



## **Civil Society Dialogue Network Geographic Meeting**

# **The situation of Rohingya refugees from a regional perspective: International responses and policy options for the EU**

**Thursday 13 March 2015 (9.00-12.30)**

**Scotland House Conference Centre**

**Rond-Point Robert Schuman / Robert Schumanplein 6, 1040 Brussels**

### **Background**

The Rohingya community of Myanmar is facing a humanitarian and political crisis. This situation has serious regional implications for countries across South and Southeast Asia. The plight of Rohingya people fleeing Myanmar by boat and over land presents a humanitarian challenge for countries such as Thailand, Malaysia, Bangladesh, Indonesia and India. Governments in the region also face ongoing policy challenges regarding how to respond effectively to the needs of Rohingya refugee communities. Meanwhile concerns regarding the risk of radicalisation and violence, including violent incidents in Indonesia, India, and Malaysia in 2013 reportedly linked to the situation of the Rohingya, have spread across the region. In 2012, the then-secretary general of ASEAN noted the risk that “the entire region could be destabilised” by the Rohingya issue. However, at present ASEAN has yet to develop a regional position on the issue and appears unlikely to do so in the foreseeable future.<sup>1</sup>

In this context, the European Peacebuilding Liaison Office (EPLO) is hosting a confidential, expert-level Civil Society Dialogue Network meeting focused on regional challenges and potential policy responses to the Rohingya refugee situation, bringing together European policy-makers and representatives from relevant regional and international organisations.

### **Objectives**

The overall objectives of the meeting are to:

- (1) Better inform EU policy-makers regarding the regional aspects of the Rohingya refugee situation in South and Southeast Asia;
- (2) Bring together regional and international organisations working on Rohingya refugee issues to share concerns, lessons learned, and increase coordination where needed;
- (3) Generate policy recommendations that the EU can support across the region in order to promote an effective regional response that addresses both humanitarian/protection and conflict prevention/peacebuilding needs.

Additionally, participants will also discuss potential follow-on activities such as:

---

<sup>1</sup> International Crisis Group, “Myanmar: The Politics of Rakhine State,” Asia Report No. 261, 22 October 2014, p29.

- Exploring the possibility of developing dialogue channels with Rohingya communities to hear their views directly;
- Identifying opportunities for the EU to engage with governments in the region on this issue.

The meeting will be held under the Chatham House Rule.

## AGENDA

08:30 – 09:00	<b>Registration</b>
09:00 – 09:10	<b>Welcome and Opening Remarks</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sarah Levit-Shore, Senior Associate, European Peacebuilding Liaison Office</li> <li>• Tomas Henning, Conflict Prevention, Peacebuilding, and Mediation Instruments Division, European External Action Service</li> <li>• Terri Beswick, Conflict Prevention, Peacebuilding, and Mediation Instruments Division, European External Action Service</li> </ul>
09:10 – 10:30	<b>Session 1 – Understanding the Regional Situation for Rohingya Refugees</b>  <u>Moderator:</u> Sarah Levit-Shore, Senior Associate, EPLO  <u>Description:</u> This session will focus on the current situation of Rohingya refugees who have fled Myanmar for other countries in the region. It will include a brief description of the humanitarian situation for Rohingya refugees in Thailand, Bangladesh, Malaysia, Indonesia, and India, and the government responses in these countries.  <u>Opening comments by:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chris Lewa, Director, The Arakan Project</li> <li>• Tim Johnston, Program Director, Asia, International Crisis Group</li> </ul> <u>Focus questions:</u> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. How is the Rohingya situation in Myanmar presently affecting other countries in the region?</li> <li>2. What are the humanitarian and protection needs for Rohingya refugees in the region?</li> <li>3. What is the risk of increased conflict, violence, or radicalisation in the region? Are there myths or misperceptions that should be dispelled?</li> <li>4. Looking forward, how might this situation develop over the short or medium term? What upcoming events (such as the planned 2015 elections in Myanmar) could have an impact on the present situation, and in what ways?</li> </ol>

	a. Scenario planning regarding the impact of Myanmar's 2015 elections and other relevant upcoming events
10:30 – 11:00	<b>Coffee Break</b>
11:00 – 12:30	<p><b>Session 2 – Current International Responses and Policy Options for the EU</b></p> <p><u>Moderator:</u> Sonya Reines-Djivanides, Director, Brussels Headquarters, Search for Common Ground</p> <p><u>Description:</u> This session will focus on describing the current efforts by international organisations to respond to the situation outlined in Session 1. It will also discuss policy options for the EU to consider in order to support an effective resolution to the situation. Finally, understanding that an immediate solution addressing the root of the problem is most likely not possible in the short-term, it will facilitate discussion on potential interim ways to mitigate the situation.</p> <p><u>Opening comments by:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• James Lynch, Regional Representative and Regional Coordinator for South-East Asia, UNHCR</li> <li>• Dennis McNamara, Senior Humanitarian Adviser, Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue</li> <li>• Lilianne Fan, Research Fellow, Overseas Development Institute</li> </ul> <p><u>Focus questions:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What steps are international organisations currently taking to address the situation? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Humanitarian/protection</li> <li>b. Conflict prevention/peacebuilding</li> </ol> </li> <li>2. Which regional, international and/or national actors may be best placed to influence the situation? How could they do so and when?</li> <li>3. How can the EU help to support an effective regional response?</li> <li>4. Given that the core problem remains in Myanmar and may not be resolved in the near term, are there creative ways to address the current situation or to target specific aspects of the problem more effectively – for example, focusing on protection of children?</li> </ol>
12:30 – 14:00	<b>Informal Lunch</b>

#### **Civil Society Dialogue Network**

The Civil Society Dialogue Network (CSDN) is a mechanism for dialogue between civil society and EU policy-makers on issues related to peace and conflict. It is co-financed by the European Union (Instrument for Stability). It is managed by the European Peacebuilding Liaison Office (EPLO), a civil society network, in cooperation with the European Commission (EC) and the European External Action Service (EEAS). The second phase of the CSDN will last from 2014 to 2016. For more information, please visit the [EPLO website](#).