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## **Peace, Accountability and Representation: The Pillars for Development**

*Views are my own - Maria Imad*

It is generally agreed that we live in what philosophers and historians call the “modern world” - leaving the very lingering question of modernity. What makes a world “modern”? What makes a world “developed”? Industrialization, economic growth, or perhaps social justice? Now comes the time to look at the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals, in particular SDG16 which aims to promote peace and social inclusion all while increasing trust in government bodies and providing access to justice and social accountability (United Nations, 2022).

Much of this century’s problems can be blamed on neglect which could be divided into three areas: lack of action caused by dearth of knowledge, lack of action caused by corruption and bribery, and finally insufficient action caused by absence of representation and heedlessness.

To demonstrate it, while we live in the forefront of technological growth and flow of information, ‘55 journalists and over 358 human rights activists were murdered in 2021 alone’ (United Nations, 2022). Accountability is thus nearly nonexistent in most “developing” countries where oppression still rules, hidden behind the mask of democracy and rule of law.

However, when it comes to accountability, it is not only developing countries that we must blame or frame as corrupt; instead, we should ask ourselves what the drivers of corruption are, and how we can make peace. Sustainable growth should start with answers to challenges and immediate damage control. Yet, to put an end to corruption, we must sustain trust in government bodies, and this certitude of the effectiveness of leaders should rely on representation.

Today, only “twenty-four countries have female heads of states” (Sairam, 2021) and many of these women are the first to hold their office. Alarming as it already is, this is only a piece of even bigger injustices in a world where just recently ‘indigenous people started to be parts of the governments of their own motherlands’ (NPR , 2020). Furthermore, it does not stop at the misrepresentation of minorities, but also the complete failure to protect the future of this “modern” world: the children, for whom the rights to protection are still fragile (“only three of the G7 countries have banned corporal punishment for children” and “one in ten children are sexually abused before the age of eighteen” (United Nations, 2022)).

In conclusion, contrary to common understanding, the state of the world we live in is in fact very far from developed. In a world where slavery is still a topic of conversation in political debates, and where merely voicing an opinion is a crime punishable by death, action must be taken. Thus, the urgency for governments to take the UN SDGs very seriously - especially SDG16 - for our children to possibly live in a truly “modern” world.

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