



REGIONAL FORUM

ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT FOR THE UNECE REGION

13 – 14 MARCH 2024 | HYBRID EVENT | GENEVA & ONLINE

SIDE EVENT CONCEPT NOTE

Event title

Protection of Civilians: Governments' Responsibility and Civil Society Efforts in the UNECE Region

Background and Rationale

The UNECE region is engulfed in several armed conflicts where numerous civilian lives are claimed daily. Simultaneously in the region, there are heightened tensions that could potentially lead to further armed conflict and civilian casualties. This event addresses the crisis's resonance with SDG 16, emphasizing the imperative for States to uphold their obligations to the 'Protection of Civilians'.

The event will also explore the impact of conflict on civilians and how they are managing. Inviting civilians, international experts, governmental representatives, and civil society, the discussion aims to scrutinize strategies to mitigate civilian casualties. Participants will delve into the critical role of civil society in fostering peace and explore collaborative solutions, fostering a platform where diverse perspectives converge to tackle the urgent humanitarian challenges gripping the UNECE region.

Session objectives and expected outcomes

Objective:

The objective of the side event 'Protection of Civilians: Governments' Responsibility and Civil Society Efforts in the UNECE Region' is to address the urgent humanitarian crisis stemming from armed conflicts and heightened tensions in the UNECE region. By emphasizing the alignment with Sustainable Development Goal 16, the event aims to underscore the responsibility of governments to protect civilians and explore the role of civil society in fostering peace.

Expected Outcomes:

- Enhanced understanding among participants regarding the obligations of governments bound by the Geneva Conventions and International Humanitarian Law
- Enhanced understanding of the gravity of the humanitarian crisis in the UNECE region, particularly the impact of armed conflicts on civilian populations.



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- Identification and analysis of effective strategies and mechanisms for governments to fulfill their obligations in protecting civilians, including the implementation of international humanitarian law.
- Recognition of the crucial role civil society plays in promoting peacebuilding efforts and the exploration of ways to amplify their contributions.
- Collaboration and networking opportunities among international experts, governmental representatives, and civil society actors to develop concrete action plans for mitigating civilian casualties and fostering stability in the UNECE region.

Organizers

Lead organizers: ECE-RCEM

Agenda and Structure

Opening & Welcoming Remarks

- Introduction to the event's objectives and significance
- Establishment of safe space principles to ensure respectful and inclusive dialogue
- Overview of the agenda and key discussion points

First Panel: Legal Landscape of Protection of Civilians

- Presentation by legal experts on international humanitarian law and its application in protecting civilians during armed conflicts
- Discussion on the challenges and gaps in legal frameworks for safeguarding civilians
- Q&A session to engage participants and address inquiries

Second Panel: Protection of Marginalized Groups of Civilians

- Presentation highlighting the specific vulnerabilities faced by marginalized groups, such as older persons, persons with disabilities, women, children, refugees, and ethnic minorities, in conflict settings
- Exploration of strategies and initiatives aimed at addressing the unique protection needs of these groups
- Q&A session to delve deeper into issues and perspectives related to marginalized populations

Conclusions

- Summary of key insights and takeaways from the panel discussions
- Reflections on the role of governments and civil society in enhancing protection measures for civilians
- Call to action for collaborative efforts toward advancing peace and security in the UNECE region



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Closing Remarks

- Expression of gratitude to participants, speakers, and organizers
- Encouragement for continued engagement and advocacy in the realm of civilian protection

List of Panellists

Moderators:

Vappu Taipale, Peace Campaigner, Former Minister of Health, Finland

Second Moderator tbc

First Panel:

- **Richard Blewitt**, Executive Director International at British Red Cross
- CIVIC (tbc)
- Norwegian Refugee Council (tbc)

Second Panel:

- **James Denselow**, Head of humanitarian and conflict policy, Save the Children
- **Chris McIvor**, Regional Director, Eurasia and Middle East, HelpAge International
- **Alradi Abdalla**, International Disability Alliance
- WILPF (tbc)

Conclusions and Recommendations: **Sylvia Beales**, ECE-RCEM Governing Body

Sign-up / Registration Link

https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_dZBDwysVTBCdYw_tBwZn-g