



## What Do Crises Teach Us? Civilian Crisis Prevention in Germany and the European Union – Message from Annual Conference

On 2 October 2020 the Advisory Board to the Federal Government for Civilian Crisis Prevention and Peacebuilding hosted its annual conference in a virtual format. Almost 300 people from various German and EU ministries, state institutions, as well as academia and civil society from Europe and the Sahel participated in the event. The conference is **supporting a future EU political consensus and strategy on peacebuilding**. It would strengthen the role of EU as a key global mediator and peacebuilding actor, provide new strategic guidance and instruments at the EU-level and help to improve coherence between member states policies. The evaluation of the chapter on peacebuilding in the EU-Consensus for Development should be the starting point to build on.

To draft a future European Consensus for Peacebuilding an **innovative format for engaging civil society actors** should be established. Bilateral cooperation and solely state-focused approaches are about to fail. Inclusive and open dialogue with local actors is the key for successful conflict prevention, conflict management and post-conflict peacebuilding. Virtual formats offer new possibilities for engaging civil society actors. Externals actors like Germany and the EU to support the potentials of already existing local and regional civil society movements as youth, religious leaders and women.

**Perception of crises shapes prevention efforts.** According to our discussions it is necessary to create a shared understanding of those crises. Controversial issues like migration as crisis or opportunity have to be discussed first inside EU and among societies of origin and in regions like the Sahel where migration is a key driver of the economy.

A future EU-consensus should invest in **long term approaches and the primacy of civil conflict prevention**. Strategic patience is needed. Results for peacebuilding and theories for change need to be designed in periods of ten year or more. Also financial and project support in peacebuilding needs to establish longer term, results based and flexible frameworks.

Further objectives of a future consensus should be more **policy coherence for peace at EU level** and between member states and to establish a learning culture inside EU

on the issue of conflict prevention and peacebuilding. The European Centre for Excellence for Civilian Crisis Management established recently in Berlin should have a special focus on good practices how to engage local civil society actors in conflict analysis, building national strategies, and monitoring.

Learning from current strategies must consider **controversial lessons in security sector reform** and EU Engagement in the Sahel region. Regional roadmaps in small arms/light weapons control are needed in cooperation between the ECOWAS member states. The ownership of such strategies has to lie with the ECOWAS member states. The underlying concept should be a focus on human security. Improvement of legislative frameworks, risk assessments, awareness raising are important issues. A comprehensive approach is necessary beyond stockpile management of weapons and equipment, including the judiciary, governors, parliament, local communities and civil society organizations. State-linked militias should be formalized and integrated into official security instead of keeping them as separate units beyond functional state control.

Multiple **non-traditional threats like climate change and health risks** are occurring simultaneously and need science and fact-based governance. It was highlighted that the EU is leading the international debate on climate change, but needs to increase its own early warning and preparedness measures. Adapting early warning mechanisms like the Preview Tool, increasing finances and building capacities in environmental peacebuilding, mediation and the science policy interface, as well as training personnel to address non-traditional security threats in the EU and UN system are important steps ahead.

The discussed new **European Peace Facility needs strong and specific safeguards** to encounter multiple risks, such as the diversion of weapons and equipment, a continued reliance on corrupt governance structures and partners and human rights abuses. At the minimum a thorough context analysis involving perspectives from the people, civil society and media representatives is needed. Furthermore, a broad local ownership throughout the entire programming process, a focus both on efficacy and legitimacy of local security actors and an integration of SSR into a broader peacebuilding approach is a must.

It is important to stress that a forward-looking approach with conflicted regions requires an inclusive and integrated practice that empowers the local level including civil society, especially women. A well-coordinated multilateral partnership with the continent that takes lessons of the past into account can support Africa in reaching its potential. **The future AU-EU-Strategy and Partnership** to be agreed in 2021 is a good opportunity to anchor the named approaches in the EU AU collaboration and can complement a future EU Consensus on Peacebuilding.

## **About the Advisory Board**

By bringing together expertise on crisis prevention and peacebuilding from both civil society and academia, the Advisory Board assists the Federal Government in these areas. It is appointed for four years and comprises twenty experts from academia, foundations and civil society organizations. It follows the implementation of the Federal Government's guidelines on "Preventing Crises, Resolving Conflicts, Building Peace" published in 2017. With its work, the Advisory Board fosters constant exchange between the Federal Government and civil society. It can also publish positions on overarching strategic questions. In addition, it may develop its own contributions on various issues.