



FUNDING INSTRUMENTS MEETING

Multiannual Action Programme 2025-2026 for the Thematic Programme on Peace, Stability and Conflict Prevention under the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument – Global Europe (NDICI-GE)

Meeting Report
3 October 2024, Brussels

The European Commission's (EC) Service for Foreign Policy Instruments (FPI) and the European External Action Service's (EEAS) Peace, Partnerships and Crisis Management Directorate (PCM) are currently preparing the Multiannual Action Programme (MAP) 2025-2026 for the Neighbourhood Development and International Cooperation Instrument – Global Europe (NDICI-GE) Thematic Programme on Peace, Stability, and Conflict Prevention (TP on PS&CP). In this context, they asked the European Peacebuilding Liaison Office (EPLO) to organise a Civil Society Dialogue Network (CSDN) Funding Instruments Meeting (FIM) in order to gather civil society input into the process.

The meeting brought together 113 participants: 88 civil society experts and 25 officials from the European External Action Service (EEAS) and the European Commission (EC). The discussions were held under the Chatham House Rule. There was no attempt to reach a consensus during the meeting or through this report, which presents the key points and recommendations put forward by the civil society participants.

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 (Neighbourhood Development and International Cooperation Instrument – Global Europe). It is managed by the European Peacebuilding Liaison Office (EPLO), a civil society network, in cooperation with the European Commission (EC) and the European External Action Service (EEAS). The fifth phase of the CSDN will last from 2023 to 2026. For more information, please visit the [EPLO website](#).



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Acronyms

AAP	Annual Action Programme
CPPB	Conflict prevention and peacebuilding
CPS	Climate, Peace, and Security
CSDP	Common Security and Defence Policy
CSO	Civil society organisation
DG	Directorate-General (of the European Commission)
DG INTPA	Directorate-General for International Partnerships
DG NEAR	Directorate-General for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations
EC	European Commission
EEAS	European External Action Service
FPI	Service for Foreign Policy Instruments
GG	Global Gateway
INGO	International non-governmental organisation
MAAP	Multiannual Action Programme
NDICI-GE	Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument - Global Europe
PCM	Peace, Partnerships and Crisis Management Directorate
PCVE	Preventing & Countering Violent Extremism
SGBV	Sexual and gender-based violence
TP on PS&CP	Thematic Programme on Peace, Stability, and Conflict Prevention
UN PBF	United Nations Peacebuilding Fund
UNFCCC CoP	Conference of the Parties, United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
WPS	Women, Peace, & Security

Session 1: State of play of the Annual Action Programme 2024 and initial thoughts on the Multiannual Action Programme 2025-2026

Panellists from the EC and EEAS gave short presentations on the 2024 Annual Action Programme (AAP) and the preparation of the 2025-26 MAAP. As the Thematic Programme represents only 1.1% of NDICI-GE, in a global context marked by increasing number of violent conflicts and crises, the EEAS highlighted the need to prioritise where there is potential for synergies between the two intervention areas and where there is a specific added value. The presentation was followed by a question-and-answer session, in which representatives of civil society organisations (CSOs) addressed queries to the panellists.

	Question (CSOs)	Response (EC/EEAS)
1.	Outside the TP on PS&CP, what is the state of EU funding for peace and security? Is the allocation of funding through member states being considered?	In addition to the thematic programme, funding for CPPB is frequently given through the NDICI-GE's geographic programmes and rapid response programmes. The Directorate-General (DG) for International Partnerships (INTPA) shares responsibility for CPPB-related programmes with the DG for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations (NEAR).
2.	In the absence of calls for proposals, how are decisions made on the allocation of funding for peacebuilding and conflict-prevention (CPPB)?	Calls for proposals continue to be used. We also engage with partners to decide on priorities for funding allocation through direct awards. The approach to funding CPPB is shifting, however; the emphasis is more on the proposer, and there is a greater awareness of the importance of local-level engagement.
3.	What does the advent and dissemination of artificial intelligence mean for the CPPB field? How much risk-taking should practitioners be engaging in?	There appears to be significant demand among CSOs and other CPPB practitioners to explore this question; further discussion is clearly needed. We encourage those with experience, who are conducting research, or who have ideas to share them with us.
4.	There is widespread awareness of shortcomings in the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund (UN PBF), particularly the proportion of its funding allocated to civil society. Does the EU have any specific plans to address this?	We do not closely monitor the local-level activities of the UN PBF. However, we maintain an awareness of their work in general and maintain a dialogue with our colleagues there.
5.	The meaning of some terminology in planning and programming documents is sometimes unclear. What do terms like "stabilisation" mean precisely, and where is the line of demarcation between "hard" approaches to security on the one hand and CPPB on the other?	This has been discussed at previous CSDN meetings to a certain extent. The difference is less methodological and more about the timing of interventions.

6.	The EU has invested significantly in early warning systems and conflict analysis, particularly in the last year. How is this going to feed into action, and is there room for the participation of CSOs?	On the EU side, there is interest in working closely with CSOs on this issue. We see these monitoring systems as enabling early action and prompt crisis response, which are often vital. We would like to increase capacity for these types of interventions.
7.	How much will the new Financial Regulation ¹ impact the work of the FPI and its management of funding?	Not at all.
8.	The mission letters for the commissioners-designate indicate a new emphasis on economic foreign policy. How much will this impact FPI, and to what extent will this policy be conflict sensitive?	We do not foresee any major impact on the work of FPI.
9.	Local CSOs are often the first to raise the alarm on imminent instability/conflict. How do we ensure these observations get back to Brussels to trigger early intervention by the EU?	Each country's civil society ecosystem is distinct. We often work through intermediaries, out of necessity. It is true that management of small funding allocations and connecting with smaller CSOs is a weak point of EU action currently.
10.	Some parts of the Global Gateway (GG) – such as the policies on energy, critical raw materials etc. – appear to be quite conflict insensitive. Is there a plan to address this?	<p>The sensitivity of these policy areas is itself a sensitive matter. More attention must be paid to it on the EU side. We are aware that, for example, critical raw materials are very frequently extracted in conflict-affected or unstable locales.</p> <p>Going forward, there will be two strands of the GG's approach to development. One will focus on facilitating the Green Transition, reducing poverty, building up clean energy capacity and related matters. The other will focus on fragile and conflict-affected countries, ensuring they receive ample funding and attention. DG INTPA is monitoring all relevant aspects of the GG.</p> <p>EU delegations have been equipped with tools to carry out risk assessments. All investments must have conflict sensitivity integrated throughout the programming process.</p>

¹ <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/fb2caf66-7ba3-11ef-bbbe-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>

Session 2: Small group discussions on priority areas for the Multiannual Action Programme 2025-2026

Small group A: *Localisation and citizen engagement to enhance conflict prevention and early action*

Guiding questions:

- What are good practices in ensuring meaningful citizen engagement in conflict prevention efforts at both local and national levels?
- What key challenges do CSOs face in engaging in localisation initiatives for conflict prevention in the NDICI-GE Thematic Programme, and what should the European Commission and EEAS prioritise to better support these efforts?
- How can citizen-driven and localised approaches be effectively integrated into early conflict prevention strategies, and what innovative models demonstrate their potential to strengthen conflict prevention and early action?

Discussion:

- There exists debate about the usefulness of the term “localisation”.
 - It is a more complex and systemic issue than merely measuring the number of local staff. It is a matter of baseline principles, organisational strategies and mindsets, and tackling things issues such as like systemic racism. Some humanitarian and development organisations are particularly uncertain about this, but the PBCP sector has already adopted many principles of the localisation approach. is almost wholly on board, at least nominally. Action must follow.
- Conversations about localisation must themselves **involve the people they are meant to be about** – local actors. If these discussions happen purely between representatives of INGOs, meaningful outcomes are unlikely to be attained.
 - Sometimes the traditional models for action – humanitarian, development, peacebuilding, stabilisation – can be actively harmful, and it is necessary to break out of them. It can be as simple as asking local actors what they need. Lessons learned in other contexts may not be useful at all.
- Compliance can be a sticking point, as civil society in each country/region is completely different and complex in its own way.
 - “Passporting” – where a local group which has completed compliance with one INGO does not need to go through it again when working with another – can vastly increase prospects for localisation.
- Transfer of operations/leadership to local partners is more difficult in the case of technically complex activities such as mine/ordnance clearance. It can result in an increase in accidents or incidents, a decrease in quality and may lead to corruption
 - Donors nonetheless are exerting pressure in favour of localisation. Aspects like risk education, victim assistance, advocacy etc. are easier to localise.
- The principle of “**do no harm**” must be kept in mind at all times.
 - Engaging local actors can put them at risk, depending on the context, and they may not always be aware of all the risks. Risk analysis must be conducted, and appropriate mitigation measures taken.

- After localisation has been largely completed, many local CSOs have expressed that they would prefer that international partners not return should the country enter a new period of crisis, as their presence will overshadow and undermine the local infrastructure that took so long to build.
- There are many approaches INGOs have taken to try to structurally integrate localisation in their work.
 - One example given was of an organisation that primarily works in its country of origin, and has enshrined in its charter that it will only work in other locations if invited by a local actor who will maintain leadership of the project.
 - Another was an organisation which takes the form of a coalition of member organisations of varying sizes in different locations, with regional representatives guiding decision-making at the centre. This model facilitates the exchange of knowledge, ideas, best practices etc. It was acknowledged however that such a participatory approach creates challenges for speed and efficiency of action.
 - Another was described as a “federated model”, where local groups work on the issues relevant to their context, but the overall structure provides a link to the national and international level.
- The EU is perceived as having good intentions with respect to localisation, and progress is being made, but many **“practical and strategic barriers” remain**.
 - Most European funding goes to European and international CSOs, which needs to change. European/INGOs should also understand that in that regard, the push for localisation is to an extent against their own interests and **push for it anyway**.
 - Small organisations are unable to directly apply for EU funding even if it is disbursed in smaller portions, as they do not have the capacity to handle the paperwork and administration involved.
 - Even when local organisations work with INGOs, requirements that they contribute to administration fees etc. create problems. The logframe/project-based orientation of almost all EU programming is also a barrier to them, as well as to the **flexibility and responsiveness** of all actions.
 - For those undertaking training, dialogue or similar kinds of event-based work, the inability of non-EU/Schengen participants to consistently be granted visas is a huge barrier.
 - Requirements that projects demonstrate significant, national-level impacts unintentionally prevent smaller organisations from submitting proposals. A wider definition of what constitutes an “impact” would be better.
- Multi-annual core funding has been discussed in CSDNs and other consultations in previous years, but has yet to become a widespread practice.
 - Irish Aid, USAID and the Dutch foreign ministry are recognised for effectively providing multiannual, relatively flexible funding. Their examples should be emulated.
- **Unrestricted, flexible and adaptive funding and programming tools** are “gold dust” for local partners, and needs to be more widely available to them.
 - Donors often have a conceptual problem with unrestricted funding, as they need to be accountable to taxpayers. But unrestricted does not have to mean unaccountable. There needs to be a reimagining of what accountability means on the donor side.

- Unrestricted funding can respond immediately to emerging crises – no need to write a proposal and wait six months.
- Good examples for unrestricted/flexible funding are the Center for Effective Philanthropy² and the Yemen Civil Society Solidarity Fund³.

² <https://cep.org/>

³ <https://www.saferworld-global.org/resources/news-and-analysis/post/1022-towards-solidarity-introducing-the-yemen-civil-society-solidarity-fund->

Small group B: *Maritime security and mediation*

Guiding questions:

- What are the best practices for enhancing maritime security through the integration of dialogue, mediation, and conflict prevention mechanisms, in combination with diplomatic efforts?
- What are the key challenges related to maritime security in conflict-prone regions, and how can these be addressed by the Commission and the EEAS with the support of CSOs in the upcoming Multiannual Action Programme?
- Which factors lead to innovative examples of CSO-driven mediation projects in maritime security issues within fragile contexts?

Discussion:

- There is **significant potential for accidents** in maritime contexts with high geopolitical tensions. Mediation, dialogue, back-channels and other means are needed to precisely stop events spiralling out of control.
 - States should establish **hotlines** for crisis communication in the wake of maritime incidents. Precedent exists – hotline for Persian Gulf between Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and US Central Command.
 - Risks in the Baltic Sea have risen drastically. Navigation-system jamming increases them further. Ships may collide, or WWII-era munitions explode.
- There needs to be better **knowledge-sharing**. Europe has much maritime security expertise, but it remains fragmented, rather than aggregated in a repository.
- Threats in the maritime domain are diverse: drug trafficking; illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing; human trafficking; and illicit hydrocarbon exploitation. We need to expand thinking on addressing these beyond just legal mechanisms.
- National and bilateral approaches dominate maritime security currently. In the South China Sea and Eastern Mediterranean, conflicting bilateral agreements hold the potential for conflict.
 - **Regional arrangements** are more necessary than ever. The wider question of how to revive multilateralism is highly relevant here.
 - There is untapped potential in existing structures such as the Red Sea Council. However, single actors can block such multilateral initiatives often, so such structures should not be relied on too much.
 - Civil society could lay the groundwork here, with a focus on dialogue rather than legal arbitration or law enforcement.
- Maritime mediation is a potential **entry point for broader dialogue**.
 - For example, the thematic issues of radiological risk reduction and grain markets were entry points for broader dialogue in Ukraine; the same principle could apply to maritime security in various contexts.
- In turn, **climate** can be an entry point for dialogue on maritime security.
- The technocratic nature of maritime issues can allow dialogue to continue even when the broader political climate is difficult.

- Even when dialogue Finland and Russia ceased at the political level, low-level discussions between relevant agencies on Baltic Sea geography, the transit of vessels, oil and gas transport etc. continued out of necessity.
- **Matrix thinking** can be applied to maritime security, encompassing simultaneously the levels of hard security, mediation and technical exchange.
 - One element supports institutions and dispute-resolution mechanisms, taking an “insurance” view of conflict prevention that seeks to resolve issues before they serve as flashpoints and/or require active mediation.
 - Another element does invest in continuous, active mediation on thematic issues. It cannot be known ahead of time if it will be a catalytic intervention, but the established networks/relationships will be useful either way when incidents arise.
- In the case of Guinea-Bissau, observatories have been established by CSOs to track emerging threats, such as fishermen reporting depleting stocks. Other involved local groups include women’s organisations, businesspeople etc, reporting on issues such as fisheries, migration, terrorism.
 - This approach should be emulated, funded, and scaled.
- Authorities in Northern Kenya wanted to ban small-boat fishing due to the threat of piracy and drugs/arms smuggling, particularly by Al-Shabab.
 - This would increase potential for radicalisation among fishermen who lost livelihoods. Instead, fishermen worked with local CSOs to develop a digital ID system for them to be identified as legitimate fishers.
- Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) missions should have dialogue capacity built into them. Currently, they usually have quite limited mandates focused purely on security.
 - Pre-deployment training for mission staff could equip them with sensitisation and mediation and dialogue facilitation skills. A certification could be a valuable incentive and help to connect this work to other sectors.
 - CSDP missions usually do not work to address root causes of conflict, but often have staff with excellent technical expertise. Leveraging this technical capability can “take the politics out” of incident response, which opens doors.

Small group C: *Critical raw materials and natural resource management in fragile contexts*

Guiding questions:

- What are good practices in promoting transparent and sustainable management of critical raw materials in fragile or conflict-affected areas?
- What key challenges do CSOs face in engaging with the NDICI-GE Thematic Programme on natural resource management in fragile contexts and in developing programmes on natural resource management in fragile contexts, and how can the Commission and EEAS better support their efforts to promote peacebuilding?
- How can natural resource management innovatively promote peacebuilding in vulnerable regions and strengthen original CSO-led initiatives that successfully mitigate conflict risks related to raw materials?

Discussion:

- Local communities must not only be involved but **give their consent** to projects. Their involvement means little if they are opposed to the project as such.
 - Without community consultation, many direct and indirect consequences are likely to be overlooked, particularly damage to lands used by indigenous communities.
 - This is an intrinsic problem but also a conflict driver as people driven off their traditional land have to move to land which may be used by others.
 - Critical material extraction does often occur on indigenous lands and those communities **must be supported in any transition** that the project produces.
- **Mechanisms for redress** are key, when human rights violations have occurred. Often no such mechanisms exist.
- **Lack of transparency is a conflict driver.** Where the perception exists that the benefits of natural resource extraction are not being distributed evenly, this can fuel conflict (e.g., Mozambique).
 - Conflict occurs both between communities and **within communities**. Grievances may arise if, for example, some members of a community secure jobs with an extraction project and others do not.
 - Thus, the community must not be viewed as a monolith, particularly when it is being consulted. All processes must be **inclusive** to the greatest possible extent.
- There should be **greater coherence and coordination** between DG INTPA's overseeing of GG projects and FPI's management of CPPB where they occur in the same geographic contexts.
 - The Thematic Programme could be used to ensure that **multi-assessments** are done, and that **GG programming is conflict-sensitive**.
 - Some conflict assessment is done, but often does not include civil society and is often not updated throughout the lifetime of projects. A combination of internal monitoring & evaluation and external accountability by CSOs would be ideal.
 - How can the EU **extend the regulations** which apply to European companies working in these contexts to all actors? Can the example of the Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive, as a generalised standard, be emulated?

- Risk assessments have become compulsory for private companies in many contexts, which is very positive. However, they often **do not understand how to interpret and act upon** these assessments.
 - The private sector should be supported in post-assessment follow-up.
 - Companies should be compelled to **use security services responsibly**. In conflict-affected contexts, some private security actors use child soldiers or former child soldiers. EU countries are not part of the Voluntary Principles Initiative, unfortunately.
- The differences between artisanal miners and large/multinational corporations must be understood. The latter can be more easily held to account, but in contexts where resource extraction is very straightforward, organised crime and/or non-state armed groups may become involved in the sector. Strengthening the local **rule of law** is key.
 - Multinationals should be required to be consistent. If they abide by European labour regulations in Europe; this should be extended to their operations in other contexts.
 - How to tackle actively **belligerent businesses** remains a key question.
- All of this is made much more difficult if the **national government** in a given country actively favours mining businesses who engage in abuses. Governments must be pushed to engage in **good governance**.
- In general, greater **coherence between the EU's internal and external policies** is urgently needed. All EU agreements, including trade agreements, should have human rights clauses.
 - It is true that actors such as China and Russia care much less about such standards, and the market is competitive. Where is the balance between upholding standards and securing access to materials? Currently, the EU approach appears to favour the latter.
- DG INTPA's establishment of Civil Society and Local Authorities Advisory Platforms is positive and could be emulated in the context of critical raw materials projects.
 - The mandate of these bodies needs to be clarified, however.
- When funding CPPB, the EU should **target specific conflict dynamics** and root causes rather than the conflict generally. This targeting should be based on assessments of the conflict.
- CSOs should be prepared to work **alongside the private sector**, whether it is consulting for companies, collaborating with them, or acting as a bridge between them and local populations.
 - Equally, the EU should consider doing more **consultancies** for the private sector to inform them on operating in conflict-affected contexts.
- CSOs will always have a vital role to play. Local CSOs are best equipped to implement CPBP and have expertise and knowledge **specific to the local context**.
 - Larger CSOs/INGOs should consider rethinking their role as one of facilitation of interaction between the EU and local CSOs.
 - The EU could assist in this by **better publicising information on funding** and issuing **cross-thematic** calls for proposals.
 - More **long-term funding** would also be hugely beneficial to CSOs.

- A 2019 report commissioned by DG INTPA on natural resource management had excellent recommendations, but there has been no funding for their implementation.

Small group D: Women, Peace and Security agenda: Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism

Guiding questions:

- What are good practices to effectively leverage the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda in order to prevent and counter violent extremism (PCVE) in fragile contexts, particularly with a view to its upcoming 25th anniversary?
- What are the specific challenges faced by women in preventing violent extremism, and how can the Commission and EEAS support CSOs in helping women to address these challenges?
- What elements should the Commission and the EEAS prioritise in designing WPS-related interventions to elevate innovative examples of CSO initiatives that have empowered women and to support women-led and feminist organisations to lead or participate in efforts to prevent violent extremism?

Discussion:

Recommendations related to PCVE:

- PCVE is just a small part of PBCP, and it tends to receive disproportionate attention and funding. The WPS agenda has a much broader role to play; by focusing too much on PCVE, we risk **instrumentalising women**.
 - There is an existing problem of WPS being looked at through an excessively militarised/securitised lens, often emphasising increased female representation in the military but WPS was intended to encompass a much broader range of perspectives and issues. Trying to “leverage WPS for PCVE” will worsen this issue, given PCVE is already approached in a highly securitised manner. The “countering” happens a lot more than the “preventing”, and the resulting military operations often hurt many civilians.
 - It would be better to see the breadth and depth of WPS realised – a transformative, upstream, whole-of-society approach to all PBCP.
 - PCVE budgets should be reallocated to gender-responsive conflict prevention.
- The definition and understanding of concepts matter:
 - PCVE is often construed only as applying to non-state groups, even though extremism and violence against civilians **frequently occur inside of state structures**.
 - This includes states and militaries which receive EU funding. There should be enforcement of existing laws prohibiting the sale/transfer of weapons where there is proof or high risk of their use against civilians.
 - The UK’s classification of misogyny as a type of violent extremism was a positive step.
 - National action plans (NAPs) are almost always externally-focused; there is increasing awareness of the need for PCVE within Europe, and CSOs should equally be working on **peacebuilding within Europe**.
- PCVE frameworks frequently have no gendered analysis. Such analysis is sometimes key to understanding the push and pull factors of recruitment to extremist groups.

- For example, former Boko Haram fighters in Nigeria and former Daesh/ISIS fighters in Jordan – many were motivated by gender-related issues and their reintegration into communities raises gender-related questions.
- In other words, the **gendered aspects of violence by men** and the socialisation that contributes to such violence must be studied. The analysis should be evidence-based, cross-sectoral and well-integrated into the wider PCVE framework. There should be gender-related indicators developed.
- Women in conflict-affected contexts often have their own indicators of what security means to them. They must be involved in PCVE not just for their experience but also for their practice. This makes processes more effective generally, as well as more inclusive.
- Violence-observatory systems should be led by local women activists, peacebuilders, journalists etc. self-reporting indicators of violence and conflict. They can then use that data, particularly about sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), to make their cases to policymakers for the necessary preventative actions.
- Ensuring the safety of women working in PCVE and CPPB generally is paramount. Allocating **funding for safety and protection** within programming is vital.
 - Do women’s groups have safe spaces to organise etc.
 - Often threats to safety take place in the digital space; tools like encryption matter when **online intimidation and retaliation** are ever-increasing problems. Women activists, journalists, politicians, and peacebuilders face threats of violence, threats of sexual violence, the manufacture of deepfake pornographic material and other evolving digital threats.
 - Sometimes it is not digital; sometimes it is just the **rhetoric** of populist politicians; this occurs in all countries, including partner states and within the EU.
- Many women’s groups are working more broadly on misogyny online, and there needs to be connection of this to the PCVE agenda.
 - Programmes which actively try to promote peace online, with gender-sensitive and positive narratives, are key, and need more funding and attention.
- Too often there is a tendency in PCVE and other contexts to see women exclusively as victims and not as actors. Experts, politicians, security actors are usually assumed to be and/or actually are male.

Recommendations related to WPS generally

- Very few WPS NAPs have funding associated with them; this needs to change. Given that PCVE tends to be very well-funded, perhaps the linking of the two agendas can be beneficial.
 - The development of the Finnish NAP was inclusive in a way many have not been, and it should be emulated.
- **Flexible funding** is particularly transformative for women’s groups. It allows them to foster coordination across different sectors, build a movement etc.
- While the over-militarisation of WPS is an issue, equally the presence of women in security/military contexts does matter, especially in societies where women are under-represented overall.
- There is always more work to do on **intersectionality** in the WPS agenda. It is still too often implemented by women from the societal elite exclusively.

- Indigenous women, disabled women and women in rural areas, for example, are particularly unlikely to get to contribute to reporting on their experiences when data collection is carried out. Projects should actively seek them out and put them first.
- The intersection with the Youth, Peace, and Security agenda is profound, especially when it comes to PCVE. Young people make up most recruits to extremist groups. The establishment and **consistency** of norms against terror tactics and targeting of civilians is vital, and those norms must have a strong gendered component.

Final reflections

- Programming should be gender-sensitive throughout.
 - **Gender-sensitive budgeting** may mean, for example, accounting for childcare costs or costs related to pregnancy so that everyone is able to participate in meetings/processes.
- **The increasing anti-gender backlash** is highly limiting. Some donors do not fund programmes associated with “gender”, and some governments will not accept reporting on this topic.
 - In some contexts, it has been necessary to drop the word “gender” from programming entirely to be able to engage at all. How can the EU maintain funding for this work in this climate?

Small group E: *Climate, Peace and Security agenda: Strengthening the linkages between community-based approaches and national/regional efforts*

Guiding questions:

- What are the best practices for supporting CSOs in bridging the gap between grassroots climate action and larger-scale peace and security frameworks, and how can their efforts be most effectively enhanced?
- What challenges should the EU address to strengthen the linkages between community-based and national/regional approaches to the Climate, Peace, and Security (CPS) agenda, and what should be prioritised to overcome them?
- Can you share examples of community-based efforts that have innovatively contributed to or were effectively integrated in national or regional climate, peace, and security strategies?

Discussion:

- There are problems of **communication** in the CPS agenda, hindering adaptation and mitigation efforts. The language used by the sector is often not understood by affected communities, who may not be aware of concepts like “climate justice”.
 - Necessary information often does not reach first responders working on the ground, or does not do so in a timely manner.
 - Equally, there should be more recording of conditions in affected communities and what adaptations people are making. This could be carried out by journalists, and must feed into high-level international discussions, such as the UNFCCC COP. Information must flow both ways.
- Work on climate and security frequently remains **siloes** in those two sectors. Many donors remain reluctant to fund cross-cutting projects.
 - Breaking out of silos is vital when working on risk multipliers which acutely affect and are affected by climate and conflict, such as food insecurity combined with poor governance and a climate disaster.
 - Bringing actors together from different sectors and different levels of work (international & national, government & CSO) can help to open minds.
- Working at scale is not always possible or desirable in conflict-affected situations. In fragile contexts, adaptation is often a case of many small actions which add up to (or go on to inform) something big.
- Relatedly, the intersectionality of **climate, conflict, and gender** should be explored more. Women are particularly impacted by climate change and conflict escalation, such as through land tenure and/or SGBV.
- **Youth** need a much greater voice in conversations on climate.
 - In some contexts, such as Southeast Africa, they account for half the population.
 - CSOs and international organisations must speak up for and amplify the voices of youth, particularly those who have been victimised by conflict, missed education, and/or forced to fight.
 - Many traditional/established structures in communities are not youth-representative.

- More structured methodology should be developed with the aim of including children's status in such discussions.
- The Republic of the Marshall Islands has demonstrated good practice on climate adaptation inclusive of youth; their national adaptation plan was contracted out to a youth NGO which ran consultations in communities.
- There is a **circular relationship** between climate and conflict risk.
 - Many climate adaptations can drive conflict, including large-scale projects such as GG-funded energy schemes or hydropower projects. Conflict sensitivity must be incorporated and communities consulted.
 - In turn, conflict can cause environmental damage. This happens both as a byproduct and when parties use the environment as a weapon, such as by restricting access to food and water sources. There must be mechanisms by which parties to conflicts are held accountable for this damage.
- Climate adaptation can be an **entry point for peacebuilding**. Climate finance can act as an incentive for inter-community cooperation. Climate change is a “common enemy”.
 - Climate adaptation/resilience can be a starting point for discussion with pariah states/groups – this has happened at the local level in Afghanistan, and may be applicable elsewhere such as in the Sahel.
 - In this way, conflict-sensitive climate work can produce a peace dividend.
 - Equally, PBCP can produce climate dividends, by preventing/ending the harm inflicted on ecosystems by conflict.
- **Indigenous knowledge** of local climate/ecosystems is often the most useful and accurate. It can be connected to early-warning systems and reinforced by agrometeorological data which is made accessible/user friendly.
- It is vital to work with **existing mechanisms and structures** in communities. The adaptation to long-term climate change is a generational challenge and can only be addressed through methods communities normally use to confront challenges, rather than norms/nexus that are new and unfamiliar.

Session 3: Report back from small group discussions and plenary exchange on possible identified recommendations

Rapporteurs from each of the small groups presented summaries of their discussions. The following were identified as key takeaways and cross-cutting issues from **all groups**:

- **Expertise:** how can it be mobilised? Who is in the room and are they the right people? What kind of outside-the-box perspective is needed and where can it be sourced?
- **Language/messaging:** it changes at local, national and international levels.
- The importance of **local knowledge**.
- Improving **synergy** and cooperation between CSOs and EU agencies and institutions.
- The dichotomy of **technical and political discussions**. Talking about issues at a technical level is often easier, but is that just avoiding the hard political discussion?
- **Regional-level cooperation** is increasingly important, especially with the crisis of multilateralism.
- **Flexibility** in funding, programming and cooperation has always been needed, but especially now.