



# Annual Conference 2019

## *Call for Session Proposals*

The Knowledge Platform Security & Rule of Law will host its Annual Conference on **10 October 2019** at **COMM in The Hague**.

The Annual Conference brings together the brightest minds in the security and rule of law (SRoL) community and beyond, to critically engage with the most pressing questions in the field. The conference connects SRoL stakeholders, with the objective of sparking discussions and enabling knowledge transfer beyond systemic and geographical boundaries. Through interactive exchanges in workshops, debates and discussions, the Platform aims to extract lessons and best practices that will help to shape security and rule of law policy. The content of the Annual Conference is split between sessions conceived and organized by the Secretariat and the sessions that result from this call, submitted by the Platform network.

We invite submissions for a range of session formats—from panels and workshops, to poster-presentations and debates, or any other type of session you might have in mind. This document offers guidance on what we're looking for in terms of content, format and how to submit your proposal.

### **Bridging the Gap: Rhetoric and practice in security and the rule of law**

Each year, the Secretariat, in consultation with the network and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, sets a theme for the Annual Conference around which the discussions and debates on the day will center. Previous themes have targeted acute issues in the SRoL field: the unanswered or ignored issues that prevail and challenge progress in security and rule of law ("[Elephants in the Room](#)"), and the inequalities that perpetuate or exacerbate instability, fragility and conflict ("[Inequality](#)"). This year, the Secretariat has chosen to investigate a number of gaps, as well as how we can work together to bridge them.

What follows is an introduction to our understanding of the theme. We invite the network to submit proposals for sessions linked to the theme, and encourage you to push the boundaries of what we've proposed if you feel that there are other gaps that we should examine together. The Secretariat, with the support of the Platform's [Advisory Committee](#), will work together with accepted applicants to co-create sessions that meaningfully address the identified gaps, to collectively shape the day.

#### **Rationale**

Through the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, all states have committed to fostering peaceful, just and inclusive societies which are free from fear and violence. It is incumbent on all states to implement this vision through concerted efforts and a commitment to the elements that make up the Agenda, acknowledging the importance of stability, peace and the (inter)national rule of law for sustainable development. However, ensuring the implementation of effective interventions and integrating the approaches of the various actors working on security and rule of law remains challenging.

Despite efforts of states, civil society, and citizens to work together, there are persistent gaps in the ways that we think of and work on security and the rule of law. These include systemic gaps between the broad consensus on how we should be working, and the administrative and political structures that impede us from doing so – gaps between rhetoric and practice.

In 2019, the Knowledge Platform's Annual Conference will zoom in on some of these gaps. As ever, the Secretariat looks to the wealth of knowledge and experience within its vibrant community to devise ways to have an open and honest dialogue about these gaps, in an effort to try and begin to bridge them, and together work towards a culture of the rule of law, viable justice mechanisms, secure and stable environments, and sustainable peace and development.

The Secretariat has identified the following gaps in the security and rule of law field that aim to guide the Platform network in its thinking in preparation for the Annual Conference:

- **Learning and innovation:** Working on security and the rule of law requires actors to learn from past mistakes and the experiences of others and to quickly react and respond to continuous changes in the political and socio-economic environments in which they operate. This demands continuous learning and adapting to find appropriate solutions. Learning is central to improving the effectiveness and quality of policy and programming. In turn, trialing new and innovative approaches is central to this iterative process, in order to navigate the complexity of conflict-affected settings. Yet incorporating learning, adapting and innovating into interventions remains challenging. There are a number of factors that hinder more groundbreaking and disruptive innovation in SRoL. For instance, political changes in donor countries have led to (ever) decreasing risk appetites, zero-tolerance for mistakes and increased upward, one-way accountability. This has translated into administrative and contract structures such as financing through competitive tendering, which are not conducive to organizations being iterative and adaptive. Currently, organizations and institutions still do not systematically adopt these approaches. How can we organize ourselves to stimulate, rather than impede, learning and innovation, in a way that is collaborative rather than competitive? What are other obstacles to come to more creative and substantive changes? What are the risks of innovation, and how can these risks be shared?
- **Partnership and power:** From community security to institution building, security and rule of law efforts revolve around partnerships. Whether between donors and its grantees, the public and private sector, or local and international researchers, partnerships are central to security and rule of law work, helping to better understand local contexts, creating larger resource pools, or by transferring specific knowledge. Yet, partnerships to foster security and the rule of law are not always rooted in equality, trust, reciprocity and mutual respect –with potentially negative consequences. Arguably, there are systemic factors which prevent truly equal partnerships. Procurement rules and regulations, results frameworks and the management of funding relationships push risk downwards onto grantees and partners, while data and information is sucked upwards. In this context, accountability becomes a one way street, contributing to large power imbalances. What are the differences between financial and non-financial partnerships, and what are its implications for how power is transferred to (local) actors? How does this affect (downwards) accountability and the sharing of risk? How can we set an evidence-based SRoL agenda if knowledge is extracted in a context of extreme power imbalance?
- **Policy and practice:** Policymaking and programming in the field of security and rule of law has always been challenging, not least because of the political nature of peace- and state building activities, but also due to a lack of knowledge on what works in specific, dynamic contexts. However, even when the evidence is there, the uptake and integration of these insights into policy decisions and translation into practice remains elusive. The dominant rhetoric of evidence-based policymaking is often at odds with reality. Policymaking is constrained by political realities, and the integration of knowledge is hindered by a limited capacity of both policymakers to absorb, and for researchers to translate research, compromising the impact of research. There is a tension between political realities (both in donor and partner countries) and development policies that is particularly acute in the SRoL field, as it frequently

touches upon the way power itself is distributed. How can we reconcile (international) policy approaches and interventions with the specific challenges coming from operating in fragile and conflict-affected contexts, where host government policies are not always entirely collaborative? To what extent does the Western security agenda drive its development agenda? How are notions of 'security' and the 'rule of law' defined and understood in both international (donor) and local (e.g. experiencing violence and extremism) policy contexts?

This year's Annual Conference offers a forum to critically explore ways to bridge the gaps between rhetoric and practice, and capitalize on the expertise brought by the diverse audience drawn to the Annual Conference. As such, the Secretariat hopes to interrogate the way the current ecosystem is organized and framed, and to contribute to the generation of new ideas to stimulate learning, and reward taking risks and successful innovation, and to the forging of promising and equal relationships to enable progress towards sustaining peace and strengthening the rule of law.

We are seeking applicants to speak to one or more of the gaps identified above, or identify their own gaps, accompanied by a brief rationale.

## Format

This year, the Annual Conference's program will comprise of longer sessions, as we have done for the past years, and shorter poster presentations. Where the sessions will serve as interactive and participatory discussions in various formats on the gaps we've outlined above, the poster presentations should be brief (10-15 minute) presentations of research, programs, or policy questions with small audiences. More information on what we're looking for can be found below:

## Sessions

With this call, the Platform is soliciting applications from its network to contribute to the Annual Conference by hosting a session. Sessions can take various forms, including – but not limited to – panels, workshops, discussions, fish bowls, skills training, collaborative brainstorming – or any other interactive and engaging session you think may contribute to bridging a gap.

This year's Annual Conference will place enhanced emphasis on creative session formats that place a strong emphasis on interaction and discussion with the audience of experts at the Conference. Sessions will range from 50-90 minutes and must address an important issue within the field of security and rule of law. While we are open to any ideas for proposals, the following characteristics for sessions will be weighed more favorably:

- **Partnerships between organizations** (particularly Global South) – We encourage cooperation and feel that collaboration between organizations – especially those from different regions – stimulates joint learning and allows us to best build innovative answers to the challenges in our field of work.
- **Relevance to the theme** – Sessions should be linked to the theme (specifically one or more gap(s) to be explored, either as identified in the rationale or by the applicants themselves).
- **Diversity of perspectives: “two sides of the story”** – We value willingness to present and critically engage with differing opinions and believe this help us better recognize and respond to the nuances within them. Every effort will be made to ensure diversity of perspectives and expertise is represented.
- **Innovation or creativity** – New technology that will energize participants? Innovative formats to get the discussion going? Ice-breakers? We are looking for innovative ideas and creative approaches which will help participants to engage fully and move beyond rehashing what we've been saying for years.

- **Depth over breadth: better to be specific than superficial** – Sessions should aim to get to the core of the issue at hand, rather than revisiting common talking points.
- **Allow time for discussion** – Everyone at the Conference should have the opportunity to have their say. Sessions should devote plenty of time to debate and exchanges of ideas.
- **Audience interaction** – To capitalise on the wealth of experience at the Conference, we'd like sessions to provide ample opportunities for interaction between presenters and participants.

### Presentations

At the Annual Conference, we'd like to offer our community the opportunity to briefly present successes, failures, insights, and lessons from research projects, recently concluded or ongoing projects or policy discussions, in the form of a short poster presentation. In contrast to the longer sessions described above, the poster presentations will only last 10-15 minutes, and allow for only a few questions from a small audience.

- **Concise and to-the-point** – Poster presentations should pick one or two specific lessons, challenges or questions and address them on the basis of experience
- **Visually engaging** – Presentations can be a physical poster, (short) PowerPoint presentation, videos, etc. – but should capture the audience's attention.
- **Digestible** – Presentations should not be overly technical or complex, but rather take one or two key points and expand on them for a small audience.
- **Based on project or research** – Presentations should be based on direct project or research experiences, whether ongoing or recently completed.

### Speakers

We encourage sessions to present a diversity of views and perspectives. We are not just aiming to have SRoL experts, but also recruit thinkers and talented speakers from across sectors, regions, and professional backgrounds.

### Important dates

Date	Action
<b>18 April</b>	Opening of Call for Applications
<b>14 June</b>	Proposals for sessions due
<b>8 July</b>	Notification of acceptance
<b>15 July</b>	Announcement of Annual Conference sessions <i>Beginning of refining sessions jointly with the Secretariat, with support from the Platform's Advisory Committee</i>
<b>1 August</b>	Confirm session titles and summaries
<b>21 August</b>	Confirm session speakers and submit: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• full session description for Conference program</li> <li>• speaker bios and photos</li> <li>• logistical and A/V requirements</li> </ul>
<b>25 September</b>	Submit session media (PowerPoint, videos, audio, etc.)
<b>10 October</b>	Annual Conference

## How to submit a proposal

Proposals are required to be submitted through the [online form](#). The deadline for the online submission is up to and including **Friday 14 June 2019**. Late submissions will not be accepted. Submissions must include:

- **Contact details**
- **Proposed session title**
- **Brief summary of the session:** Describe the substantive content of the session, the proposed format for the session and the structure in which it will play out. Please include a suggested length, proposed size of audience, etc.
- **Relevance to conference theme:** Summarize how the session relates to the theme of the Conference (“Bridging the Gap”), making reference to the gaps it is investigating. These can be either those outlined in the rationale above, or gaps identified by the applicant. In the case of the latter, please include a brief rationale. Outline what you see as the desired outcomes for the session.
- **Name and role of speakers:** Identify proposed speakers, outlining their role in the session and providing a brief bio if possible. Speakers do not need to be confirmed for the application, but please keep in mind feasibility.
- **Note taker:** Indicate if you are able to provide a note taker for your session.
- **Facilities and AV requirements:** List the facilities and AV equipment required for your session.

## Miscellaneous

- Applicants may submit more than one proposal.
- Proposals can fall under one or more gaps to be explored at the conference. They do not strictly need to be those identified by the Secretariat.
- Due to the expected amount of proposals, not all submissions will be accepted. If the Secretariat determines that two or more proposals address similar topics, we may encourage applicants to work together or combine sessions where possible.
- For selected proposals, the format of the sessions will be refined jointly by the Secretariat, with support from the Platform’s Advisory Committee, and the applicant to ensure that they align with the objectives and structure of the conference. The Platform reserves the right to recommend changes to submissions in collaboration with applicants.
- Please note that acceptance by the Secretariat of a session proposal for the Annual Conference does not imply financial support from the Secretariat. Financial support can be discussed with the Secretariat.

If you have any further questions, please [get in touch with the Secretariat](#) for more information.