

SDG 16 - Peace

Thank you, Moderator,

I am speaking on behalf of the **Volunteer Groups Alliance**. Volunteers around the world are working to promote just societies and build strong institutions. They are facilitating and enabling people's active participation in their own development, helping them to challenge policies and laws and hold governments to account for the delivery of SDG 16 and the 20230 agenda.

Volunteers are also helping to bridge gaps between traditional and official forms of justice - for example community volunteers in Sierra Leone, supported by local partner Fambul Initiative Network for Equality and VSO, have worked to harmonize local gender-based violence laws and norms with national laws. This effort, coupled with support from local leaders, has led to a significant increase of referrals of gender-based violence cases to the local courts and the reduction of cases that are 'settled' within the local community.

They are promoting social cohesion across the world, facilitating dialogue between different communities -- from Pakistan to Northern Ireland, and even here in the USA.

We ask that members states:

- Open up the space for civil society and volunteer groups
- Recognize the efforts of volunteers in their national plans and strategies
- Accept the voices, data and evidence collected by volunteer and CSOs in order to promote the accountability of the SDGs