

The European Union as a Global Peace Actor

Dear future elected Members of the European Parliament,

I am writing this letter on behalf of the European Peacebuilding Liaison Office (EPLO), the independent civil society platform of 55 European NGOs, networks of NGOs and think tanks that are committed to peacebuilding and the prevention of violent conflict. Following the European Parliament elections in June, your mandates as MEPs will lead you to play an important role in shaping how the EU will engage internationally in favour of peace and development.

As a peace project itself, the EU has a unique comparative advantage in promoting nonviolent forms of conflict resolution and contributing to long-term, sustainable peace across the world through its peacebuilding and development instruments, alongside initiatives like the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP). However, security and defence alone cannot address the complex array of challenges facing our world today. As multilateralism is increasingly being questioned, the rest of the world is counting on the EU as an advocate for cooperation and diplomacy.

In this letter, we would like to highlight four priorities that are crucial to strengthening and expanding the EU's role as a global peace actor, and that you can put on the agenda as future MEPs.

I. Financial support to peace and gender equality

As MEPs, you will have a role in shaping the next Multi-Annual Financial Framework (MFF) (2028-2034), and as such, you will play an essential role in **expanding the EU's financial support** to conflict prevention and peacebuilding, and protecting it from cuts driven by short-term interests. This funding allows the EU to contribute to preventing conflict and promoting **sustainable peace** through **long-term, transformational efforts** that address the root causes of conflict, including by promoting **inclusion** and addressing social, economic and political drivers of marginalisation. MEPs should push for more resources, political attention and strategic communication to advance the EU's commitments to **gender equality** and the implementation of the Gender Action Plan III and EU Youth Action Plan.

MEPs should also use their powers of scrutiny to track how the EU implements its instruments (European Peace Facility, CSDP missions, etc.) and makes more deliberate use of its diplomacy in working with partner governments to strengthen how they **deliver public services** (justice, health, education, etc.) in an equitable and responsive manner, and advance on their commitments on **governance**, democracy, the rule of law, human rights, and accountability. Establishing clear red lines in how the EU engages with partner governments will strengthen the EU's long-term credibility and leverage.

II. Partnerships with civil society

Civil society is facing a funding landscape marked by severe budget cuts in several Member States and an increasingly shrinking civic space. Your mandate as MEPs will enable you to reshape how the next MFF allocates funding to civil society actors active in the EU as well as in fragile and conflict-affected countries. Providing more long-term, accessible and flexible funding to local CSOs, and partnering with international NGOs, will make an enormous difference in maximising the EU's contributions to long-term peace.

MEPs should push the EU to systematically defend and protect an **open civic space** in its political dialogue with partner governments, and ensure that its partnerships contribute to safeguarding the ability of civil society actors to carry out their work, monitor government actions, and participate in the public debate. Similarly, MEPs should call for the EU to further **engage and consult with civil society**, particularly with local civil society actors in fragile and conflict-affected countries, so that its conflict analysis and external action reflect the communities' protection priorities and approaches to conflict resolution.

III. Response to conflict

In a global context of increasing military-oriented narratives, the EU is still well-positioned to expand its capacities in **mediation**. MEPs should ensure that the EU's role as a convenor and facilitator is increased, mediation as an EU external action tool is given visibility, and the Concept of EU Peace Mediation and its relative guidelines are implemented.

In line with its obligations for **conflict sensitivity** under the NDICI-GE, the EU has made significant progress in developing its processes for conflict analysis, and in connecting them with its early warning system. Moving forward, MEPs should monitor how EU programming is informed by **conflict analysis** that is regularly updated, and promote **early warning** and **early action**, including through high-level engagement and coordination with EU Member States.

IV. Connecting peacebuilding with all EU external instruments

MEPs can strengthen how peacebuilding and conflict sensitivity are linked to the full range of the EU's external instruments, including by calling for **human security** and **protection of civilians** to be central in all EU external security engagements. During **pre-appointment hearings**, the Foreign Affairs Committee will have the opportunity to ensure the next HRVP candidate is supporting the EU's peace commitments and policies, and will work to strengthen them. Transforming the Subcommittee on Security and Defence (SEDE) into a **Subcommittee on Peace and Defence** would help overcome the heavy focus on CSDP and military cooperation and address the EU's contributions to human security more holistically.

MEPs should also call for the EU's **green transition** to be conflict-sensitive and to actively contribute to peace. Joint approaches to climate adaptation, environmental protection, natural resource governance and sustainable energy production can serve as entry points for dialogue and mediation. In addition, MEPs should also advocate for a more intentional use of development assistance to address root causes of conflict, which would improve the implementation of the **humanitarian-development-peace nexus**.

We hope that as Members of the European Parliament, you will put these priorities at the centre of your work on EU external action, and we are ready to provide additional recommendations to translate them into practice. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you would like to discuss them further.

Yours sincerely,

Sonya Reines-Djivanides,
EPLO Executive Director