



## Civil Society Dialogue Network

### The European Union as a Global Peace Actor: Exchange of views on the EU and conflict prevention

Friday 25 May 2018, Brussels

On May 25, the European Peacebuilding Liaison Office (EPLO), the European External Action Service (EEAS, in particular its PRISM division<sup>1</sup>) and the European Commission (in particular the Service for Foreign Policy Instruments, FPI) organised a Civil Society Dialogue Network (CSDN) policy meeting on the *European Union as a Global Peace Actor*. The overall objective of the meeting was to have an informal discussion on the EU's capacity as a global peace actor between the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy / Vice-President of the Commission (HR/VP) Federica Mogherini, senior EU officials and the top leadership of established peacebuilding civil society organisations (CSOs).

In the first session of the meeting, HR/VP Mogherini and civil society participants discussed matters relating to the work of the EU and CSOs on conflict prevention. In the second session, initial comments by Pedro Serrano, EEAS Deputy Secretary General for CSDP and Crisis Response and EEAS focal point for conflict prevention,<sup>2</sup> were followed by group discussions between civil society and EU participants.

HR/VP Mogherini's enthusiastic and open engagement in the discussions and her emphasis on the vital role of civil society in relation to the EU's external action were greatly appreciated by the civil society participants. Several issues were raised in the course of the discussions.

Participants emphasised the importance for the European Union and civil society to be working together to prevent violent conflict and to contribute to building sustainable peace in fragile and conflict-affected situations. The value of civil society input on local peace and conflict dynamics was further underlined given the differing contexts in which the EU is engaged; it was noted that CSOs provide vital input not only into the design of EU strategies and programmes but also in their implementation and monitoring. This cooperation was described as essential to ensuring that EU engagement is conflict-sensitive. Participants commented on the need to continue to support CSOs, including through financial support in the next long-term EU budget. In particular, they highlighted the key contributions of diverse women and young people to conflict prevention and peacebuilding.

It was underscored that conflict prevention and peacebuilding approaches are not always seen as valuable or adequate choices by the European public and policymakers in addressing current challenges, even though the research points to their cost-effectiveness and long-term benefits. Furthermore, these approaches to conflicts and crises do not seem to garner as much media attention as the more limited short-term actions do, compounding the problem in their perception as viable responses. Several participants raised the issue of shrinking space for civil society in the current international context, making it increasingly difficult for the EU and CSOs to carry out their work on conflict prevention and peacebuilding.

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<sup>1</sup> PRISM stands for Prevention of conflicts, Rule of law/Security Sector Reform, Integrated approach, Stabilisation and Mediation.

<sup>2</sup> CSDP stands for Common Security and Defence Policy.

EU and civil society participants discussed a number of proposals to continue strengthening their cooperation on conflict prevention. These included the following suggestions:

- Ensuring sustained, high-level engagement between the EU and civil society on conflict prevention and peacebuilding (e.g. by holding similar meetings on a yearly basis);
- Organising regular meetings between EU Member States ambassadors to the EU's Political and Security Committee (PSC), civil society experts and EU officials to discuss salient geographic or thematic issues;
- Gathering civil society expertise to feed into the review of the EU's guidance note on the use of conflict analysis in support of the EU's external action;
- Providing CSOs with opportunities to submit input into EU conflict analyses for specific country contexts at all stages (i.e. during the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes), in order to strengthen conflict sensitivity in EU engagements.

The EU and civil society participants welcomed the opportunity to exchange on their conflict prevention and peacebuilding activities. They expressed a strong interest in deepening their work together to address the above-mentioned challenges and to maximise the positive impact of their engagements in fragile and conflict-affected contexts.



### **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 contributing to Stability and Peace). 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 third phase of the CSDN will last from 2017 to 2020. For more information, please visit the [EPLO website](#).