



Council ad hoc working group on the EU-Africa Strategy

ECDPM report of the meeting of 5 September 2007

The Council ad hoc working group met on 5 September in preparation for the Joint Expert Troika Meeting negotiating the strategy scheduled for the following week. CSOs were invited to discuss on peace and security issues.

The CSOs present were headed by EPLO, the European Peacebuilding Liaison Office, and included several of its Member Organisations: International Alert, the Quaker Council for European Affairs, Saferworld, International Centre for Transitional Justice and Search for Common Ground. They were invited to present their views on the contents of the strategy concerning peace and security, and on cross-cutting issues such as the monitoring and implementation of the strategy. The different CSOs made presentations covering 6 different aspects: cross-cutting issues; EU-AU crisis management capacity; conflict sensitivity; impunity; implementation and the role of civil society. Their presentations were followed by discussions with the representatives of the Presidency, the Commission, the Council and the member states.

1 Cross-cutting issues

On the cross-cutting issues clarification was requested on three different aspects: 1) who will be the **beneficiaries** in terms of the outcomes of the strategy ? ; 2) what are the real **objectives** for the strategy process in respect of building sustainable peace and security ; and 3) how are the **overlapping initiatives** from the EU tackled, bringing up especially the development of a fragile states agenda alongside the EU-Africa Strategy. How is the learning in the International Community on addressing situations of fragility being reflected in the Strategy process?

The Portuguese representative explained that there are many things that are developed in parallel and that they are making efforts to bring them together. On the fragile states specifically the up-coming informal meeting of EU ministers of development will also discuss state fragility, and the November GAERC should be of particular interest, when development and defence ministers will meet for the first time.



The Strategy was presented by the representative from the Council as a good **opportunity for the EU to develop a political partnership with the AU**. There are shortcomings, but the European officials believe that it is going in the right direction. He also emphasised that especially in the implementation all levels must be targeted, regional, national and local. The CSO representatives argued, however, that it should be clarified whether it is to be an EU-AU Strategy or an EU-Africa one, since they would require different approaches and would result in different types of inputs as well as different expectations amongst African partners. On the one hand, if the strategy is effectively about addressing the needs and helping the African Union to achieve its particular added value (as an emerging institution), then the strategy should be called as such and targeted accordingly. If, on the other, the strategy is seen as a mechanism for establishing mutual agenda with African political leaders, including on building sustainable peace, then the EU and its African counterparts need to focus on how to ensure citizens within each country, and beyond elites in national capitals, are empowered to participate in governance and play their role. The CSO representative argued that African civil society partners locally on the ground would expect such a distinction to be made, as the AU remains distant from their everyday challenges and opportunities, and remains far from representing Africa as a whole.

2 EU-AU crisis management capacity

The second presentation highlighted the importance of **long term planning in peacebuilding** and raised three questions. Firstly, the **timeframes** used in crises management need to be revised. The instruments at hand are not adequate for work on long term peacebuilding: the ESDP tools and the Instrument for Stability are short term in focus and the EIDHR, ENPI and DCI have had all explicit references to peacebuilding removed. Secondly the **modalities** for intervention ought to be discussed. The choice often falls on military rather than civilian interventions, and the need to look more creatively at civilian peace building was raised, including police, rule of law, civil administration, and civil protection. Thirdly, in order to intervene in a greater scale through **civilian means**, civilian unarmed peacekeeping forces need to be trained and supported through for instance the AU, EU or UN. There are tools for civilian interventions within the ESDP that could be used to fund such operations and relevant NGOs as well as some EU Member States have the knowledge and experience on which such deployments can draw on.

The concepts of long term peace building and civilian peacekeeping was welcomed by the officials, and the civil society organisations were invited to present ideas on how this could be developed in practice. Member States are also contributors at a bilateral level and should reflect how to use their resources to fund civilian interventions.



3 Conflict sensitivity

The presentation on conflict sensitivity highlighted that the notion was only briefly mentioned in the current Strategy draft, and that it needs to play a part not only in the peace and security cluster, but also in the other sections such as trade, natural resource management, climate change and the key development issues. Development and humanitarian assistance can contribute to stability, but can also exacerbate conflict. Conflict sensitivity can help reduce these negative impacts and also increase the effectiveness of the aid. The **understanding of root causes is of particular importance** and a conflict assessment study should be undertaken prior to any EU engagement in a country. The EC as well as several of the member states have developed **tools** and instruments on conflict assessments, notably the Commission's check lists on root causes of conflicts, which could be used as examples or basis for the development of new tools.. Obviously such a tool would need to be carefully designed and EC staff trained on this issue, especially in delegations but it would be a concrete instrument that could be used for all policies that could have an impact on peace and security. The European Investment Bank and Africa Development Bank are for instance in the process of setting up such an impact assessment.

4 Impunity

The relation between impunity and the struggle for peace, justice and human rights was the topic in the subsequent presentation. Considering the priority the EU has placed on fighting impunity the speaker was surprised at it not being mentioned in the Strategy. Human rights and governance are central for the EU-African dialogue and should be mainstreamed. It was argued that most African states are unable to handle mass atrocities, and that the EU is responsible to provide **assistance** and support to governments and civil society where capacity is lacking as well as to place **appropriate pressure**, where good faith and political will are lacking.

The representative of the Council later explained that the most important aspect of the strategy is that of a new partnership between Europe and Africa. Therefore **some sensitive issues**, such as impunity, **might be difficult for Europe to push**. One of the member states' representatives brought up the truth and reconciliation process in South Africa, and that there are various views on how to achieve justice. The CSOs responded, however, that there had been a lot of development since the truth and reconciliation, and there is a shift of the legal framework requiring states to adequately address the question of impunity, as fostered by the coming into force of the Rome Statute. There are **different nuances of fighting impunity**, and he especially brought up experiences ICTJ has in conducting surveys to inquire the needs and perception of victims.



5 Implementation

The following presentation focused on how the strategy would be implemented. Questions raised include which concrete results would be formulated and how these will be achieved and monitored (benchmarks). It was argued that **local civil society needs to be involved in the monitoring**, and that they need to be **funded and informed** accordingly – it was argued that enhancing communication around reforms is essential for success: it builds public awareness on what government is doing and provides the feedback loop to ensure that government is linked into the needs of their constituents on these policies. **The initial Action Plan needs to include concrete peace and security measures** and EPLO was concerned that it was not mentioned as a priority in the EC Communication “From Cairo to Lisbon”. Furthermore, information on how the implementation of the strategy would be funded was called for: will there be **new funding** aside the existing funding instruments (as the existing instruments do not mention the Strategy and conflict-prevention has been deleted from most instruments)? The fact that ODA should not be used to cover military expenses has been reiterated.

Concerning the Action Plan the Commission responded that it would be a 2-3 year plan, and could not include all aspects of the Strategy but peace and security would be included in the first Action Plan.

6 The role of civil society

The final presentation welcomed the role civil society was given in the strategy but mentioned some aspects that need to be taken into consideration further:

1. Civil society is a vague term, and needs to involve everything from development NGOs to trade unions and traditional African formations. It is important to be brave politically and **define who you want to talk to**.
2. Correct and up to date **information** needs to be shared with civil society in order for them to work efficiently. There is also a greater risk of bad governance to flourish where there is a lack of information.
3. African governments should be encouraged to use the direct support they get for helping **civil society accountability mechanisms** to develop: too few governments welcome scrutiny or encourage the growth of alternative movements.
4. Civil society in new democracies is often unprepared for their roles – they need **support** to improve their effectiveness.

In the following discussion the Commission highlighted the role of civil society in the third phase of the strategy, that of monitoring and implementation of the Strategy after the Lisbon Summit. **The CSOs welcomed their role in the third phase, but emphasised that they would rather influence what is decided as well as how to implement the decisions** already taken than only the latter aspect. The Commission further mentioned that the strategy is people-centred is a new aspect, and he stated that this would need to be delivered on. He called for



proposals how this should work in practice. The CSOs also called for better means of consultation, especially since they could not see that the EC Communication on the Strategy reflected the views expressed in the internet consultation conducted previously.

Member states' representatives asked how civil society saw themselves as actors in the strategy. Other inputs from the officials expressed a wish to further consult African civil society networks and platforms especially at a continental and regional level. They also asked for **ideas on how the people to people dialogue could be better facilitated**.

To facilitate the implementation of the Strategy the **communication** department of the EC was mentioned by one national official who proposed that they could meet with NGOs to develop ways in how to ensure that the information about the Strategy would reach the ordinary people so they would know what to expect and be able to monitor its implementation. The CSOs highlighted that they have long experience with working with people on the ground, which could be useful in implementing the Strategy. One point made in the meeting was that in the early stages of European integration **town twinning** played an important role and this method could also be used between the two continents. For this to work in practice, and for **equal partnerships to be able to develop changes need to be made**, however, especially concerning the difficulties many African NGO representatives encounter through visa regulation when wishing to attend meetings and conferences held in Europe.

Overall the format of the ad hoc working group meeting was perceived as a good start in building up more systematic interaction among the Council, Commission, member states and civil society. The suggestions made by the CSOs were welcomed, and the Portuguese representative as well as some Member States specifically encouraged further input into the draft strategy in writing

The meeting was also informed that Denmark and the United Kingdom are planning national consultations with civil society on the EU-Africa Strategy.

CSO speakers:

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