

NEWSFLASH

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Theme: The Regional Process

Towards the first international meeting

The Role of Civil Society in the Prevention of Armed Conflict Program will be launched at an International Preparatory Meeting in June 2003. There, the participants (representatives from the regional NGOs, some INGOs) will decide the structure, process and content of the Program. Furthermore, we hope to invite some observers from governments and UN agencies. This issue of the Newsflash focuses specifically on the regional process

The regional participants for this meeting will be elected through a regional preparatory process, that started in September 2002.

As a start, in September 2002 the ECCP sent out a letter to 120 organizations worldwide to inform them of the program, and to ask for their comments and if they would like to be involved in this. The letters were sent to organizations working in conflict prevention/peacebuilding preferably belonging to a networks to encourage broader scope and regional focus, and to research / academic institutions that have a specific focus on peacebuilding and/or conflict prevention.

Based on the response to the initial letter, the ECCP with the help of its partners identifies in the coming months so-called "regional initiators" that could act as regional catalysts for the program. The initiators should start up a process of assessing the needs and wishes of their own region by convening a preparatory meeting or other ways of

consulting with partners before the International Preparatory Meeting in June 2003. These initiators should also coordinate the participation from their region at the International Preparatory Meeting. Initiators from the specific regions will be invited to participate: North/West Africa, East Africa, and Southern Africa; the Arab world; Central Asia, Southeast Asia & the Pacific, East Asia; Europe, Balkans, Caucasus; North America, and Latin America & Caribbean.

Planning Regional Process

- Preparatory process until June 2003, to stimulate regional involvement, pinpoint initiators, and nominate participants for the International Preparatory Meeting in June 2003
- June 2003: International Preparatory Meeting, where structure and content will be discussed
- Preparatory work, organization, agenda setting, etc for the regional conferences in 2004
- On going research on issues & actors and the interaction between NGOs and the UN
- Regional conferences in 2004 in all regions, to ensure regional input to set the agenda for the International Conference at the UN in 2005

Supporters of the Program:

- Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida)
- The Netherlands Ministry for Foreign Affairs
- Cordaid, The Netherlands
- The German Ministry for Foreign Affairs
- Royal Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- Oxfam Netherlands
- The Irish Ministry for Foreign Affairs

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Regional Process: Recent developments

North/West Africa

The West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP) is a regional network with national networks and contacts in all West African countries. The ECCP presented the programme and their possible involvement in it at the Annual General Meeting of WANEP (January 27 – 31). At this meeting a future project was discussed that will increase the capacity and effectiveness of conflict prevention and good governance mechanisms in the West African sub-region through the establishment of a Civil Society Forum. This program and the ECCP initiative will be mutually beneficial through the regional process. WANEP would like to act as an initiator and they have decided to have a broader preparatory group come together and discuss precise involvement and nominate 2 people to participate in the International Preparatory Meeting in June. This group will also be involved in the organisation and preparation of a regional conference in 2004.

East Africa

ECCP staff will go to Nairobi from March 12-18 to discuss the process with partners in East Africa. A small meeting with some key NGOs and networks of one and a half day (March 13, 14) will be organised to present the Program, discuss cooperation, and decide participation form the region for the International Preparatory Meeting (IPM) in June. In the following 3 days possible locations for the IPM in June will be checked out, and further discussions with key partners, will be held, as well as meetings with other NGOs. Several UN agencies in Nairobi, will also be consulted. NPI and COPA will help facilitate this meeting.

Organisations such as IRG / Africa Peace Forum, IAG, PeaceNet, Citizens for Peace, Eritrea, Centre for Conflict Resolution, Uganda will be approached.

Arab World

The Arab World covers the Arab countries including Palestine from Morocco to Iraq and also includes Iran. The flyer of the programme is translated into Arabic and will be mailed with a follow up letter to the 15 contacts in the region. El Taller, Panorama and Ittijah have expressed interest in cooperation and will be discussing how to initiate the process in this region.

Latin America & Caribbean

In **Costa Rica** the programme was presented by the ECCP to several development and peace organisations, such as the FUNPADEM, University for Peace, the Arias Foundation, Inter - American Institute of Human Rights, Radio for Peace and FLACSO. Costa Rica is traditionally seen as almost a 'paradise of peace' in this unstable region; hence, development and peace organisations that are based here have a more regional than local focus, which make them very suitable to take part in the sub-regional process in Central America.

After Costa Rica, the programme was discussed at a special meeting of the Forum on Citizen Diplomacy on Conflict Prevention in the region. The FDC is an umbrella organisation whose members are network organizations and NGOs from across Latin America and the Caribbean, the founders of this forum are CEAAL, CRIES, HRI and AFSC. The Forum expressed their interest to be actively involved in this programme by acting as a regional initiator and proposed some exciting ideas for cooperation with the region during the regional process.

Europe:

The Programme was one of the key issues on the agenda of the Annual Meeting of the European Platform for Conflict Prevention and Transformation that was organised in November in the Netherlands.

In three separate working groups participants discussed and commented on the programme and in the closing session the participants endorsed the ECCP as leading agency for this programme. To ensure a southern and eastern voice in the discussions, the Platform invited organisations from Africa, Asia and Central Asia.

Asia

In Asia the South East Asian Conflict Studies Network (SEACSN) and the Gaston Z. Ortigas Peace Institute (Manila, Philippines) expressed its interest in cooperating in the regional conference in South East Asia. Representatives of these organisations visited the ECCP in November to discuss further cooperation. The SEACSN member in Thailand plans to organise a initial meeting in Chiang Mai.

Also in November, the ECCP invited some key NGOs from Sri Lanka to the Netherlands for a seminar on the peace process in Sri Lanka and the need to involve civil society. At this meeting the proposal to organise a conference for **South Asia** in Sri Lanka was discussed as well.

North America:

The Canadian Peacebuilding Coordinating Committee (CPCC) committed itself to play a leading role in the North-American preparatory process, in close cooperation with American organisations such as the Alliance for International Conflict Resolution (AICR)

A few words about added value ...

Your feedback is needed

ECCP hopes that an inclusive consultation process will ensure ownership at the regional level throughout the process. We would like the regions themselves to decide what content should be addressed through this process, and how to focus the process to achieve that. The space created will provide the opportunity to meet other regional NGOs working in conflict prevention and peacebuilding to improve collaboration, in turn enhancing the strength and impact of your work. We look forward to an increase in the effectiveness of activities through everyone's input on best practices and lessons learned including experience with the UN so far. We hope that through the regional process these efforts will strengthen regional networking and establish regional conflict prevention networks. We would then like to see the same process at the international level to create a global network that raises the leverage and profile of NGOs. Our aim is for these networks to result in more international cooperation, professionalization of the field of conflict prevention and peacebuilding, and improved communication and cooperation with the UN for its activities in your region.

Here is an excerpt of what Emmanuel Bombande from the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP), has to say about the process:

The most important part of this challenge is the creation of regional conferences. What is most essential to WANEP about these regional conferences is that we make the communities the main focus. We must finally admit that NGOs cannot bring peace to a community. For too long NGOs and the people they help have held the notion that experts can fly in and bring resolution to problems. Every situation is different and if we go in with a standard approach we will most likely fail. We cannot succeed if we do not involve the communities in the process of creating their own peace. We can facilitate. We can motivate. We can play the role of the catalyst. But we cannot give them the magic answer. The communities must make the peace themselves. We have found that when communities work with WANEP to design peacebuilding programs, two things occur:

The level of commitment is higher because the communities are not left out of the initial stage of design.

There is a greater chance for the success of the project than if we just hand a community a prepared solution.

At a regional conference we can decide what proposals and topics we as a region want to carry to a UN level conference. We need to come up with concrete plans on how and if we can influence the UN structures to involve and value communities in peacebuilding and how we can convince the UN that working with the grass roots is just as important as working with state level actors.

In answer to the UN Secretary General's appeal that NGOs with an interest in conflict prevention to organize "an international conference of local, national and international NGOs on their role in conflict prevention and future interaction with United Nations in this field" (see: The Prevention of Armed Conflict, Rec. 27), the ECCP offered to facilitate a worldwide participatory process that would lead to the envisaged conference. To achieve this, the ECCP depends on your feedback and co-operation. We would therefore kindly like to ask you to read the flyer and send us your feedback. In order to help you, we formulated the following specific questions:

- *What do you see as the potential added value of this program for you or your organization?*
- *What could be the connection/links with your work and related staff?*
- *What should be the outcome of this program?*
- *Would your organization be interested to be involved in this program? If so, in which way?*
- *What are the tasks you could undertake and what additional support is needed?*
- *Would your organization be interested in co-organizing a (sub-) regional conference?*
- *What are potential partners if it is one of our aims to have a broad preparatory group, including people from the whole region, NGOs, practitioners and academics*
- *Do you have contact with specific regional organizations or networks in the field of conflict prevention and peacebuilding?*
- *Are there regional meetings in the near future where these ideas could be discussed?*

Please send you feedback to:

g.bierbrauwer@conflict-prevention.net

The Role of Civil Society in the Prevention of Armed Conflict

About the Programme

This programme should lead to the conference as envisaged by the Secretary General in his report on "[The Prevention of Armed Conflict](#)", in which Kofi Annan urges NGOs with an interest in conflict prevention to organise "an international conference of local, national and international NGOs on their role in conflict prevention and future interaction with United Nations in this field" (Rec. 27).

Over the last months the ECCP has initiated the preparatory phases of a global civil society conference to bring together representatives from the peacebuilding community.

In sum, the ECCP proposes a two-year integrated program of research, consultation and discussion to take place all over the world. Six regional conferences will focus the experience of each region and lead on to a major international conference at UN Headquarters in 2004. All those involved at any level of conflict prevention and peace building are warmly invited to take part.

Please click here for the English flyer which summarises the proposals. Please contact the ECCP if you would like to receive the Arab, French or Spanish version.

Objective and Goals of the Programme

Overall objective:

to increase the effectiveness of conflict prevention efforts

First goal:

to explore fully the role of civil society and NGO's in the prevention of armed conflicts

Second goal:

to improve the interaction between civil society and the UN, regional organizations and governments and thereby to achieve a more integrated and coherent approach to conflict prevention

Third goal:

to strengthen regional networking and to establish regional conflict-prevention networks composed of key NGOs, sub-regional networks, practitioners and academics

Fourth goal:

to promote the development of a coherent body of research and theory that will help the conflict prevention community take its place in international deliberations

Fifth goal:

to produce a UN Action Plan or Protocol on Conflict Prevention in its broadest sense, possibly embodied in a Security Council Resolution, which will guide the international community as it seeks non-violent solutions to armed conflict in the decades ahead

The ECCP

The European Centre for Conflict Prevention

(ECCP) is a Non-Governmental Organisation that promotes effective conflict-prevention and peacebuilding strategies, and actively supports and connects people working for peace worldwide.



Contact Information

If you are interested to be involved in the Programme, please contact:

Guido de Graaf Bierbrauwer:
g.bierbrauwer@conflict-prevention.net

Telephone: (+31) 30 242 77 77

Fax: (+ 31) 30 236 92 68

Website: www.conflict-prevention.net

