



Civil Society Dialogue Network Geographic Meeting

Conflict Dynamics and Drivers of Peace in the Sahel Region: Gathering Civil Society Perspectives

Friday 6 March 2020

**Scotland House Conference Centre
Rond-Point Robert Schuman / Robert Schumanplein 6, Brussels**

Concept Note

Background

The Sahel region faces a number of development and security challenges, which are often interlinked. While some of these challenges are specific to individual countries, others are similar across borders or are transnational in nature. Some of the issues affecting diverse communities and countries in the region relate to:

- Governance, including in relation to political inclusivity, accountability, justice, state presence and the role of security forces;
- The role of armed groups and of violent extremism;
- Social cohesion and inter-/intra-communal relations;
- Extreme poverty, livelihoods and access to natural resources and public services.

As the European Union (EU) is currently looking to adjust its engagement in the Sahel, especially on peace and development issues, this meeting will bring together civil society experts from the region to share their analysis of sources of tension and insecurity, drivers of peace and resilience, local expectations and perceptions of state authorities, the EU and other actors, and opportunities for deepened EU engagement.

Objective

The overall objective of the meeting is to gather civil society input on conflict dynamics and drivers of peace in the Sahel region, and to allow participants to exchange with and provide recommendations to the EU in relation to its engagement in the region.

Participants

The meeting will bring together around 35 participants, including 20 civil society experts from the Sahel region and officials from the European External Action Service (EEAS), the European Commission (EC) and the office of the EU Special Representative for the Sahel.

Format

The meeting will take the form of a day-long round-table meeting with facilitated interactive sessions in which all participants will be encouraged to provide their analysis and recommendations. Participants may be split into small groups during the day. The discussions will take place under the Chatham House Rule.¹

Civil society participants will also be invited to attend a preparatory meeting the previous day.

¹ Participants are free to use the information received, but neither the identity nor the affiliation of the speaker(s), nor that of any other participant, may be revealed.

Language

The meeting will take place in French. Simultaneous interpretation from French to English and from English to French will be provided (if necessary).

Agenda

08.30 – 09.00	Registration and welcome coffee
09.00 – 09.15	Opening remarks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hilde Hardeman (FPI) • Birgitte Markussen (EEAS) • Sonya Reines-Djivanides (EPLO)
9.15 – 10.45	SESSION 1: An overview of peace and conflict issues in the Sahel region Participants will be invited to provide initial insights on peace and conflict issues across the Sahel region. Questions to be discussed may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are some of the challenges relating to governance and human security in the region, including with respect to populations' access to natural resources and public services? • How are different challenges related to regional dynamics or specific to individual countries? • How do populations perceive different armed groups, public authorities / national armed forces, and international actors (including the EU and EU Member States)?
10.45 – 11.15	Coffee Break
11.15 – 13.00	SESSION 2: Examining key challenges In small groups, participants will be invited to focus on some the key challenges affecting populations in the Sahel region at the local, national and regional levels. Issues to be discussed may relate to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The accountability, transparency and inclusivity of authorities • Relations between security/conflict actors (including national armed forces and different types of non-state armed groups) and populations • Populations' livelihoods and access to natural resources • Populations' access to justice
13.00 – 14.00	Lunch

14.00 – 15.30	<p>SESSION 3: Capacities for peace and resilience</p> <p>Participants will be invited to discuss the capacities for peace and resilience in the Sahel region, and to share insights on positive examples and on initiatives to support.</p> <p>Questions to be discussed may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How should civil society and local initiatives for peace be supported, and how may social cohesion and intra- / intercommunal relations be improved? • How may local and national authorities as well as international actors improve the livelihoods of populations, including with regard to their access to natural resources? • What should local, national and international actors do in response to the existence and actions of violent armed groups? How may community resilience to recruitment and violence by armed groups be enhanced?
15.30 – 15.45	<p>Coffee break</p>
15.45 – 17.00	<p>SESSION 4: Recommendations for deepened EU engagement</p> <p>Building on points expressed throughout the day, participants will discuss how the EU may enhance and deepen its engagement in the Sahel region, including in relation to its support to civil society.</p> <p>Questions to be discussed may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the key opportunities for the EU to prevent violence and support positive initiatives for resilience and peace, in particular at the local level and with regard to the existence and actions of violent armed groups? • How should the EU support governance reforms and address peace and conflict issues, including relations between populations and national armed forces, in its dialogue with the governments of Sahel countries? • How should the EU deepen other aspects of its engagement, in particular its contribution to the social and economic development of the Sahel region?
17.00 – 17.15	<p>Closing remarks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Angel Losada (EU Special Representative for the Sahel)

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](#).