



Civil Society Dialogue Network Member State Meeting in The Netherlands: Peacebuilding, Statebuilding and Situations of Fragility

Key Points from Participants

This document presents some of the key points made during the CSDN Member State meeting on 'Peacebuilding, Statebuilding and Situations of Fragility' which took place on Wednesday 6 April 2011 in The Hague, The Netherlands. A full report of the meeting will follow soon.

The following points, which were collated by meeting *rapporteur*, Laura Davis, were made by participants during the meeting and do not necessarily represent the views of EPLO or the other organising parties.

The EU has only recently emerged as a major actor in fragile situations and it still punches below its weight: The EU should develop an ambitious and flexible approach to statebuilding in situations of fragility. This means using all available tools, integrating conflict prevention into development, grounding institution-building on human security. Approaches must be informed by understanding the local conflicts and must engage the citizens in all aspects. To achieve this, the EU needs strategic policy; civil society and progressive member states have important roles to play in developing this.

A. The EU's approach to peacebuilding, statebuilding and situations of fragility should:

- Focus on its 'soft power' strength and leverage; prioritise preventive action over crisis response. Crisis response is reactive, plays to the EU's weakness ('hard power'), comes too late and has unintended consequences. Early – preventive - action should follow early warning.
- Support building strong states grounded on human security and the rule of law rather than state security.
- Adopt the 3 D (Development, Diplomacy, Defence) approach.
- Aim to build strong social contracts between society and state, and state and international community.
- Commit to long-term engagement and partnership in fragile situations. This is multifaceted and includes: ensuring implementation of peace agreements (e.g. public consultation on reform) including through robust diplomacy or conditionality where necessary; supporting important accompanying measures (e.g. for civic education in advance of elections); accompanying the transition of civil society organisations from opposition to government and addressing the challenges this poses where there are strong patterns of bad governance.
- Be informed by deep understanding of the context and local opinion; no one-size-fits-all approach. The approach should build on local systems and capacities rather than impose new models from outside.
- Engage civil society in all stages of statebuilding – and in the reform/formation of all institutions (including the security sector) through e.g. consultation, oversight, monitoring. Particular effort should be made to engage women and women's associations in reform processes.
- Support local leadership without overburdening national institutions with limited capacity.

1. The EU needs a policy framework which:

- Provides strategic guidance on fragility and conflict prevention to translate high-level support for mainstreaming of conflict prevention into coherence, ensuring that all institutions integrate conflict prevention into their work. The Gothenburg Programme review process and the EU Action Plan on Fragility and Conflict need to be revived.

- Sets priorities to ensure that focus is not lost.
- Makes interventions more effective through a better division of labour in-country between the EU institutions and Member States as well as between donors.
- Enables the EU to take more risk and establish the risk of inaction, not financial accounting as the benchmark for action.
- Allows different ambitions for different regions: more ambitious in the Neighbourhood, where the EU has a whole range of soft power tools to use for conflict prevention, and lower expectations further afield.
- Ensures that all the EU's policies (e.g. energy, trade) at least do no harm externally.
- Learns lessons from EU interventions by evaluating their effects.

2. Institutional arrangements

- The EU and its Member States should harmonise their policies.
- The post-Lisbon reform process has disrupted some important policy processes (e.g. the EU Action Plan on Fragility and Conflict). The creation of the EEAS and other reforms (e.g. the new Fragility Unit in DEVCO) are an opportunity to increase focus on fragility and coordinate EU activities, and should not introduce parallel structures. These should draw in complementary expertise from EU institutions, Member States and others to maximise positive impact.
- Conflict prevention expertise within the EU institutions – at headquarters and in the delegations - should be strengthened.
- EU Special Representatives have brought significant added value to some EU interventions (eg Sudan); best practice from these experiences should inform future interventions.
- The CSDP should also engage preventive missions e.g. mediation missions.

3. Funding

- More funds should be available for development, conflict prevention and CSDP within the EU budget. This does not necessarily mean increasing the budget but reviewing and re-prioritising expenditure.
- More EU funds should support local organisations engaged in long-term, sustainable conflict transformation.
- Development aid should fund all actors (military and civilian) engaged in development work in line with the 3D approach.¹
- Funding needs to be more flexible and be able to accommodate more risk.
- CSDP and crisis management/conflict prevention budgets should be combined in one budget which can be quickly disbursed.²
- The Instrument for Stability should be strengthened.

4. Engaging with other global actors

- The EU should not seek to act alone but in partnership with the UN, other regional organisations and networks (eg OECD-DAC International Network on Fragility).
- It should lead in breaking the “status quo of inertia” and support preventive action by other regional/global actors.

B: Next steps

- EU processes, (e.g. Multiannual Financial Framework, Green Paper on Development) and global processes, (e.g. the World Bank World Development Report and Aid Effectiveness meeting) will bring the EU's role onto the political agenda; civil society and like-minded Member States should use the opportunity to push for an effective EU strategy.
- Progressive Member States, such as the Netherlands, should work to bring more Member States to their way of thinking on fragility; civil society should work to increase public awareness of the importance of effective interventions in fragile situations in Member States with little history of engagement.
- Member State/civil society dialogues should be extended to other Member States, and beyond the EU.

¹ This view is not shared by EPLO or the other organising partners.

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