



Civil Society Dialogue Network Member State Meeting in Finland

Conflict Prevention and the European Union

Monday, 7 February 2011

Representation of the European Commission, Helsinki

Introduction

The first Member State meeting of the Civil Society Dialogue Network (CSDN) took place in Helsinki on Monday, 7 February 2011 and was entitled *Conflict Prevention and the European Union*. The overall objectives of the meeting were to analyse the state of play regarding the establishment of the European External Action Service (EEAS), to identify opportunities and obstacles for the Service to prevent conflict and build peace and to discuss possibilities for Finnish foreign policy expertise in the field of civilian crisis management and mediation to be incorporated into EU foreign policy.

Participants

The meeting was attended by representatives from peacebuilding NGOs and academia, officials from the European Commission, the EEAS and the Finnish government as well as Members of the European Parliament.

Welcome and opening remarks

Ms Catherine Woollard, Executive Director of EPLO welcomed participants to the seminar and introduced EPLO. She explained the purpose of the CSDN, which is to facilitate dialogue between civil society and EU policy makers on peacebuilding issues. The inclusion of Member State meetings is in recognition of the crucial role that Member States play in deciding on EU policy. It is very appropriate that the first Member State meeting inside the CSDN took place in Finland, as it has demonstrated a strong commitment to peacebuilding and conflict prevention in EU policy-making since 1995, consistent with its national policies.

Mr. Eikka Kosonen, Head of the European Union Representation in Finland welcomed participants to the premises of the European Union in Finland and sketched the developments in EU Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) since the accession of Finland in 1995, among them the civil and military crisis management structures, the establishment of battle groups and finally the set-up of the EEAS. The situation in Egypt has shown that much still remains to be done to increase the coherence and continuity in EU external action.

Ms Tuija Talvitie, Executive Director of CMI, welcomed the participants on behalf of CMI and KATU and thanked Oili Alm from KATU for her work and Mr. Kosonen for hosting the meeting. She stressed the meeting's focus on dialogue and interactive discussion between panelists and participants.

Since Mr. Erkki Tuomioja, Chair of the Grand Committee in the Finnish Parliament and former Minister for Foreign Affairs, was unable to join the meeting his speech was read out. It stated that today's security concerns have been replaced by what is referred to as the broad concept of

security, including non-military threats such as drugs, communicable diseases, cross-border crime etc., which are not susceptible to military solutions and cannot be dealt with unilaterally. The EU has a wide array of tools to respond to these threats but still has to increase its capacity to respond to all phases of the conflict cycle and to implement one common policy.

The EEAS and conflict prevention – state of play

Panelists and participants raised the following points (which are not necessarily the views of EPLO):

The EU's approach to conflict prevention and peacebuilding:

- The wide array of policies that the EU has at its disposal (Humanitarian Instrument, Instrument for Stability, EIDHR, Development Cooperation, CSDP instruments) allow it to have a comprehensive approach to conflict prevention and peacebuilding
- While the EU has demonstrated its capacity to respond to conflict and crises, it should focus on long-term conflict prevention.
- Human security is part of the EU policy framework and was integrated into the European Security Strategy in the 2008 review of its implementation and should therefore guide the programming of the Instrument for Stability.

The establishment of the EEAS:

- There seems to be genuine commitment to conflict prevention and peacebuilding at EEAS leadership level. How to implement this commitment in a complex institutional structure seems to have been a problem in setting up the Service.
- No integrated structure for crisis management and peacebuilding has been created. While the Directorate for Conflict Prevention and Security Policy is a welcome development, it is currently not formally linked to other parts of the crisis response structure (e.g. Managing Director for Crisis Response and Organisational Cooperation and crisis response bodies).
- Currently, the human resource needs of the Directorate for Conflict Prevention and Security Policy and within it the unit for peacebuilding, conflict prevention and mediation, are being assessed. The Directorate could play the role of acting as the hub of conflict expertise, as a focal point for other parts of the EEAS, and could mainstream conflict prevention and peacebuilding into other policy areas.
- Under the current arrangement for the Instrument of Stability, the EEAS will be dealing with the strategic and policy aspects of the Instrument. The newly set-up Foreign Policy Instruments Service (FPIS), which remains with the Commission, will deal with the implementation aspects of the Instrument. How this arrangement will be articulated remains to be seen.
- As the new structures responsible for peacebuilding and crisis response are currently being revisited, it is now the time to influence the outstanding decisions regarding the structure of the EEAS.

EU's capacity to take an integrated approach to conflict:

- The current separation between the Directorate for Conflict Prevention and Security Policy and crisis management bodies as well as geographic directorates could make an integrated approach to conflict very difficult.

- A crisis management board, which will bring together Managing Director for Crisis Response, members of the Corporate Board and regional Managing Directors, is currently being set up.
- The EU Action Plan for Afghanistan and Pakistan is a good example for a more comprehensive EU approach towards third countries.

Other challenges for the EEAS:

- Credibility crisis caused by the double standards ('do as we say, not as we do'). This is especially striking in the case of the low number of women in senior management positions inside the EEAS.
- The current lack of staff is hampering the EU's capacity to start working on new areas and to bring contemporary thinking on peacebuilding into EU policies.
- Conflicting visions of CFSP within the EU: some Member States continue to push for a form of crisis management that focuses on military stabilisation missions. This has resulted in a serious weakening of civilian crisis management.

Recommendations:

- Conflict prevention should be a priority of the EU, also within crisis management (the original concept of civilian crisis management is about taking a long-term approach), so that the underlying causes of conflicts are addressed and a reemergence of violent conflict is prevented.
- EU Delegations should play leading role in linking developments in third countries and bringing conflict analysis to EU policy making in Brussels.
- Conflict policy experts should be transferred from FPIS to the Unit on Peacebuilding, Conflict Prevention and Mediation to ensure that it can act as the hub of conflict expertise inside the Service.
- A strong link between conflict prevention and human rights and democracy as well as development cooperation has to be ensured.
- Stronger cooperation with other actors such as the UN and the African Union on matters related to conflict prevention and democracy promotion should be developed, including the EU operating as a partner not just a funder.
- A new policy on the EU response to situations of fragility and conflict should be devised by the EEAS – it would be useful to know the fate of the Fragility Implementation Plan.
- Communication should be improved not only with third countries but also with EU citizens to ensure public support for EU external actions.
- The EEAS should provide strategic leadership on conflict prevention and enable the EU to play an effective role throughout the whole conflict cycle.

Civilian crisis management as an EU peacebuilding tool

Panelists and participants raised the following points (which are not necessarily the views of EPLO):

Finland's National Strategy for Civilian Crisis Management:

- Finland's national strategy, which was approved in 2008, focuses on domestic capacity building for civilian crisis management and includes concrete commitments to the EU. It is based on extensive policy and a solid structure that was put in place to monitor the implementation of the policy.
- Civil society has been involved from the beginning in the drafting of the strategy and is represented in the Advisory Board that monitors its implementation.
- The different actors involved in the strategy are in regular contact, which provided for smooth cooperation.

EU civilian crisis management:

- There is room to improve the effectiveness of EU CSDP missions regarding conflict prevention and peacebuilding.
- There have been important developments regarding human rights and gender in CSDP missions, such as the recent publication of 'Lessons and best practices of mainstreaming human rights and gender into CSDP military and civilian operations', but it remains to be seen how this will be integrated into the EEAS and the planning and implementation of CSDP missions.
- There is a lack of expertise in both civilian crisis management and human rights, which needs to be addressed.

Role of Finland in EU civilian crisis management:

- Finland has been instrumental in developing the EU's civilian crisis management capacities and should be bolder in demanding similar commitments from other EU Member States.
- Bringing Finnish policies to the EU level would not in itself improve the EU's capacity to respond to or prevent conflict.
- Member States can become active in driving CSDP developments, by e.g. preparing handbooks for crisis management, supporting training expertise in Missions or commissioning research.
- If no clear policy and structure exists on the national level, Member States will have difficulties in becoming active and effective at the EU level.

Challenges:

- Research about the effectiveness of mainstreaming gender is very important and much needed.
- What meaningful role could civil society play in monitoring CSDP missions?

Recommendations:

- Member States should actively monitor CSDP developments in the relevant Working Groups and raise questions to Heads of Mission when they report to Member States.
- Credible alternatives to crisis management have to be found; the Gothenburg Programme review is a good opportunity to consider the option of conflict prevention missions (on the other hand, the need to address capacity problems with CSDP as it stands militates against developing new responsibilities).

- The gap between training of CSDP staff and deployment still needs to be bridged.
- Gender and human rights should be mainstreamed throughout the work of CSDP mission instead of being considered as an add-on to the mission objective.
- The shortage of staff and resources for civilian crisis management at EU level has to be addressed.

The EU as a global mediator: potential and challenges

Panelists and participants raised the following points (which are not necessarily the views of EPLO):

The EU's role in mediation:

- Mediation falls into the EU's comprehensive approach to conflict prevention; a concept paper on mediation was adopted by the Council in 2009, which for the first time mentioned mediation as an EU policy tool and made reference to cooperation with the UN and regional actors such as the African Union on mediation efforts.
- The EU has added value as a global mediator due to its wide range of foreign policy tools, (political, diplomatic, economic and military), its global presence through EU delegations, its financial and political weight and its credibility as a value-based actor.
- The EU's mediation activities range from political and financial support to actual mediation activities.
- The EU's approach so far has been ad-hoc, but the establishment of the unit for conflict prevention, peacebuilding and mediation might be a first step towards developing a more robust mediation capacity.
- The European Parliament has introduced a preparatory action on mediation support which will be implemented throughout 2011.
- The Instrument for Stability allows for mediation activities to be funded via the Policy Advice and Mediation Facility and the Peacebuilding Partnership.

Finland's role in mediation:

- In 2010, Finland published its peace mediation guidelines, which describes how Finland will take peace mediation forward in its foreign relations.
- Together with Turkey, Finland has started a group of 'Friends of Mediation' at the UN to promote the use of mediation; they are currently preparing a UNGA resolution on mediation which encourages regional organisations to build up their mediation capacity.
- Cooperation with civil society is a cornerstone in Finnish engagement in peace mediation.
- A joint initiative of the Swedish and Finnish foreign ministers is to establish a European Institute for Peace, which would be an independent institution that would engage in Track II mediation and gather and disseminate best practices.

The role of civil society in mediation:

- While recruitment of former CSO staff into EU institutions has happened on a couple of occasions, this does not seem to be the most suitable way to provide CSO input to EU policy making.

- The CSDN project is a vehicle for CSOs to provide input on EU policy and put forward their analysis and recommendations.
- In view of the shortage of financial resources that many CSOs are faced with, they should consider public-private partnerships to finance mediation activities and broaden their funding base.
- Civil society can engage in building the capacity of regional organisations' mediation capacity, at the EU, African Union and African sub-regional organisations.

Challenges:

- Complex conflict dynamics imply the need for flexible multilateral mediation activities.
- Lack of adequate international support structures for peace processes may lead to mediators focusing on brokering a deal instead of trying to find long-term solutions.
- Regarding the current financial situation inside the EU, is it realistic to suggest the establishment of a new institution, such as the European Institute for Peace?
- Getting women involved peace processes, for example by attaching women's participation as a condition of provision of financial support for negotiations, remains difficult.

Recommendations:

- Civil society should be involved in mediation, ranging from grass-roots movements to specialised organisations that support high-level negotiations, in order to ensure genuine multi-track mediation activities.
- The EU should consider how it can assure women's participation in peace processes at all levels. For instance, can the EU make political or financial support conditional on the participation of women?
- The EU should seek to build partnerships with other organisations which are at the frontline of conflicts or may have long-term experience in certain areas.
- Increased attention should be placed on EU delegations, which are important sources of conflict analysis and can play an increasing role in preventive diplomacy.
- The EU's professional capacity in mediation has to be improved (for example through developing policy guidance, staff, training etc).
- The EU should learn how to support the most appropriate mediation channel and should use its leverage to support collaborative and coordinated mediation responses.

Concluding remarks

Ms Oili Alm concluded the meeting and Ms Catherine Woollard thanked the EU Representation for hosting the meeting, the panelists and participants for the discussion and KATU and CMI for organising the meeting.

Civil Society Dialogue Network

The Civil Society Dialogue Network (CSDN) is a three-year project funded by the European Commission aimed at facilitating dialogue on peacebuilding issues between civil society and the EU institutions. For more information about the Civil Society Dialogue Network, please visit the [EPLD website](#).