

Ms Federica Mogherini  
High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy  
Vice-President of the European Commission  
B-1049  
Brussels  
Belgium

31 May 2016

Dear High Representative/Vice-President Mogherini,

**Re.: An EU Global Strategy for Peace**

I am writing to you on behalf of the European Peacebuilding Liaison Office (EPLO) with regard to the EU Global Strategy on Foreign and Security Policy (EUGS).

As a platform of 38 European non-governmental organisations (NGOs), NGO networks and think tanks working across the world to prevent violent conflict and build peace, EPLO believes that the EUGS represents a major opportunity for the EU to strengthen its support for conflict prevention and peacebuilding globally.

Given the climate of insecurity which currently seems to dominate discourse within Europe, there is an increasing demand for highly visible, short-term responses based on a very narrow definition of security, which, in our view, may unintentionally exacerbate conflict risks and undermine the EU's efforts to tackle the root causes of violence.

EPLO shares your stated commitment that the EUGS should serve to ensure that the EU's external actions are not perpetually crisis-driven. Similarly, we also support your commitment to ensuring long-term perspectives and the need to pay attention to conflict prevention and post-crisis management. In this context, we very much welcome the analysis included in your report on the EU in a changing global environment that:

‘with conflicts proliferating and escalating, a proactive rather than reactive EU policy must combine early warning, conflict prevention, crisis management and peacebuilding in a coherent whole. This, in turn, is to be connected to long-term state-building and development efforts.’

However, despite the overall consensus on the importance of addressing the different dimensions of conflicts, including their root causes, it is our view that conflict prevention remains the poor relation of the EU's external relations in terms of the relatively limited political attention and human and financial resources which it receives.

EPLO was founded in 2001 partly as a response to the adoption of the EU Programme for the Prevention of Violent Conflicts (also known as the ‘Gothenburg Programme’). At the time, our member organisations welcomed the Programme's strong policy commitments on conflict prevention but 15 years later we are disappointed by their limited implementation.

In order to make a real change in this regard, EPLO would like to highlight both the importance of ensuring that the EUGS has a strong focus on conflict prevention but also (and perhaps more importantly) how any policy commitments could be operationalised once it is finalised.

### **Conflict prevention as the principal driving force for EU action**

The EUGS should reaffirm the EU's commitment to the prevention of armed conflict and encourage the evolution of the EU's institutional culture towards a more preventive mindset.

As the European Commission (EC) and the European External Action Service (EEAS) acknowledged in their 2013 joint communication on the EU's comprehensive approach to external conflicts and crises, investing in conflict prevention *inter alia* saves lives, reduces suffering and is 'far less costly than addressing conflicts which have erupted'.

Adopting a conflict prevention approach is also crucial since it means developing a more strategic and political view which can enable policy-makers to anticipate better the consequences of the EU's actions on conflict dynamics and plan accordingly. It therefore minimises the risk of inadvertently exacerbating existing tensions and can enhance the long-term peacebuilding impact of the EU's efforts.

The EU's conflict prevention efforts should not be limited to geographical areas where crises are acute or imminent. Conflict prevention involves the progressive reduction of the underlying causes of armed conflict and goes far beyond the prevention of crises. It is therefore important that the EU continues to support long-term conflict prevention in countries which are not necessarily currently in the media spotlight, including through early warning, conflict analysis, dialogue and mediation support.

Given the immense pressure on the EU to respond to immediate crises, the EUGS should show EU Member States and citizens that greater investment in conflict prevention does not come at the expense of crisis management efforts and could actually increase the effectiveness of the EU's overall response to conflict, including its Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) missions. Indeed, decisions on which EU tool(s) to use or deploy in a given context should be informed by detailed conflict analysis and thorough scenario planning, taking into account the different options for EU responses and their potential impact on conflict dynamics. This would ensure that CSDP missions are only established when they are the most appropriate tools for the EU to meet its objectives in a given country or region, instead of being misused as the 'default option' to show the EU's engagement. Upstream and steady investment in early warning and conflict analysis can only benefit the decision-making process for CSDP missions as well as their implementation when conflict dynamics evolve and/or new crises erupt.

### **Operationalising conflict prevention in EU external action**

As you have stated, the EUGS is 'a beginning, not an end': the real challenge lies in its implementation. In order to ensure the effective operationalisation of the EU's commitments on conflict prevention, EPLO recommends that the following actions be taken:

#### **1. Ensure space for conflict prevention in discussions with Member States**

Within EU decision-making structures, especially the Foreign Affairs Council (FAC) and the Political and Security Committee (PSC), the focus tends to be on responding

to impending crises thus leaving little, if any, room on the political agenda for discussing conflict prevention. This could be overcome by:

- Dedicating two FAC meetings per year to conflict prevention issues, under the same format as the FAC meetings dedicated to defence and development;
- Including discussions on countries which are at risk of conflict and where the EU can play a preventive role as a more regular item on PSC agendas;
- Inviting conflict prevention experts from Member State capitals to join Council working groups on a regular basis in order to discuss preventive action in a given country or region.

## **2. Integrate conflict prevention into all relevant EU policies and instruments**

The EU should ensure that conflict prevention is integrated into all relevant areas of its external actions, including development co-operation, neighbourhood, trade and investment policies. The following actions could help to ensure that conflict prevention is integrated into relevant policy areas:

- Taking into account conflict risks during the programming of EU external financing instruments in line with the joint EC and EEAS guidance note;
- Including a clear commitment to conflict sensitivity in all EU external financing instruments when they are reviewed as part of the mid-term review of the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) in 2017;
- Including a clear commitment to conflict sensitivity as a crosscutting theme in the European Consensus on Development when it is reviewed later this year;
- Obliging the EC's Directorate-General for Trade (DG TRADE) to consult conflict experts in the EEAS and the DG for International Cooperation and Development (DG DEVCO) in order to identify potential negative impacts so they can be addressed at an early stage and positive impacts can be strengthened.

## **3. Continue to strengthen the EEAS' early warning, conflict analysis and mediation support capabilities**

- Provide increased human and financial resources for the EEAS' early warning system and conflict analysis methodology;
- Request senior management in the EEAS and in the relevant EC Directorate-Generals to monitor and report regularly on how their directorates translated the policy options generated by the EU Conflict Early Warning System into practical actions;
- Ensure that long-term preventive work is sufficiently prioritised alongside more urgent actions;
- Provide increased human and financial resources to the EEAS' dialogue and mediation support capacity;
- Continue to ensure that conflict analysis is informed by in-country sources, including local and international civil society organisations (CSOs).

## **4. Build up EU delegations' (EUDs) capacities for conflict prevention**

- Improve information sharing with Member States' embassies in order to build a common country/region strategic vision on conflict prevention;
- Appoint heads of delegations (HoDs) with conflict expertise;
- Define a clear coordination role of the EUD in conflict prevention matters so that it is not solely reliant on the HoD's personal leadership;

- Increase coordination between EU special representatives (EUSRs) and EUDs on conflict prevention;
- Reinforce EUDs' political sections, including by recruiting staff with conflict expertise and relevant language skills;
- Increase the number of civil society focal points in EUDs' operational sections and create civil society focal points in political sections.

We hope that you will take EPLO's recommendations into consideration in the finalisation and subsequent implementation of the EUGS and we would be very happy to discuss any of the abovementioned issues with you or a member of your cabinet.

In the meantime, please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any queries or if you would like any additional information.

Yours sincerely,



Sonya Reines-Djivanides  
EPLO Executive Director

cc: Ms Fabrizia Panzetti, Mr Michael Curtis and Mr Enrico Petrocelli – Cabinet  
Mr Alfredo Conte – Head of Division for Strategic Planning, EEAS  
Dr Nathalie Tocci – Special Advisor  
Mr Elmar Brok – Chair of the European Parliament Committee on Foreign Affairs  
All members of the Political and Security Committee