

“Glocal” diplomacy in pursuit of SDG 16 for world peace and security

The growing significance of subnational authorities in realizing the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) mirrors the escalating complexity of national and global challenges. Evidence underscores the pivotal role played by subnational governments in fostering initiatives pertaining to climate change mitigation as well as in pandemic management amidst the COVID-19 crisis, along with their unique capabilities in addressing social and economic vulnerabilities where conflicts and instability can take root. Against this backdrop, the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development serves as a guiding framework empowering subnational administrations towards the attainment of inclusive and sustainable territorial development goals. Moreover, this paradigm puts emphasis on the inclusion and valorization of marginalized populations, epitomized by the principle: *leave no one behind*.

In their SDGs implementation endeavors, local and regional authorities frequently insist on fostering strategic partnerships across different sectors and tiers of both national and supranational governance. The orientation towards multi-level approach to governance, decentralized collaboration, and active engagement of multiple stakeholders proves the commitment of subnational governments to accountability, responsiveness, peer-learning, review mechanisms, dissemination, and coherence within the SDGs implementation context, also from an effective cross-border perspective. The cultivation of such horizontal and heterogeneous partnerships holds the core potential to offset knowledge asymmetries, fortify institutional capacities, and galvanize resource mobilization even circumventing national systemic resistance.

Within this framework, the EU’s Treaty of Lisbon stands as a salient model for innovative and democratic global governance where *global* and *local* levels can be functionally synthesized in a *glocal* approach. In the axiological prism traced by the preamble of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights as well as by Article 4, paragraph 2 TEU, and Article 3, paragraphs 3 (clause 3) and 5 TEU, the EU fully embraces the *principle of subsidiarity*, enshrined in Article 5, paragraphs 1 and 3 TEU, as well as the *principle of proximity*, referred to in Article 10, paragraph 3 TEU which also reaffirms (together with paragraph 2) the *principle of participatory and representative democracy*. Consistently, Article 300, paragraph 3 TFEU *et seq.* defines the mandate of the *Committee of the Regions*, requiring that members of this additional consultative body hold an official electoral mandate within – or be politically accountable to – an elected subnational assembly. Moreover, this programmatic outline coherently pervades the entire regulatory structure of the EU, also taking shape in the allocations of the *European Regional Development Fund*, in the *Inter-Reg* programming for EU funds (open to partners from non-EU countries) and, lastly, in the leading role attributed to subnational bodies in the implementation of the national recovery and resilience plans funded through the *NextGenerationEU* and *RepowerEurope* chapters.

The synergistic relationship among SDGs 11, 16, and 17 underscores their relevance in delineating concerted actions towards the attainment of peace, justice, and the fortification of robust multi-level institutions. SDG 16 embodies a dual role as both a consequential outcome and a catalyst for *glocal* sustainable development. Its overarching aims pivot around the promotion of peaceful and inclusive societies, ensuring universal access to justice, and fostering the establishment of effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions across all tiers of governance within the scope of the holistic realization of the 2030 Agenda. The nexus between peace and sustainable development finds further confirmation in the UN 2030 Agenda’s assertion that development progresses *hand in hand* with peace and security, as emphasized by UN Security Council resolution 2282 (2016) under which the responsibility for sustaining peace and security worldwide is broadly shared by national governments and all other national stakeholders. Thus, improving the capacities of national and subnational institutions, particularly in human rights protection and economic facilitation, emerges as a linchpin for crisis management and plays a pivotal role in conflict prevention as well as in the post-conflict reconstruction process by addressing root causes of conflict linked to social, economic and land inequality through a *reality-based* institutional approach.

In this context, a renewed concept of *City diplomacy* – as per Recommendation 234 (2008) of the Congress of local and regional authorities of the Council of Europe, in accordance with the European Charter of Local Self-Government and its Article 10 – has evolved to encompass various forms of intra-state and inter-state engagement and co-operation between local and regional authorities, with a growing emphasis on their *glocal* role in peace-building efforts. Of course, this raises pertinent questions regarding the traditional concept of diplomacy as an exclusive attribute of nation-states, as well as about the rationale behind local and regional government commitment in peace-building endeavors, their capacity to undertake such initiatives, or the geographical scope of their involvement. However, the innovative concept of *Glocal diplomacy* underscores the contributions of local and regional authorities to conflict prevention, peace-building, and post-conflict reconstruction – both within and outside conflict-affected regions, and at a cross-border level – as direct interlocutors of the bodies of the international organizations to which the States they belong have joined. Furthermore, the indispensable roles played by local politicians, CSOs, citizens assemblies, journalists and academia cannot be underestimated for the coherent SDG 16 implementation and in the perspective of the broader realization of the 2030 Agenda. *Glocal diplomacy* can effectively connect all multi-level actors helping to circumvent many of the bureaucratic mechanisms and systemic interferences that persist at the national central level by fostering *local-to-local* and *region-to-region* learning and collaboration for democracy, sustainability, and resilience, thus facilitating an inclusive multilateralism.