

# North American Action Agenda On the Prevention of Violent Conflict

**February 2005**

## **Background and acknowledgments**

The North American Action Agenda below is a component of regional substantive input for a Global Action Agenda on the role of civil society in conflict prevention being prepared through the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict.

The Global Partnership's programme is founded on 15 regional processes that are taking place throughout the world prior to a Global Conference at United Nations Headquarters in New York, from 19 to 21 July, 2005. The main focus of the conference will be on the implementation of the Global Action Agenda, and ways to concretize the partnership between civil society and the United Nations in the field of peace and security.

The North American Action Agenda incorporates contributions from Canadian, U.S. and Mexican civil society organizations who participated in direct consultations in Ottawa, Canada on December 9-10, 2004 and subsequent fine-tuning of the final document by steering groups in each country. Much of the core work on the North American agenda was carried out at the regional meeting on Dec. 9, hosted by the Canadian Peacebuilding Coordinating Committee (CPCC), with financial support from Foreign Affairs Canada.

Mexican, U.S. and Canadian representatives from a number of civil society networks in each country had prepared substantive national inputs for the day-long discussion in plenary and break-out sessions. Participants worked to share national perspectives, clarify commonalities and areas of divergence and synthesize agreed inputs for a rough draft document. That draft was subsequently circulated for comment and revisions at the national level.

The North American Agenda has also benefited from complementary activities and discussions carried out with counterparts in Latin America and the Caribbean who are also engaged in the GPPAC process.

Indeed, the North American Regional meeting fed directly into an Inter-American meeting convened in Ottawa the following day. Hosted by the Canadian Foundation for the Americas (FOCAL), in collaboration with the Coordinadora Regional de Investigaciones Económicas y Sociales (CRIES), and supported financially by the International Development Research Centre, the Inter-American meeting built on prepared presentations and discussion of conflict prevention issues in Latin America and the Caribbean as well as the previous day's deliberations.

Forty-two participants came to the Ottawa meetings from Venezuela, Argentina, Chile, Ecuador, Brazil, El Salvador, Honduras, Dominican Republic, Mexico, the U.S. and Canada.

Networks represented included: Coordinacion Latinoamericano de las Fuerzas de Paz Noviolentas; Servicio de Asesoría por la Paz (SERAPAZ); Centro de Derechos Humanos Fray Bartolomé de las Casas, Chiapas; Jóvenes en Resistencia Alternativa; Coordinadora Regional de Investigaciones Económicas y Sociales (CRIES); Canadian Peacebuilding Coordinating Committee; and the U.S. Steering Committee for GPPAC, which includes organizational members from the relief, development, conflict resolution, think tank, and academic communities, as well as networks such as InterAction and the Alliance for International Conflict Prevention and Resolution. A representative of the International Committee of the Red Cross also attended as an observer.

Special thanks is due Jayne Stoyles and Gottlieb Duwan for their work in the elaboration of the North American Action Agenda.

Further work on the Global Action Agenda is expected to entail a drafting team and the GPPAC International Steering Group extracting overarching themes from commissioned issue papers, case studies, and Regional Action Agendas to formulate a draft Global Action Agenda. This draft will be distributed by regional networks for several rounds of feedback and input. Through a consensus-building process, including meetings, email communication and an Internet forum, a final draft of the Global Action Agenda for presentation and discussion at the Global Conference in July 2005 will be agreed upon. However, the draft will be open for the incorporation of comments derived from discussions at the conference.

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GPPAC website:  
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## **North American Action Agenda On the Prevention of Violent Conflict**

### **I. PREAMBLE**

In July 2005, members of the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict, representing civil society groups from around the world, will gather at United Nations Headquarters in New York for the first international conference on the Role of Civil Society in the Prevention of Armed Conflict. This action agenda incorporates the ideas and recommendations of Canadian, Mexican and U.S. civil society experts, including academics, non-governmental organizations, think tanks and conflict prevention practitioners. Its purpose is to serve as both a guide and a toolkit for North American groups and individuals working on or interested in conflict prevention activities.

What do we mean by prevention of violent conflict? We are not attempting to prevent all conflicts. In fact, nonviolent conflict can be a positive force for change, justice, and development. Our concern is to minimize violent conflict and its human, economic and environmental impact. Ultimately, conflict prevention saves lives and is both more effective and less expensive than reaction.

In recent years, various groups have articulated a distinction between two types of conflict prevention:

**Structural prevention**, which addresses the economic, social and political forces that animate conflict by working to achieve justice, meet human needs, govern effectively, implement respect for human rights, and develop mechanisms for handling conflicts constructively. Structural prevention approaches assume that addressing these factors reduces the likelihood that violent conflict will erupt.

**Operational prevention** addresses the more immediate emergence, escalation and/or renewed cycles of violence. Work on this basis is often called conflict resolution, and peacemaking.

Programs devoted to economic development, good governance, strengthening of democratic institutions, the rule of law, and human rights address issues of structural prevention. We concur with the High Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change<sup>1</sup> that poverty, infectious disease, and environmental degradation are threats to global security and support the Panel's emphasis on meeting the challenge of prevention with more resources and action. Development, as the Panel notes, is "the indispensable foundation for a collective security system that takes prevention seriously."

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<sup>1</sup> High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, *A More Secure World: Our Shared Responsibility*, 2 December 2004, UN Document A/59/565, presented to the UN General Assembly during the 59<sup>th</sup> session as Agenda Item 55.

Active support of human democratic development and the achievement of the UN Millennium Development Goals are of paramount importance to move from a culture of reaction to a culture of prevention. However, situations of deep poverty, injustice and even repression do not always lead to violent conflict. Other factors, such as the availability of arms, attitudes that support violent means, manipulation of symbols, grievances and fears through the media, and forceful leadership that can mobilize populations and recruit fighters, must also be analyzed and addressed.

The typology of violent conflicts includes warfare within states, between states, regional conflicts, and violence undertaken by non-state actors on a global scale. Prevention strategies must be able to respond flexibly to each of these situations, including the dominant concern among some governments (and their populations) regarding security.

In the words of the Secretary General's Report on Prevention of Armed Conflict<sup>2</sup>, "[a]n effective conflict prevention strategy requires a comprehensive approach that encompasses both short-term and long-term political, diplomatic, humanitarian, human rights, developmental, institutional and other measures taken by the international community, in cooperation with national and regional actors."

**The goal of conflict prevention is a world in which people elect to use nonviolent means to achieve greater justice, better governance, sustainable development, and human security.**

## **II. GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

### **1. Shift to Prevention**

Promoting peace and security in the 21<sup>st</sup> century requires a fundamental shift in how we respond to the challenge of violent conflict. A paradigm shift from reaction to prevention is necessary to avoid the massive human and economic cost of war. Civil society can have a major impact in bringing about this shift and in transforming the conditions that give rise to violent conflict.

While Chapter VI of the UN Charter provides a strong mandate for preventing violent conflict, collective security has been pursued largely by reacting to crises rather than by preventing them. An essential step in achieving a shift to prevention is the development of more effective early warning systems and the political will to translate this information into early action. Instead of only reacting to crises, when it is often too late to act effectively without the use of force, we should focus on addressing the root causes of conflict, including terrorism, and the factors that enable them to become deadly. Whilst there is no single reason why violent conflicts erupt, recent experience demonstrates that

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<sup>2</sup> Kofi A. Annan, *Prevention of Armed Conflict: Report of the Secretary-General*, New York: United Nations, 2002.

violence often occurs in countries that have a poor development record and a weak or failing system of governance.

Efforts to prevent violent conflict thus also require policies that achieve social justice, meet basic human needs, and ensure effective governance and respect for human rights. Prevention is a critical tool at all stages of violent conflict, including its outbreak, escalation, or resurgence.

## **2. Security for People, as well as for States: Human Security**

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

Human security is a broad and inclusive framework for understanding world affairs. Its potential as an analytical paradigm has not been fully developed, by governments, civil society or international organizations. Human security reinforces our sense of common humanity and “common security,” recognizing that no one is secure unless we are all secure. Children and their rights are a priority area in the implementation of human security principles.

## **3. Responsibility to Prevent and Protect**

We share the view of the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty that the international community has a responsibility to act decisively when states are unwilling or unable to fulfill their basic responsibilities to their citizens. We welcome the Commission’s call to “all members of the community of nations, together with non-governmental actors and citizens of states, to embrace the idea of the responsibility to protect as a basic element in the code of global citizenship, for states and peoples, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century”.<sup>3</sup> This responsibility must be fulfilled with extreme care and only pursued in accordance with international law and clearly defined criteria, as articulated by the Commission and in the report of the High Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change. This responsibility does not constitute a free license for military intervention. CSOs can play a vitally important role in non-military protection, as well as in prevention and peacebuilding.

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<sup>3</sup> International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, *The Responsibility to Protect*, Ottawa: International Development Research Centre, 2001. Found at: <http://www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/iciss-ciise/report2-en.asp>.

The Responsibility to Protect includes the responsibilities to prevent, react and rebuild. We note that the Commission identifies the primary responsibility of states as the responsibility to prevent. At the same time, methods and mechanisms for peacebuilding must be considered at an early stage of any response to an emerging crisis. The duty to prosecute and to condemn those undermining human security is a critical aspect of conflict prevention and peacebuilding.

#### **4. Local Ownership**

Local actors, including governments and civil society organizations (CSOs), play a critical role in preventing and transforming conflicts. Sustainable solutions to conflict require active participation from affected communities. Generally, initiatives should be internally generated and externally supported in order to build on existing capacities. The international community – foreign governments, multilateral institutions, and international NGOs – should create spaces and support inclusive processes that enable people directly involved to build their own capacity and to make decisions on ways to resolve violent conflict. Where democratic institutions do not already exist, the international community should encourage their creation. It should also promote the inclusion in conflict prevention and peacebuilding processes of all relevant groups – particularly women, youth, minority groups and the poor – that are often excluded.

#### **5. Multilateralism**

Fulfilling an expanded vision of human security can best be achieved on the basis of a truly cooperative endeavor. Major global problems can most effectively be addressed through the coordinated efforts and policies developed collectively through multilateral fora - above all through a strengthened and reformed United Nations. We must also look to regional and sub-regional mechanisms as essential actors in conflict prevention. This approach is one built on the principle that international norms and standards should apply to all and be complied with by all to enhance the security of all. An effective system for conflict prevention, therefore, should be undertaken within a strong multilateral framework that includes coordinated and systematic responses. We believe that CSOs have an important role to play in an expanded conception of multilateralism.

#### **6. A New Partnership for Prevention among Civil Society, Governments and Inter-Governmental Organizations**

As civil society actors, we believe that preventing violent conflicts requires the forging of effective partnerships and networking among CSOs, governments and multilateral organizations. Effective conflict prevention requires the creation of collaborative, strategic partnerships for prevention at the national, regional and international level. CSOs can undertake initiatives that governments cannot and are well placed to mobilize wider societal support for prevention. The effectiveness of this partnership hinges on official acknowledgement of the legitimacy of CSOs that are representative and accountable in peace and security matters; recognition of their roles in the conflict prevention partnership; and mechanisms and resources to fulfill their potential

operationally. This new partnership will serve to affirm and build on the principle identified in UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan's Report on "The Prevention of Armed Conflict", where he recognized that conflict prevention cannot happen without civil society involvement.

The participation rights of CSOs in national, regional and international fora must be systematically integrated into prevention activities. These rights should be exercised based on well-defined concepts and frameworks for partnering. The principle of subsidiarity is important, i.e. that prevention must occur at the "lowest" level possible.

## **7. Building a 'Culture of Prevention' and 'Culture of Peace'**

We endorse the principle of building a culture of prevention and a culture of peace as articulated in the Dublin Action Agenda. In addition to an emphasis on life skills training, peace education involves teaching human values, such as the equality of all people in dignity and rights. Peace education should raise awareness of alternatives to violence and increase the profile of prevention and peacebuilding activities. The role of peace journalism, opinion leaders and the media must receive special attention, with local political support in creating a culture of peace one of the primary goals. The securing of the human right to peace is a long-term endeavor, requiring investment over time. Our ultimate goal is a world in which all human beings take responsibility for the consequences of their behavior towards others. This requires personal and cultural transformation as a central strategy for creating a peaceful world, starting with ourselves and our organizations. Peace and security requires culturally appropriate education for all, based upon proven best practices, to improve conflict resolution life skills, increase tolerance, promote diversity, and encourage the construction of caring, non-violent communities.

## **8. Inclusion and Equality**

A failure to ensure effective political participation is often one of the root causes of conflict because those who feel excluded may try to defend their interests through other means, sometimes through violence. Governments and civil society alike are challenged to build confidence by eliminating exclusion and creating sustained participatory arrangements. The will of the people can only be truly represented if the diverse elements that comprise that society engage in effective mechanisms for public participation. To promote human security, governments, international agencies, and CSOs must ensure that their actions actively promote respect for gender equality and identity, and include people from diverse political, ethnic, religious, cultural, socio-economic and other minority backgrounds, including immigrant and Diaspora communities. We strongly support UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security that specifically addresses the impact of war on women, and women's contributions to conflict resolution and sustainable peace. We call on relevant decision-makers and agencies to resource its full and consistent implementation.

## **9. Learning from Practice and Accountability**

As the power and influence of CSOs grows, so does the obligation to be accountable to beneficiaries and to the communities in which they work. To become more effective in our work, we need to reflect upon and examine the lessons we are learning from that work, and how we are learning them. We must aim to be reflective practitioners: cognizant of our role, mandate, and contribution at every stage. There are various approaches and methodologies to guide us in this task. Monitoring and evaluating our own activities is, however, just a starting point for more generalized learning. A significant body of knowledge on best practices in the field of conflict prevention can only be assembled if practitioners understand that they have a responsibility to pass on the knowledge gained. Capturing and disseminating learning is an essential aspect of accountability for CSOs, governments and inter-governmental institutions, and partnerships for prevention among them.

## **10. Sustainability**

All the points mentioned above will combine to produce an integrated, holistic and more sustainable approach to conflict prevention. The obstacles to achieving this sustainability should not be underestimated and will necessitate persistent effort on the part of CSOs, as well as their partners in governments and multilateral institutions. Funding must be adequate and sustained over time. CSOs need to ensure that there is meaningful involvement of local actors from the beginning of any endeavor that will affect their future and that advocacy for social and economic justice is part of the work for sustainable peace. In addition, governments and intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) need to involve CSOs in designing broader policy frameworks on trade, security and development that are strategically consistent with peacebuilding objectives and human rights.

# **III. ROLES AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

## ***CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS***

CSOs play a broad range of roles in conflict prevention and peacebuilding, from relief and development to community-building and local conflict resolution, to advocacy and civic engagement, to nonviolent third-party accompaniment, interposition, and monitoring. CSOs are now actively linking development activities and prevention efforts, and addressing the structural causes of violence through their programming.

While states remain the primary political actors, globalization and the transnational nature of threats have heightened the role of global civil society as a significant actor in addressing peace and security issues. At the local level, civilians bear the brunt of wars and violent conflict, and civil society is striving to develop effective local capacities for peace. As demonstrated through the Global Partnership, many civil society groups are

now actively working to strengthen their own conflict prevention capacities and programming and to build national, regional, and international networks focused on these issues.

At the same time, we must recognize the emergence of many non-state actors that perpetrate violence and terror, and acknowledge that some CSOs—in the name of justice—have allied themselves with them. The broader community of CSOs bears a measure of responsibility for asserting standards and accountability in relation to these disturbing trends.

### **Networking and Coalition Building**

- CSOs must build more effective mechanisms to enhance interaction amongst themselves in order to improve communication, to assist coordination and mutual assistance between groups with different approaches to conflict prevention, to increase transparency and to develop shared and complementary strategies with groups working in similar geographic or substantive areas, whether of a preventive, of a reactive or of a rebuilding nature, with the express objective to deepen partnerships and to widen the network of local and regional CSOs with whom international organizations consult. This will also allow greater integration of southern perspectives in regional and international fora to which they often have less access than northern CSOs.
- CSOs need to encourage coalition building between organizations to facilitate joint initiatives to mobilize public support for the prevention and transformation of violent conflict. Such public support is essential in order to generate political will amongst governments and IGOs to prevent the escalation of impending crises in a timely and effective manner, as well as to address the underlying causes of violent conflict.
- CSOs must engage with regional and international organizations such as the UN to ensure more active involvement of civil society in conflict prevention activities including observer and participation rights at the UN.

### **Education and Training**

- CSOs need to actively encourage both informal and formal education and training in diverse approaches to conflict prevention and resolution. This will provide constructive means of dealing with conflict at all levels and enhance the protection of civilian communities by generalizing knowledge of nonviolent prevention strategies. CSOs should not only seek to broaden and deepen the knowledge and understanding of conflict prevention and resolution but also to build and strengthen training programs to ensure that unarmed civil society members are equipped with the necessary skills for working under both peace and conflict conditions in the field.
- CSOs should play a leading role in fostering a culture of peace at all levels, through a worldwide, proactive and participatory program, from the classroom outwards.

Through these efforts CSOs must endeavor to generate new constituencies of support, bringing together groups now divided across ethnic, linguistic, religious, cultural and gender lines.

### **Modeling**

- CSOs must lead by example in their respect for international human rights and by examining critically how their own policies, practices and programs could contribute to violent conflict. International CSOs must work closely with national and local groups in this regard, engaging in participatory, inclusive and just processes for planning, decision-making and evaluating programs with their local counterparts.

### **Advocacy**

- CSOs who engage in relevant advocacy should deepen their advocacy roles in relation to peace and conflict at both the national and international levels. At the national level, advocacy efforts should address policies on peace and security as well as focusing on violent conflict and structural injustice in domestic communities. Internationally, advocacy efforts should be directed, among other initiatives, at developing the political will and resources to respond to early warning with preventive action, and supporting local partners on the ground in their own peacebuilding efforts and in partnership with global coalitions and networks.
- CSOs should more actively lobby national governments and IGOs to strengthen their efforts to combat both the proliferation and misuse of the weapons of violent conflict—particularly, but not exclusively, small arms and light weapons—which are integral to achieving human security.
- CSOs must work harder to promote an enlarged and integrated approach to conflict prevention activity to ensure that issues of human security and the responsibility to protect and to prevent inform policy and practice of governments, inter-governmental and non-governmental bodies. CSOs with practical experience in conflict prevention should take the lead role in educating policy-makers.

### **Evaluating and Sharing of Practices and Advancing Research**

- CSOs, governments and IGOs should work together to develop more rigorous frameworks and mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating conflict prevention and resolution activities to promote the exchange of lessons learned from previous successful partnerships and to ensure the constant improvement of practice.
- CSOs should actively encourage further rigorous research on the issue of conflict prevention and security in an attempt to enhance the effectiveness of their work and that of governmental and inter-governmental bodies to contribute to the prevention of destructive conflict and the construction of peace.

- As one means for capturing lessons, CSOs should engage in regular research, writing and cross-agency discussion of case studies, in order to assess the impact of peacebuilding programs. At the same time, the array of organizations engaged in work for peace, needs to develop common understandings regarding key terms and concepts—among themselves and for better communication with the wider society, including a shared and accepted understanding and language around peacebuilding.

### **Operational Prevention**

- CSOs should strengthen mechanisms to identify the structural causes and the linkages between violent conflict at home and violent conflict abroad, as well as between the organizations and constituencies involved in these situations in order to develop more effective early warning mechanisms.
- CSOs should strengthen their early warning and response mechanisms in countries and regions at greatest risk; this should include drawing on the unique knowledge of local groups and assisting lead IGOs in the establishment and functioning of early warning and response mechanisms. The aim is to develop an integrated global network of CSOs that can co-operate to mobilize the political will necessary for effective early warning response and identify appropriate conflict prevention responses.
- CSOs need to establish strong mutual early warning networking mechanisms with development, advocacy, third-party mediation, facilitation, monitoring, unarmed civilian accompaniment, and other conflict-prevention CSOs.
- CSOs should work to build and strengthen community-based programs aimed at reducing the number of weapons among the civilian population in conflict prone societies.
- CSOs should build upon existing programs and develop further initiatives for the comprehensive disarmament, demobilization and social and economic reintegration (DDR) of former fighters as a means to build sustainable peace. CSOs should endeavor to ensure that these programs are well planned, adequately funded and sufficiently integrated into the broader post-conflict reconstruction and rehabilitation process.

### **Structural Prevention**

- Relief and development organizations working in conflict situations should sensitize their programming to conflict dynamics through better analysis and more widespread training in the Do No Harm framework and similar approaches. CSOs should mainstream training focused on conflict assessment and analysis, peacebuilding principles and frameworks, program design, monitoring and evaluation, and conflict management methodologies. CSOs should seek to close the gap between relief and

development through developmental approaches to relief and strengthened transition assistance.

- CSOs must work with all levels of government to strengthen institutional capacity and practices for good governance as a key facet of conflict prevention and long-term peacebuilding activities.
- CSOs must ensure that governance models are region and nation-specific. Strategies should include the entrenchment of free and fair elections, accountability, transparency, informed citizen participation, respect for diversity, the impartial application of law, management of tensions through constructive dialogue, and the provision of basic services in an equitable manner.
- Recognizing that many violent conflicts occur in the context of unequal access to economic and social power and resources, CSOs must promote concrete measures to overcome the economic and social disenfranchisement of particular communities or groups.

### ***NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS***

As noted by UN Secretary General Kofi Annan in his 2001 Report on Prevention of Armed Conflict “The primary responsibility for conflict prevention rests with national governments, with civil society playing an important role”. There is no lack of rhetorical commitment by national governments to prevent the emergence of violent conflict. National governments are now challenged to move from the rhetoric of prevention to its practical implementation, strengthening their political commitment to making the prevention of armed conflict a national priority. A conflict prevention lens must be used in the design and implementation of domestic and foreign policy programming in such areas as development, defense, trade, security and foreign affairs, and increased resource investments are needed nationally and internationally. Local and international civil society groups must be involved at all stages of the development, design, and implementation of conflict prevention policies and programs.

#### **Commitment to Prevention of Violent Conflict**

- Governments should strengthen their commitments to making the prevention of violent conflict a national priority; to integrate conflict prevention into their national security policies and operational capacities; and to provide increased resources nationally and internationally to help prevent the emergence, escalation, or renewal of violent conflict. They should champion the cause of conflict prevention at all levels, including in the development of norms, but also in creating and exercising political will and capacity for early and effective structural and operational responses to emerging violent conflicts.

- In relation to the Report of the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, governments should adopt integrated regional approaches for preventing and reacting to conflict as well as for post-conflict rebuilding. It is imperative that the concept of the Responsibility to Protect be understood as emphasizing the prevention of violent conflict, and that its translation into concrete initiatives demonstrate a commitment to this priority.
- Government policies and practices should be informed by an understanding that state security and human security are complementary and mutually reinforcing.
- National governments should reaffirm their commitment to the relevance of international law to the prevention of violent conflict and work towards strengthening international normative frameworks to meet global threats.

### **Structural Prevention**

We support the following recommendations concerning structural prevention vis-à-vis national governments contained in the 2004 report of the High Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change:

- All states must recommit themselves to the goals of eradicating poverty, achieving sustained economic growth and promoting sustainable development.
- Donor countries which currently fall short of the United Nations 0.7 per cent gross national product target for ODA should establish a timetable for reaching it.
- Lender Governments and the international financial institutions should provide highly indebted poor countries with greater debt relief, longer rescheduling and improved access to global markets.
- Although international resources devoted to meeting the challenge of HIV/AIDS have increased from about \$250 million in 1996 to about \$2.8 billion in 2002, more than \$10 billion annually is needed to stem the pandemic. Leaders of affected countries need to mobilize resources, commit funds and engage civil society and the private sector in disease control efforts.

### **Operational Prevention**

- Governments should be prepared to use preventive diplomacy, mediation and negotiation, and to sponsor dialogue processes which aim to prevent violent conflict, when they are in a position to serve as interveners.
- Governments should increase support for multilateral initiatives to augment international peacekeeping and civilian police training and include non-governmental

organizations with experience in conflict situations as participants, advisors, and evaluators of such training.

- National governments should strengthen their capacity for contributing effectively to non-military approaches to early warning, conflict prevention, conflict resolution, and post-war peacebuilding.

### **Coordination**

- Recognition of the critical role of local civil society actors in conflict prevention and peacebuilding must be clearly manifest in national policy and practice.
- National governments should take responsibility for developing transparent processes for including civil society in the development, design and implementation of conflict prevention policies and programs.
- Where poverty and social inequality are root causes of conflict, governments must develop new democratic institutions that enable direct participation of the poor and other marginalized people in meaningful decision-making and action to eliminate the root causes of violent conflict.
- Open and transparent channels for communication and shared learning between government actors and civil society groups should be developed, and governments should work through the UN and other multilateral venues to develop and share best practices on conflict prevention.
- True participation from relevant civil society actors requires more adequate, sustained and predictable funding.
- Governments should consider how to involve civilians in conflict management mechanisms, perhaps including through the creation of civilian peace services that would respond to requests to provide an international civilian presence.

### ***REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS***

Strengthening existing regional conflict prevention mechanisms and establishing new regional security mechanisms with conflict prevention and peacekeeping capabilities in each major region are essential steps for the development of a more effective global security system. The African Union, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Organization of American States (OAS) and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) are among several regional bodies developing more concerted action in conflict prevention. Efforts to enhance the capacity and political will for conflict prevention activity within regional organizations must be undertaken in a way that complements and strengthens multilateral mechanisms such as those of the United Nations, as well as involving local and international CSOs.

## **Operational Prevention**

- Options for building regional early conflict prevention mechanisms should be examined, taking into account successful experiences in other regions. The record of the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities merits more careful assessment, and possibly replication, in this regard.
- The OAS should increase the budget of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights and better utilize its services for early warning. It should more consistently apply the Inter-American Democratic Charter and explore a possible broadening of its trigger mechanisms to include grave violations of human rights and other conditions that can lead to violent conflict.
- The OAS should also expand the implementation of confidence and security-building measures and ensure that the new hemispheric security agenda remains fully consistent with the principles of conflict prevention. Finally, it should significantly strengthen its capacity to coordinate these and other inter-American mechanisms crucial for conflict prevention in the Hemisphere, perhaps by establishing the position of Deputy Secretary-General responsible for Conflict Prevention.

## **Structural Prevention**

- Democratic governance and economic and social equity should be promoted at the national level.
- Economic and social governance reform should be emphasized at the international level. The fragmentation and lack of coordination and coherence of international institutions and programs to regulate international trade, finance and promote economic development is a longstanding problem that needs to be addressed. The reform of economic and social global governance institutions and processes must involve closer integration within the UN system.
- The OAS should develop its capacity to articulate the valuable but limited structural prevention programming previously carried out by the UPD with the much larger portfolio of conflict-related socio-economic and governance programming funded by the Inter-American Development Bank. Moreover, the OAS should promote the systematic integration of conflict analysis into FTAA trade liberalization processes.

## **Capacity Building and Coordination**

- Strengthening the capacity of existing regional mechanisms and establishing new regional security mechanisms with conflict prevention and peacekeeping capabilities in each major region are essential steps for the development of a more effective global security system. Coordination between governments, the UN, civil society,

and regional mechanisms should be enhanced to improve early warning and planning for early response options.

- There is a critical need to strengthen the engagement of CSOs in the conflict prevention activities of regional inter-governmental bodies. Regional organizations should consider developing integrated and transparent cross-organizational strategies for public and CSO involvement, including accreditation, participation in meetings, and involvement in the regular activities of the organization. Mechanisms should allow CSO input to be fed directly into decision-making processes, and information should be readily available as to how CSOs can access and contribute to the work of the organization.

## ***UNITED NATIONS***

As stated in the UN Secretary General's report, "Conflict prevention is one of the primary obligations of Member States set out in the Charter of the United Nations". National economic and political interests, or the lack thereof, have too often triumphed over the legal and moral commitment of UN Member States to fulfill this obligation. In addition to political will, issues of capacity and coordination are central to this discussion. As the UN Secretary General has noted, "[a] successful preventive strategy depends on the cooperation of many United Nations actors, including the Secretary-General, the Security Council, the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council, the International Court of Justice and United Nations agencies, offices, funds and programmes, as well as the Bretton Wood institutions."

### **Integrated Approach to the Conflict Prevention**

- Greater coordination of conflict prevention activity within the UN is required and dedicated human and economic resources should be devoted to enhancing existing structures to better address conflict prevention.
- Strategies are required to mainstream conflict prevention throughout the UN system. The UN should invest more in training to ensure that field-based personnel and civilians working on conflict prevention activities and those at UN headquarters (UNHQ) have a mutual understanding of the conflict prevention mechanisms and tools available. Vertical information sharing within the organization must also be increased. Both of these efforts would improve information flows from CSOs, which now have access at the field level or at UNHQ, but whose inputs are not adequately benefiting the organization as a whole.

### **Operational Prevention**

- The High Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change has proposed the creation of a Peacebuilding Commission, setting forth guidelines but not clear recommendations regarding composition and reporting lines. Careful consideration

should be given to whether the proposed peacebuilding commission should be created as a subsidiary body of the Security Council (Article 29) or of the General Assembly (Article 22). In order to be effective, this Commission must also include mechanisms for regular participation by civil society organizations.

- We support the efforts of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Sub-Working Group on Preparedness and Contingency Planning and its decision to review, as a standing agenda item at IASC Working Group meetings, an early warning brief focusing on high-risk/low preparedness situations, in order to ensure that attention is drawn to these crises at senior management levels within each agency, and to facilitate translation of early warning analysis into early action and preparedness at a system-wide level.
- We support the emphasis of the High Level Panel on preventive diplomacy and mediation and its recommendations on restructuring the Department of Political Affairs (DPA). In particular, we support the recommendation for better training of UN mediators. We also concur that a restructuring of DPA should address the need for the UN to have “greater interaction with national mediators, regional organizations and non-governmental organizations involved in conflict resolution” and “greater consultation with and involvement in peace processes of important voices from civil society, especially those of women...”
- With regard to the threat of internal conflict, we concur with the High Level Panel’s recommendation that the UN should “work with national authorities, international financial institutions, CSOs and the private sector to develop norms governing the management of natural resources for countries emerging from or at risk of conflict”.
- The UN must quickly develop a militarily credible rapid reaction capability focused on the prevention of armed conflict and the protection of civilians as a standing deterrent, for preventive deployment and as a last resort in reacting to violence in the event that prevention fails.
- More regular use of Chapter VI of the UN Charter on the peaceful settlement of disputes is essential. Chapter VI encourages “the parties to any dispute, the continuance of which is likely to endanger the maintenance of international peace and security” to “seek a solution by negotiation, enquiry, mediation, conciliation, arbitration, judicial settlement, resort to regional agencies or arrangements, or other peaceful means of their own choice”.
- Civilian mechanisms should be strengthened, perhaps by establishing an international roster of unarmed peace specialists, trained for use by the UN at short notice. These rosters could be interconnected with the Civilian Peace Services developed in some countries.
- Centers for Non-violent Conflict Resolution could be established at the UN and in Regional Security Organizations, to be staffed by a professional corps of trained

mediation experts advised by qualified volunteers from the world's religious, academic institutions, business and professional communities.

### **Structural Prevention**

- Regional and multilateral organizations should work to build local and national conflict management capacities through training, funding, and assistance for institutional reform, focused on institutions such as elected and traditional authorities, the judiciary, the police, and correctional services. Local and national civil society actors must be included both as contributors to and beneficiaries of such programs.
- Several organizations, including the UN and the OAS, are developing technical assistance programs to help national governments strengthen their public dialogue and engagement capacities. These are important initiatives but they must be carefully monitored to ensure they strengthen rather than displace national mechanisms such as legislatures.
- We concur with the High Level Panel that the Security Council “should host a second special session on HIV/AIDS as a threat to international peace and security, to...identify critical steps towards a long-term strategy for diminishing the threat”. We also support its recommendation that “international donors, in partnership with national authorities and local CSOs, should undertake a major new global initiative to rebuild local and national public health systems throughout the developing world”. CSOs must be included in these rebuilding processes to help ensure their appropriateness to local needs.

### **Coordination with CSOs**

- The UN must enhance interaction on conflict prevention with CSOs at all levels, from the Secretariat to the country teams, and strengthen CSO observer and participation rights, including through implementation of relevant recommendations of the Cardoso Panel. The UN should recognize and actively support CSO conflict prevention activities.
- The interface between civil society and the Security Council on conflict prevention should be strengthened. The Council should institutionalize an expert-level working group on prevention engaged in regular dialogue and information exchange with civil society, provide it with regional and functional experts and establish a regular reporting schedule on danger spots. The Arria Formula mechanism should be better utilized for routine interface between CSOs and the Council on conflict prevention opportunities. The Council should consult with local and international CSOs during fact-finding missions and promote their involvement in relevant prevention activities authorized by the Council.
- We encourage Special Representatives of the Secretary-General and/or Resident Coordinators to establish regular and transparent interfaces between local and/or

international CSOs and UN country teams for early warning, the exchange of information, and the development of complementary strategies for peacebuilding activities that prevent the resurgence or eruption of conflict.

- We concur with the High Level Panel that better information and analysis are needed to meet the challenge of prevention. Opportunities for joint training on early warning for UN staff and CSOs should be explored to generate shared knowledge and strengthen the potential for strong working relationships.
- The UN Development Group should consult with CSOs at the earliest stages when conducting Post-Conflict Needs Assessments in order to develop and implement effective strategies and programs that strengthen and complement long-term peacebuilding.
- A “UN Decade for the Prevention of Armed Conflict” should be declared and launched at the international GPPAC conference as a vehicle for taking forward the recommendations of the regional and global action agendas.

### **Coordination with Regional Bodies**

- The UN Charter provides for the development of Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) between the UN and regional organizations with respect to their role in maintaining international peace and security. These are an important means of clarifying mandates and responsibilities. MOUs must be consistent across organizations and be in accordance with the UN Charter, and should recognize and support the important role of regional organizations in conflict prevention, while maintaining a central role in overall decision-making and coordination for the United Nations.
- Relationships between the UN system and regional mechanisms around early warning and early response should be strengthened. A link should be made between human security and conflict prevention in the area of early warning. Monitoring indicators of human security, including the provision of basic needs, human rights, physical security and environmental factors would allow for early response in a global environment where reaction remains the norm.

### ***PRIVATE SECTOR***

There is a growing understanding that the private sector has a significant role in conflict and can either exacerbate or mitigate tensions. Private sector investment in areas of conflict can stimulate economic development and help address the structural causes of violence, but it can also exacerbate instability. Disinvestment from unstable regions can undermine the long-term foundations for peaceful development. As the example of conflict diamonds demonstrates, the private sector can also fuel resource-driven conflict and supply weapons to the perpetrators of violence.

- Private sector actors should critically evaluate their potential role in exacerbating or mitigating violent conflict. Private sector groups working overseas should adopt a statement of commitment to consider the impact of their business practices on local and national communities, including the potential to create or exacerbate conditions that could lead to violent conflict as part of a contextual analysis for any proposed business activity.
- As called for by the UN Secretary General in his 2001 Report on the Prevention of Armed Conflict, the business community should adopt “socially responsible practices that foster a climate of peace in conflict prone societies, help prevent and mitigate crisis situations, and contribute to reconstruction and reconciliation.”
- The private sector should engage CSOs and governments in dialogue around conflict issues in particular countries or regions, playing a positive role in early warning and early response.

### ***INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS***

Although barred by the letters of agreement from direct involvement in the political affairs of individual states, the World Bank and other regional development banks are increasingly aware of their roles in post-conflict situations and in early warning and prevention. Some institutions are developing greater capacity to address conflict and its prevention, and there is a growing recognition that stronger partnerships between international financial institutions and civil society are needed, particularly at the local level and in the context of fragile states. Issues of structural prevention are of particular relevance, and such institutions must examine the potential impact of their policies and programs through a conflict prevention lens.

- Stronger partnerships are needed between international financial institutions and CSOs, particularly at the local level and in the context of fragile states. CSOs already play an active role in programs funded by the World Bank in conflict-affected areas, and dozens of international NGOs as well as local organizations have received grants from its Post-Conflict Fund. Increased funding is needed for CSOs engaged in post-conflict prevention activities, as well as strengthened consultative mechanisms around early warning and response.
- International financial institutions should commit to more open and participatory processes that lend a greater voice to the Global South, including local civil society in areas affected by conflict.
- Continued efforts are also needed to achieve more comprehensive debt relief, and international financial institutions should work more closely with civil society toward achieving the UN Millennium Development Goals.