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Peace and Sustainable Development: challenges and opportunities in the framework of the 2030 Agenda.

In recent years, the international scenario has faced overarching transformations, rapidly reshaping the global context in which our mutual development cooperation systems are bound to operate. We have witnessed a general shift in development practices, going beyond the definition of Official Development Assistance (ODA) and the traditional donor-recipient relationship in order to focus on concepts of cooperation and partnership, in accordance with the new international agenda with new international and national tools and objectives, ranging various areas from poverty eradication to climate protection, human rights and peace and security.

Such innovations reflect the transition occurred from the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to the new, ambitious framework established by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and its complementary agendas: the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on Financing for Development, the 2015 Paris Agreement on Climate Change, the Agenda for Humanity, the Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction, the New Urban Agenda. These new structured and coherent global policy frameworks intend to provide vision and strategies to tackle the increasing domestic and global challenges, which threaten peace, prosperity and people, such as humanitarian and protracted crises, climate change, international terrorism, fragilityt, persistent levels of inequality.

The context for implementing the 2030 Agenda is therefore increasingly complex. As a consequence thereof, our Development Cooperation had to evolve and adapt to such complex and interconnected changes.

As an engaged bilateral and multilateral actor, Italy started to reflect on how to transform ourselves to better serve new purposes and the goals set by the international community, building on our traditional strengths. Hence, after a long debate, the Italian Parliament approved a new Reform Law, entered into force in 2014, deeply transforming the Italian Development Cooperation. The reform of the Italian Cooperation provides us with more effective instruments to face the new global challenges, while setting the overarching principles which must guide our development efforts.

The Reform Law has set out new objectives and guiding principles. In particular, according to the Law, Italian Development Cooperation activities shall support conflict prevention, peace processes, reconciliation, post-conflict stabilization, peace-building and the consolidation and strengthening of democratic institutions.

The promotion of inclusive and peaceful societies is a key enabling factor in order to foster sustainable development and international stability. This objective has been fully integrated in the strategic guidelines of the Italian Cooperation, contained in the latest “Three-year Programming and Policy Planning Document, which focuses our actions and our priorities on the implementation of Agenda 2030 and the achievement of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals.

On a geographical basis, our priority countries are 22, 11 of which are located in the African continent. Particular attention is given to Least Developed and to Fragile Countries, conflict/post-conflict situations and, more generally, to the interconnection of peace, security and development addressed by Sustainable Development Goal 16 of the 2030 Agenda.

On the thematic side, our priorities outlined in the Three-Year Document include: 1. Governance and the fight against inequality; 2. Migration and development; 3. Health; 4. Education; 5. Sustainable agriculture and food security; 6. Environment, climate change and energy for development; 7. Protection of cultural and natural heritage and, finally: 8. Development of the private sector.

The focus on Governance, in line with SDG 16 of the 2030 Agenda, is particularly relevant, since we are convinced that strengthening the local institutions will enable a democratic framework in fragile countries.

The UN itself is eventually recognizing the powerful demographic trend and is elaborating more focused development strategies which so far have primarily focused on issues of political economy and structural transformation, based on youth as the greatest actor of change in the society and on the concept of “peace-sustaining”.

Peaceful development is nowadays no longer synonymous with economic growth alone. The 2030 Agenda added to the economy, the environmental and the social pillars refreshing the intimate connection of Development with Human Rights and Peace & Security.

Culture, considered as a means to achieve a more satisfactory intellectual, emotional and moral existence, could be considered also as the Agenda’s fourth pillar and contribute to strengthen the relationship among the three main areas of activity of the UN: development, human rights, peace and security. According to the Italian vision, these sectors are inseparable from culture and progress in each one of them operates as a “cultural process”.

Italy is committed to implement the 2030 Agenda in the so called “Fragile Countries” by using new and emerging principles, strengthening ownership of our partners and mutual accountability. Inclusiveness is fostered at central and local level, and gender balance encouraged, particularly in peace and mediation process.

Italy now tackles in a coherent way the humanitarian, development and security nexus in ODA, which were previously running on separate tracks, with separate funding sources, application processes, and program objectives. Whole of Government approach has been adopted and is implemented across our interventions aiming at promoting rule of law and tackling exclusion.

We are actually using humanitarian and development aid to better respond to protracted crises. Programmable aid to most in need or protracted crisis countries has increased by about 14% from 2016 to 2017 and the same from 2017 to 2018, with a special focus to the Syrian crisis, Mediterranean and West Africa Countries affected by migration issues.

Italy has actually expanded its capacity to build partnership, duly adopting the Istanbul Grand Bargain for multi-year funding earmarking and the Good Humanitarian Donorship (GDH) agenda. In line with the suggestions from the Secretary General report for the World Humanitarian Summit, we are planning to introduce new procedures enabling the Agency to finance local civil society organizations, strengthening local capacity to manage and respond to crises, also as a way to encourage fragile to fragile co-operation.

Root causes of fragility are increasingly addressed in our programs to the benefit of local people, and to tackle the migration crisis by fostering business opportunities in origin and transit countries for displaced and host communities, in the Sub-Saharan Africa.

In this context, it is worth recalling that the Italian Cooperation has opened a constructive and permanent dialogue with the actors of the civil society, regarded as strategic partners in the sector of development cooperation. Academia is playing an increasingly important role at the international level in promoting a vision based on capacity building, which implies institutional strengthening, the enrichment of training programs and the acquisition of scientific, technological and managerial skills. These are essential conditions for innovation, technological transfer and ultimately economic growth, whilst ensuring the full participation and the ownership of partner countries. In order to succeed in the implementation of the SDGs and achieve peace and development for all, we will need to strengthen partnership and coordinating efforts at all levels.

Italy is fully committed to the 2030 Agenda. To succeed, we will need to increase and improve cooperation and collaboration among all the involved actors. We need to set up programs and actions where dialogue and knowledge are shared in order to encourage good practices and mutual comprehension, exploring the best ways to work together and initiate partnerships. The priority is to work for people and with people, leaving no one behind.

Peace and Sustainable Development remain deeply interlinked, as highlighted by the 2030 Agenda, and therefore, the only sustainable pathway is to work jointly on this nexus for a more inclusive, prosperous and sustainable future.

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