

## Workshop Report

1. October 2019, Berlin

### **“Looking ahead to Germany's Presidency of the Council of the EU and beyond: what role for conflict prevention?”**

*Expert workshop co-organized by the European Peacebuilding Liaison Office (EPLO) and the Working Group on Peace and Development (FriEnt) at Bread for the World.*

From 1 July 2020, Germany will hold the Presidency of the Council of the European Union (EU) for six months. This Presidency provides an opportunity to further the implementation of the EU's [Integrated Approach to External Conflicts and Crises](#) and the [German Guidelines on Preventing Crises, Resolving Conflicts, Building Peace](#) – seeking the prevention of violent conflicts and promoting human security in the short and long term. As Germany's priorities for the Presidency are currently developed, the aim of this expert workshop was to facilitate dialogue between German and European policy-makers, FriEnt and EPLO members, as well as other civil society experts, and to gather analysis and recommendations on possible peacebuilding aspects of the German Presidency.

*Plenary Session I*

#### **The EU and Peacebuilding – State of Play**

##### Overview

In this session, René van Nes, Head of Division for Conflict Prevention and Mediation Support at the European External Action Service (EEAS), gave an overview of the current state of play in terms of EU support to conflict prevention and peacebuilding and shared some personal suggestions for Germany's Presidency. His input was followed by a panel of four discussants: Dr. Thomas Helfen, Head of Division Peace and Security/Disaster Risk Management at the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ); Daniela Vogl, Head Of Division International Stabilisation Policy, Crisis Engagement at the German Federal Foreign Office; Dr. Martina Fischer, Policy Advisor in the Human Rights and Peace Desk, Bread for the World; and Anna Penfrat, Senior Policy Officer at the European Peacebuilding Liaison Office (EPLO). The panel was moderated by Elsa Benhöfer, Policy Officer at the Working Group on Peace and Development (FriEnt).

##### Key Takeaways

- For an integrated approach to conflict and crisis – i.e. “meaningful peacebuilding” – the use of a variety of tools and instruments and cooperation between different actors and sectors are fundamental. The EU Council (e.g. during the German Council presidency) can have an enormous impact on enhancing the work of the EU during all stages of conflict and help to better integrate efforts – by bringing together member states and civil society, emphasising resilience, sustainability, and inclusivity in peacebuilding. Furthermore, conflict prevention and

peacebuilding have to be approached in a conflict-sensitive manner and must be linked to development measures.

- The former European External Action Service (EEAS) division “PRISM” (Prevention of Conflicts, Rule of Law and SSR, Integrated Approach, Stabilisation and Mediation) and the new Directorate Integrated Approach for Security and Peace (ISP) (established on 1st of March 2019) were highlighted as key actors to apply conflict-sensitivity to EU external action, including the strategic planning of missions under the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP).
- Political support is a necessary precondition to prevent conflict; therefore Germany should raise political support for conflict prevention and peacebuilding – e.g. by getting conflict prevention on the agenda of the Political and Security Committee of the EU Council. Furthermore, the creation of a high-level and inclusive document on conflict prevention, in a similar format process as for the existing European Consensus on Development or European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid was suggested – which would help to improve the dialogue between the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission on peacebuilding. Some also emphasised the need to get better at telling compelling stories to politicians on conflict prevention and the added value of civilian alternatives compared to military-based approaches. Discussants also mentioned the upcoming review process of the 2009 Concept on Strengthening EU Mediation and Dialogue Capacities as an opportunity to shed light on conflict prevention and peacebuilding at a political level during the German Presidency.
- Furthermore, the dialogue between EU member states on matters of conflict prevention and peacebuilding needs improvement. Germany could support the setting up of a dedicated Council Working Group on issues such as conflict prevention, mediation, and stabilisation. Additionally, conflict prevention expertise should be included within the work of the already existing geographic Council Working Groups. Another format mentioned could be discussions at Directors-level between the EU and member states on conflict prevention and peacebuilding, similar to the existing forum on security and defence issues.
- A debate also emerged around the question of the terminology used. Should we rephrase “peacebuilding” (perceived as very narrow) and instead talk more about “building peace” (therefore drawing a broader picture)? Should we rather talk about “fostering the ability to deal with violent conflicts” instead of “conflict prevention”? What is the difference between “crisis” and “conflict” and how does this translate into policy efforts? Whose security are we talking about and how can one ensure that the concept of human security (or people-centred security) and the perceptions and expertise of the populations in conflict-affected countries are taken into account adequately in European and German responses to conflicts and crises? While some discussants perceive these questions of terminology as well determined within new German guidelines, others still regard it as misleading and leading to conceptual blurs.
- According to some participants, the EU toolbox needs to be used in a more flexible way. Already existing tools and instruments to prevent conflict need to be reinforced (e.g. the [EU conflict Early Warning System](#), the Early Action Forum, conflict analysis, mediation support, the [Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace](#) (IcSP)). The expertise within the EU must be strengthened: each managing directorate should include at least one person who is trained to become a conflict advisor. Additionally, dialogue with civil society, the United Nations, the African Union, the Organisation for Security and Co-operation (etc.) should be institutionalised in order to share learnings and create a common understanding of approaches to prevent conflict.

- Some discussants shared concerns that changes in the next EU multiannual financial framework may not maintain the current amounts and modalities of funding for conflict prevention, peacebuilding, human rights and democracy work. They encouraged Germany to stand up for and commit to better EU funding for peacebuilding. The German Presidency should focus on already existing EU documents in order to improve EU policies regarding conflict prevention and peace building – e.g. the non-binding EU parliament’s resolution [Building EU capacity on conflict prevention and mediation](#) or the non-binding EU parliament’s resolution on [restricting arms exports](#). To be credible, Germany should share its own lessons learnt – in particular on topics such as monitoring and evaluation in order to assess adequately the conflict-sensitivity of external action efforts (including in the military or trade realms).

### *Plenary Session II (A)*

#### **Working Group A: African Union – European Union relations**

##### Overview

“Strengthening Resilience, Peace, Security and Governance“ is one pillar of the key priorities of the Africa-EU partnership. Building on the [updated German policy guidelines on Africa](#) and the [German Marshall Plan with Africa](#), the German EU Council Presidency could provide momentum to further promote civil society partnerships on peace and development. Inputs were given by Elissa Jobson, Director of Africa Regional Advocacy (International Crisis Group) and by Robert Dölger, Regional Director for Sub-Saharan Africa and Sahel (Federal Foreign Office). The session was moderated by Marina Peter (Bread for the World).

##### Key Takeaways

- The relations between the African Union (AU) and the European Union (EU) are very important for Germany and will be high on its agenda for the EU presidency – in particular as the next EU-AU Summit is scheduled to take place right after it in the first half of 2021, during Portugal’s Presidency. The EU is the strongest security partner of the AU (beside the UN); it significantly supports the improvement of the African security sectors – however, a strong, strategic cooperation has not been institutionalized yet and a strategic approach is perceived as overall missing in the AU’s actions; which probably is the result of a lack of capacity. The AU Peace Fund is now equipped with 20 million dollars – which was seen as a positive sign by some of the participants.
- It was emphasized that African ownership is important and has to be incorporated into a partnership between the EU and AU. The relationship between the EU and the AU, however, is not equal: It is partly one between donor and recipient as the AU is financially dependent on the EU; there are notable differences on the institutional level regarding budget, staff numbers, levels of political integration, etc.; and the colonial legacy has to be taken into account as well. It was strongly recommended to engage with African actors when writing new strategies (“Don’t talk about us without us”), in particular in view of the new [‘comprehensive strategy on Africa’](#) announced by the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen.
- Future challenges of AU-EU relations include a great power competition on the continent – e.g. regarding Russia and China – and the repression of civil society actors. It was noted that Transitional Justice processes allow more contact and more funding for the inclusion of civil society actors. In addition, both the [AU](#) and [Germany](#) recently adopted policies on Transitional

Justice while the [EU](#) adopted one in 2015. There might be room for further cooperation based on these policy developments.

- One participant argued that peace and security must be de-linked from migration (i.e. so that economic migrants are not framed as jihadist threats). Mobility, legal routes to the EU, and inner African migration are very important issues by themselves and should be addressed separately.
- It was also noted that relations between AU-members must be kept in mind. Questions about the role of the EU as mediator were met with scepticism, since the AU has made clear that the EU is not wanted in this role. However, it was noted that EU support to African mediation efforts, in particular through the Early Response Mechanism of the African Peace Facility, have been positive and should continue.

### *Plenary Session II (B)*

#### **Working Group B: Climate Change and Peace**

##### Overview

Does the climate crisis increase the risk of conflict globally? If so, what can be done by the EU? The workshop, moderated by Sonja Vorwerk-Halve (GIZ/FriEnt), included the panelists Achim Schkade (Head of Division International Climate and Environmental Policy, Federal Foreign Office), Dr. Kira Vinke (Co-chair of the Advisory Council on Civilian Crisis Prevention and Peacebuilding of the German Federal Government, Project Lead East Africa Peru India Climate Capacities, Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research (PIK)), Dr. Florian Krampe (Senior Researcher at Climate Change and Risk Programme, Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI)), and Markus Kipping (Head of Division Climate Policy, Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)). During the introduction it was emphasized that the climate crisis is now on the political and public agenda – as e.g. Fridays for Future shows. The aim of the session was to draw attention to interrelations between the climate crisis, peace, security and migration and to discuss how these findings can be better integrated into the EU's efforts to promote sustainable peace.

##### Key Takeaways

- Discussants called for a change of narrative – from problem/risk-oriented to solution-oriented; and it was advocated to link climate change to peace and development discussions and not to discuss the issues separately.
- It is proven that climate change increases security risks particularly in agriculturally dependent, ethnically diversified, and fragile societies. While talking about “climate conflicts” is too simple, the climate crisis leads to an increase of vulnerability and threatens socio-economic development; it shifts resource distributions; intensifies migration – there are 140 million migrants due to climate change – and it can contribute to the destabilization of already weak states. However, studies in the Lake Chad region have shown that societies with conflict transformation and management capacities are better equipped for climate change adaptations than other communities without peacebuilding activities on the ground.
- The “[Climate Security Mechanism](#)” introduced by Sweden at the UN and implemented by four persons at the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA) seems to be a positive step forward. Germany should promote the issue by linking the UN Security Council Presidency with the EU Presidency and to look critically at the new EU financial framework.

- Trying to find solutions it was emphasized that primarily, synergies (climate adaptation, development, and peacebuilding) must be found. Installing an early warning and response system, which includes climate change related indicators as well as conflict escalating indicators, is important. Additionally it is necessary to foster the exchange on failures and success stories and regional dialogue in order to reduce a top-down narrative. To strengthen the interrelatedness of climate change, conflicts and sustaining peace, a multi-sectoral risk assessment and multi-sectoral solution-oriented approaches and structures at all levels are needed.

### *Plenary Session II (C)*

#### **Workshop C: Security Sector Reform (SSR) Governance and Human Security in fragile and conflict affected contexts**

##### Overview

A strategy on [Security Sector Reform](#) (SSR) agreed between the German federal ministries was published in September 2019, while the EU adopted its [Strategic Framework to support SSR](#) in 2016. Ensuring that SSR initiatives are conflict-sensitive and contribute to increased human security remains a recurring challenge, in particular as Train & Equip projects at EU level are gaining increasing attention. The session was moderated by Konstantin Bärwaldt (FriEnt/FES). Speakers included Ferdinand von Weyhe (Ministry of Foreign Affairs), Lucia Montanaro (Saferworld), and Dr. Cornelius Friesendorf (IFSH, University of Hamburg).

##### Key Takeaways

- Long-term peace emerges from “long-term bargaining processes”, while an approach based on Train & Equip does not necessarily lead to reforms and even risks to intensify conflicts – as it is the case e.g. in Mali, Iraq and Yemen. Instead, accountability is vital: are there any safeguarding mechanisms if governments violate human rights? Regarding Germany’s Presidency, it was called for the support of a coherent approach, sensitive to conflicts, and that, generally, a “very cautious approach to train & equip” should be the aim.
- However, to join forces (in different formats, such as the EU or G7) is considered a great advantage. While, for instance, to deliver equipment is relatively easy, structural reforms are much more difficult – although being necessary in order to fight causes, rather than symptoms. A mixture of approaches could be the solution – if donors work together. The proverb “marching separately, but fighting together” illustrates this strategy.
- While many of the problems regarding the security sectors in areas of (potential) conflict are structurally conditioned – and, thus, very hard to change – taking red lines, as proposed in the German SSR strategy, is immensely important. Other small steps contributing to proper SSR are to reduce organizations active in policy implementation, that SSR is not (necessarily) implemented by people with security background, and that the evaluation of SSR programs are to be made public.
- Germany will most likely support the fund of the European Peace Facility. This fund is controversial among civil society, as no budget control is carried out by the European Parliament and military equipment can be financed. Thus, a question, which also Germany has to answer, is if an effective security sector should be favored over a responsible (i.e. accountable) security sector.

- Against the backdrop of commitments that have so far been rather fragmented, the European Parliament proposed to tackle a pilot or showcase commitment in order to link SSR, civil-military commitments, the promotion of the rule of law, and dealing with the past. Especially regarding the latter, Germany could build on the work already done and enhance the link between SSR and transitional justice.
- Understanding the political context, including the powerbrokers, is a precondition for any reform-project supported by external players, especially in the realm of power and security. Embassies are often the most important cells for making sense of turbulent contexts. Participants wondered how the staff of embassies could fulfill this crucial role when – as is often the case – embassies are weakly staffed particularly in fragile environments. Representatives from civil society organizations and staff on site both offered their support to the Government to better understand the contexts.

## **Conclusion**

In a final round, the debate was opened to formulate critical points and further policy recommendations for the German EU-Presidency. Among the points raised was that Germany must work on its credibility as a peacebuilder. The prerequisite for this is the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Taking SDG 16 seriously means consistently focusing on tools and instruments that contribute to peaceful, just and inclusive societies. In this context, the problematic link between migration, peace and security should be constantly critically discussed within the EU. The participants called for further joint actions to facilitate a dialogue on conflict prevention between state and civil society actors at EU level.

FriEnt and EPLO thank all discussants and participants for their contributions to make this a thought-provoking and enriching day of exchange and discussion. This event served as a starting point for further discussions – with the aim of gathering further peacebuilding policy recommendations and highlighting challenges for a successful German Presidency of the Council of the EU in 2020.