

# Conflict Prevention Newsletter



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CONFLICT PREVENTION AND TRANSFORMATION

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The next issue of this newsletter will be published on September 11. All contributions and suggestions can be sent to the European Platform before August 10.

## Media can help to prevent conflicts

The media can play a dark role in conflict situations. This has been brutally confirmed over the past couple of years, particularly by Rwandese Radio Mille Collines, which potently demonstrated how a media organization can incite violence and hatred. In addition, there is 'the CNN effect', where governments feel compelled by television-generated public opinion to intervene in overseas conflicts, often creating more problems than opportunities.

However, the media can also have a positive role in stemming violence and conflict. With its gigantic influence over public opinion and government policy, its power can also be mobilized for the prevention of conflicts. But how? This question has only recently been put forward. Debate continues to rage over this question, but it remains inconclusive.

In the meantime, some NGOs have decided not to wait for the outcome of the debate, but to begin using media techniques to reduce tension, hatred and violence in conflict-prone regions. Search for Common Ground, for instance, has helped produce a 13-part television series exploring conflicts in Africa and the way they are being resolved. The series was broadcast in South Africa and other African countries. The organisation, Fondation Hirondelle, founded Radio Agatashya in 1994 to counterbalance the hate messages of Radio Mille Collines in Rwanda.

These young initiatives have attracted little attention so far, even among people familiar with conflict prevention issues. The discussion on the role of the media is still young and quite immature. This is one of the reasons why the Platform is devoting this issue to role of media in endorsing peace. We hope to make a contribution to both debate and action.

There are other reasons for us to focus on the media's role in conflict prevention. The European Platform for Conflict Prevention & Transformation is itself engaged in initiatives

in the field. In cooperation with the International Broadcasting trust (IBT), the One World Group of Broadcasters, International Alert, Rob Hof Productions and others, the Platform is working on the production of a series of television programmes aimed to increase the public awareness of the necessity for and prospects of conflict prevention.

The occasion for this initiative is next year's commemoration of the Hague Peace Conference of 1899. We think this ceremony, which involves both governments' and civil peace activists initiatives, is a good opportunity to inform a global audience on the issue of conflict prevention. Aspects of the plans are still in an embryonic stage. We hope NGOs and national platforms will be able to incite their national broadcasting organizations to join this initiative. So far, a dozen broadcasters have been approached, but the number of broadcasting partners, and with them the target audience, should be extended.

Warmakers have always been aware of what media can do for them. It is time for those who work for peace to pay more attention to what media can do for the prevention of violent conflict, and to decide to what extent they should resort to media techniques themselves in order to sustain their efforts.

Paul van Tongeren  
*Executive Director, European Centre for Conflict Prevention*

### Change of address

The European Platform has a new mailing address:  
P.O. Box 14069  
3508 SC  
Utrecht  
The Netherlands

Visiting address remains Janskerkhof 30,  
Utrecht. You will soon be able to visit us at  
our new website: [www.euconflict.org](http://www.euconflict.org).

# News from the European Platform

The European Platform for Conflict Prevention and Transformation is a network of European non-governmental organisations involved in the prevention and/or resolution of violent conflicts in the international arena. Its mission is to facilitate the exchange of information and experience among participating organisations, as well as to stimulate co-operation and synergy. The Platform strives to be an open network of key organisations working in this field, and aims to include participant organisations in all European countries. Optimally, these should be national platforms or networks, such as have already been established - or are being established - in Belgium, Finland, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, the Russian Federation, Switzerland and the UK. Where no such national focal point exists, the Platform aims to support the creation of one. Apart from national platforms, international NGO networks are also invited to participate. By organising bi-annual Platform meetings

-the first in London in March 1998- in the country holding the EU-Presidency, the Secretariat brings the participating organisations together to discuss relevant issues of the moment, from thematic issues to institutional questions.

## Activities in 1998/1999 Information clearing-house

The European Platform proposes to function as an information clearing-house, facilitating the sharing of knowledge and experience between participating organisations. This requires the identification of relevant actors, experts, publications and events in the relevant areas.

To encourage this, an updated and extended version of 'Prevention and Management of Violent Conflicts, An International Directory' has recently been published. As the first edition of this directory has received a very positive reception, regular updates will follow. Research for a third edition will

begin in 1999 and will be published in 2000.

Another publication will be released in 1999, containing approximately 75 surveys on prevention activities in the main international conflict areas, focusing especially on key NGOs/institutions and resource persons. Some twenty surveys have already been written, and most of these are included in the 1998 edition of the International Directory. Another source of information is the quarterly Newsletter of the Platform, which first came out in March 1998. The Platform's web-site will be operational in June ([www.euconflict.org](http://www.euconflict.org)).

## Education and Training

Educational and awareness-raising activities aimed at expanding public support for preventative action will be targeted at myriad actors: the public at large, the media, formal education systems, NGOs, churches, etc., through many different channels. In June, the

### Prevention and Management of Violent Conflicts

An International Directory - 1998 Edition

A completely revised, updated and largely enhanced version of the 1996 edition.

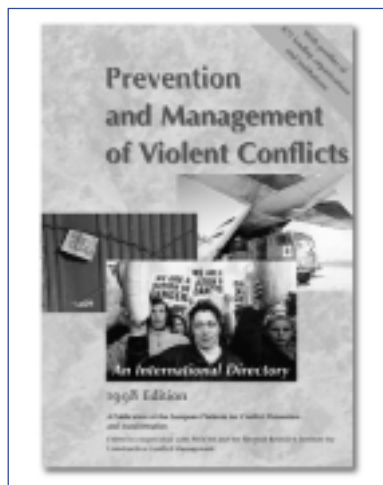
'This Directory (...) provides a wealth of information for building bridges between local and external actors.' (from the preface, by Jan Pronk - Dutch Minister for Development Cooperation)

The 1998 Directory offers written profiles of 475 organizations and institutions working on conflict prevention and management in various parts of the world. Compared with the 1996 Directory (which described 170 organizations in this field), this new publication provides substantial coverage of conflict management in Asia, Latin America, sub-Saharan Africa, North Africa and the Middle East, Central and Eastern Europe, and the former Soviet Union.

Besides these profiles, the Directory includes:

- surveys of prevention efforts in 14

### Just released



conflict areas, plus basic information on the main actors involved, programmes, publications, resource persons, websites, etc.

- a world conflict map
- search guides to additional information via websites, databases and directories
- reflection and analysis on the need for conflict prevention, policy tools and the role of NGOs
- trends: key governments involved, the United Nations, European

Union, NGO networks and regional prevention centres

- summaries of major academic institutions and grantmaking foundations.

The 475 profiles of organizations and institutions working on conflict prevention and management, as well as the conflict prevention surveys, will also be put onto the European Platform's website, which will be launched in June 1998.

This Directory is a publication of the European Platform for Conflict Prevention and Transformation, edited in cooperation with PIOOM and the Berghof Research Institute for Constructive Conflict Management.

If you wish to order one or more copies of the 1998 Directory (\$25 + postage), please contact the European Centre for Conflict Prevention, fax +31 30 253 7529, e-mail [euconflict@euconflict.org](mailto:euconflict@euconflict.org).

Organizations which have contributed to the Directory by answering the questionnaire, as well as national platforms and other contacts of the European Platform, will receive a copy of the Directory free of charge.

Platform will also publish an inventory of European universities and training institutions that have programmes related to conflict prevention and resolution. This will be compiled jointly with the Dutch training centre Kontakt der Kontinenten and the Centre for Conflict Resolution (Bradford University, UK). The Platform also plans to develop an educational rapid-response system.

#### Media

A Platform workgroup will act as catalyst and advisor in the development of a series of media productions to be made by European film producers and broadcasters under the working-title 'To end all wars'. This should be ready in time for the May 1999 Hague Appeal for Peace. Efforts will also be made to promote the use of existing audio-visual material on conflict prevention and transformation (see also page 6 of this Newsletter).

#### Advocacy & lobbying

A boost should be given in the coming

period to recent initiatives at the European level e.g. the establishment of a Policy Planning and Early-Warning Unit and the adoption of a Commission Communication on the European Union and the Issue of Conflicts in Africa. Platform advocacy activities will be linked with the bi-annual rotation of the EU-presidency, so the particular National Platform of the country which holds the EU-presidency will be expected to initiate advocacy strategy aimed at getting the key elements of the Amsterdam Appeal adopted. Another key issue to be pursued is the debate on a Code of Conduct for conflict prevention organisations.

#### Steering Group

The Steering Group of the European Platform is composed of representatives of the following participating organisations:

*Berghof Research Centre, Germany; Centre for Applied Studies in International Negotiations (CASIN), Switzerland; Centre for the Study and Management of Conflict - Russian Academy of Sciences,*

*Russia; European Centre for Common Ground, Belgium; European Centre for Conflict Prevention, The Netherlands; Flemish NGO Consultation on Conflict Prevention/NCOS, Belgium; International Alert, UK; KATU Citizens Security Council, Finland; Life & Peace Institute, Sweden; Saferworld, UK*

The secretariat of the European Platform is accommodated by the European Centre for Conflict Prevention. Further information is available from: Paul van Tongeren, executive director and Annoesjka Oostindiër, assistant to the director.

Publications available from the Centre:

- Prevention and Management of Conflicts - An International Directory, 1996 (\$15)
- Prevention and Management of Violent Conflicts - An International Directory, 1998 (\$25)
- Conflict Prevention Newsletter
- European Universities and Training Institutions on Conflict Prevention & Resolution, 1998

## New Surveys of Conflict Management Activities

**Many descriptions of conflict situations exist. However, there are currently no overviews of the different activities which have been, and are being, carried out to prevent escalation, nor of the persons and institutions which have gained expertise in this field. In recent years, the number of organisations involved in conflict prevention has grown immensely, as has the scope of their activities. But there is a rising tide of complaint about a flagrant lack of coordination.**

Hence, although the surveys give a short description of the background of conflicts in various parts of the world, they focus mainly on the activities of key local and international institutions, as well as providing guides to literature, experts and databases. The primary objective is to offer clear insights into existing possibilities for successful conflict prevention and conflict management in different situations.

In October 1997, the European Centre started working on some 20 surveys, summaries of which are included in the Directory 1998. In total, 150 prevention surveys are planned in the next three years. In 1999, a compilation of the first seventy-five will be published; in 2000, a further seventy-five will follow.

The research for these is conducted in cooperation with a number of

organisations and individuals, to facilitate cross-checking and ensure accuracy and quality. Among them are the PIOOM Foundation, the Berghof Research Institute, the Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution, and

International Alert. Many individual experts as well as other organizations knowledgeable in particular areas or subjects will also be involved.

The surveys are produced according to the following plan: We will start with research on the causes of conflict as well as on important peace initiatives. Next, the conflict resolution activities of different organizations will be analysed. Important data and personal testimonies will be recorded. The surveys will then be submitted to the experts as mentioned above after which final editing will take place.

## London Platform-meeting

Over 80 representatives of organisations from 20 European countries attended the first official meeting of the members of the European Platform in London on March 15/16. Discussions were largely focused on organizational and institutional issues due to the fact that this was the first time the Platform members were together. After debate, the proposed activities in the 1998/1999 Workplan were approved. The clearinghouse-function which the Platform seeks to establish

was, in particular, warmly applauded. Separate working groups debated the various elements of the Workplan, and it was decided to establish structural working groups on several items, including media, education, and advocacy, each to be chaired by a lead agency. Several initiatives regarding media productions were discussed (see page 6). Apart from a meeting in the fall in Austria, a platform-meeting will take place end 1998 in preparation of the German EU-presidency

# Better media less conflict

People committed to the notion that conflict prevention is possible are convinced that media can play a critical role in defusing tension and forging peace. But most media representatives are opposed to becoming actors in developments they have to cover. Still, however, there is space for them to be won over to the cause of conflict prevention. ♦ *By Jos Havermans*

But can media really prevent conflict? Nobody can say for sure. Using media to defuse tension and prevent the outbreak of violence is a young phenomenon. The value of mobilizing newspapers, radio, television and other media in the quest for peace has never been scientifically proven or thoroughly evaluated. Part of the problem here is the general difficulty connected to conflict prevention: It is by definition impossible to prove that the absence of war is due to specific preventive activities.

Despite legitimate doubts and uncertainty about its effectiveness, however, many NGOs have embarked on initiatives to engage media in conflict prevention, basing their belief in the value of this undertaking on experience. There can be little doubt, for instance, that the hate messages of Radio Mille Collines contributed to the massacres in Rwanda in 1994. Thus some NGOs have concluded that if media are not able to actively boost peace, they can at least be impelled to refrain from doing the opposite, and kept from inciting hatred. This 'do no harm' premise is one of the basic goals for which NGOs try to win support with media working in areas of conflict.

## **Blunt observations**

Efforts to mobilize media for peace are taking place along different tracks and at varying levels. Of all actors that are to be convinced of the necessity and potential of the media's role in conflict prevention, probably the most difficult group is that of the media itself. Never short of blunt observations, journalists who are asked to commit themselves to the cause of conflict prevention often dismiss these propositions as "nonsense" or "naive". Their reactions may be connected to jaded cynicism, but - more likely - may also be founded on honest perception of their professional duties. Media are supposed to stand on the sidelines and watch, report and analyze what is happening, according to the rule of the

trade. In general, journalists feel they shouldn't become part of the action.

This sounds like a bleak message for conflict preventers. However, many reporters, among them the most revered, claim to be driven by motives such as 'giving a voice to the voiceless', 'letting the world know what injustices are happening', etc. and risk their life to live to these principles. So another kind of idealism seems to smolder within the world of journalism. Moreover, in practice, they themselves sometimes contradict their own principles. A renowned Middle East correspondent, for instance, who strenuously rejects any form of preventive journalism, in the same conversation confided that he had once withheld a story on the request of a president he had interviewed because he felt publication could have increased tension in the region. "I didn't want to be responsible for a war", he explained.

Asked if he or she would yield to pressure from the authorities not to publish an interview, any reporter would say no. But apparently there can be good reasons to deviate from traditional rules.

In an overt case of deep political engagement, media in The Netherlands in the late 80s agreed to boycott a small racist political party which had been elected into parliament. By neglecting the party, the media said they hoped to contribute to its downfall. While evading the question as to whether this is good or bad journalism, the example makes clear that journalists can be led into taking a political position, and are even letting such positions guide their day to day professional behavior.

## **Mobile television crews**

There are less abstract opportunities for NGOs to forge ties with the media. They can step into the shoes of media themselves and produce television or radio programmes, or commission journalists or documentary-makers to do so. The organization, Internews, has

chosen this option. In cooperation with the International Crisis Group (ICG) and Human Rights Watch, Internews created mobile television crews equipped with satellite communications systems that can be deployed in tense regions such as Kosovo or Sudan. The crews provide coverage of 'pre-conflict' situations at below-market cost to news agencies around the world. "We will take the financial burden of covering pre-conflict situation off the broadcasters and agencies" Internews explains, "because economics of international news agencies do not support the coverage of impending conflict. It is simply too expensive." In the former Yugoslavia, Internews has been reporting extensively on the Hague War Crimes Tribunal, filling the void left by local media.

## **Baddies and goodies**

Plans of the European Platform for Conflict Prevention and Transformation to help produce TV programmes, including a drama production on conflict and reconciliation in the Caucasus ('The Peace machine'), follow similar lines. These initiatives seem to be primarily fitting for audiences in western countries.

A growing number of NGOs and mediators are trying to convince journalists, both within and outside the western world, that it is not only conflict that can be sold to their reading, listening and viewing audience, but that conflict resolution can be an equally marketable concept. Successful conflict resolution, they claim, can get good ratings. The Australian NGO Conflict Resolution Network (CRN) even developed a "Toolkit" consisting of practical suggestions for journalists on how to bring parties in a conflict closer to one another. "Avoid simplistic representations of baddies and goodies" is one of the recommendations. "Report areas of agreement as well as disagreement. This encourages the problem-solving process to continue", is another. Members of the International Center for Humanitarian Reporting presented similar guidelines.

Another approach is to work with local media in areas of conflict, either through cooperation with existing media organizations or by setting up new media organizations with local

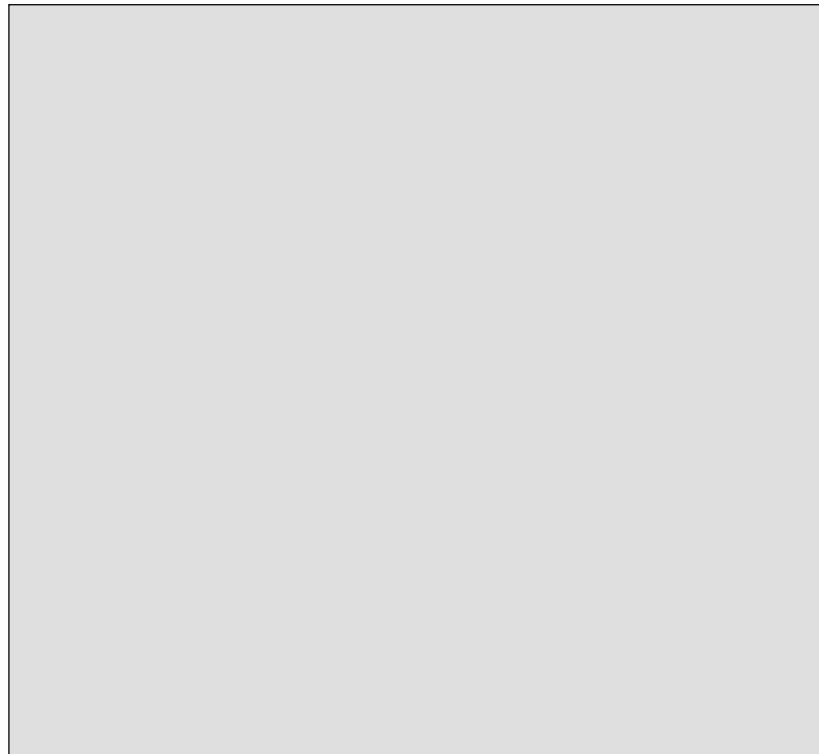
journalists. So far, this approach has been the core business of 'preventive journalism'. In a majority of cases, this approach amounts to western organizations working with non-western counterparts, usually in poorer countries. It is considered to go against what is called the CNN-factor; the phenomenon that big international news organizations tend to decide what is news and what is not.

**Down to earth approach**

NGOs agree that training local media, tailored to local needs, is one of the most valuable instruments to keep media organizations from contributing to the escalation of a conflict. There is also a strong case for recruiting and training local trainers who can, in the long-term, continue to build local media capacity adapted to the specific conditions. Another prerequisite for successful media projects is that they should be planned as long-term enterprises, which means that donors also have to remain financially committed for longer periods of time.

Sandra Melone, director of the European Center for Common Ground in Brussels, recommends taking a pragmatic, down to earth approach in working through local media. "In times of conflict, messages of peace and theories about brotherly love do not have much lasting impact at all", she says in the latest CPN Yearbook. "It is important that one uses the media to go past the stage of pontificating and of imposing morality and values so as to reach the stage of demonstrating what is possible in terms of cross-divide collaboration (between parties in a conflict)".

Search for Common Ground has built



up wide experience in working on conflict prevention through local media and is active in countries such as South Africa and Macedonia. Melone's office in Brussels is particularly close to efforts in Burundi, where Search helped to establish the renowned Radio Ijambo. Search for Common Ground is convinced that programming aimed at prevention and reconciliation can be entertaining and attract large audiences. "It is a fallacy to think that the world's public is interested only in sensationalism and is not attracted by intelligent analyses."

**Good journalism**

Special, sophisticated programming increases the potential of generating constructive movements in a divided

society, but Melone points out that in many cases, conflict prevention is already enhanced once a decent media organization is established which follows simple rules of good journalism. In areas where access to information is limited, she says, providing any accurate, balanced information already constitutes a huge step towards promoting peace. The better the media, the less the chance of an outbreak of violent conflict becomes.

Opportunities for the courtship between media and organizations working for conflict prevention to turn into a stable relationship would undoubtedly improve if the rapprochement could be classified under the neutral motto of 'the quest for professional journalism' instead of ideals that are considered by media representatives to be out of their scope.

For the time being the rapprochement is an experiment for both journalists and peacemakers. People active in this domain believe that evaluation of the current programmes should give directions as to what types of linkage between media and conflict prevention are best. This poses another challenge to the adherents of preventive action. Finding standards for impact assessment is difficult. Evaluating the preventive value of media may be nothing less than trying to measure the unmeasurable.

**Help us build a new database**

The European Platform is planning to set up a database of television and film productions in the field of conflict prevention. We need your help to make this database as exhaustive as possible.

The Platform is interested in receiving information (title, length, name of producer, director and broadcasting organization) of any production, in any language, that has been made with the explicit goal of documenting mediation activities, grass root reconciliation initiatives, or any other efforts directly related to conflict prevention or conflict resolution.

If you know of any relevant television or video production in your country, please give us a call or send an email.

We feel that the audiovisual database, which will be accessible to all interested organizations or individuals, will be a useful point of reference for filmmakers working on similar productions and a valuable resource for all national platforms.

# Platform Plans on Conflict and Media

In May 1899, the Dutch city of The Hague hosted the first international peace conference. Attended by dozens of government delegations, as well as independent scholars, this meeting aimed to discover means of ending all wars and led to the establishment of the International Court of Justice, set up in 1919 under the auspices of the League of Nations.

A century later, governments and independent organizations are planning to commemorate this ambitious peace conference. In May 1999, governments will again come together to review both failure and progress since that first bold initiative. Simultaneously, thousands of citizens and peace campaigners will gather to attend what is called the Hague Appeal for Peace, aimed at urging governments and civic society to invest in the prevention of conflicts.

At a meeting in January 1998, the International Broadcasting Trust (IBT), One World Group, International Alert and the European Platform took the decision to use the Hague Appeal for Peace as a launching pad for the production of a series of television programmes. These will be aimed at increasing public awareness of the necessity and prospects for conflict prevention as well as to arouse debate on the issue. The plan, which has since been dubbed the 'To End All Wars'-project, aims at putting together an ambitious series of tv programmes focusing on conflict prevention. The programmes will be broadcast in 1999.

The initiators are now seeking collaboration with other NGOs so as to realize as much of their plan as possible. Apart from finding financial resources, NGOs could help to forge partnerships with national broadcasting organizations. Some tv productions that have already been commissioned are now part of the 'To End All Wars' initiative. Others are under construction. A third group consists of productions that are still in a preliminary, embryonic stage and require fleshing out as well as support.

## What has been done

- In 1996, the Dutch NCDO commissioned filmmaker Rob Hof to make a series of three films under the title 'Peace with Pain'. The series consists of documentaries on conflict resolution in East Slavonia, Burundi and South Africa. The first one mainly focuses on the efforts of Max van der Stoel, the High Commissioner for Minorities in Europe, to establish a peaceful coexistence of Croats and Serbians in this region. The documentary on Burundi focuses on the work of Radio Agathashya in Burundi, where Hutu- and Tutsi-journalists work together, informing their listeners about peace efforts in the region. The documentary on South Africa explores the work of the South African Media Peace Centre in the township Crossroads, located near Cape Town. All three films will be available as of June 1998.

## What is under Construction

- *The Peace Machine*. A 90 minute drama production set in the post-Cold War Caucasus giving an insider's view of the role of a mediator in a war. The film has been co-developed by the IBT and the German public broadcasting organization BR/ARD. Six European public broadcasters have agreed to support and broadcast the production, which is due to be completed in early 1999.
- *The Peacemaker of Europe*. A Portrait of Max van der Stoel, High Commissioner on National Minorities for the OSCE. The documentary focuses on Van der Stoel's personal - mostly behind the scenes - method of defusing ethnic tension in the former Soviet Union and the Balkans. A co-production by the Dutch broadcasting body, Humanitaire Omroep Stichting (HOS), and NCDO.

## Other Plans

- *The Peace Warrior*. The documentary on Van der Stoel could be the first in a series on the work of international peace brokers. The series could focus

on the activities of other major peace brokers, such as Jimmy Carter and Washington Okumo.

- *Arms trade*. Preliminary plans have been made to make a film revealing the British and French banks that finance the export of small arms and ammunition in deals that allegedly circumvent UN and EU embargoes.
- *Dawn to Dusk*. The Second Casualty. A production on children and conflict. The makers would provide videocamera's to children who would make short video diaries in which they show how they survive in a war zone.
- *Two Minutes Silence*. Mr Kalashnikov Regrets. The designer of the widely used machinegun will be taken to Sierra Leone, one of the countries where the Kalashnikov is the gun of choice, to show what harm handguns can do.
- The initiators of the 'To End All Wars'-project' also consider sustaining the project by using new media, such as organizing dialogue on the internet.

Suggestions on how to realize these ideas are solicited. More information on all of the plans mentioned is available at the Platform's secretariat. For the 'To End All Wars'-project to succeed, the full cooperation of both broadcasters and NGOs is necessary. No doubt, the project offers a good chance for Platform members and national networks to get television attention for conflict prevention in their own country. <

# Africa: Search for Common Ground

By Kristina Lochr

In 1977 TV anchor Walter Cronkite spoke by satellite television with Egyptian President Anwar Sadat and Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin. Their discussion resulted in the agreement between Sadat and Begin to meet five days later in Jerusalem and laid the groundwork for the Camp David Accords. An example of 'television diplomacy', Cronkite's interview indicated the powerful influence media can have in international affairs. As technological advances promote

widespread and rapid access to information, the media's ability to not only describe events, but help shape their direction is undeniable. Frequently, however, this influence has proven to be catastrophic in the midst of violent conflict. But, as the human and economic costs of violent conflict continue to climb, some recognize the need for an alternative to conflict-driven media - one which taps into the powerful influence of media to promote conflict resolution. This approach was taken by Search for Common Ground's media unit, Common Ground Productions (CGP), in its recent television and radio series, Africa: Search for Common Ground. This thirteen-part series gets behind the prominent headlines of victimization and tyranny to shed new light on issues of concern to the entire continent.

Based upon the premise that current media coverage presents a one-dimensional picture of African life, the series counters this distorted perception with a portrait of Africa as seen through African eyes. Topics include child soldiers returning home, traditional healing versus modern medicine, and South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission. In the wake of this production, one message continues to come through loud and clear: Resolutions-oriented programming is more than simply a feel-good production. It is also highly entertaining, and sows the seeds for conflict resolution and reconciliation. Similar productions by other organizations have also been well received. One such program is UNESCO's radio drama 'New Home, New Life' in Afghanistan which addresses post-war problems facing Afghans every day. Another is the Israeli-Palestinian 'Sesame Street', which chips away at stereotypes by exposing Israeli and Palestinian children to the themes of tolerance and mutual respect. The success of these programs indicates that bridging the professional standards of mainstream media with transformative programming is indeed possible. While more in-depth evaluation is necessary to determine the broader impact of these shows, building such a bridge in hot spots around the world can not only present a more accurate picture of conflict, but can also enhance our ability to identify workable solutions. <

## Internews' Media Conflict Prevention Strategies\*

By Paul Greenberg, Director of International Co-productions Internews

Internews has been working with local electronic media in zones of deadly conflict over the course of the last ten years. While we have had great success in developing and broadcasting conflict prevention programming on local media within zones of conflict, we have rarely been able to get that programming to viewers in Western Europe and the US. We see a real lack of information in the West about conflicts that have not yet turned violent but could in the near future. We also see the international media regularly ignoring conflicts that have supposedly 'ended' but in fact have continued to fester because international assistance was too rapidly diverted. The constructive role that the international media could play in raising public awareness of impending-conflict and post-conflict situations is too often subverted by the economics of the media business. The blood and guts of an actual conflict bring rating points and profit whereas programming that focuses on preventing conflict is often too abstract to attract public attention. As NGOs, private foundations and media professionals, we need to find an innovative project that can begin to change the economics of electronic media in the West. Over the course of the last year I have been consulting with

our offices in Tajikistan, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Palestine and the Great Lakes Region of Africa, as well with broadcasters in Western Europe and the US, in an attempt to crystallize a global media conflict prevention approach. I believe we have arrived at a three-part strategy that could change the way global media institutions react to conflict and also contribute to more responsible behaviour by local media within the actual regions of conflict.

1. Covering conflict before it happens. In cooperation with the International Crisis Group (ICG) and Human Rights Watch, Internews has developed a project called Media Rapid Response. We will create several mobile television crews equipped with flyaway satellite communications systems and deploy them to areas like Kosovo where conflict is brewing. We will then provide a coverage of the 'pre-conflict' situation at a below-market cost to news agencies around the world. Eventually we could work with channels in the West to develop 'early warning' sections of their broadcasts that could highlight for viewers the mechanics of emerging conflict in a clear and understandable fashion.
2. Educational programs on the nature of local conflict. Schools, universities and public television channels need to educate their audiences more actively about the

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## From page 7

fundamental roots of local conflict. The point would be to build a constituency of viewers that could become more reactive to local conflict and exert more pressure on governments. Internews has produced two pilot programs of an educational series on conflict for American Public Television called *Vis a Vis*. *Vis a Vis* uses video-conferencing technology to link two people on opposite ends of a conflict.

The two characters talk and share video diaries with one another over a period of days. The resulting footage is edited into a one hour programme that conveys both sides of a conflict in a balanced fashion. Such a series could serve as a model for other educational programmes.

3. Pre and Post Conflict programming for local channels.

In addition to providing footage and programming to Western channels, we plan to continue to develop

programming on a local level that deals with local conflicts on site. Presently we are producing regional television magazines series in the former Yugoslavia and the Caucasus. The point of both of these programmes is to provide unbiased news. <

\* Internews Europe, based in Paris, is part of Internews International, a non-profit association of four regional organisations in the US, Europe and the Middle East.

## New Literature on Media and Conflict Prevention

compiled by Albert J. Jongman (PIOOM)

### MEDIA AND GENOCIDE

Are Public Media Useful for Early Warning or Creating Political Will for Early Response?

Leitenberg, M. In: Proceedings of the ISPAC/UN Conference 'Violent Crime and Conflicts: Towards Early Warning and Preventive Mechanisms, Courmayeur, Italy, October 4-6, 1997 (forthcoming)

The author analyzes the early warning role of the media in cases of imminent genocide. He argues that if 'early warning' is considered to be a notice of the likelihood of genocide six months or a year before its potential occurrence, the media is not particularly suited to providing such notice. War and genocide in Bosnia and Rwanda were thoroughly reported in the media, but in neither case did such reporting contribute to 'political will' for an international response.

### LATE-BREAKING FOREIGN POLICY

The News Media's Influence on Peace Operations  
Strobel, W.P. Washington, D.C. US Institute of Peace Press, 1997, 275p.

This study by a former US State Department and White House correspondent for the Washington Times, deals with the connection between the phenomenon of late-breaking news and the conduct of foreign policy decisions. The author analyzes the role of real-time television, in particular CNN's coverage of four peacekeeping operations in which America was involved - former Yugoslavia, Somalia, Rwanda and Haiti.

### Other publications

- Adam, G. **Media: Peace-Building Through the Media, Part 3**. Crosslines Global Report, December 30, 1997.
- Benini, A.A. **Uncertainty and Information Flows: The Case of Humanitarian Agencies**. Disasters, 1998.
- Cappella, J.N. **Spiral of Cynicism**. The Press and the Public Good. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997, 334p.
- Carruthers, S.L. **The Media at War**. Communication and Conflict in the 20th Century. London, 1998, 288p.
- Van Ginneken, J. **Understanding Global News**. London: Sage, 1997, 256p.
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### Websites

A selection of websites related to war & media:

#### War and Media

<http://www.augie.edu/dept/coth/coth380/war/war.htm>

#### Common Ground Productions

<http://www.sfcg.org/cgppmain.htm>

#### CROSS Lines

<http://www.ichr.org/xlines/xlinback.html>  
**DHA News**

[http://156.106.192.130/dha\\_ol/pub/dhanews/](http://156.106.192.130/dha_ol/pub/dhanews/)

#### Fairness and Accuracy Reporting

<http://www.fair.org>

#### Global Beat Home

<http://www.nyu.edu/globalbeat/>

#### Headlines and Soundbites

<http://www.mediastudies.org/CTR/Publications/hsb/index.html>

#### International Center for Humanitarian Reporting

<http://www.ichr.org/index.html>

#### Journal of Humanitarian Assistance

<http://131.111.06.147/jcontent.htm>

#### Journalists at War

<http://www.easynet.co.uk/LIRE/wars.htm>

#### Media Warfare

<http://sunset.backbone.olemiss.edu/~mirjana/rat/dediji/mediji-INDEX.html>

#### CPJ Website

<http://www.cpj.org/>

#### Media Studies Center

<http://www.freedomforum.org/whoware/media.asp>

#### AJR Newslink (3600 newspapers)

<http://www.newslinks.org/menu.html>

## Profile

# Action for Peace-building

*Questions and Observations following a consultation organised by Responding to Conflict and INCORE in Northern Ireland, March 1998*

Since 1993 RTC has been organising opportunities for practitioners in the fields of development, rights and peace to come together for three months, to study common problems, to strengthen their conflict-handling skills and to develop new ways of understanding and addressing issues of conflict and peace-building in their own societies. Currently the results of the course, and the in-country work that this has led to, are being evaluated. There is considerable evidence of practical outcomes. ♦ *By Simon Fisher and Sue Williams*

One sign of this is that former participants have been forming their own regional networks. Two in particular have developed their own programmes: Coalition for Peace in Africa, which covers much of sub-Saharan Africa and has its base in Johannesburg, and Cooperation for Peace and Unity, which operates in Afghanistan. Now there is a move amongst the most active of former participants to link up on a global basis in order to work more closely on common issues in the future. As a result, in March a unique gathering took place in Derry, Northern Ireland when 23 experienced practitioners met, together with RTC staff, for a two-week consultation on Action for Peace-Building. All have previously worked with RTC in their own countries, or are planning to do so. The venue was the headquarters of INCORE (Initiative on Conflict Resolution and Ethnicity), a department of the United Nations University, which co-sponsored the event and contributed in many ways to its success.

## Action and training

The consultation centred around six priority themes: action, training, evaluation, networking, influencing policy and building theory, of which the first two, action and training became the prime focus. Over the two weeks participants reviewed and shared their experience in these areas, assessed likely needs over the next five years and developed situation-specific ways of addressing these needs.

Much of the outcome will consist of medium to long-term initiatives to address regional or local conflicts in Central Asia, Central America and West Africa.

Below are some pertinent observations which arose from the shared experience of the group.

- Conflict (not violence) is essential for social change and justice. Practitioners often need to be catalysts for conflict, as well as resolvers of it.
  - Training is often mistaken for action: in fact training usually has, at best, an indirect influence on a situation.
  - Good training offers space, time, methods and tools to reflect on practical experience. Learn from it, and go back into one's situation better equipped.
  - Effective action is inclusive, offers an arena to explore differences, and empowers communities to define and solve their own problems.
  - Analysis of conflict is not a preparation for action, it is action itself. Including the affected community in making the analyses is essential.
  - Influencing policy in one's own and other relevant institutions is vital.
  - Networking, both within and across countries, is a crucial way to increase impact and influence policy.
  - Outside agencies must recognise the need for community ownership of peace-related work.
  - Evaluating the impact of work on conflict is vital, and methodologies are still in their infancy. We know that agencies often escalate conflicts unwittingly, and that, on the other hand, some excellent work has been done to build peace through development and reconstruction programmes. But how do we demonstrate impact? What are useful indicators?
- INCORE is producing a report on the state of the art in evaluating conflict,



**Dekha Ibrahim Abdi, rural development worker in North-Eastern Kenya; Regional Co-ordinator, Eastern Africa, for the Coalition for Peace in Africa (COPA)**

using this consultation as a starting-point.

Members of this consultation were middle-level people, with access both to the grass-roots and to governments. They were clear that a major task now is to build a constituency for this work: with officials and political people, with community leaders, both customary and modern, and across the middle spectrum of society. All tracks need to be mobilised in order to raise the profile and impact of this kind of work.

Specific needs were identified which others could assist with, including:

- Documenting 'successful' and 'unsuccessful' practice
- Action-research to increase understanding of the dynamics of latent conflict
- Mapping the role of international institutions in conflict situations
- Advocacy with policy staff in international aid agencies to explain the practicality of peace-building and seek additional resources for it.

More information on RTC courses and consultancy, and a report on this consultation, can be obtained from: RTC, 1046 Bristol Road, Birmingham B29 6LJ, UK. Tel: 44 121 415 5641. Fax: 44 121 415 4119. Email: [enquiries@respond.org](mailto:enquiries@respond.org)

# Eight Critical Statements on the Contribution of NGOs to Conflict Prevention and Transformation

The work of NGOs as well as other civil activists in the prevention and transformation of violent conflicts is, in general, highly esteemed. The increasing involvement of NGOs in this area is not, however, entirely welcomed. Critical voices point out that this expansion has its darker sides and that it gave rise to illusions about the manageability of potentially violent conflicts ♦ *By Norbert Ropers*

The criticism initially aimed at the consequences of the 'humanitarian interventionism' as a result of the massive involvement of humanitarian aid-organisations in civil wars and 'complex emergencies'. Some of this criticism has been dealt with by the organisations concerned and led to a new policy for humanitarian aid in the sense of an 'Hippocratic Oath of Aid': Do no Harm. With regard to the considerably smaller funds for direct civic measurements in favour of conflict prevention and transformation, the debate about its possibilities and limits was, until recently, only a sideline in the discussions about 'humanitarian interventionism'. Practical experience gained in the meantime, as well as first attempts to evaluations in this field, have led to critical questions about conflict-resolution projects within the civil society. Some of these questions were raised from the outside, especially in academic circles, whereas others deal with this topic in the traditional sense - as diplomats or representatives of multilateral organisations. In the following, I will condense these questions, problems and considerations to eight points of criticism in order to determine the possibilities, limits and needs for further clarification of conflict prevention and transformation by civil activists.

1. The movement for conflict prevention and transformation tends to rule out questions about power and sovereignty and overlook that the violent escalation of conflicts could, from the viewpoint of single activists, be a highly rational and calculated policy.

Whether consciously or not, the activities of NGOs have necessarily to do with power and authority. There are four ways of dealing with it.

a NGOs try to empower single or all parties to deal with the conflict constructively and/or to support them to avoid a violent outbreak. Among other things this means the monitoring and lobbying of human

rights and the protection of minorities, capacity-building and protective measurements for disadvantaged or endangered groups, negotiation training for strategic activists, public relations etc.

- b NGOs try to create channels and forums to balance out the influence of power-differences, power-political positions and negotiation strategies in favour of an orientation towards basic interests, the clarifying of relationships and the enabling of common problem-solutions.
- c NGOs help the victims of violent conflicts regardless of interests of power and sovereignty. This well-meaning approach has been revised as a consequence of the debate about the negative sides of humanitarian interventionism.
- d NGOs contribute to the civilising of conflicts by promoting skills and capabilities for a constructive conflict-management to as many individual persons as possible. This belief is not altogether wrong, but not sufficient as the one and only approach, because it doesn't consider enough that individual opinions and forms of behaviour only become politically powerful in the context of social movements, of organisations and institutions.

2. The fixation on prevention and/or termination of violence as well as the role of Third Party-Negotiation in conflict management makes the movement for conflict prevention and transformation blind towards questions of justice.

This criticism also dates back to an old debate - the one about the relationship between the values of peace and justice. The tension between these two cannot be solved completely. Therefore it is all the more important that in the societal debate about appropriate means of conflict management both values get considered sufficiently. This initially means to give up

the idea that constructive conflict management is primarily the result of Third-Party-Mediation. Without the support of legitimate interests of disadvantaged persons and groups, without their empowerment towards capabilities for conflict, without the work of groups for the protection of human rights and minorities conflict prevention and transformation would be incomplete. Third parties, however, can have an important function in the concentration on improving the communication between the conflicting parties rather than to enforce externally developed solutions.

3. The approach of conflict prevention and transformation tends to psychologize conflicts and to treat all participants as victims.

This point refers primarily to those NGOs which organise training and workshops about conflict resolution with more or less influential members of the conflicting parties, but not with the leading groups of the parties. On this level they concentrate either on the training of individual skills or work on aspects of relationships within the conflict (traumas, different patterns of behaviour and attitudes etc.). Emphasizing psychological (and spiritual) aspects of violent conflicts is a necessity. Nevertheless, some criticism rightfully points out one weakness in the conflict prevention and transformation movement so far: The underestimation of questions of organisational development and conscious activities on meso and macrosocial structures, as mentioned above. There are only few concepts and tentative approaches to overcome these weaknesses, like the creation of 'peace-constituencies', but the infrastructure for their application so far still has to be improved.

4. The concentration on activities of the civil society in many transitional and developing societies endangers the necessary strengthening of the state as an effective monopoly of power as well as of its legal control.

This criticism has to be taken seriously. It illuminates that the civilisation of the conflict-potential in transitional and developing societies can never be the task of civil society alone. Not only the capacity

for self-regulation of societal activists and the creation of non-party, non-ethnic loyalties is important, but also participation in the support of the other civilising dimensions. The simple contrasting of measurements for the strengthening of the state as an alternative to the strengthening of the civil society is confusing. This has its origin in the function of the civil society as a counterpart of authoritarian regimes as in Eastern Europe before the transition in 1989/90. In the same way, however, as one succeeds to democratize state structures the functions of the civil society have to change. Now it can also be important to support state-institutions to offer services as well as a legally controlled monopoly of power.

**5.** Because of the constant external interference of the movement for conflict prevention and transformation in critical areas there is the danger that their representatives themselves become part of the conflict, and even create the stimulus for the continuation of the conflict - albeit involuntarily.

In the case of interference by external civil activists one has at first to differentiate whether it is an 'interested' attempt in favour of a disadvantaged group, a more or less neutral attempt to prevent or terminate violence or to balance interests. With 'interested' activities it is obvious to ask the question in how far an empowerment of single parties really contributes to a constructive conflict transformation. This is less obvious with activities of mediation, consulting and support from a point of view of a neutral or all-party position. The debate about 'humanitarian interventionism' has shown that withdrawal as a meaningful and ethically acceptable consequence from these difficulties is no viable option. More appropriate is a conscious consideration of the by-products of the interference to be expected. The same is true for the movement of conflict prevention and transformation. It is facing the challenge to develop a more self-critical and reflective relationship towards its work. This is helped by forums and opportunities for 'facilitated self-reflection' as well as by a growing participation of local civil activists.

**6.** Like with other activists within civil society, the conflict prevention and transformation-NGOs are lacking in sufficient legitimacy in regard to their



(potential) influence as well as to their own internal structure.

In regard to the question of 'external' legitimacy this criticism cannot be justified, because NGOs are not capable of collectively binding decisions. The questions of the 'internal' legitimacy in conflict management is more difficult. It is difficult to formulate general statements about the appropriate constitution of NGOs dealing with conflict management, because they are rooted in a highly diverse environment. This makes it all the more important to promote the process of self-understanding about standards of quality in this field. This may also be the best way to deal with the unavoidable consequences of the inner dynamic of growing organisations. We cannot emphasize enough that the main problem in this field in the foreseeable future is not the dynamics of powerful organisations but, on the contrary, the contrast between the massive needs for action on the one hand and the under-financed small organisations which are mainly feeding on idealism and self-exploitation.

**7.** Similar to the world of development-NGOs, the movement for conflict prevention and transformation is influenced by the distinct North-South-divide as well as the West-East-divide. This concerns the dependencies in the co-operation of NGOs as well as the application of primarily Western concepts in conflict management.

Many transitional societies have traditional conflict management mechanisms and cultures, without which the changes would be even less manageable. With the growing pressure for modernisation and politicization they

are, however, increasingly under strain. Given these conditions, and also because of their cultural implications, Western forms of communicative conflict management more and more meet with reservation. It is an interesting question to what extent the movement in time has managed to narrow the divide by empowering NGOs in the South and East, by creating increasingly partner-orientated structures as well as by integrating non-Western conflict management approaches. In this regard there is a number of positive indicators showing up in the diversity of the organisations. This is comparable with the development of culturally and societally orientated concepts for training. The dynamic development of the movement for conflict prevention and transformation in South-Africa and parts of Eastern Europe has furthermore resulted in more partner-orientated structures in these areas.

**8.** In regard to the immense challenges for the conflict prevention and transformation and their limited resources the labour-division between NGOs as well as between NGOs, the state and multilateral activists is surprisingly underdeveloped.

Many practitioners in the movement would like to intensify the co-operation with local social institutions and to develop local and regional 'peace-constituencies'. These demands are frequent and very understandable, because they express the wish for increased efficiency in spite of the presumably ongoing tight financial situation. Nevertheless, it should be taken into account that co-ordination and co-operation also require energy, money and time and that they have to be assessed under a cost-benefit perspective as well. Historically the movement for conflict prevention and transformation is in its seminal stage. Its contributions to sustainable peace-building is primarily dependent on how far it succeeds to manage a successful process of self-reflection, to learn from experience and to contextualise its work in regard to other political, societal and economic influences.

*Norbert Ropers is director of the Berghof Research Centre for Constructive Conflict Management, Germany. This article is a condensed version of a chapter in 'Prevention and Management of Violent Conflicts. An International Directory - 1998 Edition'.*

## Director, Conflict Resolution Program

*The Carter Centre*

The Carter Centre seeks an individual with expertise and substantial experience in the fields of conflict prevention, resolution, and negotiations to be the director of its Conflict Resolution Program. This person spearheads the resolution of conflicts through a variety of means: the use of third-party mediation, behind-the-scenes diplomacy, and careful monitoring and highlighting of major conflict areas. S/he will be responsible for program development and program management. The Director is also responsible for managing and raising the funds required to finance new projects and activities from foundations, corporations, individuals, and government donors. This individual must have fifteen years of experience, including some overseas in developing countries. The person must also have substantial managerial communications and leadership

## Vacancies



abilities, including at high levels of responsibility in nongovernmental, intergovernmental, or governmental organizations.

**Please send letter of interest and resumes, no later than June 15, to: The Carter Centre, c/o Sabrina Callahan, HR  
453 Freedom Parkway, Atlanta, GA 30307, FAX (404) 420-3818.**

## Social Entrepreneur/Organizer

*State of the World Forum*

The Coexistence and Community Building Initiative of the State of the World Forum is seeking an

experienced social entrepreneur/organizer to carry out a unique project to facilitate the creation of a global coalition spanning the existing fields of Coexistence and Community Building. The goals of this project are to create the same level of energy, public support, national and global institutions for conflict resolution and coexistence as currently exists for the environment, and to catalyze the global consciousness that it is essential that we learn to live together if we are to survive. S/he will work within a network that encompasses a host of existing fields, including conflict resolution, religious conciliation, community building, democracy, and cross-cultural education. Knowledge of the field of conflict resolution is required as well as excellent communication skills and experience with fundraising.

**For more information contact: Joan Bronk, Vice President, The Abraham Fund, 477 Madison Avenue-4th Floor, New York, New York 10022, e-mail: jbronk@aol.com, Fax: +1 212 935 1834.**

## Calendar of Events and Conferences

- **ETHNO-POLITICAL WARFARE**  
June 29–July 3, Derry/Londonderry, Northern Ireland  
International conference bringing together specialists on ethnic conflict, as well as social scientists.  
Contact: Lyn Moffett, INCORE. Tel. +44 (1504) 375 507, Fax: +44 (1504) 375510, e-mail: lyn@incore.ulst.ac.uk  
<http://www.incore.ulst.ac.uk>
- **TOWARDS PEACEBUILDING**  
Developing New Policy and Practice in Areas of Instability and Conflict  
July 6-10, Birmingham, UK  
A residential workshop for staff of international relief and development agencies organised by Responding to

Conflict. Info: Responding to Conflict. Tel.: +44 (121) 415 5641, e-mail: enquiries@respond.org

- **AGENDA FOR PEACE: RECONCILIATION**  
October 3-4, Loccum, Germany  
Organised by Protestant Academy Loccum in cooperation with other organizations. This conference will discuss what function and what priority is to be attached to reconciliation in the post-conflict peace-building processes.  
Contact: Jörg Calließ, Evangelische Akademie Loccum. Tel.: +49 (5766) 81109, Fax: +49 (5766) 81128. Juan Gutierrez, Gernika Gogoratuz, Tel.: +34 (4) 625 3558, Fax: +34 (4) 625 6765.

- **THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY AND ITS ROLE IN PREVENTING, MANAGING AND RESOLVING CONFLICT**  
September 17-25, Cambridge, UK  
It will examine how the role of the international community could be better defined in terms of international response to crisis: diplomatic action; military action; the promotion of human rights; and action in the economic and social fields to address the root causes of conflict. Organised by 21st Century Trust.  
Contact: John Lotherington, 21st Century Trust. Tel: +44 171 323 2099, Fax: +44 171 323 2088, e-mail: trust@21centurytrust.org, Website: [www.21stCenturyTrust.org/1998.html](http://www.21stCenturyTrust.org/1998.html).

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invited to send in information about upcoming events and vacancies.

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