

Civil Society Dialogue Network Policy Meeting
The EU, Peacebuilding and Situations of Fragility
Tuesday 9 November 2010

Meeting Report¹

April 2010

Overview

The following report is a summary of the Civil Society Dialogue Network meeting which took place in November 2010 in Brussels. It brought together approximately 90 participants, including representatives of EPLO member organisations and other civil society organisations, officials from the EU institutions, officials from the permanent representations of EU Member States and staff members from the offices of members of the European Parliament.

The 10 civil society panellists were all from countries / regions which are normally considered to be fragile.

1. Opening Remarks

Catherine Woollard – Executive Director, European Peacebuilding Liaison Office (EPLO) – This the first meeting to be held under the Civil Society Dialogue Network, a three-year project funded by the European Commission (EC) aimed at facilitating dialogue on peacebuilding issues between civil society and the EU institutions.

Ambassador Emilio Cassinello Aubán – Director-General, Toledo International Center for Peace (CITpax), Honorary President of EPLO – More importance needs to be given to multilateralism, to common solutions for common problems and to trust-building on the spot through conflict prevention mechanisms.

Richard Wright – Director, Crisis Platform, Directorate-General for External Relations, European Commission – This meeting is very timely as DG External Relations and parts of DG Development are in the process of merging thus strengthening ongoing work on conflict and fragility, which is based on four objectives: strengthening statebuilding; increasing aid effectiveness (budget); increasing international co-operation; and developing a more coherent and comprehensive approach.

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 or EPLO's member organisations.

2. Panel 1: Peacebuilding and Statebuilding

(Chair: *Herta Eckert – Senior Representative, Brussels Office, International Alert*)

Key Recommendations

- Constructive state-society relations should be at the heart of statebuilding. Civil society should be supported to play its crucial role in ensuring that state institutions built are accountable; accountability mechanisms should be introduced at all stages, including in the provision of budget support.
- There is a need to make both opposition and government accountable to the citizenry and to open dialogue so that peacebuilding and statebuilding can be “owned” by the people.
- Political spaces need to be created for open, transparent and political decision-making.
- The role of the EU and other international actors is limited. However, where they are involved they should seek to ensure that they act in a coordinated way and assess the potential harm of their actions.
- Partnerships such as the ones which DG Development is forming with the World Bank and the African Development Bank should also be established wherever possible.
- Neglected areas, including land use and trade, need to be reviewed and incorporated into policies towards fragile states.
- Statebuilding should include a high level of conflict-sensitivity, addressing the root causes of conflict. This can be achieved through people’s participation and education on the issues.
- The EU should provide support for media activities as the media is a key actor in promoting democratic participation.
- It should be noted that traditional value and governance systems are not static; they are transformed by conflict and peace processes.

Stephan Massing – Policy Analyst, International Network on Conflict and Fragility (INCAF), OECD – Some of the challenges faced in statebuilding include a lack of shared vision for change, a proliferation of plans and strategic frameworks and a fluid environment. There is a need to design integrated interventions to foster constructive state-society relations and to align aid modalities and technical assistance with statebuilding objectives.

Wolfram Vetter – Policy Desk Officer, DG Development, European Commission – The issue of ownership is of importance in statebuilding and thus there is a need for budget support, guidelines, and concrete tools. Statebuilding is more than just building institutions; it is also about developing an indigenous process between the state and civil society, and thus the role of the EU may be limited. Partnerships also need to be established, such as the ones DG Development is forming with the United Nations (UN), the African Union (AU), the World Bank and others.

Gran Hewad Jamaludin – Political Researcher, Afghanistan Analysts Network – Afghanistan is currently experiencing the most fragile situation in its history, due to external and internal factors. External factors include a high activity of insurgency, citizens relying more heavily on the international community than on their own government and statements from the US and UK about ‘mission failure’. Internal factors include a lack of coordination and of common agendas between national and international players as well as little agreement on governance, rule of law and security sector reform. There are numerous issues that need to be dealt with: corruption in the government, low investment in development sector, moving away from opium being the only export with a competitive advantage, and a lack of political agendas.

Jama Mohamed – Director, Somali Organization for Community Development Activities – Somalia is not merely a fragile state, but it is a failed state, which affects and extends to the world. Common interests need to be forged between internationals and locals so that there is adequate accessibility to local products and revenues, and to ensure the delivery of social services. Poverty, insecurity and leadership are issues that need to be dealt with together.

The EU is only dealing with international NGOs; it has no tangible relationships on the ground. Political spaces need to be created for open, transparent and effective policy-making decisions. Fragile state policies related to land use and trade need to be reviewed and the human rights agenda should be promoted.

Janet Adama Mohammed – West Africa Programme Director, Conciliation Resources – In Sierra Leone and Liberia there is ongoing security sector and judicial reforms as well as capacity building and training of police and military. However, little attention has been given to the parliament, there is not sufficient education about legal reform and taxation, and peace agreements do not include gender or youth issues. There is a need to make both opposition and government accountable to the citizenry and to open dialogue so that peacebuilding and statebuilding can be “owned” by the people.

Discussion

Wolfram Vetter (EC) – The biggest problem for the EU and which limits its action is mainly the ongoing security issue in Somalia, which makes it very difficult for it to respond to the problems on the ground. In relation to trade, the EU has implemented an “EBA scheme” (everything can be exported but arms).

Robert Parker (Saferworld) – The OECD is engaging with non-state actors. Civil society truly reflects society and state legitimacy in the donor process.

Catherine Woollard (EPLO) – If statebuilding as currently practised exacerbates fragility and conflict, should it be stopped or should it be rethought? There are risks attached to not building states. We call for a new approach based on healthy state-society relations, promoting accountability to civil society and putting in place accountability mechanisms at every stage.

Janet Adama Mohammed (Conciliation Resources) – Statebuilding should continue, given that more needs to be done in state security related to border management, which is not a people’s process. Statebuilding should include a high level of conflict-sensitivity, addressing root causes of conflict. This can be achieved through people’s participation and education on the issue.

Stephan Massing (OECD) – The definition of statebuilding should not be limited to “the action of external actors”. The most effective approach needs to be sought after, including elements of legitimacy, such as rooting the process in civil society and local groups. A broader interaction between different actors also needs to be part of such a statebuilding process.

Gran Hewad Jamaludin (Afghanistan Analysts Network) – Afghanistan has its own principles for statebuilding, but it needs to upgrade to include national principles, a social format and better access to information to decide in a more transparent way on the statebuilding process.

Wolfram Vetter (EC) – Budget support will be emphasised in the Green Paper, which will be used to strengthen accountability mechanisms.

Dr Samina Ahmed (International Crisis Group) – Political orders and systems are desirable and effective in statebuilding process. Traditional values are transformed by conflict; they no longer exist as such. The question then becomes: how does this impact institutional systems?

Dr Solomon Ayele Dersso (Institute for Security Studies) – There is a disconnection between the state and society, when there is no political settlement organised. How does one carry out statebuilding when there is no national consensus?

Sarah Noble (Interpeace) – How can the donor's attitude change in order to establish the state-society relationship referred to by the OECD guidelines? The OECD guidelines' addresses these gaps. However, there is no major shift in donor behaviour. How does one react to this, with modesty? How is this put into practice?

Jean Pierre Husi (Fondation Hironnelle) – Hironnelle is an independent media support organisations, which has played an essential role (in elections). The EU should provide support for such media activities. Media is a key actor to promote people's democratic participation.

Janet Adama Mohammed (Conciliation Resources) – Traditional systems are not static, they need to be scrutinised given that they inform much of governance practice. There is a disconnection between the state and society. If national consensus is weak, measures need to be taken to increase consensus.

Wolfram Vetter (EC) – The term 'statebuilding' is misleading; it concentrates merely on institutions, which is not accurate. The focus should also be on ownership, accountability, civil society. Statebuilding, in this sense, needs to be disseminated and implemented. With respect to the media, the EU needs a more comprehensive approach. The key is increasing resources.

Jama Mohamed (Somali Organization for Community Development Activities) – An appropriate political system needs to be established, with a decentralised government, which is contextualised in local values, built on sustainable and harmonious values, as well as responding to local needs. That is why local values should be included in statebuilding policies.

Stephan Massing (OECD) – Political order and settlement is at the heart of the peace process in statebuilding. What can be done by outsiders is very limited. In order for recommendations to be more effectively implemented, there needs to be a change of mind set, analysis needs to be carried out better, staff members need to be better rewarded, aid delivery modalities need to be in place and more pressure needs to be put on organisations who signed up as partners to better disseminate and implement good practices.

3. Panel 2: Effective Aid in Situations of Fragility

(Chair: *Robert Parker – Head of Policy and Advocacy (Saferworld)*)

Key Recommendations

- Donors should consider how to deliver flexible and more rapid aid, accepting higher risks in transition contexts. Current accountability and recording requirements need to be adapted to transitional challenges.
- There is often either too much or not enough aid as organisations tend to concentrate in certain countries, regions or conflicts.
- Donors should take communities into account when planning.
- What is aid in fragile situations seeking to address? Is it the right priority? In many conflict areas, people do not want aid, they would prefer just to have a sense of security.
- International agencies advocate for channelling their funding through civil society organisations because of the fragility of the state. However, the state is the only institution that represents the whole of the territory and should, therefore, be strengthened.
- Should we put into place punitive measures for when aid does harm?
- A number of important issues such as gender-based violence and land conflict are not currently highlighted in peace agreements in fragile states.

Asbjorn Wee – Administrator, INCAF, OECD – There is a need to look into the issue of how to deliver flexible and more rapid aid that accepts higher risks in transition contexts. It is also important to recognise that aid is political. There has been a demand for a ‘whole-of-government’ approach but there is a lack of clarity on who holds responsibility for this. There is a problem of a proliferation of plans and lack of prioritisation. Donors are currently too risk averse in their engagement and collaborations on risk are hampered by a lack of agreed concepts, terms and frameworks of analysis. The pressure to demonstrate results and meet accountability requirements make donors even more risk averse. Current accountability and recording requirements are too unrealistic and need to be adapted to transition challenges. There is also a need to strengthen local capacities and systems to transfer aid on-budget.

Lucy Akello – Programme Director, Justice and Peace Commission of the Archdiocese of Gulu, Uganda – Aid is often allocation just to certain individuals and there is a lack of understanding amongst non-recipients, which put the recipients at risk. As people are not adequately aware of programmes, they do not demand quality services. There is often a problem of there being either too much or not enough aid as organisations tend to concentrate in certain countries, regions or conflicts. Therefore, there is a need for more donor coordination to avoid duplication and international NGOs should only carry out direct implementation in exceptional cases, with a bottom-up approach being favoured. A lack of an exit strategy often results in dependency. Transparency and information about crucial government programmes and international aid need to be increased.

Dr Samina Ahmed – South Asia Project Director, International Crisis Group – Aid and humanitarian assistance are not neutral and so the do-no-harm principle is often lost.

In terms of state structures and capacity building, it is essential to deal with communities that matter and to use multiple mechanisms for aid delivery that include a focus on the state’s institutions. In Pakistan, there has been a dilemma over whether to bypass or work with institutions delivering aid that are a security threat. Many NGOs and the UN have said that they will be politically correct and work with Jihadist organisations, but there are actually many local NGOs that are legitimate and non-violent. The affected people and communities prefer money over food aid,

but donors are risk averse; cash transfer programmes could help to avoid dependency and allow for an exit strategy.

Pierre Esperance – Executive Director, National Human Rights Defense Network, Haiti –

Many international agencies that implement projects do so without the co-operation of civil society organisations, grassroots organisations or local authorities. The staff of international agencies can often barely communicate in the local languages and do not understand the local realities. Doubts often arise due to non-transparency, lack of communication and the excessive use of foreign personnel. The international agencies advocate for channelling their funding through civil society organisations because of the fragility of the state. However, the state is the only institution that represents the whole of the territory, and should therefore be strengthened.

Discussion

Atif Hameed (Nonviolent Peaceforce) – In many conflict areas people do not want aid, they are victims and they would prefer to have just a sense of security.

Elisabeth Sandfuchs (Konrad Adenauer Foundation) – How do you ensure that the regional power would not use aid to advance certain agendas?

Lucy Akello (Justice and Peace Commission of the Archdiocese of Gulu) – In Uganda the issue of justice and security for the people returning is very important; all the people want is some peace. They want the chance to just go home and cultivate their land rather than relying on food distribution and hand-outs.

Samina Ahmed (International Crisis Group) – The most effective mechanism of oversight that can be used in a transitional society is to involve the communities on the ground, political parties, provincial parliament and public accounts committee. In a transitional democracy there is a chance to build the institutions we want to see created or reformed.

Pierre Esperance (National Human Rights Defense Network) – In no country can civil society organisations replace the state as it is a national institution and it must be strengthened. As we cannot replace the state, we must really institutionalise it and strengthen civil society so that they too can participate and monitor the state.

Asbjorn Wee (OECD) – There needs to be a level of realism about what we as the international community, an external actor, can achieve. The only framework that donors have at the moment for deciding on funding flows and priorities are the MDGs. Do we really need a new framework so that we can focus on issues of peace and security? Donors often say that they need arguments to translate why they need to accept certain risks in certain contexts and their ministers would often be more than happy to accept those risks.

Janet Adama Mohammed (Conciliation Resources) – What is aid in fragile states seeking to address?

Elise Ford (Oxfam International) – The problem of risk aversion is not only a problem now but it is also increasing. Based on the OECD studies, it seems as though we are increasingly going to have to justify new programmes based on outcomes. However, is there good, solid evidence out there that we can use?

Catherine Woollard (EPLO) – Are we being far too idealistic when talking about aid? For many donors, their priority is not to help intended beneficiaries; they want to establish strong central states to protect their economic and trading interests. Should we put into place punitive measures when aid does harm? Aid is consistently undermined by other policies such as trade, economic policies, and increasingly, security policies.

Asbjorn Wee (OECD) – It is also about what the country and citizens would like to see in terms of their development; civil society consultations need to be strengthened. It is not realistic to do ‘no harm’; we should realise that we will do some harm and try to be aware of it.

Samina Ahmed (International Crisis Group) – There is a huge pressure to ‘burn’ the large amounts of money that come into Pakistan from the US. The challenge is to use the aid to achieve the particular ends for which it was intended. The provincial authorities are responsible for such things as natural disaster management; however, donors tend to focus their attention on the national government. Conditionalities for governance in humanitarian crises can be very dangerous.

Lucy Akello (Justice and Peace Commission of the Archdiocese of Gulu) – There are many important issues that are not highlighted in the current frameworks, such as gender-based violence and land conflict. Is it enough to have the reports of corruption and impunity on paper? Rather, what is going to be done about it?

4. Panel 3: The EU's policies in situations of fragility: The potential of the European External Action Service (EEAS)

(Chair: *Tanja Popović – Project Coordinator, Nansen Dialogue Centre Serbia*)

Key Recommendations

- In the EEAS, there is a need for more decentralisation of country analysis, conflict analysis and development analysis.
- Within the peacebuilding and crisis response structure, there needs to be adequate resources and staff and the structure should do conflict risk assessment, conflict sensitivity of development programmes and formulate alternatives to crisis management.
- The EU needs to be better at picking and choosing where the EU is best able to work but we should also not be too under-ambitious on what can be accomplished.
- There has been disappointment when it comes to engagement with the EU. It is important that the EU continues to support local groups because they will play an important role in the long-term governance of their countries.

Elise Ford – Head of EU Advocacy, Oxfam International – There is a lack of clarity from all sides and many of the key decisions have still not been made, such as how will the EEAS be relating to and interacting with other key services that can also still implement the policies of the EU in its external relations; what roles will each organ have within the EEAS; how will country strategy papers be developed; who will take the lead on issues of fragile states, such as Sudan? There is a need for decentralisation of country and conflict analysis, and development analysis.

Josephine Liebl – Policy Officer, EPLO – The peacebuilding and crisis response structure should be the hub of expertise for conflict prevention and should feed in analysis for programming policies for the EU's response to fragile countries. There needs to be adequate resources and staff and the structure should do conflict risk assessment, conflict sensitivity of development programmes and formulate alternatives to crisis management. There is still a question of how the directorate will relate to the regional DGs.

Dr Solomon Ayele Dersso – Senior Researcher, Institute for Security Studies – In Somalia, political and security interventions need to be supplemented by development projects and provisions of services that respond to the needs of the local population. There is an absence of an ongoing political process for resolving conflict. The EU's actions have been mainly focused on the military. It does not seem to know how to undertake diplomatic and political interventions. The international community needs to reconsider their exclusive focus on the transitional federal government and the EU could initiate a discussion with all actors to develop an effective political strategy.

Hamdi Shaqura – Director, Palestinian Centre for Human Rights – In 2006, EU sanctions on Palestine plus the escalation of attacks and restrictions from Israel helped to accelerate conflicts and resulted in higher unemployment and isolation of Gaza. The EU sanctions therefore failed as they created fertile grounds for extremism. The EU has a great responsibility to intervene; it is relevant to their economic and financial growth. The April 2011 EC meeting should also push forward the Goldstone Report.

Ali Saleem – Country Director, Pakistan, Search for Common Ground – The floods damaged the legitimacy of the government at the local level; the people have since asked the military to hold the government accountable for corruption. The international community's response to conflict, floods, humanitarian issues, governance weaknesses, injustices, grievances has been utter

confusion. Additionally, the post conflict needs assessments have become extremely political. State-society relationship is almost non-existent; the government does not attempt to engage with the public, no framework to deal with the people.

Atif Hameed – Country Director, The Philippines, Nonviolent Peaceforce – The EU is playing a very important role in the Philippines. In 2006, it was focusing more on the development side but we have now seen a shift towards the security side. The 2008 peace process, facilitated by the EU had included all actors such as rebel groups and EU ambassadors made visits to IDP camps, which the media picked up on. It is important that the EU continues to support local groups because they will be running the country in the long-term. Transformation of conflict takes time, but the role of international actors has been appreciated.

Discussion

Philipp Agathonos (Permanent Representation of Austria to the EU) [Speaking in a personal capacity] – I do not think that the new EU structures will bring much change. There is room to talk to the permanent chairs of the Council working parties and committees as they may have some say in a change of attitude. The role of delegations is crucial; CSOs can send them examples of best practices.

Filip Pavlović (Fractal) – What is your experience with feeding into the EU policies in your respective countries? Our experience in Kosovo and Serbia was that this was a slow process.

Hamdi Shaqura (Palestinian Centre for Human Rights) – I have been disappointed because we have received nice words but when it comes to actions everyone blames it on each other. It is not a matter of lack of knowledge in Palestine; it is a lack of will to take action.

Atif Hameed (Nonviolent Peaceforce) – The delegations representing the EU often come in to talk to CSOs, as well as to IDPs and others, but this depends on the character of the head of the delegation.

Phil Vernon (International Alert) – There will be cases where the EEAS maybe cannot make a difference and should rather focus on where they can be successful; Palestine might be one of those cases.

Jama Mohamed (Somali Organization for Community Development Activities) – If the EU does not support accountability, they risk losing their credibility.

Lucia Montanaro (Independent consultant) – There have been several steps in the right direction for the EEAS but the current plans do not match the actual ambitions of the EEAS. What steps need to be taken to ensure that it is effective?

Alessandro Rossi (Nonviolent Peaceforce) – Is it better for the EEAS to work with civil society to look for a range of services to be ready in case deals are made, or is it better for us to push for them to be public?

Ali Saleem (Search for Common Ground) – Our project in Pakistan is to engage private media stations to promote peacebuilding. Both media and the idea of peacebuilding are very new in Pakistan and so we are trying to create awareness amongst the public about the option of peacebuilding.

Dr Solomon Ayele Dersso (Institute for Security Studies) – The EU will have a role in any reforms of AMISOM as they are one of the major donors. AMISOM does not have any mandate for civilian protection; the problem with this is that even if the funds are provided, they are still unable to address the problems of the humanitarian crisis.

Elise Ford (Oxfam International) - The EU needs to be better at picking and choosing where the EU is best able to work, although we should also not be too under-ambitious on what can be accomplished. The managing directors of the EEAS are going to need to pick up some of the thematic 'slack' left by this new focus that tends to be quite regional. Somalia and the Philippines are great examples of why there needs to be an understanding of development within the EEAS in order to make sound judgements in conflict and humanitarian situations.

5. Conclusions

Catherine Woollard – Executive Director, EPLO – We would like to take forward some of the implications of what we have discussed here with officials from the EEAS. There is an importance to both support the state and its institutions but also to go beyond that to look at the legitimacy of the institutions being supported, as well as local authorities and other service providers. There is an important role for civil society in providing analysis and participating in peace processes, monitoring agreements and peacebuilding. Civil society can also support dialogue processes and accountability mechanisms, which are essential in creating functioning governance institutions.

All EU external action is political and this needs to be recognised. We have heard pleas to the EU to use its political leverage and to assess the measures it is taking and the risks involved to ensure that no harm is done.

Over the next few months we hope to influence the development of the EEAS and then, as civil society, to continue dialogue to influence the service and its key people. We hope to bring the kind of analysis we have seen here today to the attention of the service.

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.

The CSDN will contribute to strengthening international and regional capacity for conflict prevention and post-conflict co-operation. EPLO will organise CSDN meetings which will be open to all interested civil society actors and will take place in Brussels, EU Member States and conflict-affected countries with EU presence.

The CSDN will discuss policy, strategic and programming aspects of the Peacebuilding Partnership, transversal thematic issues relating to peacebuilding and crisis-specific situations. CSDN meetings will fall into the following five categories:

1. Policy (Thematic)
2. Geographic
3. Funding Instruments
4. Member State
5. In-country Dialogue

For more information about the Civil Society Dialogue Network, please visit the [EPLO website](#).