

26 January 2018, Brussels

Dear Ambassador to the Political and Security Committee,

Re.: The Integrated Approach: what next after the Council Conclusions?

I am writing to you on behalf of the European Peacebuilding Liaison Office (EPLO) with regard to the Council Conclusions on the Integrated Approach to External Conflicts and Crises (IA) adopted by the Foreign Affairs Council on 22 January 2018.

As a platform of more than 30 European non-governmental organisations (NGOs), NGO networks and think tanks working across the world to prevent violent conflict and build peace, EPLO welcomes several elements of these Conclusions as they can set the path for the EU to be a more effective global peace actor. The confirmation of the EU's policy commitments to promote human security, sustainable peace, local ownership and inclusion in the very first paragraphs, as well as the various acknowledgements of the key role of civil society in this endeavour are positive. We also very much welcome the importance given to conflict analyses, conflict sensitivity, mediation support capacities, and the emphasis on early warning/early action as well as the dedicated ministerial discussions on conflict prevention.

Building upon the many positive intentions set out in the Conclusions, it is now the time to see how the IA can be operationalised. Member States have a key role to play in putting the IA into action and we see your internal retreat to discuss specific geographic cases on 31 January as positive and necessary. In advance of this discussion we would like to highlight some areas to take into consideration, which follow from our letter to you in June 2017 on the Integrated Approach¹.

Prioritising resources: The intent set out in the Conclusions will require a shift in prioritisation of financial and human resources to increase peace and conflict prevention expertise across the EU. Without this, these Conclusions are likely to be more aspirational than operable. You will find in annex a list of concrete recommendations centred on human resources taken from our June letter.

Integrating the whole spectrum of EU policies: The Conclusions refer to the 'wide array of policies and instruments' of the EU, including defence, finance and trade. It is essential that conflict sensitivity is applied in these areas as well as in migration, agriculture and investment, which will require constant political attention from Member States. Such policies with external dimensions have significant consequences on conflict dynamics, including on structural violence against women and exclusion of various social groups. To ensure that EU action is conflict-sensitive and not doing harm, robust analysis – including, of course, gender analysis – needs to be conducted.

¹ EPLO, [The Integrated Approach: an opportunity to operationalise conflict prevention](#) (June 2017)

Monitoring impact: Once the IA is applied, it will be essential to plan ways to monitor the positive and negative impact on different parts of affected communities in each of the fragile and conflict-affected situations where the EU is active. In this endeavour diverse and inclusive civil society will be crucial in contributing analysis on how the different EU actors are working together, as well as in channelling the perceptions and needs of different men and women.

We look forward to discussing ways in which civil society can support these efforts, with analysis, expertise and the learning that has been built up over time for the EU to fulfil its role as a significant global peace actor.

We hope that you will take EPLO's recommendations into consideration in your upcoming discussions on the implementation of the IA and we would be very happy to discuss any of the abovementioned issues with you or a member of your team.

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

Sincerely,



Sonya Reines-Djivanides
EPLO Executive Director

Annex: List of specific recommendations on putting the necessary human resources arrangements in place

- cc: All Ambassadors to the Political and Security Committee
Mr Jean-Christophe Belliard – Deputy Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Political Director, EEAS
Mr Pedro Serrano – Deputy Secretary-General for CSDP and Crisis Response, EEAS
Mr Walter Stevens – Chair of the Political and Security Committee, EEAS
Ms Maria Manuela Cabral – Head of Unit for Fragility and Resilience, DG DEVCO, EC
Mr Hervé Delphin – Head of Division for Strategic Planning, EEAS
Mr Stefano Tomat – Head of Division for Prevention of Conflicts, Rule of Law/SSR, Integrated Approach, Stabilisation and Mediation, EEAS
Mr David McAllister – Chair of the European Parliament Committee on Foreign Affairs
Ms Fabrizia Panzetti, Mr Jani Taivalantti and Mr Enrico Petrocelli – Cabinet of the HR/VP
Dr Nathalie Tocci – Special Advisor to the HR/VP

Annex: Putting the necessary human resources arrangements in place

In a letter sent in June 2017 to Ambassadors to the Political and Security Committee, EPLO recommended that the EU and its Member States support the following administrative and political steps for an effective implementation of the Integrated Approach:

In the short term (3-6 months):

- Increase the number of **Member States peace and conflict experts seconded** to the different parts of the EU institutions, in particular within the European External Action Service's (EEAS) Division for Prevention, Rule of Law/SSR, Integrated Approach, Stabilisation and Mediation (PRISM), the Unit for Fragility and Resilience within the European Commission's Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development (DG DEVCO) and the EU Delegations (EUDs), in order to enhance the EU's ability to deliver conflict analysis and resilience assessment, to support mediation and to translate early warning assessments into actionable preventive options.
- Encourage the secondment of **non-governmental peace and conflict experts** to the EU institutions and promote more regular exchanges with external experts to refine and test ideas for preventive responses.
- Raise awareness of **existing EU and Member States tools and concrete guidance** for conflict and gender analysis, resilience assessment, conflict sensitivity or theories of change (e.g. training, handbooks, guidance notes, workshops, etc.) among EU officials in Brussels and in EUDs, and regularly review their use in order to improve their usability.
- Ensure that resources and mechanisms to **access external (civil society) conflict expertise** for EU officials are more flexible and sustainable (e.g. European Resources for Mediation Support (ERMES) and others).
- Increase the number of **focal points for in-country civil society** in EUDs' operational sections and create civil society focal points in political sections in order to take greater account of complex sub-national political dynamics and to monitor the effectiveness of EU actions.

In the medium term (6-12 months):

- Embed mechanisms for **peer-to-peer exchange** of officials working in/on fragile and conflict-affected environments across institutions and with MS (e.g. to share knowledge on administrative flexibilities within instruments).
- Consider creating an internal **peace and conflict expert roster**, to be deployed (or consulted) temporarily in those parts of the EU which are less engaged in conflict issues (e.g. **conflict expertise for DG Trade** negotiation teams working on trade agreements – **or DG Home** when working on a migration compact – in conflict-affected contexts in order to map potential negative conflict impacts and/or identify opportunities to multiply peacebuilding effects at an early stage).

In the long term (>1 year):

- Invest in sustainable internal expertise by **recruiting and maintaining a quota of permanent conflict experts on staff**.
- Add conflict sensitivity as a task or conflict expertise as a skill in **EU job descriptions** and **evaluate officials** on these grounds in order to create incentives for them to better take into account conflict and resilience dynamics in their work.
- Provide a **viable career path** for EU officials who want to specialise in conflict issues.
- Build and sustain **institutional memory** on prevention and peacebuilding good practice. As much as external facilities or rosters are useful for providing additional technical

expertise at lower costs and in a short timeframe, they cannot fully replace building in-house expertise. They should be complemented by better institutional **knowledge management**, including by:

- Ensuring a proper handover between rotating staff,
- Documenting lessons learned and successes (e.g. through cases studies, reflection seminars and listing of past prevention activities),
- Mentoring programmes between experienced and new EU officials working on peace and conflict issues.