

Insights for the Negotiations for the Pact for the Future: How can National Strategies advance the Prevention Agenda?

In-person discussion | 7 March 2024

Summary Note

In the current context of high and rising rates of violent conflict, when financial resources do not cover humanitarian needs, and the peaceful resolution of protracted crises seems out of reach, the need to step up efforts for prevention is evident. The upcoming Summit of the Future could shift the narrative on prevention at the UN by heeding the Secretary-General's call for all countries to develop nationally led prevention strategies ([New Agenda for Peace, Action 3](#)). The development of the Pact for the Future provides a unique opportunity for Member States to consider making a universal commitment to national prevention strategies and to identify concrete policy avenues through which the UN, including its agencies, funds and programs, and intergovernmental bodies, can support Member States in realizing their national prevention priorities in a comprehensive and coherent manner.

This roundtable discussion explored opportunities and challenges of including language on national prevention strategies and on strengthening the prevention mandate of and support by the UN system to such efforts in the Pact for the Future.

The following are key themes raised during the discussion:

- What is a national prevention strategy? Why is it important?

Referring to national prevention strategies in the Pact for the Future is an opportunity to significantly advance the prevention agenda. First, having one national prevention strategy that includes all forms of violence is more effective than individual prevention projects because it allows for a multi-dimensional and multi-stakeholder approach. Second, references to national prevention strategies in the Pact could contribute to normalizing and destigmatizing prevention by highlighting that no country is immune to violence.

At present, while many countries support a greater focus on national prevention strategies, a clear understanding of what those strategies encompass in practice and what role the UN system can play in supporting them has been lacking. The commitment to national prevention strategies is not new; almost every country has some kind of national prevention strategy or parts of it (e.g. infrastructures for peace, PVE action plans, crime prevention strategies, early warning systems), whether those efforts are explicitly framed as prevention or not. It is critical to take note of existing good efforts and start with what is already working.

A better understanding of what makes national prevention strategies effective can help develop a shared vision and more tailor-made and relevant UN support. Drawing on the evidence available, Member States could highlight key universal parameters that lead to more effective development and support of national peacebuilding and prevention strategies to inform practice. See for instance the box below.



Paragraph 66 of the Pact for the Future, in this regard, could support *the development of national prevention strategies to address drivers and enablers of all forms of violence and conflict in societies through—evidence-based, long-term, holistic, localized, and flexible approaches based on national ownership.*

Referring to the need to address all forms of violence allows countries to acknowledge that none of them are immune to violence, to tackle the risk factors that are the most harmful and pervasive domestically, and to acknowledge the linkages between different types of violence, thus using resources more effectively. Violence prevention can also be further defined at the national level. At the roundtable, the Institute for Security Studies (ISS) shared a [definition](#) developed in South Africa by NGOs, researchers, government officials, and representatives of development partners and the private sector through the National Violence Prevention Forum: *Violence prevention is the whole of society working deliberately and sustainably to remove sources of harm and inequality and heal wounds by intentionally growing an ethic of mutual care, respect, and inclusion to build peace.*

- How can the UN support national prevention strategies?

National prevention strategies are often multi-stakeholder efforts, involving actors from across different parts of government, civil society, and academia. In certain cases, national actors may request and benefit from UN support. Beyond committing to the development of nationally-led prevention strategies, Member States can approach the Pact for the Future as an opportunity to request the UN system, including its peacebuilding architecture, to identify the necessary elements and parameters for designing and implementing effective national prevention strategies and what is needed to provide better UN support in such efforts.

To support national prevention priorities, Member States could include language in the Pact for the Future that calls upon the Secretary-General to conduct a detailed review of the capacity of the United Nations system to support Member States in the development and strengthening of such national strategies.

The existing resolutions on conflict prevention within the UN system highlight two themes¹: 1) the fundamental commitment to conflict prevention and 2) the persisting fragmentation within the UN's prevention ecosystem. Despite recognizing that 'the UN system possesses the significant technical expertise to support national prevention priorities that are spread out across various parts of the UN system and at different levels' ([A/RES/57/337](#), OP 3), there is a strong sense of agreement among Member States, the UN and civil society that little has been done to address the fragmentation within the UN prevention ecosystem and to establish a coherent, overarching approach for the UN to support the prevention priorities of its Member States. Concerns have been expressed about the lack of capacity to advance prevention through existing tools. A comprehensive review of the UN capacity to support national prevention efforts could provide clarity on what more is needed to advance conflict prevention across the globe.

¹ Marina Kumskova, Johanna Hilbert (2024), The UN's capacity for supporting member states' national prevention strategies: Assessing practical capabilities: <https://gppac.net/news/uns-capacity-supporting-member-states-national-prevention-strategies-assessing-practical>

- What does it take for the Pact for the Future to include National Prevention Strategies?

There is a sense of hope among some Member States that the Pact for the Future can be an innovative political document. National prevention strategies could be included as a universal commitment. The zero draft of the Pact for the Future did not include such references because this concept was not presented to the co-facilitators by a sufficient number of Member States. Now, strong support from cross-regional groups is required to include the references in the next draft. Participants suggested that a balance was needed in negotiating the language of the Pact to include general references to national prevention strategies that can serve as a hook to further develop work on this in the follow-up to the Summit of the Future, including through the various tracks of the 2025 Peacebuilding Architecture Review (PBAR).

Participants encouraged Member States to organize more cross-regional discussions to develop a common understanding of national prevention strategies and to form coalitions. Good practices could be explored from other negotiation processes, including the 2022 Resolution on Financing for Peacebuilding. It is also important to do a mapping of the champions on this issue. For example, the AU Commission has previously expressed support for national prevention strategies. Further, the Peacebuilding Commission plays an important role in organizing convenings to facilitate learning about what has and has not worked in national prevention efforts. Recognizing that the Commission's meetings are typically not open to all Member States, it was suggested that the High-Level Meeting during every General Assembly session could be utilized as another space to have such exchanges. In addition, Member States could generate more awareness of prevention in other intergovernmental fora and processes.

Based on the key takeaways from the discussion, the following suggestions for follow-up are offered:

- Member States could identify *key parameters for effective national prevention strategies* to be included in the Pact for the Future to inform practice. For example, Member States could support *the development of national prevention strategies to address drivers and enablers of all forms of violence and conflict in societies through-evidence-based, long-term, holistic, localized, and flexible approaches based on national ownership*. Cross-regional coalitions in support of national prevention strategies could help make progress on including this language in the Pact.
- Member States could *call upon the Secretary-General to submit a report to the General Assembly for consideration during the 80th session*, drawing upon best practices, lessons learned, and recent and relevant academic research on effective nationally-led prevention approaches with a view to developing recommendations that Member States may draw upon in the development or strengthening of their own national strategies. This report could also help improve the support provided to Member States by the United Nations.
- Member States could request the Secretary-General to submit a detailed review of the capacity of the United Nations system to support Member States in the development and strengthening of their national strategies. This may lead to the development of *'a comprehensive conflict prevention strategy'* echoed by the Security Council in [S/RES/1366 \(OP6\)](#).