

# **GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP FOR THE PREVENTION OF ARMED CONFLICT**

## **Regional Action Agenda for Western CIS, Romania, Bulgaria**

### **INTRODUCTION**

In recommendation 27 of his report on The Prevention of Armed Conflict (2001), UN Secretary General Kofi Annan “urge(s) 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 the United Nations in this field.”

In response to this, NGOs worldwide joined together to form the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict to enhance the role of civil society in conflict prevention and peacebuilding and to strengthen partnerships between civil society organizations and governments, regional organizations and the United Nations.

Diversity is a key element in conflicts and in conflict prevention and peacebuilding. For this reason, the Global Partnership initiated fifteen regional processes, each of which will develop an Action Agenda based on their own experiences, needs and social, cultural and political realities. All these Regional Action Agendas will form the basis of the Global Action Agenda, which will be presented and discussed at the Global Conference which will take place at UN Headquarters in New York from 19 to 21 July 2005.

This Action Agenda reflects the outcome of a process of conferences and consultations throughout the region, which includes Bulgaria, Romania, Moldova, Ukraine, Belarus as well as the European part of Russia (except for the North Caucasus). The final conference that formulated this action agenda took place in Odessa, Ukraine, on 7-9 of March 2005 and included over 60 representatives of regional NGOs. It was facilitated by Nonviolence International and the Odessa Regional Mediation Group with the financial support of the European Center for Conflict Prevention and the Department of Foreign Affairs of Norway.

### **PREAMBLE**

One of the main goals of the world community is the prevention of violent conflicts universally, on the regional level and inside each country.

In the modern world violent conflicts happen not as much between states and governments as between and within communities. Therefore the mechanisms for conflict management and prevention need to be re-adjusted in order to work more effectively in modern circumstances.

Unfortunately in the United Nations system today there is no mechanism for prevention of violent conflicts, which arise not between states but inside society itself. The intergovernmental format of the UN must not be seen as a barrier for supporting civil conflict prevention activities in areas of acute and potential violence.

It is essential to enhance the role of civil society institutions, including NGOs, strengthen their cooperation with the government agencies and international organizations that are working in the field of peacebuilding. Such cooperation will contribute to effective conflict management and prevention, particularly in those cases when international organizations do not have the mandate to act at their discretion while governments are either a side of the conflict or do not have public trust.

## GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF REGION

During the post-communist period in the region there remain threats of the use of violent methods for the resolution of social, political, inter-faith and inter-ethnic problems. The latter have the highest conflict potential.

**The Transdnistria conflict** is the most serious conflict in the region. In the context of EU expansion this conflict is regarded as a threat to European security and stability.

**The issue of establishing democratic regimes** is important problem for many countries of the region. “The Orange Revolution” in Ukraine has demonstrated the people’s will to reform power on the democratic basis, the strengthening of the civil society institutions and, finally, the Revolution is a vivid example of resolving a political conflict in a peaceful way. At the same time the Revolution has changed the situation in the region. On the one hand it has created the conditions for closer relations between Ukraine and its Western neighbors. On the other hand it has led to a cool-off in Ukraine-Russia relations. The old post-Soviet elites in the CIS countries regard the Revolution as a real threat to their existence because it has set an example for the opposition in these countries.

**The issue of the state borders and the neighboring territories.** The state and administrative borders in the region were drawn without proper account for the traditional settlement of various ethnic groups. The latest “revisions” took place fairly recently (for example, the transfer of the Crimea from RSFSR<sup>1</sup> to Ukrainian SSR<sup>2</sup> took place in 1954). The administrative borders between the former USSR republics have become the state borders of the new independent states, although in most cases there is no demarcation and in the people’s minds the borders are not perceived as stable and not subject to change.

In the Black Sea and the Azov Sea basins there are certain tensions caused by the regular violations of the exclusive maritime economic zones (for example - disputes between Ukraine and Turkey about illegitimate fishing).

Certain tension in the relations of different churches and confessions exists in all the countries of the region. In this respect the most complicated situation is in Ukraine where there are several Orthodox Christian Churches, competing with each other, many Greek Catholic and Roman Catholic wards. Besides, there is a substantial Muslim population and many followers of non-traditional Christian Churches. A specific feature of the region is that in spite of the Constitutional principle separating the Church from the state, there are frequent cases of mutual interference in each other’s affairs.

**Ethnic conflicts** in the region are manifestations of previously created contradictions between different groups of the population, as well existing of the cross-border and inter-faith problems. The ethno-cultural composition of the population living in the European part of Russia is changing rapidly, leading inevitably to the growth of tensions in the ethnic relations. In Ukraine the ethnic problem exists in two dimensions: a) speculations on the language, ethnic and religious differences and b) the return to the native land of some ethnic groups and the Crimean Tatars, deported by the former totalitarian regime.

In the region there is a positive example of resolving a conflict between the government of Moldova and the leaders of Gagausia. The problem was solved when Gagausia received territorial autonomy (Gagauz-Eri). At the same time the continuing 12-year old Transdnistrian conflict

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<sup>1</sup> Russian Soviet Federal Socialist Republic – one of the 15 republics of the former USSR.

<sup>2</sup> Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic – one of the republics of the former USSR.

requires a search for alternative approaches to its resolution with the active participation of civil society institutions.

**Migration processes** have the following regional specificity: The Russian Federation remains attractive for the immigrants from CIS and Asian countries as a final destination. Ukraine is both a supplier and a recipient of migrants. Every third Ukrainian is seeking employment abroad, the people from Eastern Ukraine go to Russia, while the residents of Western Ukraine prefer Italy, Spain, Portugal and Greece.

At the same time labor migrants from Moldova, China, Armenia, and some other countries chose Ukraine as their destination. The migrants from Asia to EU, including illegal migrants, use Russia, Ukraine and Belarus as a transit states. Moldova is mainly the country of labor emigration primarily to Russia and Western Europe.

## **SUBREGIONAL PRIORITIES**

1. ***Transdnistria (Moldova)***. In Moldova there is an unresolved conflict linked to the existence of Transdnistrian Republic, which has not been recognized by the international community.

### ***Recommendations for NGOs and International Organizations***

- a) Organizing a peacebuilding mission in order to help overcome “enemy images” in the minds of the conflicting parties and the use of “belligerent language” in mass media and in public discourse;
  - b) Prepare expert recommendations for expanding the existing five-sided format of the negotiations, which so far proved ineffective;
2. ***Crimea (Ukraine)***. The return of Crimean Tatars and representatives of other ethnic groups, deported during World War II, began in the late 80s of the past century and so far hasn’t been completed. The top priority in this process is resolving the land issue, which can be a matter of dispute with the local population. Another outstanding problem is the integration of the returnees into Ukrainian society.

### ***Recommendations for NGOs and International Organizations***

- a) Monitoring mass media and school textbooks to ensure their compliance with the principle of tolerance;
- b) Introduction of programs into the educational curricula promoting the ideas of multiculturalism, tolerance and human rights;
- c) Elaboration of a training course for civil servants and representatives of local governments bringing awareness to ethnic and cultural differences.

## **THEMATIC PRIORITIES**

**1. The promotion of tolerance; overcoming xenophobia and other forms of intolerance in the society.** Many experts have drawn attention to the growth of xenophobia and other forms of intolerance in all the countries of the region. Purely legal mechanisms lack the capacity to prevent these phenomena.

### ***Recommendations for NGOs and International Organizations***

- a) promotion of universal human values, the culture of peace and tolerance in the education systems. Developing and integrating into the educational system courses on “neighborhood culture” using the Crimean experience;

- b) Setting-up resource Centers for inter-cultural education and tolerance;
- c) Spreading different forms of monitoring mass media and textbooks;
- d) Locating and highlighting positive examples of inter-ethnic cooperation.

**2. The promotion of non-violent (alternative) conflict / dispute resolution practices (ADR).**

The communities in the region have not been educated in constructive non-violent methods of conflict resolution (mediation, restorative justice, etc).

*Recommendations for NGOs and International Organizations*

- a) Supporting the work of NGOs in the field of ADR; setting-up ADR resource Centers to promote these methods in the communities;
- b) Expanding the network of organizations practicing ADR;
- c) Supporting the developing of established practices for alternative dispute resolution dealing with various disputes and conflicts arising in the society;
- d) Supporting an action plan for developing ADR in the region.

3. **Developing and implementing a new policy of neighborhood relationships.** The emergence of new independent states in Central and Eastern Europe in the late 1980s – early 1990s led to the appearance of new state borders and new national minorities.

*Recommendations for NGOs and International Organizations*

- a) Facilitating cross-border contacts and cooperation in different spheres, for example through the active participation of NGOs in the “Euroregions” programs.
- b) Setting-up joint research groups involving representatives of neighboring countries in order to elaborate unified approaches for monitoring and evaluating the state of inter-ethnic relations;
- c) Supporting people’s diplomacy, for example organizing joint training programs for the leaders and activists of the ethnic and cultural communities, living in the neighboring countries;
- d) Instantiating and carrying out education and cultural activities leading to better inter-cultural understanding and elimination of negative ethnic stereotypes.

4. **Overcoming the negative effects of migration.** Migration may potentially lead to the growth of xenophobia and distort the labor market. These negative phenomena may, in turn, cause institutionalization of political extremism, for example the emergence of associations and movements demanding from their governments policies to restrict migration.

*Recommendations for NGOs and International Organizations*

- a) Rendering legal counseling and material support for the migrants and to organizations of national minorities;
- b) Cooperation with mass media to overcome the negative image of the migrants;
- c) Organizing activities, which develop tolerance toward migrants & assist their social integration;

5. **Development of Civil Society.** The old communist elites do not favor the development of civil society, emerging on the post-Soviet space. Moreover, in some countries they deliberately hinder this process. It is particularly true for Belarus. Russia has lately demonstrated similar tendencies in a milder form.

*Recommendations for NGOs and International Organizations*

- a) Expert evaluation & monitoring the situation by independent civil experts & analytical Centers;

- b) Research of the experience of nonviolent protest and civil disobedience in the countries of the region (based on the presumption that “exporting” of such experiences to other countries is impossible).
- c) Human rights education for the public

## **GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS**

### ***Recommendations for the UN system***

We deem it necessary to create institutions within the UN system, specializing in conflict management and prevention and working directly with the local communities and civil society institutions in areas of conflict. As a first step it is important to expand the mandate and the capacity of the existing UN bodies to work on such issues. In the long-term perspective it is crucial to establish a special UN institution (agency), working toward the prevention and management of violent conflicts at all levels, specifically – on the level of local communities and civil society institutions.

The UN should initiate joint appeals to the donor countries and donor organizations to support integrated programs of civil society organizations and international institutions, aimed at easing tensions in the regions of ongoing or potential conflicts (similarly to the Consolidated Appeals for humanitarian support).

The UN should include peacebuilding activities, easing the tensions between communities and reintegrating marginalized population groups, as one of the thematic sectors within the format of Consolidated Appeals, produced for different regions requiring humanitarian action.

The UN should hold regular consultations with the civil society institutions operating in the countries and regions of existing or potential conflicts in order to jointly analyze the situation, identify the potential for the eruption of violence and develop adequate conflict prevention measures.

It is essential to support existing civil peacebuilding networks as well as develop the practice of organizing and carrying out civil peacebuilding and monitoring missions of various types and formats. Such missions may ensure the efficient use of the peacemaking potential of civil organizations in the field of monitoring, analyses, experience sharing as well as emergency response to developing crisis. Civil society participation in peacebuilding missions is important and useful, thus, it requires the development of unified approaches and procedures. For this purpose we suggest holding a special seminar for CSO specialists, involved in such activities.

It is expedient to create within the UN frame of a permanent Working Group of civil experts in conflict management and prevention, which will reinforce the interaction of NGOs and international organizations.

### ***Recommendations for the Governments***

The governments should demonstrate political will to ensure civil control over the activities of state powers and local governments.

They should expand the practice of involving civil experts into conflict prevention and management activities on all levels (from the community level to the level inter-state relations).

### ***Recommendations for the Civil Society Institutions and Donor Organizations***

Elaborate and implement training programs for civil experts in conflict management and prevention (methodological seminars, workshops, discussions, etc).