**SUSTAINABLE PEACE**

*An authentic peace*

By Deon Snyman

Johan Galtung, a well-known theorist of peace and conflict studies introduced the concepts of negative peace and positive peace in his seminal Editorial to the Journal of Peace Research. The two concepts represent two different dimensions of peace:

* Negative peace describes the absence of violence and war, and is usually reached through the agreement to a ceasefire. It is considered negative peace because something undesirable such as violence and oppression has stopped happening.
* Positive peace or sustainable peace is based on solving the underlying causes of a conflict to ensure that the conflict does not recur in the future. It develops from the premise that the cessation of direct physical or structural violence (negative peace) is only the start of the process in ending a conflict situation. To reach conditions for sustainable peace the systems that led to the original disagreement have to be transformed in order to be fair to everyone and to allow for the repair of the harm caused. Sustainable peace is therefore peace that is able to last now and in the future.

Literature on peace building defines the concept of sustainable peace as a situation characterized by the absence of physical, psychological and structural violence within a society where the diverse communities strive together to meet the macro and micro level needs of all of its members through the promotion of social justice, the resolving of traumatic memories caused by the conflict, the addressing of the root causes of the past conflict and having conflict resolution mechanisms in place to ensure that new conflict situations are resolved in a peaceful manner.

For the purposes of this article, sustainable peace is broadly defined as the conditions that need to be in place for a community to peacefully co-exist next to each other - now and in the future.

Sustainable peace requires both a backward-looking and a forward-looking approach. The backward-looking approach assists in the identification of the underlying causes of a conflict while the forward-looking approach focuses on the development of strategies to ensure that the root causes for the violence are addressed.

The end of the Apartheid era and the establishment of a democratic South Africa led to the emergence of negative peace in the country. The current service delivery protests and strike actions are indications that South Africa has not yet moved beyond negative peace. It is particularly the huge socio-economic gap between the “haves” and the “have not’s” in the society that serves as fertile soil for the breeding of potential conflict situations. Sustainable peace in South Africa will only be possible if citizens feel that the resources in the country are equally shared amongst all the people living in the country.

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