



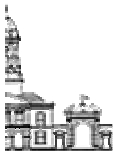
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Dublin Action Agenda

On the Prevention of Violent Conflict

**Adopted at the European Conference on
“The Role of Civil Society in the Prevention of Armed Conflict”
Dublin Castle, Dublin, March 31- April 2, 2004**



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A. Introduction

Following the UN Secretary-General's call to action, the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC)¹ was established to enhance the role of civil society in developing effective action in preventing and transforming violent conflict, as well as to strengthen civil society relationships with governments, the UN and regional organisations such as the European Union (EU), Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and Council of Europe.

To ensure that it includes a wide range of perspectives, GPPAC has organised 15 regional processes, each of which will develop action agendas that will feed into a global action agenda for civil society roles in conflict prevention. Hence, in Dublin (31 March – 2 April 2004) a West European² Regional Conference outlined this 'Dublin Action Agenda'. Many Civil Society Organisations (CSOs)³ have provided inputs to this process.

This Dublin Action Agenda reflects outcomes of a consensus-building process among more than 200 participants, representing CSOs, governments and multilateral organisations. It articulates common ground amongst those European CSOs committed to conflict prevention and puts forward key recommendations to strengthen strategic partnerships for preventing violent conflict and building a culture of peace. It identifies common goals and strategies to encourage national governments, European multilateral organisations (especially the EU) and the UN, as well as CSOs themselves, to better implement conflict prevention and peacebuilding policies.

These institutions are already committed to furthering this agenda and to the active engagement of CSOs in that process. This provides us with a real opportunity to have an impact. This Dublin Action Agenda was presented to the Irish Government – which presently holds the EU Presidency - on 2 April 2004. It will subsequently contribute to the development of an International Action Agenda, to be presented to the UN Secretary-General in July 2005 in New York.

B. Our Goals

The number and quality of professional, accountable, not-for-profit European CSOs working on conflict prevention and peacebuilding has grown dramatically in recent years. Our approach is multi-faceted. It includes advocating policy changes to address the structural factors that generate conflict as well as working in partnerships in Europe and beyond on specific conflict situations. Our goal is to seek to prevent the emergence, escalation or recurrence of violent conflict and to achieve the transformation of the situations that give rise to it, while at the same time dealing with current conflicts. Moreover, as we learn how to manage crises more effectively, we also increasingly address problems that - if left untreated - develop over time into root causes of conflict. We are creating effective multilateral partnerships for prevention that maximise the contribution of CSOs within strengthened international and national systems for achieving the Millennium Development Goals, human security and sustainable peace.

We want official recognition of the legitimate role of civil society in peace and security matters. To more effectively prevent conflict, partnerships are needed between governments, Inter-Governmental Organisations (IGOs), the EU and those CSOs that are accountable to relevant established codes of conduct. It is important that CSOs should not be considered as instruments to carry out agendas set by others. Rather they should be seen as partners with valuable contributions to make in terms of

¹ The European Centre for Conflict Prevention (ECCP) currently holds the secretariat of the GPPAC.

² Defined as the enlarged EU, plus Norway and Switzerland.

³ Civil society includes non-governmental and community-based organisations, women's associations, youth organisations, minority and indigenous people's representatives, disabled people, the aged, trade unions (workers' collectives), religious organisations and the media – amongst others.

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policy design, programme implementation, and provision of information. We propose to work with governments, IGOs, the EU and International Financial Institutions (IFIs) towards mainstreaming the involvement of CSOs within each institutional setting through the development of formal mechanisms in which CSOs' deliberative, consultative and implementing capacities are utilised in programme planning, implementation and evaluation.

The GPPAC works on strengthening civil society networks for peace and security by linking local and global levels of action. This, in turn, supports the potential for solidarity work and global mobilisation to strengthen capacities for peace.

C. Guiding Principles - What we believe in

1. Shift to Prevention

Promoting peace and security in the 21st century requires a fundamental shift in how we respond to the challenge of violent conflict. Our priority is to prevent it from occurring and, thereby, to avoid the massive human and economic cost of war. We believe that CSOs can have a major impact in bringing about this shift away from 'reaction' to 'prevention' and overall transformation.

While Chapter VI of the UN Charter provides a strong mandate for preventing violent conflict, collective security has been pursued largely by reacting to crises rather than by preventing them. Instead of only reacting to crises, when it is often too late to act effectively without the use of force, we must focus on addressing the root causes of conflict and the factors that enable them to become deadly. Non-military prevention activity will obviate the need for the deployment of force. Whilst there is no single reason why violent conflicts erupt, experience demonstrates that most wars are fought in countries that have a poor development record and a weak system of governance.

Efforts to prevent violent conflict necessitate strengthening systems for peacefully managing competing interests, challenging the abuse of state power, upholding human rights, promoting humanitarian values and directing resources to fulfil basic human needs. We see some of the strategies deployed in the 'War on Terror' as counter-productive because, by further entrenching cycles of violence, they risk being ultimately self-defeating. The 'War on Terror' can also be used as a cloak under which CSO actors, including those who promote human rights, are targeted.

2. Building a 'Culture of Prevention' and 'Culture of Peace'

The key to fostering sustainable peace and security over the longer term is to generate a 'culture of prevention' and 'culture of peace' from the bottom-up as well as from the top-down. This will require governments and IGOs to mainstream conflict prevention and constructive conflict management as fundamental goals of their security institutions and instruments, as well as of their other policies and programmes. To do so successfully they will need to look beyond short-term considerations, ensure a re-orientation towards preparedness for prevention and address basic human needs and human rights. Historically, the emphasis has been on strengthening the institutional capacity for military response. The emphasis now needs to be on strengthening the institutional capacity for non-violent civilian response.

Efforts to generate a sustainable culture of peace must be rooted deeply in the population. A holistic and pluralistic approach is required. Education for peace is a fundamental element of this transformation. Special attention should be paid to providing everyone - and the young in particular - with conflict resolution life skills. Context is critical, and education in divided communities must be culturally sensitive. People of all ages have to be empowered to become agents of change to address conflicts from the grassroots. As their knowledge about prevention of violence and of conflict transformation grows, it should become entrenched in the mainstream consciousness.

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3. Security for People, as well as for States: Human Security

As CSOs committed to conflict prevention, we affirm the essential value of the human security paradigm. We are committed to promoting the security of people: their physical safety, their socio-economic well-being, respect for their dignity and identity as individuals and as members of communities, and the protection and promotion of their rights and fundamental freedoms. We acknowledge the particular role played by women in promoting this concept. We are especially concerned to protect vulnerable and disadvantaged groups as well as those experiencing discrimination. We affirm that the security of people is as important as the security of states. We believe that each has the potential to be mutually reinforcing.

4. Responsibility to Prevent and Protect

We share the view of the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, which concluded that the international community has a responsibility to act decisively when states are unwilling or unable to fulfil their basic responsibilities to their citizens. We welcome the Commission's call to "all members of the community of nations, together with non-governmental actors and citizens of states, to embrace the idea of the responsibility to protect as a basic element in the code of global citizenship, for states and peoples, in the 21st century".⁴ This responsibility must be fulfilled with extreme care and only pursued in accordance with clearly defined criteria, as articulated by the Commission. It does not mean a free license for military intervention. CSOs can play a vitally important role in non-military protection, as well as in prevention and peacebuilding. We welcome the adoption of the EU Guidelines on Children and Armed Conflict, including the EU's commitment to consider appointing a Special Representative on Children and Armed Conflict.

5. Multilateralism

Fulfilling an expanded vision of human security can only be achieved on the basis of a truly co-operative endeavour. Major global problems can only be addressed effectively through the co-ordinated efforts and policies developed collectively through multilateral fora - above all through the UN - and not on the basis of unilateral action. This approach is one built on the principle that international norms and standards should apply to all and be complied with by all. We call on our governments to fulfil their commitments and to demand the consistent adherence to these standards by all countries. This will counter the destabilising effects of unilateral action. An effective system for conflict prevention, therefore, should be undertaken within a strong multilateral framework that includes co-ordinated and systematic responses. We believe that CSOs have an important role to play in an expanded conception of multilateralism.

6. A New Partnership for Prevention between Civil Society, Governments and IGOs

Effective conflict prevention requires the creation of collaborative, strategic partnerships for prevention at the national, regional and international level. CSOs can undertake initiatives that government officials cannot and are well placed to mobilise wider societal support for prevention. The effectiveness of this partnership hinges on official acknowledgement of the legitimacy of CSOs that are representative and accountable in peace and security matters; recognition of their roles in the conflict prevention partnership; and mechanisms and resources to fulfil their potential operationally. This new partnership will serve to affirm and build on the principle identified in UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan's Report on "The Prevention of Armed Conflict", where he recognised that conflict prevention cannot happen without civil society involvement.

⁴ 'Responsibility to Protect', International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Canadian Government, para 8.33. Found at: <http://www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/iciss-ciise/report2-en.asp#foreword>

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7. Primacy of Local Ownership

Primary responsibility for conflict prevention rests with local actors: a key role belongs to those local CSOs that directly represent the conflict-affected populations. Governments must live up to their responsibilities to protect, to prevent violent conflict and to build a culture of peace. For prevention to be sustainable, the people must feel that the process is ‘theirs’ and that it is not externally imposed. Generally, initiatives should be internally generated and externally supported in order to build on existing capacities. The international community – foreign governments, multilateral institutions, and international NGOs – should create spaces and support inclusive processes that enable people directly involved to build their own capacity and to make decisions on ways to resolve violent conflict. As a general rule, ‘outsiders’ should avoid displacing local initiatives. Where democratic institutions do not already exist, the international community should encourage their creation. It should also promote the inclusion in conflict prevention and peacebuilding processes of all relevant groups – particularly women, youth and minority groups – which are often excluded.

8. Inclusion and Equality

A failure to ensure effective political participation is often one of the root causes of conflict because those who feel excluded invariably try to defend their interests through other means, sometimes through violence. One of the difficult challenges for preventing or resolving violent conflict is to generate sufficient confidence and establish specifically agreed arrangements to ensure that this exclusion is addressed and does not repeat itself. The will of the people can only be truly represented if there are effective mechanisms for genuine public participation by the different elements that comprise that society. To promote human security, governments, international agencies, and CSOs must ensure that their actions actively promote gender equality, and include people from diverse political, ethnic, religious, cultural, socio-economic and other minority backgrounds in processes that promote social justice. This is particularly relevant to immigrant and diaspora communities in the European context. We strongly support UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security that specifically addresses the impact of war on women, and women's contributions to conflict resolution and sustainable peace. We call on relevant decision-makers and agencies to resource its full and consistent implementation.

9. Learning from practice and accountability

To become more effective in our work, we need to reflect upon and examine the lessons we are learning from that work, and how we are learning them. We must aim to be reflective practitioners: cognisant of our role, mandate, and contribution at every stage. There are various approaches and methodologies to guide us in this task. Monitoring and evaluating our own activities is, however, just a starting point for a more generalized learning. A significant body of knowledge on best practices in the field of conflict prevention can only be assembled if practitioners understand that they have a responsibility to pass on the knowledge they gain to those who are likely to face similar challenges in the future. This task is an essential aspect of developing the accountability, not only of CSOs, but also of governmental and inter-governmental institutions, and of the field as a whole. It will also be a vital component of developing effective and accountable partnerships for prevention involving CSOs, governments and IGOs.

10. Sustainability

All the points mentioned above will combine to produce an integrated, holistic and more sustainable approach towards conflict prevention. Without a culture shift towards prevention over the longer term, security for the people, true multilateralism and new partnerships, local ownership and inclusion of people from different backgrounds, no conflict prevention effort can be sustainable. The obstacles to achieving this sustainability should not be underestimated and will necessitate persistent effort on the part of CSOs, as well as their partners in governments and multilateral institutions. Traditionally, CSOs have a long-term perspective towards conflict prevention and peacebuilding efforts. They, in turn, require increased funding to enhance their sustainability.

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The challenge is to achieve sustainable peace in a context that is characterised by a lack of conflict sensitivity by a range of actors, passively condoned or actively promoted by governments and IGOs. Some areas of trade policy and investment promotion are major obstacles to the goal of preventing violent conflict, for example. This lack of policy coherence undermines some governments' and IGOs' own objectives for sustainable development and peace. Therefore CSOs need to ensure that advocacy for social and economic justice is at the core of our own work for sustainable peace. In addition, governments and IGOs need to involve CSOs in designing broader policy frameworks on trade, security and development that are strategically coherent with peacebuilding objectives.

D. Key Recommendations

1. Civil Society Organizations

Networking

More effective mechanisms and approaches are needed to enhance interaction amongst CSOs to assist the exchange of experience, improved coordination, and the development of shared and complementary strategies. Further analysis is also needed of existing networks to identify ways in which they can better serve the functions they are organised to address.

Coalition building

GPPAC should aim to develop deeper solidarity amongst CSOs so that they can work together more effectively on common concerns. This would serve to facilitate joint initiatives to mobilize public support for prevention and transformation of violent conflict. Such public support is essential in order to generate political will amongst governments and IGOs to prevent the escalation of impending crises in a timely and effective manner, as well as to address the underlying causes that give rise to conflict.

Public awareness campaigning in as many European countries as possible

CSOs should conduct public campaigns, both to raise awareness of the impact of conflicts and to build confidence in civilian alternatives to military intervention. These campaigns will need to include a comprehensive media strategy; aim to continue to build alliances, including with influential opinion-formers; and seek opportunities to advocate the 'culture of peace' at national and regional events. Our collective target is the development of a European-wide public event shortly before the July 2005 Conference on the Role of Civil Society in the Prevention of Armed Conflict at UN Headquarters.

Educating for a culture of peace and non-violence

Based on positive experiences to date, CSOs should play a leading role in fostering a culture of peace at all levels, through a world-wide, pro-active and participatory programme, from the classroom outwards. We should aim to generate new constituencies of support, be inclusive by bringing together groups now divided across ethnic, linguistic, religious, cultural and gender lines. Building capacities for conflict resolution at all levels is a universal priority, with education as its most comprehensive means.

Early warning and early response

CSOs should develop their own early warning / early response mechanisms in countries and regions at greatest risk, drawing on the unique knowledge of local groups. CSOs should also assist in the establishment and functioning of similar, official mechanisms. We aim to develop an integrated global network of CSOs that can co-operate to mobilise the political will for effective early response.

Evaluation

CSOs, governments and IGOs should work together to develop appropriate frameworks and mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating activities in this field so that we can all learn from our experiences and develop best practice accordingly.

2. Governments

National conflict prevention mechanisms and platforms

A country's capacity to prevent and resolve violent conflict at home and abroad may be strengthened by creating national conflict prevention mechanisms and joint platforms that enable dialogue among all stakeholders aimed at forming coherent policy frameworks and effective operational mechanisms. Although the exact modalities require further discussion amongst the relevant actors in specific countries, they should be based on the principle of strong CSO participation and influence.

CSO interaction with donor governments

When governments organise for conflict prevention and peacebuilding within or across relevant government agencies they should involve CSOs in situation analysis, planning and implementation. Government-CSO interaction should be based on transparent policies, agreed standards and verifiable benchmarks, and ultimately aim for co-ordinated coherent government policies, joint initiatives and strategic partnerships.

Resource mobilisation

Prioritising conflict prevention will require more resources, more effectively administered. We need more effective funding modalities that combine reliability of supply and funding streams that can be quickly administered for flexible rapid response initiatives. Coherent framework strategies are required to achieve long-term conflict transformation and guide the effective allocation of resources to meet that goal.

Civil Peace Service

Civil Peace Services illustrate how CSOs can be actively involved in recruitment, training and deployment of qualified civilians in the prevention of violent conflict and peacebuilding. We call on national governments to support such initiatives.

3. European Union

European structural reform for peacebuilding

We call for a serious dialogue between member states, EU institutions and CSOs to agree on structural reforms that will enable a more integrated and effective EU approach to the preparation and management of short-term civilian crisis management and longer-term peacebuilding. These reforms must cover planning, implementation and evaluation of crisis management and peacebuilding activities, including training, recruitment and research. We urge European governments to support the development of Civil Peace Services as an integral component of expanding capacities for peacebuilding.

Early warning

The EU should improve its early warning analysis by ensuring that greater information from the 'field' is used to support Member States' analysis of emerging conflict situations, and that this information is then fed into the EU's early warning processes and triggers action. It is important that the EU Heads of Delegation, EU Special Representatives and Member States gather information from a broad range of CSOs to assist in the development of conflict prevention strategies, which should also inform country strategy papers. The EU should establish civil society focal points in Delegations to ensure these consultations take place.

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Tackling weapons proliferation

The EU should support the involvement of civil society in the development and implementation of national and regional action plans to reduce the proliferation of small arms and light weapons. In addition, the EU should strengthen mechanisms for meaningful consultation with civil society in order to create an effective European export control system that ensures that arms and security equipment from the EU is not exacerbating conflict and undermining development strategies and human rights.

Civil society as an alternative entry point in states and regions in crisis

The EU Security Strategy highlights state failure as a key security threat. The EU should recognise, therefore, the key role that civil society can often play in these situations. It should support the mobilisation of these social resources at all levels, including through political accompaniment and financial support at the local and national level and through working constructively with diaspora communities at the international level.

Civil society engagement in political dialogue

The EU should develop and deepen dialogue between itself and civil society across the spectrum of its external actions. For example, when appropriate, this should include involving civil society in meetings of the Political and Security Committee (PSC) and Committee for Civilian Aspects of Crisis Management (CIVCOM) meetings. Dialogue between EC delegations, Member States and civil society actors 'in the field' should be strengthened by, for example, creating civil society focal points in EC delegations.

Supporting civil society networks and engagement in regional organisations

The EU should strengthen civil society networks on the ground - at sub-national, national and regional levels - to engage in confidence building, capacity building, monitoring and awareness raising and to feed into EU policies and programming. This should include supporting the institutionalisation of civil society participation in regional and sub-regional peace and security structures.

Addressing conflicts within the EU

The EU should fund a 'pilot' European-wide action programme to assist those areas threatened by, or emerging from, conflict. The programme should compile the lessons being learnt in the Irish peace process, as well as in other regions within the EU and in the wider Europe. It should facilitate interaction and problem-solving between CSOs and all relevant actors. The programme should focus on mechanisms for matching resources and needs of CSOs (at all levels) to deliver:

- conflict prevention measures;
- sustainable peace processes; and
- post-conflict transformation.

4. United Nations

The UN's capacity for conflict prevention and interaction with civil society should be strengthened at all levels – from the Secretariat to the country teams. Dedicated human and economic resources should be devoted to enhancing existing structures to better address conflict prevention. In addition, strategies are required that seek to mainstream conflict prevention throughout the UN. While mainstreaming is important it is not enough. Consideration should also be given to the establishment of new mechanisms - particularly those related to early warning and response - to enhance interaction between civil society and the UN. These should operate at UN headquarters and at the field level, as well as for the support of local peacebuilding capacities.

Contact points

We encourage Special Representatives of the Secretary-General and/or Resident Coordinators to establish regular and transparent interfaces between local and/or international CSOs and the UN country team for early warning, and for the exchange of information, and development of complementary strategies for peacebuilding activities that prevent the resurgence or eruption of conflict.

Early warning and early response mechanisms

CSOs should co-operate with the lead agency at the UN secretariat as well as field offices of the UN Development Programme, the Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the UN Centre for Human Rights to develop an effective early warning and response mechanism that analyses root causes and devises preventive strategies to possible conflict situations. Formal arrangements, including through memoranda of understanding, could help to strengthen this co-operation and ensure that these mechanisms draw on the unique knowledge bases of all relevant bodies. Opportunities for joint training on early warning for UN staff and CSOs should be explored so as to generate shared knowledge and strengthen the potential for strong working relationships.

Specialist teams

An international roster of unarmed peace specialists should be developed for use by the UN at short notice. Training in necessary skills and knowledge will be necessary, grouping existing mediators with specialists from the academic world and CSOs. These rosters could interlink with the Civil Peace Services developed in some countries.

Strategic coherence

Encourage the active role of the existing UN inter-agency group on Conflict Prevention. This group should develop prevention strategies for the UN and governments in consultation with CSOs.

Post-war needs assessment

The UN Development Programme (UNDP) should consult with CSOs at the earliest stages when conducting Post-Conflict Needs Assessment (PCNAs) in order to develop and implement effective strategies and programmes that strengthen and complement long-term peacebuilding.

‘Culture of Peace’

In the area of ‘Culture of Peace’, the main challenge is to implement effectively UN General Assembly Resolution GA/RES/53/243 and the Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace. There has been a gap between the intentions expressed in the resolution and its implementation. We appeal to the UN to ensure that intra- and inter-agency co-operation is maximised and that national governments take a leading responsibility in implementing it, both in term of policies and funding.

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Interaction between the UN Security Council and CSOs

Regular informal dialogue and the transmittal of documentation could be established between CSOs and an expert-level working group of the UNSC on conflict prevention, led by a champion member state. The Arria Formula mechanism should be better utilised for routine interface between CSOs and the UNSC on conflict prevention opportunities. The UNSC should consult with local and international specialised CSOs during fact-finding missions and ensure their involvement in relevant prevention activities authorised by the UNSC.

High Level Panels

GPPAC will seek to liaise with the UN Secretary-General's Panel of Eminent Persons on Civil Society and United Nations Relationships and the UN High Level Panel on Global Security Threats, Challenges and Change. We will disseminate the Panel recommendations and encourage feedback into the process from CSOs.

More information:

**European Centre for Conflict Prevention (ECCP),
International Secretariat of the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict**

Korte Elisabethstraat 6

PO Box 14069

3508 SC Utrecht

The Netherlands

Tel: +31-30-242 7777

Fax: +31-30-236 9268

Email: info@conflict-prevention.net

Website: www.conflict-prevention.net