

Conflict prevention: a major priority for the EU external relations

In the year 2001, the EU adopted at the end of the Swedish Presidency its Göteborg Programme for the Prevention of Violent Conflicts. That programme confirms the prevention of conflict by peaceful means to be a major (if not the first) priority of the emerging Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and the European Union Security and Defence Policy (ESDP). Since then, all EU institutions have adopted substantial positions on the issue of EU conflict prevention, and the European Parliament has taken the stand that the development and use of peaceful means must be considered a higher priority than the development of the military Rapid Reaction Force (RRP).

Conflict prevention demands a structural long-term strategy and the development and enhancement of short-term instruments.

For a structural long-term approach:

socio-economic: sustainable development in the social, economical and ecological fields;

cultural: democratisation and the promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence;

arms: disarmament;

juridical: enforcing human rights, international humanitarian law, the international judicial order and international co-operation and integration, capacity building;

For a short-term instrumental approach:

development and enhancement of instruments for short-term crisis-prevention.

1. Regarding sustainable development in the social, economical and ecological field: The EU should work on bringing more justice into international trade. Access to the European market for LDC's should be seriously improved. Dumping of agricultural surplus on the world market should be stopped. The position of LDC's in the WTO should be strengthened. The fight against poverty has to become a central objective for all relevant international institutions in this. Debt cancellation for LDC's has to be a priority. The EU should continue to build economic partnerships with the Cotonou-agreement as an example.
2. Regarding democratisation and the Promotion of a Culture of Peace and Non-violence:
 - 2a. The EU should promote a strengthening of the European PHARE, MEDA and TACIS programs. These programs should devote sufficient attention to democratic education, human rights education, training in non-violent conflict handling, interethnic dialogue and exchanges between countries.
 - 2.b The EU and the member states should contribute to the UN decennium for a Culture of Peace and Non-violence, by promoting the inclusion of peace-education and training in non-violence, into the educational curricula throughout the world.
 - 2.c In post-conflict reconstruction, the EU can support the installation of truth-commissions in post-conflict areas.
 - 2.d Women play a key role in prevention of conflict and building of peace. Post-conflict reconstruction has to be subjected to a 'gender impact assessment' and women's organisations have to be sufficiently involved in this.
 - 2.e The EU should work hard to maximise democratic transparency and the implication of the European Parliament and the National Parliaments of the EU member states, with the development of the Common External and Security Policy and the European Security and Defence Policy of the European Union.

2.f The EU should support independent, democratic and decentralised media throughout the world.

3. Regarding disarmament:

3.a The EU must make serious efforts to take into account the conclusions of the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons and support the struggle against the unbridled distribution of such weaponry.

3.b The EU has to increase the effectiveness of the European code of conduct on arms export: the code must become legally binding; the code must also take on arms brokering; a new European arrangement for end-user certificates is needed.

3.c The EU has to work on the enforcement of the EU program for the prevention and the fight against illegal trade in conventional arms.

3.d The EU must support the UN-initiative regarding conflict diamonds and the creation of a world-wide certificate system.

3.e The EU should make sure that, in post-conflict reconstruction, sufficient efforts are dedicated to demilitarisation, demobilisation and reintegration of ex-combatants.

3.f The EU should insist that states, which have not yet signed the Anti-Personnel Mine Treaty, would do so as soon as possible. Anti-manipulation mechanisms also have to be incorporated into this treaty. The EU should support initiatives to ban cluster bombs.

3.g The EU must see to it that the International Convention Against the Recruitment, Use, Financing and Training of Mercenaries is properly implemented.

3.h The EU should support initiatives in the struggle against the use of child soldiers.

3.i All US-nuclear weapons should be removed from Europe.

4 Regarding the enforcing of human rights, international humanitarian law, the international Rule of Law and international co-operation and integration:

4.a The EU should promote training in International Humanitarian Law to Military forces, specifically in the Balkans, Eastern Europe and the Middle-East. Violent conflicts tend to get worse when regular armies commit disproportionate and indiscriminate violence.

4.b The EU should strengthen the UN and work towards one EU-seat in the UN-security council.

4.c The EU must seriously work towards a quick realisation of the enlargement of the Union and increase the financial means for the pre-accession fund.

4.d The EU and the member states should insist that states which have not yet signed the treaty on the International Criminal Court would do so as soon as possible.

5 Regarding the development of instruments for short-term crisis-prevention

5.a The civilian Rapid Reaction Capacity should also be deployable in pre-crisis situations and should gradually evolve into an European Civil Peace Corps, according to the concept as adopted by the European Parliament on several occasions, financed at EU Community level, and fully making use of the forces of civil society and NGOs.

5.b The EU has to form a working group on smart sanctions. These sanctions should allow not to hurt the entire population, but rather the power elite these sanctions are aimed at.

5.c The EU has to investigate how, in the field of conflict prevention, a regular consultation with the OSCE and the UN can be brought about, analogous to the structured consultation with the NATO in the field of crisis management. Within the Union should also be investigated, how EU-instruments for conflict-prevention within the framework of OSCE and UN initiatives can be incorporated.

5.d The EU should strengthen the efficiency of humanitarian aid and augment its potential on the field of crisis prevention.

5.e The EU should strengthen the Policy Planning and Early Warning Unit (PPEWU) for the sake of transparency and democratic control - transfer this Unit to the European

Commission. The PPEWU has to grow into a source of expertise in the field of the development and enhancement of coherence and effectiveness of instruments for prevention of conflicts.

6. Regarding women's involvement in conflict prevention, solution and post-conflict rehabilitation:

6.a. Equal participation and representation in all bodies of negotiation and decision-making, peace-services.

6.b Specific training for women in conflict resolution teams

6.c Training of military personnel, as well as police forces and UN personnel upon gender aspects

6.d Specific attention on sexual violence, traffic in women in conflict areas

6.e Draw attention to the fact that all military presence creates prostitution