undermining trust in institutions.
- Poor access to housing, healthcare, and education exacerbates tensions.

### 4. **Empowering Grassroots Peacebuilding**

- Local actors are often effective but lack resources and visibility.
- Strengthening grassroots efforts is essential for sustainable peace.

### 5. **Revitalizing International Institutions**

- The UN and similar organizations must overcome risk-averse cultures.
- Bold leadership and a renewed focus on their peace and security mandates are needed.

### 6. **Challenging Militarization**

- Militarization diverts resources from building peace and promotes violence.
- Advocacy for disarmament and reallocating budgets toward development is critical.

### 7. **Role of Education**

- Education systems should emphasize empathy, global citizenship, and critical thinking.
- Media literacy is crucial to counter misinformation.

### 8. **Youth Engagement**

- Young people must be included in decision-making and peacebuilding initiatives.
- Engaging youth is essential for creating long-term change.

### 9. **The Role of Religion**

- Religion can either unify or divide, depending on the context.
- Interfaith dialogue is a powerful tool for fostering mutual understanding.

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## Ideas for action

### 1. **Building and spreading a New Global Narrative**

- Develop and disseminate stories that highlight successful peace efforts and shared humanity.
- Counter divisive narratives with positive examples of collaboration and empathy.
- Address inequality as a root cause of violence and mistrust, and advocate for equitable access to basic services like housing, healthcare, and education.
- Study how divisive forces effectively manipulate narratives and emotions and adapt those methods for positive, peace-promoting campaigns.
- Foster environments where diverse perspectives can be safely exchanged and pair individuals with opposing views for structured, respectful discussions.

### 2. **Strengthening Institutional Frameworks, the UN included**

- Enhance mediation capacities within institutions like the UN.
- Support mechanisms for early warning systems and proactive conflict resolution.
- Encourage more proactive and courageous actions by UN country teams.



- Address structural limitations to make the UN more effective in conflict prevention.
  - Address conflicts at multiple levels—global, national, and local.
  - Use integrated strategies to tackle root causes and mitigate immediate risks.
  - Engage women and young people as active participants in peacebuilding processes.
  - Revisit UNESCO’s Culture of Peace programme and its eight pillars, and the UN General Assembly’s proclamation of 2000 as the International Year for the Culture of Peace.
- 3. Empowering Local Solutions**
- Provide funding, training, and platforms to grassroots peacebuilders.
  - Highlight successful local initiatives as scalable models for broader peace efforts.
- 4. Social Media Regulation and the Role of Education**
- Promote media literacy to help individuals recognize and counter misinformation.
  - Advocate for stricter regulations on social media platforms to minimize harm.
  - Incorporate conflict resolution and critical thinking into curricula.
  - Promote respect and empathy as foundational values in education systems.
  - Equip youth with the tools and opportunities to shape a peaceful future.
- 5. Promoting Disarmament**
- Highlight the environmental, economic, and social costs of militarization.
  - Mobilize advocacy efforts to shift resources from military budgets to systemic peacebuilding initiatives.
- 6. Topic suggestion for future FOGGS Open Consultation Monday**
- “Decolonizing the UN”