



Civil Society Dialogue Network Member State Meeting

Peacebuilding, Statebuilding and Situations of Fragility

Wednesday 6 April 2011

The Hague, The Netherlands

Meeting Report¹

By *Rapporteur* Laura Davis

On Wednesday 6 April, a one-day Member State dialogue meeting took place on 'Peacebuilding, Statebuilding and Situations of Fragility' in The Hague, The Netherlands. The meeting was organised within the framework of the Civil Society Dialogue Network (CSDN), a three-year project funded by the European Commission (EC) aimed at facilitating dialogue on peacebuilding issues between civil society and the EU institutions. This report summarises the meeting, which brought together approximately 100 participants including representatives of EPLO member organisations and other civil society organisations (CSOs), and officials from both the EU institutions and the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The meeting aimed to encourage a discussion and exchange of ideas between EU officials, representatives of the Government of the Netherlands and CSOs from both Europe and conflict-affected regions on the current status of the EU's policies on conflict prevention, peacebuilding and situations of fragility, and on how they will be incorporated and developed within the European External Action Service (EEAS). The first session examined the state of play of the EU's approach to conflict prevention, peacebuilding and situations of fragility, while the second session reflected on the experience of The Netherlands and the case of Sudan.

This report contains a summary of discussions and lists recommendations made during the meeting. For more information, please contact [Ben Moore](#) at EPLO.

¹ The contributions, comments and recommendations collated in this report were presented by participants during the meeting and do not necessarily represent the views of EPLO, EPLO's member organisations or the other organising parties, nor should they be attributed to individual participants or participating organisations.

Opening remarks

Mr Peter van Tuijl – Executive Director, Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC)

Mr van Tuijl welcomed the participants to The Hague and thanked the EU for its support to the CSDN.

Mr Ben Knapen – Minister for Development Co-operation and European Affairs, Government of the Netherlands

The Minister observed that his position combines development and European affairs for the first time in The Netherlands. He noted that the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and global public goods (GPGs) are key elements of The Netherlands' policy, and that although The Netherlands will reduce its development budget from 0.8% to 0.7% of GDP, it intends to remain a leader in international co-operation and to continue to be a reliable partner. In this context, he added that The Netherlands intends to focus on themes and regions where it can make a difference, and that security and the rule of law remain a priority.

The poorest people are the main priority; poverty and failed states go together and progress towards the MDGs remains particularly slow in fragile states. This has a global impact, for example, through illegal immigration, trafficking in arms and drugs, terrorism and piracy. A '3D' approach (Development, Diplomacy and Defence) is required. International and local partners need to address the root causes of instability. The biggest mistake is thinking that 'one-size-fits-all' as the causes of conflict differ.

The EU has a responsibility to promote peace and stability, to combine development and security policies. However, it is still punching below its weight. The Netherlands sees a clear logic in working together within the EU, and makes a major contribution to EU efforts such as the EU's police mission in Afghanistan (EUPOL Afghanistan).

The Netherlands see an important role for public private partnerships in development. Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are essential because they have a close connection to citizens. The more independent NGOs are, the better their work. Dutch funding for NGOs will be more limited in future, and NGOs may have to reinvent themselves. The new funding limits will be discussed with NGOs in the near future.

Emmanuel Bombande – Chair, Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC)

Mr Bombande stated that the EU has huge leverage to contribute to conflict prevention, but that its potential and leverage is not optimised and, in some circumstances, is wasted. For example, the EU supported the elections in Côte d'Ivoire – the costliest elections in Africa – but then questioned its engagement in following up implementation.

The narrative of the past is that EU Member States are colonisers, so engagement means re-colonisation. However, the narrative of the present should be that the EU is a strong partner in development, nurturing new partnerships in which it stands by vulnerable developing countries. Such strategic partnerships would show how conflict prevention is integral to development; if development is not built on a sound foundation of peace and the principles of human security, its gains can be easily wiped out. A good international response to crisis is preventive. Reacting by coming into the middle of a crisis is already too late.

NGOs have the capacity to anticipate crises and work towards prevention but they do not have the political clout to prevent crises. NGOs have good analysis but decision makers are ambivalent and unwilling to let institutions and structures (such as 'Responsibility to Protect', the UN Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide) function. 'Protecting civilians' has no meaning if intervention comes only when violations are escalating. This is reactive and such interventions have consequences which can create new problems. Mitigation and prevention is better than reacting to escalating conflict.

The EU should lead in integrating prevention in policy by defining thresholds for early intervention, and work with – and support - the UN and regional organisations in breaking the status quo of inertia. It should not intervene alone, but support and complement regional efforts; for example, in Côte d'Ivoire, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) leads and is supported by the UN, the EU and an EU Member State.

Discussion

Participants and panellists made the following observations:

- High Representative Ashton has halted the process of reviewing the EU Programme for the Prevention of Violent Conflicts (Gothenburg Programme); this is a missed opportunity for developing a strategic approach to preventing conflict.
- The importance of prevention should be underlined at the EU level. In reacting to crises, we have to take ambivalence into account; the EU is not a state, but a union of 27 Member States; in reacting to crises, national instincts come to the fore and it is hard for the EU to act in a unified manner. However, this ambivalence can be reduced tremendously when prevention is emphasised, as this is connected to 'soft power' where the EU has added value. A shift to prevention also helps the EU to focus on supporting long-term transformation by local partners, rather than seeking resolution. Going forward, it is necessary to determine how the EEAS can best use the EU's soft power.
- Strong civil society needs to include women and women's organisations. Women have played a strong role in the Arab Spring, yet they are also suffering.
- The Netherlands has supported many programmes in the Middle East and North Africa empowering women. Gender is mainstreamed in all of The Netherlands' development programmes. There is an opportunity to intensify some of its partnerships, and it is discussing with EU partners which programmes should be strengthened. These proposals should be available at the end of May. The importance of investing in women is clear.

Recommendations

The EU's emergence as a development actor is welcome, but it needs a more effective foreign policy, which means:

- A better division of labour in developing countries as well as between donors in order to avoid fragmentation of impact, and to bring efficiency.
- More consistency between security and fragility, by adopting the 3D approach. This means all activities related to development should be included in development assistance, whether the implementers are civilian or military.
- In fragile situations, the EU and its international partners should commit in the long term to building institutions, and have realistic expectations. Co-operation between the EU institutions and Member States should reduce the risk of overburdening national institutions, which often have limited capacity.

- The EU's tools need to be more flexible, so that, for example, South Sudan can benefit directly from the European Development Fund (EDF) and Everything But Arms Trade preferences directly after independence.
- Citizens in fragile states are the primary concern and must be directly involved in institution-building.
- The EU should lead a shift from reaction to prevention.
- The EU institutions and Member States should harmonise policy; it is important not to have contradictions. For example, the French are leading in Libya and Côte d'Ivoire but Germany abstained in the vote on UN Security Council Resolution 1973 on Libya.
- The EU should support local capacity not just because it is powerful in economic and diplomatic terms, but also because of its historical relationships with countries in situations of fragility.
- The funding programmes for peacebuilding and conflict prevention need to be redesigned. They are currently very complex and bureaucratic. National organisations cannot access funds unless they are part of an international network, which means opportunities to support long-term, sustainable conflict transformation projects are lost.
- The EU should aim to build strong states based on the values of human security and to avoid a 'one-size-fits-all' approach.

Panel 1: The EU and conflict prevention, peacebuilding and situations of fragility: State of play

The following points were raised by the panellists and in the discussion which followed:

- ***EU successes in conflict prevention and crisis management***

An analysis of the role which the EU plays in conflict prevention and crisis management reveals a need to manage ambitions. The Council of the EU adopts many conclusions: it puts on a big hat which does not always fit.

The EU is bad at early action. For example, everyone saw the Georgia crisis coming but no one did anything until the French presidency led the way and committed monitors, a mediation process and humanitarian aid on the EU's behalf. The EU finds itself mediating a difficult process; no one imagined it would be in that position. It would have been better if the EU had engaged a year earlier.

On the other hand, the EU has been very successful in the Western Balkans. 15 years ago there was terrible conflict, then the EU managed (with help at first from the US which brought about the Dayton Agreement) to roll out its normative power, offering membership, requiring the *acquis*, and pushing regional co-operation with strong conditionality. The result is that Croatia will join in 2013/14 and, if the ongoing problems over co-operation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) are solved, Serbia should also join. Enlargement has transformed Central and Eastern Europe. In its own backyard, the EU can solve very complex problems. The closer to Brussels co-operation takes place, the more successful the EU can be.

However, regarding economic interests, the EU is very ambitious and creates high expectations, but when it is faced with difficult situations, the response is 'manage expectations'; this looks like double standards. The EU should be ambitious when it comes to peacebuilding and conflict prevention.

- ***Progress since the adoption of the Gothenburg Programme***

In the 10 years since the adoption of the Gothenburg Programme, there has been considerable progress:

- **The comprehensive approach/joined-up strategy:** in the Horn of Africa and Sahel strategies, attempts have been made in that direction with action plans binding the EEAS, the EC, and the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), and reaching out to EU Member States.
- Governance has developed as a focal area connecting development with security sector reform (SSR), justice and the rule of law. In fragile states, statebuilding should be at the core of the EU's work. In North Africa, the EU is helping CSOs to become political parties, to accept responsibility for their constituencies and to address broad social issues.
- The EU engages in permanent dialogue in Europe and elsewhere with civil society through the Instrument for Stability (IfS) and engages civil society in reform process such as SSR.
- The IfS has been useful. The EU now needs to accept more risk-taking with development assistance. The benchmark should be the risk of inaction, not financial accounting.
- The EU is developing strong partnerships with UN agencies; there is an important role for the EU in supporting partnerships which can deliver and not being present as the EU for the sake of it.

- ***The EEAS and conflict prevention***

The EEAS is still a work in progress. High Representative Ashton has stated repeatedly that conflict prevention, peacebuilding and human rights should run as a silver thread throughout the Service. This is important as there is now a legal obligation for the EEAS to prevent conflict; it is strengthened by her commitment.

However, although conflict prevention is a key objective, questions remain about how it will be implemented. The cancellation of the review of Gothenburg Programme – which is an important policy statement with concrete commitments - is a cause for concern. The review should have led to a concrete strategy, and it is difficult to see an alternative. The EU Action Plan for Situations of Fragility and Conflict was also an important document which took two years to prepare. However, once it was presented to High Representative Ashton and the EEAS' senior management, it disappeared.

The high-level political reflection and review of development assistance is a good opportunity for those working on conflict prevention. Hopefully, a critical mass of EU Member States will recognise the comparative advantage which integrating conflict prevention into development will give the EU as a development actor. However, a number of Member States have negative approaches to fragility and prevent the EU from developing a progressive approach to conflict. If the EU focuses on developing traditional defence capacities, it will not be able to respond to contemporary threats to its security, including responding to fragility and organised crime.

The EEAS has been in place since 1 January 2011 and should make the EU's action more coherent and visible. There are already embryonic signs of a common, integrated approach to third countries.

The EEAS has faced huge crises from outset and High Representative Ashton has been highly engaged. For example, she spoke at the UN Security Council on behalf of the EU – something which would have been unthinkable in Javier Solana's time.

The High Representative and the EEAS are still navigating their new roles. The EEAS is in charge of some strategic development programming (although responsibility for the European Development Fund (EDF) remains unclear), political dialogue, CSDP (civilian and military) and is also chairing Member State working groups to design policy on issues and regions.

The Directorate for Conflict Prevention and Security Policy is responsible for taking stock of and devising new approaches to conflict prevention. It is an essential hub of expertise for ensuring that conflict prevention and peacebuilding are taken forward by the EEAS and other EU institutions.

- ***Potential for the EU in North Africa***

There is huge potential in North Africa for the EU's normative power. The EU was not very present in the first phases of the conflict ("European defence: Dead and buried in Libya" was the pessimistic conclusion of *Le Monde*). The EU does not have the capability to respond, and it will not have this capability in 10 years' time, so a response by a coalition of the willing is more appropriate.

However, since then, the EU has done a marvellous job: High Representative Ashton and Commissioner Füle put together a 25-step plan to help pacify the Southern Neighbourhood using classic EU tools such as loans for small businesses and trade measures to allow in agricultural products which are currently excluded. If this package is rolled out it could lead to the creation of an EU-Mediterranean zone of peace and economic stability enjoying the free flow of capital, goods and services (not of people as there is no domestic support for this in the EU). This would be the ultimate conflict prevention tool.

- ***The role of EU delegations***

Conflict is transformative and sometimes needs to become open when it has been latent for so long. It is necessary to support institutions which manage conflict peacefully. It will be important that EU delegations have the capacity to listen to all and not just the loudest voices, and to understand the complexities of conflicts.

The EEAS and the EC's Directorate General EuropeAid Development and Cooperation (DG DEVCO) have a mix of crisis management and development programmers and some political analysts. In other institutions – such as the UK's Department for International Development/Foreign and Commonwealth Office, conflict experts look at broader issues, including at local dynamics, and there is often a revolving door between them and civil society.

- ***Turning words into action***

Although Council conclusions – such as those on Syria, can be strongly worded, there is often reluctance amongst some EU Member States to turn them into concrete action.

- **EU credibility**

The EU's credibility is damaged by some undemocratic policies or human rights violations in Member States.

- **Budget reductions**

The Netherlands supports the EU taking a more active in conflict prevention but, together with the UK, it is leading the charge to reduce the overall EU budget. The first victim of this reduction is likely to be funding for the EU's external policies.

Recommendations

Ambitions

- The EU should have high ambitions in the European Neighbourhood and manage ambitions and expectations further away. It is not a problem if Member States want to intervene in a crisis providing there is a UN mandate and support from regional organisations. This neither means nor necessitates an EU response.
- The risk of inaction is very large; The Netherlands wants to end the compartmentalisation of the CSDP budget and put all the funds into a conflict prevention/crisis management budget which can be disbursed quickly.

The EU could be more effective and there are opportunities to make it so:

- **Increase human resources for conflict prevention and peacebuilding:** the Directorate is understaffed for its role. EU Member States and international organisations have conflict advisers/experts driving the agenda across the institutions; this is a possible model for the EU.
- **Increase financial resources for peacebuilding and conflict prevention:** there should be more funding for the IfS as it is flexible and held in high regard by CSOs, international organisations and EU Member States.
- Peacebuilding and conflict prevention should be integrated into development assistance.
- To be relevant, the EU needs a strategy for addressing fragility. There are already norms; it does not need a grand strategy but mid-level strategies to ensure that all regional and thematic directorates adopt a conflict prevention approach.
- The approach to governance and statebuilding needs reviewing and modernising to involve civil society in all stages of statebuilding.
- Investments through the European Investment Bank (EIB) in fragile situations should be carefully monitored and the EIB should also commit to conflict sensitivity.
- **Evaluate the CSDP:** EU Member States have blocked evaluations of the 28 CSDP missions so although some are considered a success, there is no evidence base on which to assess their impact on governance.
- The big advantage of the CSDP is its civilian potential. It should, therefore, engage in preventive missions such as on mediation.

- Civil society should scrutinise EU Member States' policies in order to ensure that the progressive ones promote good practice at the EU level.
- Powerful EU policies such as those on trade and energy should also be scrutinised to ensure that they – as a minimum, adhere to the 'Do No Harm' principle. The EU should use its leverage for good governance/peace conditionality.

Panel 2: The EU's response to situations of fragility: Drawing on the experience of The Netherlands

The following points were raised by the panellists and in the discussion which followed.

- ***The Netherlands***

A thematic focus for The Netherlands is development in fragile situations where security and human rights are paramount. Common security requires security overall. 2011 is a good year for building the evidence base for this position. The World Bank's World Development Report will be published shortly and The Netherlands will organise a conference on 27 April, the focus of which will be the link between security and development and consideration of what lessons can be learned.

Going forward, The Netherlands' policy is grounded in lessons learnt: jobs are crucial for the peace dividend and security requires the rule of law and capable and legitimate government at all levels. The Netherlands' policy changes are not radical, but refine and build on the strategy laid out for 2008-2011. They highlight the role of the EU, the US, the World Bank, the African Union (AU), ECOWAS and other regional organisations in promoting a vision of sustainable development in fragile situations.

- ***Experience from Sudan***

Civil society in Sudan has had ongoing contact with the EU and the Government of The Netherlands in different forums. In July 2010, the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) was near to collapse; the Government of North Sudan was not willing to implement important milestones of the CPA. Civil society approached the EU – as a signatory to the CPA, and other stakeholders to remind them that they had agreed that the referendum and popular consultations included in the CPA should be carried out. They also criticised them for having signed the CPA and then not engaging more actively. The Government of North Sudan is taking advantage of this lack of engagement, and there is a risk of violence. Stakeholders see the religious groups as reliable. For example, churches told the stakeholders that the army was building up on the border. The Government of North Sudan denied it, but it was confirmed by a subsequent investigation.

When the EU, the AU, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and their member states started to engage the two parties actively, it became clear that the referendum would go ahead and that South Sudan would become independent. Many challenges remain: it will be important for The Netherlands, the EU and the UN to be engaged at independence on 9 July 2011 and beyond; if not, there will be further problems. According to some, the current plan is to use Northern-backed militias in the South to cause instability; there are already rumours that they are ready to attack – but when civil society informed stakeholders about this possibility in July 2010, the latter were not convinced. Sources indicate that there was a plan to interrupt the referendum and that there is a plan to disrupt the declaration of independence. Having the EU engaged as the EU has helped CSOs to contribute to maintaining peace and preventing violence

as it meant that they did not have to try and reach each EU Member State individually, but met the EU Special Representative (EUSR).

It is striking that events in Sudan could have been much worse: the international community did certain things right. It kept the international spotlight on Sudan and held meetings with leaders, pushed the Government of North Sudan to implement the CPA and engaged key actors, including Russia and China. The Netherlands was a bilateral signatory to the CPA and chaired an international meeting on Darfur bringing in civil society, neighbouring countries, and stakeholders beyond the 'cosy club'.

The international community listened to the parties' needs and mobilised expertise from Norway, The Netherlands and the US to support them when they needed it on issues such as oil, residency rights and water management. Individuals such as Haile Menkerios and President Mbeke played key roles on behalf of the international community, and it was important to bring in other actors such as Qatar.

The Sudanese need peace. Insecurity is growing, militias – including the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) – are supported by the North to destabilise the South. Instability in South Sudan will not leave its neighbours untouched. Security, peacebuilding, and trauma healing are all required. The symptoms of trauma are clearly visible: people react violently to problems because that is the only response which they know after so many years of war. There is a strong need for nation-building, bringing the people of the South together, avoiding tribalism and learning to live together as a people.

Churches have embarked on a process to protect democracy by empowering people. Elections in the past meant voting yes or no for one person after which the president would win anyway. People need civic education to know why they should vote and how the situation has changed. Churches also advocated – particularly towards the EU, the AU and the UN, for the referendum and the electoral process to take place.

There are many challenges. The popular consultations included in the CPA are not going well. Time is running out for the CPA, and if consultations are not carried out fairly, there may be a return to violence. The EU and Member State delegations have to take responsibility for the CPA which they signed; if the CPA fails, everybody will have failed.

Once people have voted, their opinions need to be accepted. The people of the Blue Nile voted for self-rule within South Sudan, but this is not supported by the Government of North Sudan and is already a source of conflict. The referendum in Abeyi on 9 January 2011 was denied because the Government of North Sudan did not want the oil in the region to go to South Sudan so it instigated communities to violence and prevented the vote. There are many resources in Abeyi which hold the people hostage to the North. The international community has to help separate the people – who have to be able to exercise their freedom – from the question of resources.

In North Sudan, the question of Darfur remains. There are also other pressing issues such as minorities, including Christians. With the extension of Sharia, churches are concerned about their survival so they have called on the AU and the EU to help protect minority rights via the Constitution. Unfortunately, normal people have no access to the Constitution and are not consulted on it.

In South Sudan, it had been hoped that drafting the Constitution would be a public process, but so far input has only been sought from a technical committee which is not accessible for many. The technical committee will draw up a draft to be approved by the government on behalf of the

people. This is how it has always been done, but it had been hoped that it would be different in South Sudan.

- ***Facilitating exchange between countries in situations of fragility***

Numerous actors, including the EU (through the EUSR), the UN and the AU are actively engaged in Sudan, The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) Fragile States Group (FSG) has also been very interesting. As a network it facilitates dialogue and information exchange between fragile states, including a visit by South Sudanese to Timor Leste to discuss border delineation issues. In this framework, The Netherlands also shared its experience on border monitoring.

Providing services to the parties is important. In this case, the parties have shown leadership. The service provision has to be demand-driven, and abide by the parties' schedule. The international community can apply pressure and offer incentives, put issues under the spotlight and push for accountability, but this has its limits. The parties have to own it.

- ***Civil society and the EU***

Small, local organisations and women's organisations have extensive local expertise but they face challenges in benefitting from and participating in dialogue with international institutions such as the EU.

Working with local organisations is included in The Netherlands' multiyear plans. For example, a plan to foster civil society participation in Afghanistan is under development.

- ***Statebuilding***

Fragility can be understood as a lack of social contract in society and poor legitimacy. There is a risk that donor countries prioritise national security over human security; this can result in failed states. If statebuilding is at the heart of development in fragile situations, it is important to focus on the following questions: what kind of state is being built? Are those states being created from scratch? How can the situation be avoided in which the states are built but lack legitimacy? How can civil society be engaged fully in statebuilding processes?

A key reason for the recurrence of conflict is the lack of rule of law.

For the EC, statebuilding is about developing peaceful, legitimate states, so civil society engagement is crucial. The OECD's guidelines – which the EC follows – also mention inclusiveness, freedom of the media, transparency and the involvement of civil society. Engaging civil society is crucial for the EC for bottom-up statebuilding.

The Netherlands' strategy stresses the social contract between society and the government, and between the government and the international community. In cases such as Afghanistan, The Netherlands is in regular contact with CSOs.

The 2011 edition of the World Development Report and the upcoming Fourth high-level Forum on Aid Effectiveness (HLF 4) will also put these questions high on the agenda and highlight the need for an EU strategy. Civil society should use both of these occasions to make the case for a strong EU strategy.

Two sets of questionnaires have been sent to all donor and partner countries in advance of the HLF 4; they should yield useful insights. Within the EU, officials with responsibility for issues

related to fragility are co-operating with their colleagues who focus on aid effectiveness and development in fragile situations. They are interested in starting a discussion on improving the EU's instruments and managing risk.

- ***Accountability***

When taxation is not the state's primary cause of income, problems arise because other sources of income – such as those from development aid or natural resource exploitation, are unaccountable. Part of the role of international actors is to try and hold the system to account. For example, in South Sudan, The Netherlands led the process with civil society and the government to create the Juba Compact for transparency in government financing. This is not just about talking to groups, but also about making its dealings with the government transparent. The Netherlands is also trying to mainstream the transparency procedures from the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund through the rest of government expenditure and to include measures to tackle corruption.

- ***The EU, development assistance and fragility***

The creation of the EEAS has resulted in a number of changes for the EC. Since 1 January 2011, there has been DG DEVCO, which is a merger of the former DG Development and the EuropeAid Cooperation Office. The merger is so far only technical and the DG has not yet been reorganised. The new organisational structure will take effect on 1 June 2011. It will include a new unit for Fragility and Crisis Management, the specific remit of which is not yet known. It will consist of 15 officials, which is many more than currently work specifically on fragility and conflict prevention. From the first draft of the mission statement, it seems that this new unit should define the policy framework, manage the instruments and act as a focal point for the EC on these issues. This is a very broad remit, and very much a work-in-progress.

Conflict prevention is not included in the new DG; this is a thematic area for the EEAS and the EU is trying to avoid any overlap. The new institutional set-up should mean a division of labour, not duplication, so DG DEVCO will have a unit for fragility and crisis management, but not one for conflict prevention.

When the heads of unit both in EEAS and DG DEVCO are in position, they will need to work out the relationship between their respective units and an effective division of labour. The establishment of the Unit for Fragility and Crisis Management in DG DEVCO is a positive step and should help to overcome obstacles to different EU institutions working together on fragility.

The interest in working on fragility is not limited to the establishment of the Unit for Fragility and Crisis Management; there is also a high-level commitment. There are many opportunities in the coming months – notably the negotiations over the next EU multiannual financial framework (MFF) – to improve the EU's approach to fragile situations, and to improve and align the EU's instruments and policies.

The EC's Green Paper on the future of EU development policy includes an important role for the private sector in development. This will also be reflected in the new EC communication as there is a role for the private sector in development in fragile states.

The EC is considering how to differentiate between countries and to focus on needs. Fragile states will remain a focus, as will working on employment and economic growth. It is engaged in ongoing work on improving support to governance in general, but also taking into consideration the specific needs in fragile states. This will inform its work on the MFF and on the provision of budget support.

A lot of work, including by EU Member States, went into drafting the EU Action Plan on Fragility and Conflict which was supposed to be finalised in 2010. However, with the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty, it was decided to postpone publication until the EEAS was established and, as a result, it was put on hold. EU Member States and civil society could play an important role in calling for the Action Plan to be revived and used to create a coherent EU policy on fragility.

There should be the possibility within the new project cycle management for the EC to accept more risk and to manage it. It is also clear that, in future, better analysis and a greater understanding of the constraints which projects face will also be required.

- ***Supporting civil society in transition***

In South Sudan, there is a role for CSOs in monitoring, and supporting accountable government. The liberation movement has to transform into a government and civil society will play a part in this transition.

Civil society in Sudan has a big disadvantage: it supported the struggle in the South, and feels part of the struggle. Now that a government is in place they feel that it is their government and do not seem to see the mistakes which it is making. Churches have also stated that they supported the struggle; their role now is not only as watchdogs, but also guide dogs. These are important roles which need to be played; Churches also need to be detached from the government.

- ***Supporting a stronger role for the EU***

It is important to develop expertise within the EU institutions. This does not mean, however, that EU Member States and other actors should stop working on the issues themselves.

The Netherlands is willing to participate in EU initiatives and has been pushing the EU to act in South Sudan.

Recommendations

- In every situation it is important to know what is going on. It is also important to have in-depth knowledge, including from local experts, about a particular conflict before trying to intervene.
- **Conflict prevention:** It is now clearer than ever that conflict prevention is difficult. Conflicts are recurrent so every intervention has to be conflict-sensitive. A lot of people still do not realise this. For example, it is important to analyse carefully who benefits (or is excluded) from education programmes, and how such programmes relate to the conflict(s) present in a given situation.
- **Leadership:** It is important to have a leader in charge of strategy, but who takes charge in implementing activities in countries with very low capacities? There are some interesting models – such as Haiti – of using joint boards but in less successful cases, it is very difficult to get the national authorities and the international community on the same page.
- **Partnership:** No single institution can do these things alone; Partnerships with other ministries/departments, CSOs, international organisations etc. are crucial. Each partner needs to know its role (this is particularly important where civilian and military actors are involved).
- **Long-term and short-term engagements:** The 2011 edition of the World Development

Report stresses that capacity building and institution-building take time, but that short-term 'wins' such as job creation to prevent the re-emergence of war economies are also required. It is important to do both.

- **Different scales of conflicts:** It is necessary to focus on big and small conflicts and to understand how they fit together. For example, in Orūzgān province in Afghanistan, most conflict is local and centred on grievances, water, and other resources. These must (and can) be resolved at a local level; they will not be addressed by solving only the problems at the national level. It is, therefore, important to draw attention to local conflicts, and to connect efforts to resolve them to the bigger picture. Once local actors feel that their issues are addressed, they can also contribute to conflict resolution at the national level. In order to be able to do this, it is important to have an in-depth understanding of the issues, and to focus on what is needed at different levels and in different places.
- Security sector reform without the rule of law is not enough.
- One part of the role of donors is to help hold government systems to account, for example, through measures to promote transparency and combat corruption.
- CSOs in South Sudan need support in the transition from being part of the struggle to developing as institutions, working alongside the government but separate from it. This will mean capacity building so that they can come together to challenge the government and connect with other civil societies.
- It is important to use local systems and capacities in statebuilding rather than imposing models from outside.
- The EU institutions should invest in developing their expertise on grounding statebuilding on human security and conflict sensitivity.

Concluding remarks

- There are very few opportunities for engaging EU Member State officials and CSOs on EU policies. The meetings which are organised in the framework of the CSDN provide an opportunity to engage EU Member States in EU policy-making, and to encourage them to shoulder their responsibility in ensuring that the EU meets its obligations in working on fragile situations.
- Civil society representatives from fragile situations have set out clearly what they want from the EU, including deeper, long-term, active engagement, putting the citizen at the heart of statebuilding, and integrating conflict prevention into development assistance. They have raised important issues about how the EU follows up in monitoring and supporting the implementation of peace agreements which it has witnessed. They also believe that the EU has a role to play in engaging a range of actors such as Russia, China, India, neighbouring states, and not just the 'cosy club'.
- The EU's post-Lisbon institution-building process presents challenges and uncertainty, but officials have identified important entry points as new units are created, and policies drafted and updated. Civil society has an important role to play in supporting activist officials within the EU institutions and Member States in pushing forward a more progressive approach to statebuilding in fragile situations. Similarly, activist EU Member States such as The Netherlands should work to bring others over to the more progressive approach.

- There is a growing sense of global humanity and solidarity with people in situations such as that in Sudan. This is clearly articulated through the call for prioritising human security in fragile situations.
- This type of dialogue should be continued and strengthened by identifying moments and spaces for civil society to engage closely with EU institutions and Member States, and expanded to other regional organisations.
- It is important to connect efforts, to strengthen civil society and the hand of activist officials, and to adopt complementary approaches. Activist EU Member States should play a strong role in winning over the more reluctant ones. Given that in many cases, only a few EU Member States have embassies in fragile states, civil society has an important role to play in raising public awareness of the human security-centred statebuilding in fragile situations in those Member States whose engagement is limited.
- In the 'whole-of-government' approach there is always a risk that focus is lost. Civil society has a key role in pushing for priorities and policy guidance such as the review of the Gothenburg Programme and the Action Plan on Fragility and Conflict.

Further reading

Minister Ben Knapen's speech '[Peacebuilding, Statebuilding and Situations of Fragility](#)'

EPLO publications

- [Discussion paper on the review of the Gothenburg Programme for the Prevention of Violent Conflict](#) (March 2011)
- [EPLO statement on conflict prevention and peacebuilding inside the EEAS](#) (February 2011) (Click [here](#) for more EPLO publications on the EEAS and peacebuilding and conflict prevention)
- [EPLO statement on linking peacebuilding and development](#) (February 2011)

EU documents

- [Joint Africa-EU Strategy + Africa-EU Partnership on Peace and Security](#) (December 2007)
- [Council conclusions on an EU response to situations of fragility](#) (November 2007)
- [Council conclusions on security and development](#) (November 2007)
- [European Consensus on Development](#) (December 2005) (Section 4.5 'Addressing state fragility', Paragraph 37, Paragraph 40, Section on 'Conflict Prevention and fragile states 89-92))
- [European Security Strategy](#) (December 2003)
- [EU Programme for the Prevention of Violent Conflicts](#) (June 2001)

Documents from the Government of the Netherlands

- Security and development in fragile states: The Netherlands' strategy 2008-2011