

# The Voices of Sustaining Peace: Innovating capacity building for peace in the face of COVID-19

**Communications campaign and interactive conference to mark the International Day of Peace and the UNITAR Division for Peace Advisory Board side event in the wider context of the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the United Nations organised under the theme “*Shaping Peace Together*”**

The global campaign “[UN75 – Shaping Our Future Together](#)”, intended to mark the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the United Nations, was launched in January 2020 and aimed to dedicate the entire year to the *amplification of the vast diversity of grassroots voices* from the communities that the United Nations is mandated to serve. Following the call of the Secretary-General, various actors and institutions in the UN family have been designing and implementing a multitude of tools meant to listen to people across the world and learn about their experience of overcoming global challenges, including some of the most acute of them – persistent violent conflicts and instability.

The long-planned campaign came shortly ahead of the unplanned global health crisis. While posing an unprecedented challenge to the implementation of the sustaining peace agenda, the pandemic has at the same time *had a remarkable positive effect on spurring innovation* all across the related thematic areas, both in terms of greater digitalisation and new approaches to project implementation. It has also reiterated the critical value of strengthened partnerships with local actors.

In response to this double call from the community of nations and the COVID-19 pandemic, [UNITAR Division for Peace](#) will contribute to the ongoing global conversation by:

- communicating about the grassroots sustaining peace innovations with the original local voices;
- using these personal stories as an inspiration for a global cooperative action at all levels;
- showcasing innovations in various related thematic areas and using them as a starting point for further innovative developments to accommodate the needs under the new normal;
- bringing together high-level and local peace actors to raise the awareness of and lead the narrative in innovation for sustaining peace.

This way, the Division for Peace aims to silence the guns while elevating the voices of grassroots heroes serving on the frontlines of the battle against the pandemic.

## **PART 1: 21 September – The Voices of Sustaining Peace: Social Media Campaign to Elevate Grassroots Voices from the Field**

A series of 6 social media posts will each tell a very brief story of a small but remarkable individual contribution to sustaining peace of one of UNITAR’s partners, collaborators or beneficiaries. The first story will be published on the 21<sup>st</sup> of September (International Day of Peace), while the rest will follow twice per week, leading up to the Advisory Board virtual side event on the 16<sup>th</sup> of October.

Once all the stories are published and on the final week of the campaign (12-16 October), they will all be combined in one visual material that will feature all the “(s)heroes’ faces” in line with the global COVID-19 theme “*We are all in this together*”.

## **PART 2: 16 October – Sustaining Peace and Rapid Innovation in the Face of COVID-19: Meet the (S)Heroes – ADVISORY BOARD Side Event**

An online conference on the occasion of the annual side event to the Division for Peace Advisory Board meeting. The interactive virtual Zoom conference will bring together the real (s)heroes of the stories from the “Voices of Sustaining Peace” campaign above as well as the Division for Peace Advisory Board Members and the broader public.

The discussion will focus on the challenges that each of the story protagonists faced in their peacebuilding/ humanitarian/ development work as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic; on how they are dealing with these challenges and what sorts of innovative tools and approaches are being used; as well as on what is required to successfully adjust to the “new normal”. In the end, all attendees and speakers will be invited for a Q&A exchange to draw conclusions from the experience to date and identify ways forward.

**Registration:** [https://unitar.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_oJDL0CsUREqO6XfLTP84Rw](https://unitar.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_oJDL0CsUREqO6XfLTP84Rw)

## TENTATIVE THEMES

- Peacebuilding and Mediation
- Justice
- Humanitarian Action
- Youth, Peace and Security
- Communication and Media Diplomacy

## TIMELINE

**21 September – International Day of Peace – launch**

22 September – Story 1 released

24 September – Story 2 released

29 September – Story 3 released

1 October – Story 4 released

6 October – Story 5 released

8 October – Story 6 released

12 October – “We are all in this together” – combined post/short video

**16 October – AB Side Event – online conference**

## SPEAKERS

Moderator: UNITAR Division for Peace Advisory Board Member - TBC

Panel/ story protagonists:

- **Mr. Ali Chahine**, Peacebuilding consultant and facilitator in MENA region, UNITAR Mediation and Conflict Analysis Trainer
- **Ms. Orsolya Bader**, Digital Networks & Society Department, Telecommunication Development Bureau, International Telecommunication Union; Participant in the Master’s programme in Humanitarian Action and Peacebuilding by UNITAR/ Oxford Brookes University (OBU)
- **Mr. Rohullah Azizi**, Curriculum Adviser at Afghanistan Legal Education Project (ALEP), Appeals Representative, Fulbright Scholar
- **Ms. Cristina and Ms. Leidy Ríos**, Heads of Corporación Génesis, an NGO dedicated to peacebuilding in Colombia
- **Mr. Hisham Al-Omeisy**, Conflict analyst, Yemen; Alumni of the Master’s programme in Conflict, Peace and Security by UNITAR/ Universitat Oberta de Catalunya (UOC)
- Facilitator in mediation, Libya - TBC

Short stories of the speakers are regularly released on [a dedicated website page](#).

The online event will be streamed live on [UNITAR YouTube channel](#).