



## **Civil Society Dialogue Network**

### **Policy Meeting**

# **Implementing the Responsibility to Protect principle: UN, EU and civil society perspectives**

**Thursday 16 February 2017, Brussels**

## **MEETING REPORT**

A Civil Society Dialogue Network (CSDN) meeting took place on Thursday 16 February 2017 in Brussels in order to gather civil society's analysis on the Responsibility to Protect (RtoP) and conflict prevention in order to inform UN and EU approaches.

The meeting brought together the recently appointed UN Secretary-General's (UNSG's) Special Adviser on the RtoP, Mr Ivan Šimonović, EU policy-makers and civil society experts involved in conflict prevention and peacebuilding to exchange views on the current challenges related to the implementation of the RtoP principle.

### **Key reflections**

Participants raised the following issues:

- Several participants mentioned the difficulty of going from the conceptual discussion of RtoP, on which there is usually a lot of consensus, to the mainstreaming and implementation of RtoP.
- The importance of accountability in linking the concept of RtoP and its implementation was stressed, in particular the political accountability which also applies to UN Member States, the UNSG and its Secretariat.
- Participants highlighted the fact that atrocities and conflicts often occur in parallel or one after another and that there is a correlation between atrocity prevention and conflict prevention.
- The reference to RtoP in the EU Global Strategy and its links to resilience and the integrated approach to conflicts and crises as well as the appointment of the first regional contact point for RtoP in the EEAS were presented as important steps towards an actual mainstreaming of RtoP into EU structures and policies.
- One participant emphasised that a reference to RtoP had been included in the draft proposal for the new European Consensus on Development in order to further integrate RtoP into the EU's development co-operation and therefore contribute to the prevention side of the RtoP principle.

### **Key recommendations**

Participants made the following recommendations:

#### **How can the EU and the UN learn from each other?**

- The results of the UN's assessment of security forces under its due diligence policy should be shared with the EU and potentially with individual donor states to make sure that certain security forces introduce mitigating measures before they are supported.

- The EU and the UN should work together on conflict prevention and atrocity prevention by combining the EU's insights from the EU early warning system with the UN's atrocity prevention assessments and having regular information exchanges and meetings between the EU and UN country desks.

### **How to mainstream RtoP in practice?**

- The concepts of RtoP and human security can be helpful in deciding what type of support should be provided to conflict-affected states in order to make sure to neither strengthen the resilience of potentially illegitimate state structures nor the resilience of certain groups or parts of society at the expense of others.
- The concept of 'sustaining peace', a notion which emerged from the 2015 high-level reviews of the UN's peace operations, peacebuilding architecture and the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, is crucial in order to protect civilians efficiently. In order to sustain peace, there is a need for both the EU and the UN to develop tools which address all phases of conflict instead of either short-term crisis management or long-term development assistance.
- The UN should ensure that peacekeeping operations are more effective to protect civilians in line with the Kigali Principles on the Protection of Civilians. This implies providing operations with adequate training as well as resources to be able to efficiently carry out the protection mandate, which is a challenge often faced by the UN in upholding the RtoP.
- The EU should continue its efforts to integrate RtoP into all of its actions, in particular into development co-operation, such as into development programmes, but also for stabilisation and reconstruction efforts. At the same time, both the EU and the UN should carefully analyse how the financial resources for development co-operation can be used and prioritised for atrocity prevention.

### **What role for local actors and civil society?**

- The implementation of RtoP and the protection of civilians shows that community-led early warning and early response are the most effective mechanisms. Therefore, there is a need to mobilise resources to build up a standing capacity for conflict prevention and civilian-led civilian protection.
- Civil society should provide input on the work of the UNSG's Special Adviser on the RtoP by participating in various panels organised in New York and Geneva on RtoP and accountability.
- Civil society should support the formalisation of the UN Informal Interactive Dialogue on RtoP as well as call for the participation of civil society in this dialogue.
- The Universal Periodic Review should be opened up to not only include information from the UN Human Rights Office but also from other UN offices and from civil society, especially on atrocity prevention. One way would be to do capacity building for civil society in countries which are at risk of atrocity by providing them with training on atrocity risk assessment. The involvement of civil society can be a particular asset in countries where Member States may not be supportive.

#### **The Civil Society Dialogue Network**

The Civil Society Dialogue Network (CSDN) is a mechanism for dialogue between civil society and EU policy-makers on issues related to peace and conflict. It is co-financed by the European Union (Instrument for Stability). It is managed by the European Peacebuilding Liaison Office (EPLO), a civil society network, in co-operation with the European Commission (EC) and the European External Action Service (EEAS). The second phase of the CSDN will last from 2014 to 2017. For more information, please visit the [EPLO website](#).