



Civil Society Dialogue Network Member State Meeting

The EU and the Netherlands' engagement on fragility: Building on the 2030 Agenda

Wednesday 13 April 2016, The Hague, Netherlands

Meeting Report

Background

In October 2015, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was approved and a specific Sustainable Development Goal (SDG 16) was dedicated to 'the promotion of peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, the provision of access to justice for all, and building effective, accountable institutions at all levels.' How it will be implemented, monitored and evaluated is still under discussion.

The objective of this Civil Society Dialogue Network (CSDN) Member State Meeting was to gather analysis and recommendations from civil society on the implementation of SDG 16 by the EU and its Member States. By means of case studies from Burundi and Mali, the meeting looked specifically at how to make peacebuilding and statebuilding efforts more complementary and effective.

The meeting brought together approximately 40 participants, including representatives of civil society peacebuilding organisations, and officials from the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) and the EU institutions.

This report is a summary of the discussions which took place and the key recommendations made by individual participants during the meeting. The views expressed may not be attributed to any participating individual or institution, nor do they necessarily represent the views of all meeting participants, the European peacebuilding Liaison Office (EPLO) and its member organisations, or the co-organisers.

The 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 co-operation 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](#).

Introduction

This session outlined the overall context in which discussions on SDG 16 implementation were taking place, putting particular emphasis on the importance of using this process to reinforce the security-development nexus, while looking at both the internal and the external dimensions of EU implementation. A participant highlighted the ongoing trend towards the internationalisation of vulnerabilities and the increasing challenges to doing effective conflict resolution in the current global political climate. Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) were called upon to assume a key role in finding creative ways to do conflict resolution, including by facilitating outreach to and dialogue with non-state actors and difficult-to-grasp players in conflict.

Session 1: Operationalising SDG 16

The aim of this session was to better understand and discuss how the EU and the Netherlands will adapt their policies and programmes related to fragility to support the achievement of SDG 16.

The European External Action Service (EEAS), through its Conflict prevention, Peacebuilding and Mediation Instruments Division (SECPOL2), and in collaboration with the European Commission (EC) and the Member States, have developed a whole range of tools for early warning and mediation support to increase the EU's conflict prevention and peacebuilding capacities. A 'light touch' conflict analysis methodology has been elaborated internally, bringing together different EU institutions to map out conflict dynamics and actors, and assess what the EU can do to prevent further escalation or to support peacebuilding. A guidance note on the use of [conflict analysis](#) in support of effective EU external action has been issued, and a joint task force has been set up to develop an [EU-wide Strategic Framework for Security Sector Reform \(SSR\)](#).

All tools and processes aligned with the EU's comprehensive approach for external conflicts and crises and are inclusive of women and children. Member States' commitment and systematic engagement is of key importance for the EU's comprehensive approach as is collaboration with international actors such as the United Nations (UN), and with civil society.

While conflict prevention and long-term sustainable peacebuilding remain priorities, there are contexts where quick responses to security challenges are essential. Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) missions and operations are some of EU's most visible crisis management tools in this context. The EU should to improve these tools to make them more conflict-sensitive and overall better designed to fit into the broader EU toolbox.

Participants made the following recommendations to the EU and the Member States:

Improving EU's action in fragile and conflict-affected countries

- The EU has a successful track record of 'soft power' engagement; lessons learnt from past engagements should be capitalised on when dealing with fragile and post-conflict states.
- Engagement with fragile states is a complex process that ought to be dealt with in a comprehensive, integrated manner. The EU institutions should avoid working in silos and set up inter-institutional task forces to enhance horizontal collaboration.
- Synergies must be found across all relevant policy and programming frameworks, with due regard to both their internal and external dimensions, notably in EU's Multiannual Financial Framework, the EU Global Strategy, the Cotonou Agreement and the Europe 2020 Strategy.
- More emphasis should be put on early warning for early action. The EU has come a long way on this but still, a better toolbox needs to be developed to increase its ability

to intervene early and prevent conflicts and crises in a timely and cost-effective manner.

- The EU should assess the results of its spending on peace support operations and consider diverting some of the funds that go into this response to early warning and conflict prevention.

Addressing the security-development nexus

- To achieve SDG 16, development actors will need to engage with security institutions, especially in fragile and post-conflict environments which are vulnerable to terrorism and violent extremism. Caution ought to be exercised to avoid the securitisation of development.
- EU development assistance should be made more conflict-sensitive.
- The West African reality shows a clear link between violent extremism and regional instability, and their detrimental impact on development. The EU and its Member States are urged to help address this issue by supporting community vigilance and participation.
- Lessons learned from development can inform the implementation of context-sensitive, sustainable efforts towards countering violent extremism.
- Security and justice should be mainstreamed in all of the EU's and Member States' development cooperation programmes.
- Peace and Security was not made a cardinal goal in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). This explains why conflict and corruption became the main obstacles for the MDGs in Africa. Addressing these two interlinked issues will be of paramount importance for the SDGs' success. The EU is called upon to avoid channelling development assistance into corrupted leaders' hands and ensure that looted funds are not deposited in EU states, whereas African states are urged to generate their own resources for a sustainable long-term positive impact of their policies.

Building synergies between the different policy frameworks

- It is important to look for ways in which SDG 16 can benefit from existing frameworks, *inter alia* from the New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States. The operationalisation of the New Deal and of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development will have to be aligned at country level, especially in fragile states, so that they can support and mutually reinforce each other.
- The New Deal could be used as a basis for priority setting at country level to ensure that conflict-sensitive approaches to peacebuilding are being embarked upon when devising national implementation strategies for SDG 16. These strategies should be informed by fragility assessments as well as by comprehensive analyses of root causes of conflict and instability.
- SDG 16 should link to the UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security, and acknowledge the key role of young people in the former's implementation.
- Young people should be systematically included in peace-related decision-making, and supported technically, politically and financially to become agents of change for sustainable peace in their communities.
- The SDGs' implementation will need to be approached holistically, avoiding the silo approach and establishing clear links with SDGs that are of potential relevance to SDG 16, including SDG 5 on gender equality, SDG 8 on decent livelihoods for all, SDG 10 on reducing inequalities within and among countries, as well as all SDGs making specific reference to the protection and promotion of human rights (i.e. SDGs 1, 3, 4, 5, 8, 10, 14).

Inclusivity and the role of civil society

- CSOs were involved in the drafting of the 2030 Agenda. It will be important that they are offered the possibility to also be involved in its operationalisation/implementation, along with other relevant stakeholders. They should also play a key role in monitoring and evaluation, and support mainstreaming accountability into national planning and reporting processes.
- National ownership is critical in the implementation of SDG 16. EU Member States will need to show political leadership and champion inclusive government-led processes that translate SDG 16 into national policy measures. Support for civil society involvement in the follow-up and review of the implementation should be guaranteed throughout the entire process.
- Meaningful inclusivity at all levels is key for the operationalisation of SDG 16.
- A whole-of-society approach is needed to tackle the issue of shrinking spaces for civil society. The international community has to acknowledge and support the key role that civil society plays both nationally and internationally.

Session 2: Promoting conflict-sensitive statebuilding¹

This session addressed options for SDG 16 implementation, looking specifically at how this could contribute to conflict-sensitive statebuilding, support institutions that are accountable and respond to citizens' security concerns. Lessons learned from SSR and Train & Equip initiatives were formulated and discussed by means of case studies from Burundi and Mali.

The EU approach to statebuilding aims to go beyond building state institutions, favouring a whole-of-society approach, which emphasises inclusive, conflict-sensitive processes, and accountability at all levels. The EEAS has developed a range of tools and methodologies for conflict analysis which should serve not only to facilitate understanding of the conflict context and enhance EU's impact on the ground, but also to increase the EU's adherence to the 'Do No Harm' principle. Guidance on conflict sensitivity has been included in the [EU Staff Handbook on operating in situations of conflict and fragility](#) and an EU online course on conflict sensitivity has been developed for EU staff engaged in external action.

The upcoming EU-wide Strategic Framework for SSR will be a contribution to SDG 16 and its security-related targets. The new policy will apply to all EU actors across all institutions, pooling together political, diplomatic, development, crisis response, and CSDP tools and mechanisms to strengthen the governance of the security sector of partner countries. It should therefore also apply to [Capacity Building in support of Security and Development \(CBSD\) in third countries](#).

The Burundi experience showed that international support for building the capacities of state institutions did not necessarily build peace. The joint evaluation of donor programmes in Burundi also proved that assumptions that capacity building would contribute to peace were not valid. The Dutch intervention in Burundi sought to balance the need for long-term governance with the importance of addressing short-term security challenges through support for the police and the defence sectors. 'Train & Equip' was used as an entry point. Then the focus of the Dutch presence has gradually shifted towards support for long-term governance and accountability, an ongoing process which aims to put civil society at the heart of its endeavours.

Mali was heralded as a model of democracy in the past because it had held elections. Yet, in 2010 the country plunged into crisis and some of the people trained as part of EU-supported SSR processes became perpetrators of human rights violations. The EU deployed two CSDP

¹ While SG16 is not only about statebuilding, its 11th target aims to 'strengthen relevant national institutions, including through international cooperation, for building capacity at all levels, in particular in developing countries, to prevent violence and combat terrorism and crime.'

missions to the country, i.e. EUTM Mali, a military training mission, and EUCAP Sahel Mali, a civilian mission supporting the Malian internal security forces. Criticism revolves around the fact that different dimensions of these missions were implemented in a rather uncoordinated manner. The Dutch presence in the country has sought to balance soft and hard security to support democratic governance of the security sector. Efforts towards rendering capacity building of security institutions conflict-sensitive and inclusive are ongoing.

Participants made the following recommendations to the EU and the Member States:

Improving EU support to SSR

- Statebuilding should go beyond building state institutions. It should support a wide spectrum of actors, including non-state actors, and build capacities at all levels, involving all relevant stakeholders, in particular civil society and the media.
- Security Sector Reform (SSR) and capacity building in support of security and development (CBSD) in third countries should be driven by conflict-sensitive people-centered approaches.
- Local ownership is essential for the successful outcome of these processes, as is transparency, accountability and participatory governance.
- Thorough political economy assessments are key before rolling out any SSR programme.
- SSR also creates elites and power struggles. Political will is therefore key to the success of any SSR process, as is genuine ownership by all stakeholders involved.
- CSDP missions' mandates should be framed in a way that enabled them to have a lasting effect.

Burundi-focused recommendations

- The EU and its member States need to continue supporting SSR in Burundi, with focus on inclusive processes which can help deconstruct the public perception that SSR is the exclusive prerogative of state security institutions.
- Genuine partnership between the police and community leaders could provide an entry point for inclusive SSR processes.
- More political support is needed for the participation of women in stabilisation processes.
- More emphasis needs to be put on risk analysis and systematic assessment of existing tools and mechanisms for the implementation of the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement for Burundi.
- Burundi should aim for inclusive community-based mediation and conflict-resolution processes, rather than waiting for complex peacebuilding processes to be initiated from the outside by external actors. Civil society, in particular religious leaders and the media, should be key enablers of such internally-driven processes.

Mali-focused recommendations

- International support for SSR in Mali needs to be better informed by realities on the ground. Understanding the local context is essential before any international intervention takes place.
- Better coordination is necessary between EU's ongoing CSDP missions in Mali, i.e. EUTM Mali and EUCAP Sahel Mali.
- In Mali, some sort of support also needs to be directed towards peaceful, moderated Islamic organisations because they can counter-balance the influence of extremist ideologies on the educational system of the country.