

Conflict Resolution and the Promotion of Peace



Presentation at the international conference on the Challenges of Europe-Africa Relations

(Summary of Powerpoint Presentation)

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- The ECCP is an independent NGO based in the Netherlands that promotes effective conflict prevention and peacebuilding strategies, and actively supports and connects people working for peace worldwide.
- The ECCP serves as an information point, a network organisation, and an advocate for the field of conflict prevention and peacebuilding in general

Key activities:

- Network building: European Platform, six years ago established
- Documenting Civil Society involvement: *People Building Peace*
- Researching conflicts and who is working for peace: *Searching for Peace incl. directories*
- Convenor's role: international conferences on Lessons Learned etc.

Role of CSOs in Conflict Prevention

- Early warning and early preventive action;
- Support human rights and democratisation;
- Monitor human rights;
- Mobilise public support for peaceful settlements;
- Strengthen civil society and enhance capacities of local actors to work on conflicts;
- Multi-ethnic community building
- Support peace work in education and the media;
- Reintegration and reconciliation work

Collectively, NGOs have the ability to:

- function without being constrained by narrow mandates of foreign-policy imperatives;
- achieve access to areas inaccessible to official actors;
- talk to several parties without losing their credibility;
- deal directly with grassroots populations;
- operate in obscurity without media, parliamentary or public scrutiny
- take the greatest risks, given their public-advocacy and social-justice agendas;
- effectively network, given their long-standing relationships, built on trust, with civil society in the conflict zones;
- draw upon public opinion to galvanise political will;
- to focus on a longer-term perspective than governments are able to do.

Peace & Security and Civil Society

2000, September: *UN Millennium Declaration* sets the global agenda. Peace, Security & Disarmament one of the key objectives. In this Declaration heads of states and governments called for:

- more inclusive political processes, allowing for genuine participation by all citizens
- greater opportunities to NGOs and civil society to contribute to the realisation of the goals and programmes of the UN

Role increasingly acknowledged...

- *EU* expressed in Gothenburg and Helsingborg programmes to enhance cooperation with NGOs and Civil Society in implementation of conflict prevention agenda
- UNDP delivered document on UNDP and Civil Society
- 2001: Kofi Annan's Report on Prevention of Armed Conflict: "NGOs can contribute to the maintenance of peace and security by offering non-violent avenues for addressing the root causes of conflict at an early stage. Moreover, NGOs can be an important means of conducting track II diplomacy when Governments and international organizations are unable to do so."

... there are also some lessons learned....

- Conflict prevention is no longer in its infancy
- Because the nature of conflict has changed since the end of the Cold War, it is necessary to change the process, the goals and the actors that can lead to peace
- Peacebuilding must be seen as a process, rather than a goal
- Build upon local experiences/ peace initiatives
- Include all relevant actors in decision-making
- Partnerships with local organisations
- Co-operation with other organisations in the field, at the NGO, intergovernmental as well as governmental level
- Long-term engagement
- Use comprehensive approaches
- Impartiality
- Gender perspective
- Importance of interpersonality/ trust building
- Empowerment

...but there is still a lot to explore...

Kofi Annan's Recommendation 27 in "The Prevention of Armed Conflict" (June 2001):

"I urge NGOs with an interest in conflict prevention to organize an international conference of local, national and international NGOs on their role in conflict prevention and future interaction with the United Nations in this field."

Resulted in: *The Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict*

Overall objective:

- To develop a common platform for effective action on conflict prevention from the community to the global level

Goals

- To explore fully the role of civil society in conflict prevention and peacebuilding
- To improve interaction between civil society groups, the UN, regional organisations, and governments
- To strengthen regional and international networking between conflict prevention actors
- To promote the development of conflict-prevention theory and practice
- To integrate regional experience into an International Agenda for conflict prevention

Content

In the overall programme, regional consultations and conferences, and in the Action Agenda, the following issues will be discussed (amongst others):

1. *What can civil society actors do to prevent conflict?*

- Added value of role of actors as women, youth, media, religious leaders etc
- Specific issues where civil society involvement is very important, like early warning or reconciliation

2. *How mobilising for effective action?*

- lobby & advocacy
- development and peacebuilding
- networking

3. *Legitimacy, accountability, efficacy & codes of conduct*

- dilemma's of insider-outsider relationship
- codes of conduct

4. *A social infrastructure for prevention*

- capacity building
- training
- resources

5. *Interaction between civil society and governments and UN*

Action and planning

- June 2002 – June 2003: Preparatory phase, world wide consultation with partners
- June 2003: International Preparatory Meeting, concluding preparatory phase and establishment of *Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict*
- September 2003:
 - Presentation and discussion at an open meeting of the General Assembly
 - Panel discussion with UN departments and agencies
- Regional Consultation (2003 and 2004). Fifteen (sub)regional processes
- Regional Conferences (end 2004) which will produce:
 - Regional Agendas for conflict prevention
 - Recommendations for an International Agenda for conflict prevention
- International Conference at United Nations Headquarters in New York (2005)

Added Value

- It will offer an opportunity to strengthen regional networking
- It promotes grassroots activities and it legitimises civil society organisations
- It will give regions a chance to become part of a global network: create a voice, raise their profile, together they have more influence in lobbying and advocating for issues
- It will offer an opportunity to exchange experiences and to discuss lessons learned and best practices in order to improve effectiveness of peace building efforts
- Added Value (continued)

- In all regions discussions will be held on development and peacebuilding
- It develops concrete recommendations of a particular region
- It will offer an opportunity to discuss the role of both civil society actors and UN agencies in local / internal conflicts
- It will offer an opportunity to work towards a Security Council Resolution on conflict prevention and peacebuilding. And the role of civil society in it
- It will support the strengthening of multilateralism and global governance, with inclusion of civil society

In the following regions...

- Central and East Africa, West Africa, Southern Africa, Latin America and Caribbean, North America (Canada & USA), South Asia, Pacific, Southeast Asia, Northeast Asia, Central Asia, Middle East and North Africa, Eastern and South-eastern Europe, Western, Southern, and Northern Europe, The Balkans, The Caucasus.

March 31 - April 2, 2004: First regional conference in Dublin

Dublin conference: organised together with Irish Government as part of Irish EU Presidency

- First two days on issues such as development and peacebuilding; Interaction; advocacy & lobby for conflict prevention – organised by the ECCP and other NGOs, in cooperation with Irish MFA/Ireland Aid
- Third day High Level Meeting and panel debate, organised by Irish MFA and Ireland Aid, and
- presentation of Regional Action Agenda on Conflict Prevention to Irish Presidency

Example: West Africa

- In West Africa the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP) is lead agency or *Regional Initiator*.
- WANEP Programmes include women and peacebuilding, early warning, non-violence and peace education.
- Recently WANEP started a new project – looking at building the capacity of the Economic Committee of West African States (ECOWAS), and civil society organizations in general in West Africa.
- This fits perfectly with objectives Global Partnership...

Action in West Africa...

- Phase 1: to organise national preparatory meetings as preliminary phase to the implementation of the programme
- Phase 2: Creating thematic themes and establish national focal points in 15 different countries
- Phase 3: Form a Regional Steering Group; made up of representatives from the WANEP secretariat, national civil society forums, UN field offices and other key actors
- Phase 4: Organizing a Regional Conference
- Phase 5: Preparation of the regional agenda for the next decade and drafting a set of recommendations for the International Conference at the UN Headquarters in 2005.

Foreseen Outcomes of the Global Partnership...

- The Regional and International Agendas
- Recommendations how we can make more progress on the Millennium Declaration Goal of Peace & Security (cf MDG)
- A global collection of lessons learned and best practice
- Interconnected networks of conflict prevention actors
- New mechanisms for interaction between state and non-state actors
- Increased political acceptance of the role of civil society in preventing armed conflict
- “Group of Friends”
- Increased public awareness of/support for conflict prevention policies

What do we ask?

- Exchange of views coming year on how to improve interaction between civil society and governments, EU, and UN in this field;
- What can we learn from Civil Society involvement in the UN in fields of human rights, environment and development, compared to the field of conflict prevention?
- Inform your embassies, country- and regional coordinators about this programme and ask them to get involved in regional programmes
- Support for programme politically and financially

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