

Reflections on the UN Secretary-General's New Agenda for Peace as part of Our Common Agenda report

In July 2023, the Secretary-General of the United Nations (UN), António Guterres, launched his [New Agenda for Peace](#), a landmark initiative for the UN and national governments to better respond to today's challenges of international peace and security.

In this document, the Secretary-General reminds us of the weak advancement toward the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Halfway to the 2030 timeline, 88 per cent of the SDGs are in jeopardy and will remain out of reach for the majority of humanity short of a reduction in conflict and violence. For Mr. Guterres, investing in the prevention of conflict and violence is an investment in the 2030 Agenda. For a more effective response, the Secretary-General (SG) presents three recommendations, including "temporary universal basic Incomes". More specifically, under Action 4, to address the underlying drivers of violence and insecurity, the SG recommends to:

- *Accelerate implementation of proven development pathways that enhance the social contract and human security, such as education and health care.*
- *Consider new and emerging ways to protect livelihoods and provide social protection in communities emerging from conflict and in post-conflict countries, such as through temporary universal basic incomes, which can promote resilience and social cohesion and break the cycle of violence.*
- *For international financial institutions, align funding mechanisms to help address the underlying causes of instability through inclusive sustainable development.*

The Executive Committee (EC) of the Basic Income Earth Network (BIEN) salutes the clear and direct reference to Basic Income - a periodic cash payment unconditionally delivered to all on an individual basis, without means-test or work requirement - as a conflict prevention policy tool. This is particularly relevant given, on the one hand, the sense of urgency the Secretary-General warns of in this report and on the other, the speed and efficiency at which a basic income can help restore livelihoods.

Furthermore, as representatives of the organisation bringing together the largest network of researchers and practitioners on Basic Income, BIEN's EC would like to draw attention to a few specifications about this policy tool for the considerations of those interested: the "temporary" additive in the SG's recommendation may seem puzzling for some basic income advocates. While basic income practitioners envision a permanent policy that can eventually become a right, much like universal health care in some respects, we understand well that the permanency or not of a policy remains an issue of national deliberation. We would highlight that as long as the basic income envisioned by the SG's proposal refers to payments that are regular - weekly or monthly - and even if limited in time - it would be a genuine basic income and would generate all of the advantages envisaged, as did the Namibian and Indian pilot projects.

We also note that a basic income can positively contribute to the two other recommendations mentioned above. For one, as a basic income provides basic economic security to recipients, it directly enhances *human security*. Also, if distributed by the state, it can renew the *social contract*: a government awarding its residents a basic income trusts them to spend their grant as they see fit. In return, trust and goodwill is inculcated back in the awarding institution which is perceived as acting in the best interest of the recipient. Basic income can thus be a simple tool for implementing a people-centred approach and operationalise the need to shift the prevention paradigm to the national level, as called for in the New Agenda for Peace. Basic income has become a *proven development pathway* based on the evidence from pilot projects and other experiments implemented around the world, with currently over 100 ongoing experiments.

Secondly, the *alignment of international funding mechanisms*, which the SG encourages, can take place along a structure to be set up for the implementation of temporary universal basic incomes. This can support a more equitable financial architecture where at least part of international aid is channelled directly to the people in the form of a basic income.

We highlight in this sense how the three recommendations are mutually supportive and together they can deliver even stronger on conflict prevention.

Lastly, we draw attention to how a basic income rallies the three principles the Secretary-General heralds as the essence of a more peaceful global order: trust, solidarity and universality.

We believe there is no other policy that embodies better the call for “leaving no one behind” than a universal basic income. It directly translates our obligation towards global solidarity, which the SG invites us to act upon urgently. The state of deprivation of millions of people is man-made and it is unnecessary for it to be so. What is necessary is the political will for us to trust the vulnerable with unconditional cash.

It is high time for us not to deprive people in our communities of basic economic security, the ability to meet their basic needs with no questions asked. The means are at our disposal and are a matter of the priorities we set. To benefit from basic economic security is transformative: it frees people to access opportunities and empowers them to build the future they envision in more inclusive, less fragmented societies.

BIEN remains at the disposal of the office of the Secretary-General, UN agencies, funds and programs, Special Political Missions, as well as interested government entities and policy makers for any advice or consultation. We hold the largest network of basic income practitioners with unique expertise in basic income implementation and are present globally through our regional hubs in Africa, Latin America and Asia-Pacific.

BIEN's Executive Committee

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