

FROM THE HEART OF THE GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP: THE REGIONAL PROCESS IN WEST AFRICA

The Regional Conference for Conflict Prevention and Good Governance Organisations and Practitioners in West Africa took place on 30 August – 2 September 2004 in Accra, Ghana. Around sixty participants from across West Africa presented and discussed subjects such as the possibilities for using election as a tool for stability in West Africa and the role of CSOs in ensuring individual and collective security in the region.

Speakers from organisations such as USAID-West African Regional Program (WARP), Centre for Democratic Development (CDD-Ghana) and the Foundation for Security and Development Africa (FOSDA) addressed subjects covering the role of CSOs in conflict prevention in West Africa.

Participants of the Conference gave their input in the workshops held during the Conference that focused on the identification and review of existing collaborative initiatives amongst CSOs, between CSOs and governments, and CSOs and ECOWAS. Participants also discussed the challenges that are involved in preventing violent conflicts

and the strategies that can be used in an integrated approach. Each workshop was separated into a thematic working group addressing key issues in the region: elections, religion, human rights, small arms, gender, conflict prevention, media, youth and chieftaincy. The Conference resulted in the Action Agenda for West Africa.

The Action Agenda focused on the role that CSOs can play in different phases of conflict – from the pre-crisis phase to peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction. Participants came to the conclusion that CSOs can play an important role in structural prevention before conflicts start, operational prevention during a conflict and structural prevention in peacebuilding. The following is a summary of the Action Agenda recommendations for nine thematic areas pertaining to the West African region:

1. Prevention of Armed Conflict

The conference agreed that protocols on conflict prevention, and peace and security should be disseminated by CSOs at the community level. At the national level, CSOs should implement mechanisms



Regional Conference West Africa

for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of these protocols by governments. They should form national networks across borders for better collaboration, and share best practices and lessons learned.

2. Human Rights

In this area, CSOs can play the part of an intermediary by sensitising communities about their fundamental human rights on the one hand and lobbying governments and international organisations to enforce laws that protect the human rights of the communities. →

THE UN, CONFLICT PREVENTION AND CIVIL SOCIETY: A SERIES OF 'EXPERT' MEETINGS

The Global Conference on Civil Society in the Prevention of Armed Conflict and Peacebuilding that will be held in New York on 19-21 July 2004 is the culmination of a three-year process in which civil society organizations and other key actors in conflict prevention and peacebuilding have researched and discussed their roles in this field. One of the aims of the Conference is to identify mechanisms for interaction between civil society, the UN, Regional Organisations and governments, and to promote improved interaction between CSOs and the UN, governments and other actors. More importantly, the Conference is intended as an opportunity to articulate a policy change agenda aimed at achieving a shift to prevention in how governments and the

international community view and address conflicts.

Despite having extensive experience in working within their societies and regions, many members of the Global Partnership have only had sporadic interaction with operational agencies in the field. This means that many organisations have not been able to engage effectively with decision-making processes for shaping mandates and policies 'upstream' at UN Headquarters or in UN field operations; nor has the UN benefited fully from organisations' knowledge, insight and capacity.

A series of meetings have been planned that will provide opportunities for systematising approaches being used by developing more effective partnerships between the UN, CSOs

and other actors in the conflict prevention. The meetings are open to a small group of people who have particular knowledge of the interaction between the UN and civil society organisations, specifically in the field of conflict prevention.

The ECCP has issued Dr. Catherine Barnes to produce a discussion paper, entitled *The United Nations, Civil Society and Preventing Armed Conflict* is being used as a basis for discussion at these meetings, which will provide input to develop and highlight both points of consensus and points of divergence on this subject. The draft versions of this paper serve as input for Regional Conferences and the final version will serve as input for the Global Conference in New York in July 2005. →

➔ continued: *The regional process*

3. Elections

CSOs, political parties and governments can research and assess the strengths and weaknesses of electoral processes and inform citizens thoroughly to encourage participation. The conference agreed that computerising votes and making the process as transparent as possible would contribute to efforts in preventing vote rigging and in encouraging an efficient and fair electoral process.

4. Youth

International organisations should develop regional youth policies that will be included in national conflict prevention policies, and that focus on youth skill development and youth in the prevention, management and resolution of conflict. Effective cross-border networking between youth groups can facilitate sharing experiences and best practices.

5. Chieftaincy

Governments and CSOs should research and document the chieftaincy lineages in communities; by now, CSOs are in a position to build on the capacities of traditional leaders in conflict prevention. As most conflicts centre around natural resources, CSOs should advocate for the implementation of an effective resource administration policy. In addition to this, CSOs can facilitate the establishment of a council of traditional rulers who can mediate in conflicts in their regions.

6. Small Arms Proliferation

CSOs can campaign for the fight against small

arms proliferation and lobby governments and National Commissions on Small Arms to form a convention from the existing Moratorium on Small Arms. National Commissions can work together with security agencies to reduce the spread of small arms across borders.

7. Gender

Creating a greater understanding and promotion of gender in conflict prevention is an effective way for CSOs to build their own capacities. Organisations such as Women in Peacebuilding Network (WIPNET) and Manor River Union Women in Peacebuilding Network can work to advocate women's involvement in conflict prevention, management and resolution.

8. Religion

The basis of the recommendation is to call on faith-based organisations to exhort their followers to reject fanaticism and tolerate other believers. Regional interfaith councils should collaborate with governments, ECOWAS and the UN to influence policies at the national, regional and international levels, and to prevent faith-related violence.

9. Media

The West African Network for Peace (WANEP) and the West African Civil Society Forum (WACSOF) can facilitate and coordinate the formation of media networks across West Africa to build the capacity of the media, especially in reporting on conflicts.

The key conclusion of the Action Agenda for West Africa is that CSOs can have a huge influence on preventing armed conflicts.



Participants of the Conference

Often CSOs can act quickly and flexibly to respond to conflict situations because of their inside knowledge of unfolding events and their non-political nature, which is especially important when official actors are immobilised due to mandates, political will and their own official status.

The Conference also concluded that the greatest need for accomplishing effective prevention is the formation of partnerships and interaction between CSOs, governments, international governmental organisations and other local actors. There is a need for mechanisms and resources for this interaction so that the capacity for prevention can be institutionalised. Also, there is a need for official acknowledgement of the legitimacy of CSOs in peace and security matters. So, although the primary responsibility for conflict prevention rests with national governments and other local actors, CSOs have a great potential for contributing to creating more legitimate processes and sustainable outcomes in conflict prevention.

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The European Centre for Conflict Prevention acts as the International Secretariat for the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict as well as the secretariat for the International Steering Group.

➔ continued: *A series of*

Geneva, 21 July 2004

A working group meeting on the UN, Conflict Prevention and Civil Society was held on 21 July 2004 at the Quaker House in Geneva, Switzerland to stimulate the facilitation of the process that will form concrete recommendations that will make up the Global Action Agenda. Members of the meeting included representatives from UNDP, UNESCO, WHO, the Swedish government, Swisspeace, UNCOPAC, the War Torn Society Program and the Quakers.



Working group meeting, Geneva

The timing of this meeting corresponded with the release of the Report of the UN Secretary-General's Panel of Eminent Persons on UN-Civil Society Relations (also known as the Cardoso Panel). It was a follow-up event on an earlier meeting that was held in February 2004 in New York between members of the Global Partnership and the NGO-UN conflict Prevention Working Group on the interaction between CSOs and the United Nations and on what concrete recommendations can be made. These meetings are in addition to the fifteen Regional Conferences that are being held worldwide and that will produce the experiences and recommendations of each region.

The aims of this meeting were to review the role of the UN in conflict prevention; to produce concrete recommendations to improve the interaction between the UN and CSOs, especially in the field of conflict prevention and by discussing the recommendations from the Cardoso Panel; and, to link the Global Partnership with key persons from UN agencies in Europe in the field of conflict prevention.



➔ continued: A series of

One of the highlights of the meeting was the increased involvement in the Global Partnership's process of UN officials based in Geneva. The meeting also underlined the fact that the Global Partnership needs to make use of the momentum at this moment on the overall UN reform process, and to try to create right relationships in order to make the Global Partnership a successful one. One of the points that came to light for improvement was that, in making recommendations or advocating change, the Global Partnership should be clear and strategic about which recommendations require the approval of member states and which can be directly implemented by the UN Secretariat. All in all, the strength of the meeting lay in the meeting of minds that defined the facilitation process leading to the Global Conference.

New York, 18 October 2004

The next 'expert' meeting will be held in New York on 18 October 2004. The aims of this meeting are to review key features

of the UN's existing system for preventing armed conflicts, and especially interaction with civil society actors; and, to develop recommendations to improve the interaction between the UN and CSOs, specifically in the fields of conflict prevention and peacebuilding.

The four main questions the meeting will be addressing are:

1. What strategies and mechanisms are there that will enhance overall decision-making leadership in the UN system for operational prevention?
2. How can we implement strategic coordination and 'entry points' at UN Headquarters?
3. Can we implement regional conflict prevention centres? How?
4. How can we prevent counter-productive strategies and operations from being implemented on the ground that are undermining medium to long-term peacebuilding plans? This is in relation to CSO engagement in-country with UN field operations.

FROM THE REGIONS

The Balkans
In Igalo, Montenegro a Regional Steering Group meeting for the Balkans took place on 27-28 August. This meeting was planned after almost all of the national meetings had taken place in the region. (The national conference in Kosovo was planned the week after the Regional Steering Group meeting.) At the national meetings Action Agendas were formulated that will be incorporated into a Regional Action Agenda. At each national meeting, ten delegates were chosen to represent the country at the Regional Conference in November.

These meetings were evaluated at the Regional Steering Group meeting and participants discussed the different ways in which the region could create its own Regional Action Agenda with consensus. Another major decision that had to be taken concerned the format and content of

the *Balkan Regional Conference on Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding*, planned for 4-6 November in Igalo, Montenegro.

Key issues to be discussed at the conference are:

1. Peace Education
2. Transitional Processes and EU Integration
3. Dealing with the Past
4. Returnees and Integrations
5. Inter-ethnic Dialogue, Human Rights, Minorities, and Human Security
6. Peacebuilding through Gender Perspectives / Women in Peacebuilding
7. Role of Religious Communities in Peacebuilding
8. Interaction of Various Levels and Actors: International Organisations, Governments, Civil Society Organisations, etc.

Western CIS

Under the leadership of the United Nations Association of Bulgaria, a thematic conference for the Western CIS region was organised on 'Cross-border Collaboration between Intergovernmental Organisations and Civil Society in Prevention of Violent Conflicts', in Sofia, 24-25 July 2004.

At the conference, participants discussed (amongst others) issues on: the experience of participating NGOs in political, informational, educational and practical aspects of conflict prevention – a comparative analysis; the role of civil experts in conflict resolution; the role of youth in intercultural communication for conflict prevention; the Transdnestrian conflict; the conflicts in the Caucasus; and, the Euro-regions model of cross-border cooperation.

OBJECTIVE OF THE GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP

The primary objective of the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict is to create a fundamental shift in how the world responds to conflict by developing a common platform for effective action in conflict prevention from the community to the global level.

AIMS

1. To explore the roles of civil society in conflict prevention and peacebuilding
2. To identify mechanisms for interaction between civil society, the UN, regional organisations and governments and promote improved interaction between CSOs and the UN
3. To establish regional and international conflict prevention and peacebuilding networks and to strengthening existing ones
4. To produce Regional Action Agendas and a Global Action Agenda for conflict prevention and peacebuilding
5. To articulate a policy change agenda aimed at achieving a shift to prevention in how governments and the international community view and address conflict
6. To implement awareness raising activities on conflict prevention and peacebuilding

FUNDING & SUPPORT

Eight governments have thusfar decided to support the programme: Austria, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands, Sweden, and Switzerland. A number of NGOs and institutions also support the programme: NCDO, World Vision, Cordaid and Novib/Oxfam the Netherlands. Many other organisations are supporting the regional processes.

The Global Partnership has also received support in the form of letters from UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan; EU Commissioner for External Relations, Christopher Patten; Executive Director of UNIFEM, Noeleen Heyzer; and Deputy Permanent Representative of Italy to the U.N., Minister Aldo Mantovani, on behalf of the European Union.

THE GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP ONLINE

The Global Partnership's website can now be accessed at: www.gppac.net

The comprehensive website is an opportunity for regions to present their own processes within the Global Partnership. Furthermore, the website is being continually developed to house informative resources that visitors will be able refer to for more information on conflict prevention and links that are relevant for the Global Partnership.

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PEOPLE BUILDING PEACE II: 65 INSPIRING STORIES



A major outcome of the Global Partnership's programme is a book provisionally entitled *People Building Peace II: 65 inspiring stories*. *People Building Peace* will be published by Lynne Rienner Publishers, and is a book that will include sixty-five inspiring stories of civil society actors' successes in the field of conflict prevention and peacebuilding all around the world.

People Building Peace describes and explores the roles of key civil society actors and sectors in peacebuilding and conflict prevention processes such as peace processes, awareness-raising campaigns, and education. *People Building Peace* gives an overview of the current state of affairs, and latest trends and developments in peacebuilding in relation to civil society, the UN and other international organisations.

The cases presented in this book reflect the broad variety of activities in conflict prevention and peacebuilding being initiated and sustained by such diverse groups as women, youth and faith-based organisations in such diverse countries as Liberia, Macedonia, Argentina, Nigeria, and Cambodia. Each chapter includes inspiring

case studies of how people can, and have, made a difference in this field.

Authors contributing to the book are from a broad spectrum of the conflict prevention field such as civil society actors, academics, and practitioners. By now, over 200 inspiring cases have been collected.

In addition to this, the ECCP has approached some prominent public figures such as H.M. Queen Noor of Jordan, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, President Xanana Gusmao of East Timor and Max van der Stoep, the First OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities (1992 - 2001) and many others, to contribute to *People Building Peace*. The responses so far have been very positive and the ECCP looks forward to receiving their contributions for the book.

People Building Peace will be presented to UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan and all other participants at the Global Conference at UN Headquarters in July 2005. The publication will, in addition, have a worldwide distribution both through the network of this programme and through Lynne Rienner Publishers' own network of university programmes on conflict resolution and peacebuilding.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

2004

October

- Central Asia: Regional Conference
- Pacific: Regional Conference
- Southeast Asia: Regional Conference

October, 26-28

- Central & Eastern Africa: Regional Conference

November

- Middle East & North Africa: 2nd sub-regional meetings
- Balkans: Regional Steering Group Meeting and Regional Conference
- Southern Africa: Regional Conference
- Pacific: National consultations (*between November and February 2005*)

November, 4-6

- Balkans: Regional Conference, Igalo, Montenegro

November, 19-20

- Caucasus: Regional Conference, Tbilisi, Georgia

November, 20

- North America: Regional Conference, Ottawa, Canada

2005

February

- Latin America and the Caribbean: 2nd Regional Conference, Caracas, Venezuela
- Africa: Inter-Regional Consultation, Nairobi, Kenya
- N.E. Asia: Regional Conference, Seoul, Korea
- Southeast Asia: Regional Conference

March

- Pacific: Regional Conference, Fiji Islands

July, 12-15

- UN review conference on Small Arms

July, 19-21

- Global Partnership Conference at UN Headquarters, New York, U.S.A.