Group C: Strengthening civil society engagement in the security sector

1. **What are the areas in which civil society organisations (CSOs) can make a difference in the security sector and good practices of CSO engagement in security sector reform (SSR)?**

   - **Oversight**: At the local level, oversight committees and liaison committees can support SSR processes and help to report instances of corruption of security forces (e.g. the United Nations (UN) has supported liaison committees in Northern Mali). One pitfall is that the selection of the committees can raise questions about their legitimacy. CSO oversight of the legislative processes involved in establishing the mandates and budgets of security services could contribute to reducing corruption in these areas. CSOs could be supported to draft codes of conduct for security forces.
   - **Monitoring**: CSOs could be supported to undertake regular reporting on security forces and the implementation of reforms as part of SSR processes.
   - **Advocacy**: CSOs can undertake advocacy towards regional and national authorities in order to highlight best practices and to ensure inclusive processes. Supporting permanent civil society platforms can help CSOs to organise and coordinate to do advocacy and strengthen their role in all aspects of SSR processes. Providing specific advocacy groups with the tools and the skills to train other CSOs can also help to foster dialogue between civil society and national authorities on SSR.
   - **Trust-building**: CSOs can be an intermediary to build trust between populations and security forces (e.g. certain cases in Nigeria). They can also help security forces to talk explicitly about abusive behaviour and commit not to repeat it. In the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), theatre groups helped citizens and members of the security forces to address key issues and to act out typical scenes of interaction between people and the police and/or army. Also in the DRC, security forces worked together with farmers on agricultural land, which also contributed to creating empathy and trust.
   - **Training**: CSOs can provide training on a variety of issues related to human rights and human security to police forces, military actors or civilian staff involved in SSR processes. For example, the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) training mission in Mali (EUTM Mali) works closely with a platform of CSOs in order to conduct joint training of security forces. In the DRC, the *Etat Major des Armées* has an agreement with CSOs to train trainers and to work with the authorities to monitor progress.

2. **How can external actors (donors, international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) etc.) maximise their support to local actors engaged in improving people's security?**

   - **Use strategic reviews of CSDP missions to develop relationships with CSOs**: The EU should focus on developing a shared learning culture between CSDP missions and local populations. Strategic reviews can be useful for helping to achieve this end.
   - **Take into consideration digital insecurity and freedom of speech**: It is important to be aware of the safety concerns faced by human rights defenders (HRDs) in the EU's partner countries and their implications for EU-CSO dialogue in those countries. Cybersecurity is essential if CSOs are to be able to engage in advocacy, especially on sensitive subjects such as the security forces. In some countries, CSOs can put themselves at risk simply for being in contact with the EU delegation (EUD). This

means that normal EU-CSO dialogue is not possible. One potential solution is to organise consultation meetings outside the country in question.

- **Support the reintegration of child soldiers**: The EU and INGOs can help to address issues related to abusive behaviour by security forces, such as regarding child soldiers. There are examples of different actors, including INGOs, working together to better understand the connections between SSR and the root causes of abuses, and on addressing various issues relating to child soldiers.
- **Support cross-border dialogue**: Given the sensitive nature of cross-border trade and its frequent links to inter- and intra-state conflict dynamics, the EU could support dialogue between communities on different sides of borders in order to address their common issues and grievances, including regarding their relationships with security forces.
- **Support social media-based community security initiatives**: Twitter and other social media can be used to create space for dialogue between policy-makers, security forces and citizens on policing issues. One positive example of this type of initiative was in Northern Ireland.
- **Maintain and facilitate safe spaces for dialogue**: External actors can help to facilitate exchanges on sensitive topics and encourage trust-building through cycles of dialogue, conferences or discussion groups.
- **Engage with "service provider" types of CSOs in difficult contexts**: In polarised contexts, service providers are often perceived as less threatening than other CSOs by state authorities and could be good entry points to support CSO engagement on SSR issues.
- **Include a focus on prisons**: It would be useful for governments to invest in improving their understanding of the factors which result in people being incarcerated, and the processes of radicalisation which can take place in prisons. CSOs can contribute to this type of work.