

Civil Society – UN Dialogue Platform on Prevention
Background document, September 2016

Background: Time for a shift towards prevention.

The three 2015 UN peace and security reviews all recommended a greater focus on prevention. The joint UNSC and GA resolution on the UN peacebuilding architecture presented the concept of “sustaining peace” as a framework for the UN’s prevention efforts. Furthermore, the reviews and the resolution all highlight the need to address the current fragmentation of these efforts. This shared acknowledgement creates an opportune time for civil society organizations (CSOs) to engage actively with UN bodies to help facilitating coordinated and joint action, not only to prevent conflicts from emerging, but also to prevent relapse. There is a momentum for a real shift from rhetoric to action in the prevention agenda.

However, work on prevention within the UN remains challenging. While the responsibility of sustaining peace is shared across the system, there is a need to continue developing inter-departmental cooperation. The peace operations report called for a more integrated approach with its idea of spectrum of operations. This recognizes that there is a role for prevention throughout the life-cycle of all types of UN missions. Strategic collaboration between UN departments and CSOs working on prevention in the field is therefore essential. Improving the dialogue (information sharing, coordination and joint strategizing) between the UN and CSOs at both the local and policy levels has become more important than ever to enhance the UN’s preventive capacities.

Identifying concrete steps to improve the UN’s work on prevention and strengthening DPA-civil society coordination.

As an initial step to strengthen the coordination between the UN and CSOs, a selected group of civil society organizations will work closely with the Department of Political Affairs (DPA) in organizing monthly dialogue meetings to identify concrete, practical steps for a more effective prevention agenda. These meetings are organized by a “core group”, composed of 9 organizations based in New York and internationally with partners/programs in-country (see below).

While the format is still being developed, the idea is for this group and DPA to facilitate monthly discussions structured thematically or around country-related topics. All actors within the UN (expert level) and civil society in New York and in the field engaged in the topic/country under discussion are invited to take part in these monthly substantive dialogues with the aim of getting to know all actors, contribute to breaking down the silos, and identifying existing and new contextually relevant tools. Each meeting will generate a concrete outcome in the shape of recommendations/conclusions and allow participants to engage further as relevant.

More broadly, the purpose of these dialogues and the work of the “core group” is for the participants to: 1) exchange examples of best practices and share country-specific or thematic experiences and information, 2) identify concrete areas and forms of potential collaboration between CSOs and the UN (and amongst CSOs as well) and ways to strengthen UN-CSO cooperation at a practical level to improve the impact of preventive work, 3) discuss ways of bridging the gap between early warning and early action, 4) constructively engage with member states and build support for the prevention agenda and finally 4) work with DPA to shape this agenda and find new approaches to prevention within the UN.

Rather than focusing on the *issues and challenges* related to prevention, the discussions will focus on creative ways of increasing the UN's capacities to resolve these challenges. More broadly, the goal is to offer UN decision-makers and CSOs the chance to discuss concerns, obstacles, ideas, best practices, experiences and contribute to coordination and cooperation within the UN system as well.

The first meetings of the Prevention Platform will be a series of three thematic meetings (October, November and December) at the Quaker House. These three meetings will build on each other and focus on how prevention is understood across the UN system and how UN and civil society can work together in realizing this agenda. To ensure the focus, we are producing a 2-3 page discussion paper based on informal interviews with around 10 UN bodies. While not attributing the views to any person or entity, this paper will show the diversity of perspectives on prevention and the different approaches and challenges and suggestions identified. This will point of departure for the first meeting where all UN and civil society actors are welcome. The three meetings will result in an outcome document to present for the next SG.

Members of the core-group:

- African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes-ACCORD
- Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue
- Conciliation Resources
- Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict-GPPAC (co-facilitator)
- International Crisis Group-ICG
- New York University's Center for International Cooperation-CIC
- Network of Religious and Traditional Peacemakers
- Norwegian Institute of International Affairs-NUPI
- Social Science Research Council's Conflict Prevention and Peace Forum-CPPF
- Quaker United Nations Office-QUNO (co-facilitator)

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