Civil Society Dialogue Network Policy Meeting

Peacebuilding in the EU Global Strategy:
Gathering civil society input

Tuesday 23 February 2016, Brussels

Meeting Report

Background

In June 2015, following the presentation of the report on the European Union in a changing global environment[1], the European Council invited the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs & Security Policy/Vice-President of the European Commission (HR/VP) to:

> 'continue the process of strategic reflection with a view to preparing an EU global strategy on foreign and security policy in close cooperation with Member States, to be submitted to the European Council by June 2016.'[2]

The overall objective of this Civil Society Dialogue Network (CSDN)[3] Policy Meeting was to gather input from civil society peacebuilding organisations for the 'Peace' section of the EU Global Strategy (EUGS).

The meeting brought together approximately 50 participants, including representatives of civil society peacebuilding organisations, and officials from both the European Commission (EC) and the European External Action Service (EEAS).

This report is a summary of the discussions which took place and the key recommendations made by individual participants during the meeting. As some issues were discussed in parallel sessions, the different points have been grouped thematically. The views expressed may not be attributed to any participating individual or institution nor do they necessarily represent the views of all of the meeting participants, the European Peacebuilding Liaison Office (EPLO) and its member organisations, or the co-organisers.

I.   State of play in the development of the EU Global Strategy

In the introduction session and in the concluding remarks, the objectives and main elements of the draft EUGS were presented to participants.

Since the European Council conclusions asked for a 'global' strategy, the EUGS will be global not only geographically but also thematically. In line with the spirit of the Lisbon Treaty and the mandate of the High Representative to 'ensure the consistency of the Union's external action'

---

[1] See The European Union in a changing global environment: A more connected, contested and complex world, 2015
[2] See European Council Conclusions, 25-26 June 2015
[3] 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 for Stability). 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 second phase of the CSDN will last from 2014 to 2016. For more information, please visit the EPLO website.

(Article 18.4), the EUGS will aim to offer a sense of vision and direction for both EU foreign policy and external action, including for EC instruments.

The EUGS will be based on an articulation of interests while encompassing the values enshrined in the Treaty on European Union. The principles for which the EU stands will be stated clearly. The main interests identified are:
- Security of the citizens and territory of the EU
- Prosperity and economic well-being of the citizens
- Resilience of the democratic systems and ability of the EU to live up to its principles and values
- A rules-based global order.

Theses interests all have both an external and an internal dimension. The increasingly blurred line between these two dimensions will come to the fore in the EUGS.

Several objectives have been identified:
- Strengthening the EU as a value-based security community. Looking at the many crises inside and outside Europe, the EUGS will address the demand for more security in a comprehensive way, taking into account the notion of human security.
- Strengthening the resilience of the EU's neighbouring countries. Yet, the EUGS would also look beyond the European Neighbourhood as there are other geographical areas equally important for the EU's security and its strategic interests.
- Developing a more integrated approach to conflict and crises. This will require taking a multi-level, multi-dimensional and multilateral approach. With regard to the multiple levels, interaction with civil society will be at the core of the EUGS. With regard to the multiple dimensions, the EUGS will highlight the need for a more concerted approach in all its relevant policies: including the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), climate, energy, humanitarian affairs, migration or trade. The particularly relevant role of the EC's Directorate-General for Trade (DG TRADE) in efforts to counter the circle of war economies was highlighted. However, it was also mentioned that while most policies work better in concertation, they should not necessarily all be merged together, as some of them can work better in isolation.
- On multilateralism more particularly, the EUGS will emphasise the need to work with partners, including traditional ones (e.g. the United Nations (UN), regional organisations, etc.) and newly rising ones as well as non-governmental actors. The importance of non-governmental actors should be recognised as long as it strengthens at the same time the multilateral system, with the UN at its centre. In addition, the EUGS will promote regional co-operation.

A final section of the EUGS will look at how the EU's instruments and policies can be tailored to the EU Strategy's goals; the CSDP was mentioned, as well as the further implementation of the Comprehensive Approach to External Conflicts and Crises. With regard to defence, the EUGS will give a sense of direction and more concrete details will be subsequently developed.

With regard to potential implications for the EU budget and the Multiannual Financial Framework, the EC has been included in the process for the preparation of the EUGS.

The EUGS will also take into account all international agreements to which the EU has subscribed, including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The link with civil society was emphasised several times. It is supposed to feature prominently in the EUGS.

Flexibility will also be very important, in particular flexibility to engage with non-democracies while not giving up on principles and values. The EUGS will look at ways of engaging which

move away from condescending aspects of conditionality and democracy promotion as the HR/VP considers that such methods are not effective at promoting democracy.

Despite the challenges and difficulties the EU faces, the EUGS aims to be a document which ensures that the EU's approach is one of engagement, rather than one of building walls.

In terms of process, no draft will be shared but consultation with a wide range of stakeholders is ongoing. The final product will be discussed by EU heads of state and government in the European Council at the end of June. It remains to be seen how the referendum in the UK, which is due to take place at the same time, will affect the discussions.

Finally, while the final product is very important, the process of consultation matters as much. Its ambition is to reconnect citizens to EU foreign policy.

II.   How could the EU better understand and prevent conflicts?

Improving the EU's conflict analysis
The EEAS, together with the EC and the Member States, have developed different tools to increase the EU's early warning and conflict analysis capacities, for instance a joint guidance note on the use of conflict analysis in support of EU external action. In addition, the Conflict Prevention Peacebuilding and Mediation Division in the EEAS (SECPOL2) regularly conducts 'light touch' internal conflict analysis (sometimes called 'situation analysis') by bringing together colleagues from the different EU institutions working on a specific country or region. External experts are often invited to contribute to these exercises.

The initiative is not compulsory but voluntary. It can be seen as a success because more and more EU officials are asking SECPOL2 to conduct such conflict analysis workshops with them. However, it remains a challenge to bring all relevant EU policy-makers around the table. Some participants recommended to *carry out such analysis more systematically and to increasingly involve all relevant EU actors, including from DG TRADE and the EC's Directorate-General for Home Affairs and Migration (DG HOME)*.

An early warning system has also been developed. It includes a checklist of root causes of conflicts which EU delegations (EUDs) are asked to look at when assessing structural risks of conflicts. It looks at many different parameters, such as the conduct of security services, the legitimacy of the government, the human rights situation, the degree of media freedom, the existence of mechanisms to deal with intergroup tensions, the management of natural resources, regional relations, etc.

Several participants emphasised the need to *listen to local actors – including women and youth groups, faith-based communities, minorities and the most vulnerable communities – when assessing conflict risks.* Such an approach would also enable the *identification of local capacities for peace* which could be better supported.

To engage more with local actors, beyond partner governments, participants recommended that *EUDs should be empowered and given more resources.* For the moment, EU officials working with CSOs are overstretched. According to one participant, the EU is indeed one of the donors with the lowest staff to budget ratio.

Some participants added that the conflict analysis process is very important and can be a tool for action when conducted carefully. It can help to bring the different actors together in a facilitated dialogue in order to share information and perspectives. This applies for EU internal conflict analysis, as well as for conflict analysis exercises conducted by or with local actors. In the meantime, the challenge of having to constantly update any conflict analysis as dynamics evolve on the ground was also mentioned.

On the challenge of gathering and processing information, one participant highlighted the **_need for more burden-sharing_** between the different actors, including EU Member States (MS). Another participant also suggested that regional organisations such as the EU and the AU should be able to brief the UN Security Council on conflict dynamics.

Obstacles to effective EU early action and conflict prevention
Several participants agreed that early warning signals and thorough conflict analysis are insufficient if they are not followed by adequate action. Some participants mentioned the challenges of getting MS' interest in and commitment for a country or region before the situation degenerates into crisis. Incentives should be found to ensure that conflict prevention is not always trumped by crisis management issues and stays on the political agenda. Other participants highlighted structural obstacles such as the separation between political guidance and funding, which can impede early action.

According to several participants, EU actors tend to think in terms of what EU instruments are available, instead of thinking first about the context. There has been some progress on that front, for instance with the preparation of political frameworks for crisis approach (PFCA) to analyse the context and assess options before the establishment of a CSDP mission is being discussed by Member States.

Throughout the meeting, several participants called for **_a change in the EU's institutional culture_** in order to overcome the fragmented EU system. One called for creative diplomacy. Another recommended that the **_EU should engage in a more political manner, develop EU geographic strategies which include clear end goals and exit strategies,_** and use scenario planning before taking action.

Participants agreed that conflict analysis before programming in conflict-affected countries should be mandatory. Several participants recommended that **_all EU instruments should be conflict-sensitive_**.

Interests and values
One participant recommended that the **_EU should continue to uphold its normative agenda as promoting universal norms and values is in the medium- and long-term interest of the EU and its MS._** Some participants argued that it is a comparative advantage of the EU (as opposed to MS) to be perceived as genuine when it talks about upholding values. Another participant explained later in the meeting that the EUGS has to be different from geopolitics and the war on terror because the EU contrasts with other intergovernmental organisations and is the only institution which could do something constructive for human security in the current difficult context.

After the adoption of the EUGS
Some participants recommended that the EU should **_be realistic about what the EUGS can achieve_** and to **_ensure that the political commitments it includes are complemented by appropriate resources and structural changes in the institutional set-up_**.

Several participants hoped that the EUGS would provide momentum for **_EU MS to become more proactive on conflict prevention_**. One suggested **_using the EUGS to propose updating the Gothenburg Programme_**, in order to further operationalise conflict prevention within the EU.

III.   **How could the EU support peacebuilding approaches to crisis management?**

CSDP and crisis management
There are different understandings of crisis management within the EU. For instance, the CSDP is often associated with crisis management, although it takes a long time to set up its missions and most of them actually work on long-term issues. A participant wondered how the

CSDP could become a more adaptable tool within its own current limits, while acknowledging that it would remain a very political tool, governed by MS.

Some participants highlighted that the EU still works in silos, while others emphasised that improvements have been made in this regard and recommended that *civil-military dialogue within EU structures and with third actors, including civil society, should continue*.

Protection of civilians and security zones

One of the questions on the agenda was 'What civilian and military capabilities are necessary to protect civilians and foster security zones?' The term 'security zones' raised many questions and would need to be further discussed. No participant could give examples of safe zones which worked well. They have not been successful in protecting all civilians and those outside or at the border of such zones are most at risk. Who should be responsible for securing any such zones would also be an issue.

One participant explained that what matters most for the protection of civilians is information, for instance on movements on the ground, routes to safer places, the effects of chemicals being used against them, etc. They also mentioned that the UN was discussing this.

At another point in the meeting, a participant argued that military interventions have demonstrated their limits. If international presence might still be needed on the ground, it would rather be as civilian-led missions monitoring local ceasefires and human rights.

Beyond crisis management

Some participants referred to the limited potential for the EU, including the CSDP, in the immediate protection of civilians in crisis situations and preferred discussing other tools and actors which the EU could support. Throughout the meeting, participants recommended that the *EU should invest more in conflict prevention and peacebuilding, rather than in crisis management, including within EU structures*.

Mediation

One participant explained that the EU's limited capacity in crisis management can also be used as strength for facilitating dialogue between different conflict parties (e.g. Egypt, where the former HR/VP could speak to all parties). The participant recommended that *mediation tools and practices should clearly be part of the EU's toolbox in crisis management*. Later in the meeting, another participant highlighted that the EU was unlikely to get a global mandate for Track 1 mediation very regularly and should continue improving its capacities in political dialogue and convening local-level dialogue.

EU support to local actors

Several participants argued that the EU should *increase its support for peacebuilding civil society organisations in crisis areas in a demand-driven way and simplify the EC's funding rules for activities taking place in crisis contexts*. A participant also highlighted the need to *provide core funding* in addition to project funding, in order to increase flexibility.

A participant emphasised that working with local and international CSOs is very different; the EU should therefore take this diversity into account when engaging with them.

A participant recommended that *EUDs should be given more space and resources to take a more proactive role with regard to public diplomacy and coordination in crisis management.*

In terms of EU support to partner countries and regional organisations, it was noted that institutional capacity building does not necessarily lead to more accountable institutions or stronger institutional frameworks. It is essential to frame security sector reform (SSR) as a discussion about the social contract rather than as a technical process. It is even more important today, while migration is very high on the political agenda, to ensure that efforts to

counter migration, for instance capacity building of police and border control services, do not trump human security concerns.

With regard to 'Train & Equip' efforts, many participants mentioned that there are several risks in providing equipment to security services whose accountability can be questioned. In a separate discussion, a participant also explained that the provision of equipment by the EU might be worthwhile only under limited conditions, *inter alia* if it is part of a strategic framework, a policy or strategy of the partner country, where there is ownership on SSR processes, when it aims at strengthening human security and excluding lethal equipment..

In general, participants recommended that when engaging in SSR and other institutional capacity building efforts for crisis management, the EU should ***ensure that partner governments are genuinely interested in inclusive reforms and in making the relevant institutions more accountable to the population.***

A participant mentioned the human rights violations committed by AMISOM, the African-Union led peace support operation in Somalia, which receives a significant part of its budget from the EU. It was recommended that the EU should ***reflect on the effectiveness of such support and hold its partners which are being funded for peace support operations accountable***.

Integrating gender perspectives
Participants debated the efficiency of inclusive peace processes, some arguing that having too many people around the table can be counterproductive depending on the context, while others insisted on the inclusion of nonviolent groups, including women and youth.

There was wide acknowledgement however that the security and defence sectors are still lagging behind when it comes to integrating gender perspectives and that the EU should ***uphold the implementation of the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 and lead by example***, for instance by having more women EU officials dealing with security issues.

IV. How could the EU better support inclusive governance?

Building on existing policy frameworks
Several participants recommended that the ***EUGS should be embedded into existing policy frameworks, such as the New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States and the SDGs*** which aim to address the issue of inclusive governance.

For many participants, inclusive governance is about getting peaceful and stable societies. It aims at ***building trust between citizens and the state*** by creating accountability mechanisms (with an emphasis on justice), generating meaningful citizens' engagement and improving service delivery. It is very much linked to the issue of ***human security***, which, according to several participants, ***should be a core principle of the EUGS***.

Inclusive governance is important not only in conflict-affected countries but also in countries in situations of fragility or with very high inequalities.

The EU is already supporting inclusive governance in several countries. For the 2014-2020 programming, 70 partner countries have selected governance as one of the three focal sectors, of which 40 focus on justice and 15 on SSR.

It was noted that since the Agenda for Change, the EU has been taking a human-rights based approach in all its programmes. There have been improvements but it is a long process.

Budget support and political dialogue

According to one participant, budget support and the political dialogue which comes with it are key instruments for supporting inclusive governance. If the process is skilfully led by the Head of Delegation and supported by the Member States, it can give the EU a lot of political leverage for human rights and reforms. On the technical aspect, it is particularly useful for improving public finance management, transparency and accountability.

Some participants stated that budget support may not work well in all contexts. For instance, one participant raised the issue of predatory states which may have no interest in reforming.

On support to local actors, a participant emphasised that local CSOs should hold the EU and their governments to account in particular on finance and budget issues, and may need capacity building in this regard. At the same time, the issue of the shrinking space for civil society was also raised with the recommendation that it should be placed higher on the agenda.

A participant argued that inclusive governance should also be about national institutions, for instance to ensure that women and minorities are also represented in parliament and responsive to local needs. As this goes beyond classical development assistance, it also highlights the importance of having a good political dialogue with the partner country.

Throughout the meeting, several participants recommended a ***better use the EU's leverage for reforms which address the root causes of conflict.*** One stated that the EU has instruments for conditionality and had been using them mainly for economic reforms and macro-economic stabilisation. They argued that the EU should use them more to fight corruption and impunity, as well as to promote social justice.

Gathering relevant analysis

Participants agreed that even though analysis is not a silver bullet it is a very important first step to design programmes and reforms which have more chances to bring sustainable results. ***Thorough political economy analysis is crucial to understand the diversity of needs and interests as well as power and conflict dynamics.***

Talking with many different actors, beyond partner ministries is, therefore, very important. One participant also suggested that ***monitoring and evaluation of service delivery***, for instance community school cars, can serve as a ***space to discuss and identify needs at the local level***. This would contribute to increasing citizens' engagement in governance monitoring.

However, EU officials, who are often under time pressure, might only talk to national authorities and not civil society when identifying the needs at the local level.

On information gathering, it was also noted that MS should share more information and analysis with the EU institutions.

Strengthening the link between EUDs and civil society

Some participants mentioned that in order to engage more meaningfully with civil society and better support locally-driven initiatives, EU officials should be trained and EUDs in particular should be provided with more resources. EU officials not being rewarded or encouraged to take the time to talk to CSOs beyond project management issues was also identified as an obstacle. Participants recommended ***incentivising EUD staff to reach out to civil society, increasing the number of civil society focal points in EUD operational sections and creating civil society focal points in the political sections***.

Some participants placed particular emphasis on dialogue with local CSOs while another argued that the added value of international CSOs is their ability to make the links between different contexts.

V. How could the EU address the economic dimensions of conflict?

Integrating peace in economic development projects
A participant explained that four factors can promote peace-conducive economic developments: decent livelihoods, capital accumulation, revenue collection and services, as well as environmental and social sustainability. However, this cannot be left to chance, which is why the *EU should deliberately integrate peace into its own economic development projects* and in the ones the EU supports through the UN and development banks. This should also apply for countries in situations of fragility or lower-intensity conflicts.

Using the EU's regulatory clout
Participants discussed the need to engage with the private sector for peacebuilding. One explained that there are contested views on the role of transnational companies, which tend to have a very negative impact in conflict contexts, on the contrary to medium- and small-sized local enterprises, which often have more interest in seeing the situation improving.

Some participants argued that the EU has recently been lagging behind on social norms and should *use its regulatory clout to emphasise corporate social responsibility (CSR) norms* with the private sector and existing OECD guidelines, at transnational, national, and local levels. A participant also argued that the EU should even *encourage companies to go beyond a 'do no harm' approach towards actively supporting peace in their business practices*.

Some participants regretted that engaging with DG TRADE on such a discussion is often difficult despite the fact that integrating peace into EU trade policies could be extremely useful.

Shadow, criminalised or war economies
A participant used the term 'criminalised economy' instead of 'war economy', emphasising links with criminal networks and ramifications beyond conflict-affected countries. Another preferred to talk about '*shadow economies'* because they *encompass a wide range of impacts on communities, sometimes including a positive role on conflict dynamics*. For instance, informal cross-border trade initiatives in the Great Lakes region can provide space for peacebuilding activities. In the longer term however, such shadow economies should be gradually formalised in order to sustain income generating opportunities.

The impact of EU internal policies
Participants also highlighted the *need to assess the impact of EU internal policies on war or criminalised economies*. The example of restrictive migration policies increasing the smuggling economy was mentioned.

A participant also highlighted that the EU should use its normative power to ensure that anti-organised crime and counter-terrorism measures at the international level would contribute to countering war/criminalised economies without making it more difficult for CSOs to receive funding.

Sanctions
With regard to sanctions, there was debate as to their effectiveness. Some participants argued that sanctions send an important political message, whilst others maintained that in certain cases (e.g. Syria and Serbia) they have contributed to the war/criminalised economy. It was noted that in the case of South Africa where they worked, the African National Congress (ANC) had called for sanctions.

Participants recommended *engaging with CSOs before adopting sanctions in order to assess potential negative impacts which may contribute to war or criminalised economies* and to ensure that all sanctions are in conformity with international law. In addition, if sanctions are approved, then *constant monitoring alongside CSOs to ensure continuity and evidence-based review should be ensured*.