Civil Society Dialogue Network

The EU in International Peacebuilding Meeting

The 2015 UN Reviews: Civil Society Perspectives on EU Implementation

Monday 1 February 2016, Brussels

MEETING REPORT

Background

In 2015, the United Nations (UN) initiated high-level reviews of its peace operations, peacebuilding architecture and the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 on Women, Peace and Security. In this context, the European Peacebuilding Liaison Office (EPLO) organised CSDN dialogue meetings to gather practitioners' input on the UN Peace Operations review and the role of the EU in January 2015, and to discuss the EU and civil society's perspectives on the review of the UN Peacebuilding Architecture (PBA) in April 2015.

The overall objective of this follow-up meeting was to enable representatives of civil society organisations (CSOs) to discuss the common themes in the three reviews, and to provide input regarding the role of the EU and its Member States in the implementation phase.

The meeting formed part of the preparatory process for the UN General Assembly (GA) High-Level Thematic Debate on 'Strengthening the UN's Role in Peace and Security' to be convened by UNGA President Mogens Lykketoft in May 2016 in New York. The President's team has been encouraging CSOs to organise interactive dialogues and workshops on the outcomes of the 2015 reviews, with the aim of advancing a new commitment for a solid architecture and collective action on peace and security.

The meeting brought together over 50 participants, including EU policy-makers, UN officials, and representatives from civil society peacebuilding organisations.

This report is a summary of the discussions which took place and the key recommendations made by individual participants during the meeting. 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, EPLO and its member organisations, or the co-organisers.

Welcome/Introductory remarks

In a video message, UNGA President Mogens Lykketoft expressed concern that the UN's current approaches and systems were not up to the task of responding to new and emerging threats. Highlighting the primacy of politics, a people-centred approach and a greater depth in partnerships as cross-cutting themes across the three reports, he urged participants to look into the specifics of what needed to change in order to achieve these objectives within a reasonable timeframe.

The European External Action Service (EEAS) stressed the importance of identifying synergies across the three reviews, in particular with regard to the women, peace and security (WPS) agenda, and a continuum of actions linking the reviews to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the accompanying Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Session 1: Options for a strengthened UN-EU partnership on conflict prevention: what role for the EU and civil society?

CSO participants raised the following issues:

- The reviews recommend that the UN should place greater emphasis on prevention, people-centred approaches, women's leadership, the protection of women, and co-operation with civil society. All three reviews also include references to a lack of resources.
- Existing policy guidelines for UN engagement with civil society have not translated into a meaningful and consistent partnership with CSOs, including with women's organisations.
- Efforts to engage with civil society often fall short as exchanges tend to take place only in capitals and often involve the same groups of people.
- The recent adoption of UNSCR 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security is very welcome. The role of children and youth in building active communities is still insufficiently addressed.
- Contemporary conflicts tend to have a regional dimension; they go beyond state borders while EU and UN mission mandates are usually single state-focused.
- Lessons from Liberia, Burundi and the Central African Republic (CAR) reinforce the CSO argument in favour of people-centred, locally-focused, bottom-up approaches to peacebuilding.
- The UN is best-placed to steer a change in state- and peacebuilding practices. It should use this status to push for a shift from military responses to conflicts to conflict prevention and sustainable peacebuilding.
- The reviews recommend looking at a continuum of actions instead of sequencing. However, the scarcity of resources often forces CSOs to engage in the latter.
- Funding for conflict prevention activities is sometimes disconnected from the political agenda and does not necessarily support regional approaches.
- The EU's Financial Regulation makes it difficult to grant financial support to smaller NGOs which do not fulfil certain requirements.

CSO participants made the following recommendations to the EU and to the UN:

- The PBA should be more inclusive of civil society, from local community groups to internationally-established non-governmental organisations (NGOs), with a particular focus on children, young people, women, and other vulnerable groups.
- Women should be integral to peacebuilding efforts rather than an "add-on".
- Commitments to ensuring the inclusion of civil society must be matched by adequate human and financial resources.

- The UN Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO) should have a staff member whose role would be to gather civil society input and to present it in meetings from which CSOs are excluded.
- In addition to the UNPBA, the EU should continue to support regional organisations and actors in order to develop regional approaches to conflict prevention and peacebuilding.
- The EU and the UN should put more emphasis on political conflict analysis, including more nuanced analysis of different types of threats and conflict dynamics.
- The EU and the UN should carefully assess new threats and weapons technologies, and their implications for the UNPBA.
- The EU and the UN should support people-to-people approaches to peacebuilding, dialogue and reconciliation.
- Regarding modalities for reaching out to non-conventional armed actors, the UN should look at what works in specific contexts and adapt lessons from past engagements. In this context, a lot could be learned from the EU's engagement in Latin America.
- The EU should seize the opportunity to take on a more prominent role in the peacebuilding architecture, including through advocacy for the implementation of SDG 16.
- There is a need to rebalance peacekeeping and peacebuilding budgets. The UN should aim to have a much higher profile in peacebuilding and conflict prevention.
- The EU and the UN should appoint more women in senior positions, going beyond token representation and addressing the issue of meaningful participation. Structural obstacles to the recruitment and retention of women in key leadership positions should be reviewed.
- Gender-sensitive conflict analysis should not be reduced to particular roles and women should not be depicted only as victims of violence.
- Gender markers for funding should be much more sophisticated and nuanced.
- It is necessary to take a fresh look at making humanitarian work both conflict- and gender-sensitive.

EU officials made the following comments:

- The EU is mandated to consult civil society and it has been doing so in the framework of all of its external financing instruments, notably the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP), since 2014.
- The EU works closely with the UN not only on methodology and tools but also on joint political conflict analysis and field missions.
- Ways in which the two organisations could maximise reciprocal support for better coordination and implementation of their respective prevention, mediation support and peacebuilding tools, was highlighted as a common goal of the EU-UN strategic partnership dialogue.
- Strategic partnerships with other regional organisations such as the African Union (AU), the League of Arab States (LAS) and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) through EU delegations and geographical desks, were highlighted as the backbone of long-term engagement and support for sustainable peace.
- Looking beyond country dynamics, the EU's Conflict Early Warning System (EWS) provides a basis for cross-institutional decision-making, feeding into high-level discussions with other international actors and leading to concrete actions to mitigate conflict risks.
- The EU is committed to ensuring inclusive peacebuilding processes, with particular focus on the leadership and participation of women. The EEAS Principal Advisor on Gender and the implementation of UNSCR 1325 will play a key role in this regard.
- Approximately €40 million has been mobilised through the IcSP and, prior to 2014, the Instrument for Stability (IfS) to support civil society actors globally, in particular at grass-roots level, in their endeavours to prevent conflicts and build peace. This support, which has included focuses on youth, children, and gender-sensitive programming for inclusive

processes, has been complemented by funding channelled through the EC's Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development (DG DEVCO).
- The EU is supportive of stronger partnerships between CSOs and the UN Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) and the Security Council.

UN officials made the following comments:

- Partnerships are key to pushing forward the global conflict prevention agenda in a streamlined and effective way. The UN has plans for the establishment of additional regional offices to drive conflict prevention and global-regional partnerships in response to conflict.
- Addressing the regional dimension of conflict is a challenge acknowledged in the review of UN peace operations as well as by the peacebuilding community at large. In this context, the proposal to set up additional UN regional offices is aimed at facilitating analysis of regional drivers of conflict, and supporting regional conflict resolution and national dialogue and reconciliation process.
- Key elements of EU-UN collaboration on prevention include conflict analysis, joint action on programming and preventing violent extremism, the role of peace and development advisers and advancing the WPS agenda, including gender markers for programming, gender in the planning of operations, the recruitment of senior gender advisors in missions, and gender targets for individual performance of senior management in missions.

Session 2: Improving UN-EU strategic cooperation on crisis management

CSO participants raised the following issues:

- Both the High-Level Independent Panel on UN Peace Operations (HIPPO) and the UN Secretary-General's response to it recommend stronger global-regional partnerships to develop a reliable system of fast-responding regional capabilities based on stand-by arrangements.
- Neither the HIPPO report nor the UN Secretary-General's response to it includes any consideration of political interests and possibilities.
- EU support for UN peacekeeping is not about partnership but interest-based support. The UN has greater scope, legitimacy and experience, while the EU is the largest source of potential regional support.
- Progress has been made in terms of EU support for UN peacekeeping. However, structural issues remain. On the downside, collaboration is still too ad-hoc, with EU Member States (EUMS) favouring bilateral co-operation with the UN.
- The lack of trust in UN Command and Control capabilities prevents many countries from stepping up their role in peacekeeping in non-financial areas.
- Key blockages are political, not bureaucratic. Do EUMS want the EU as a key route to better UN peacekeeping? Does the UN want a privileged partnership with EU if it can deliver?
- When the level of interest of key EUMS is high, the compatibility of EU-UN purpose is also high, and there is scope for collaboration (e.g. Mali). In contrast, when the interest of key EUMS is low, compatibility is also low. This devised way of thinking might help the two institutions to decide where to put their energy and focus for stronger partnerships.
- The vast majority of victims of violent conflict are civilians. All three reviews acknowledge the enormous protection challenges the world faces.
- How to ensure that EUMS' militaries still have the capacity for protection of civilians? What role can the EU play in ensuring that energy is still there?
- The HIPPO report includes recommendations about scaling up civilian-led protection. This is referred to as 'unarmed strategies'.

- The review of the implementation of UNSCR 1325 also underscores the importance of promoting unarmed civilian protection (UCP).
- Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is a driver of violent conflict. However, none of the reports acknowledges it.

CSO participants made the following recommendations to the EU and to the UN:

- The EU should make better use of EU Special Representatives (EUSRs) and their presence in conflict-affected countries and regions to support the UN to cover regional dimensions of crisis.
- The EU should synchronise its justice and security sector reform (JSSR) programming with UN mission requirements.
- The EU should advocate for EUMS' re-engagement in peacekeeping by helping the UN to clarify recent improvements in its command and control capabilities.
- EU-UN support to the African Union (AU) should be further improved.
- Both EU and UN missions should work more closely with local communities and national and international NGOs in building protective environments.
- The EU could help to facilitate case-scenario training on the protection of civilians for UN peacekeeping operations personnel.
- The EU and the UN should consider making better use of UCP as a means of contributing to timely preventive action and shortening the mobilisation time for rapid deployments.
- The EU and the UN should improve communication and outreach to communities which are under the protection of UN peacekeepers.
- All peacekeeping missions should involve child protection strategies supported by corresponding human and financial resources.
- All three reviews acknowledge that the leadership of women in peace operations is essential for the effective prevention of gender-based violence. The strong participation of women in those operations could also help to reduce sexual abuse perpetrated by peacekeepers.
- Regarding gender mainstreaming, both the EU and the UN should integrate gender targets in the mandates of EU Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) missions and UN operations, systematically develop and include gender analysis in the development of mission mandates and objectives, and appoint gender advisors who report directly to heads of missions.

UN officials made the following comments:

- EU-UN co-operation on peacekeeping and crisis management takes place in the framework of a very strong and structured partnership, with strategic forum meetings taking place every six months.
- The partnership with the EU's CSDP has yielded positive results (e.g. the bridging mission in CAR and the parallel missions in Mali where the EU is conducting military training alongside the UN forces who are working on stabilisation).
- Positive trends can be seen on EUMS' re-engagement in peacekeeping, not just financially but also in terms of troop contributions. The number of EU police officers in UN missions (currently 2%) should be increased. The UN will host a summit for chiefs of police on 3 June 2016 in New York.
- The protection of civilians remains at the heart of UN peace operations' mandates. More needs to be done to address the political dimension of this, including by giving the UN Secretary-General's special representatives the tools to engage in political good offices.
- There is a link between the protection of civilians and force protection. Deployed troops need the capabilities to protect themselves and civilians. The EU made important capability commitments on this during the high-level peacekeeping summit hosted by US President Barack Obama in September 2015.

- There has been significant improvement in terms of command and control capabilities. A list of capabilities required over the next ten years has been developed and shared with national governments to inform their defence procurement so that they can also match UN needs.
- The UN is establishing a standing capacity for a peacebuilding capability and is looking into the possibility of a standing brigade for rapid response needs.
- Rapid response co-operation is currently under discussion with the EU and EUMS. The aim is to identify how the UN can make best use of EUMS' assets for faster and more effective crisis response.
- Engaging more in mediation and conflict prevention, including through closer co-operation with civil society actors, remains a UN priority which needs to be matched by appropriate human and financial resources.
- It is important to find ways to increase the participation of women in both military and civilian components of UN missions. At present, women account for 3% of the military components and 30% in the civilian components.
- Gender experts within missions must have the capacity to provide a gender perspective to all aspects of their mission's mandate.
- The issue of adequate financial support for gender mainstreaming in peace operations must also be addressed.
- Peacekeeping missions, actions, assets and resources should respond to the special needs of women and girls.
- Missions' conflict analysis should be informed by a gender perspective at all times.
- The international community's information about conflict context should be enriched by women on the ground.

EU officials made the following comments:

- The EU-UN partnership is supported by a range of tools which can help the two organisations to work closely with each other.
- Wider partnerships such as the UN-EU-AU trilateral collaboration can help to address the regional dimensions of contemporary conflicts.
- Improved coordination among different structures on the ground could help to optimise the continuum of responses which have been recommended by the reviews.
- The EEAS will continue to push for the protection of civilians.

Concluding remarks

EPLO thanked participants and informed them that a summary of the discussions would be fed into the ongoing consultative process in preparation of the High-Level Thematic Debate of the UN General Assembly in May 2016.

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 (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.