



EPLO CONFLICT PREVENTION NEWSLETTER

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CZECH REPUBLIC TAKES OVER EU PRESIDENCY

The priorities and the work programme of the Czech Presidency were presented by the Czech Prime Minister M. Topolánek and the Deputy Prime Minister A. Vondra in Prague on 6 January 2009.

The Czech Republic chose 'Europe without Barriers' as the symbolic motto of its Presidency: "a Europe without internal economic, cultural and value barriers for individuals, entrepreneurs and economic entities; a Europe open to the world, but not defenceless against illegal activities and attacks". The Czech Republic chose the three 'E's': Economy, Energy and External Relations as its main priorities areas.

Regarding Economy, the primary task during the Czech Presidency, will be to prevent any further deepening of the crisis and to revive the economic growth of the EU economies. Building upon the Climate-Energy Package, the Presidency will work to prepare a path for reaching a broad international consensus on how to face climate change, which should be reached at the end of 2009 in Copenhagen.

Regarding the role of the EU in the world, the Czech Presidency sees the EU as a stabilising force in the global arena. In particular, the Presidency will strongly push forward for the introduction of the Eastern Partnership aimed at strengthening the EU's relations with its Eastern neighbours. At the level of bilateral relations, negotiations with Ukraine on a new, deeper agreement on mutual relations will continue and negotiations on a new agreement with Moldova will be launched. Furthermore, the Presidency will follow the developments in the South Caucasus and it will look at the reconciliation process after the Georgia conflict, while maintaining the principles of the sovereignty and territorial integrity. The Presidency will also attempt to engage in a constructive dialogue with

Belarus, including trying to support its civil society.

Transatlantic cooperation will be enhanced; multilateralism, the Middle East peace process, Afghanistan/Pakistan and relations with Russia will be the main areas of discussion in the framework of the transatlantic dialogue.

Regarding ESDP, the Presidency will focus on the fulfilment of the civilian and military Headline Goals and will strive for the implementation and evaluation of the Capability Development Plan.

As regards the strategic level and the development of capabilities, the Presidency will support cooperation between the EU and NATO in crisis management operations. The Presidency will also focus its efforts on harmonising the processes of defence planning. The implementation of the EU-UN joint declaration on cooperation in the field of crisis prevention and conflict management will be a further area of Presidency work. The Presidency will continue updating the European Security Strategy, with the aim that it fully reflects the nature of current risks and threats.

In the field of human rights, Presidency efforts will be aimed at improving cooperation and partnership with NGOs and contribute to the effectiveness of the relevant financial tools of the EU. Regarding development policy, The Presidency will continue the efforts to achieve more interlinking between humanitarian and development aid, as well as development policies and other EU policies.

Download the Presidency work programme and priorities [here](#).

Inside this Issue:

Page 2:
Informal meeting of EU
Development Ministers

Page 2:
Gender mainstreaming
in ESDP missions

Page 3:
Crisis in Gaza

Page 4:
Initiative for
Peacebuilding

Page 4:
European Commission
2009 work programme

Page 5:
EPLO Member focus:
Berghof Center for
Conflict Research

Page 6:
Publications & Trainings

INFORMAL DEVELOPMENT MINISTERS MEETING IN PRAGUE

An informal meeting of EU Ministers for Development Cooperation was concluded in Prague on 30 January. European Commissioner Louis Michel and representatives of the European Parliament were also present. Representatives of the World Bank and the UN as well as the Moldovan Finance Minister Mariana Durllesteanu and the Czech Minister of Foreign Affairs Karel Schwarzenberg were among the guest speakers.

The adaptation of development aid to the current situation of financial and economic crisis was the main issue discussed at the meeting. The Ministers agreed that the European Union should help especially the Least Developed Countries to cope with consequences of the financial crisis. In this

respect it is essential that rich countries keep their promise in terms of financing for development while searching for new solutions. The EU as a whole has committed to provide 0.56% of its total Gross National Income in aid by 2010. However, as of today, it provides only around 0.4%.

The Ministers also discussed the current humanitarian situation in Gaza. A number of EU countries already confirmed their readiness to provide humanitarian and reconstruction aid and the EU will support the planned donors' conference to take place in Egypt. Access to sustainable sources of energy on the local level in developing countries was another important item on the agenda. For more information on the Gaza crisis, see page 3 of this newsletter.

GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN ESDP MISSIONS

On Wednesday the 21st of January the **European Parliament** Committee on Foreign Affairs organised a **workshop on gender mainstreaming**. At the meeting Giji Gya (ISIS Europe) gave a presentation of the study on gender mainstreaming and empowerment of women in the EU's external relations instruments. This was followed by two presentations on EU institutional aspects of gender mainstreaming by Ms Grange from the European Commission and Ms Leinonen from the General Secretariat of the Council. The Parliament prepared a note on "European Parliament and Gender Mainstreaming as it relates to ESDP" that was distributed at the workshop and is available [here](#).

The note starts out by summarizing the process aimed at integrating a gender dimension into the parliamentary work of the EP. It then highlights the problem of implementing ideas and recommendations related to gender mainstreaming in ESDP operations and peacebuilding activities. It stresses that the EP could encourage a strategic debate to ensure gender mainstreaming is an essential part of decision-

making and policy implementation related to ESDP and peacebuilding.

The final report on [Implementing SCR 1325 and 1820 in ESDP missions in the Democratic Republic of Congo](#) has been published.

This report was commissioned by UNIFEM and presented as background paper for the conference "From Commitment to Action - The EU Delivering to Women in Conflict and Post-Conflict - Implementing SCR 1325 and 1820 in EU missions: Improving immediate and long-term security for women", co-organised by the French Presidency of the Council of the European Union and UNIFEM, in cooperation with the European Commission last October. In this report, the authors, Giji Gya, Charlotte Isaksson and Marta Martinelli, covered all five ESDP missions undertaken in the DRC and focused on three aspects of gender and gender mainstreaming: in EU policy and institutions; internally in the mission; and mission interaction with the local DRC population and actors on the ground.

Handbook for Civil Society Organisations on Public Oversight over the Security Sector

A resource handbook for grassroots organizations to help them monitor governmental security agencies is now available from the United Nations Development Programme-Bratislava Regional Centre and the Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces. You can download the handbook [here](#).

CRISIS IN THE MIDDLE EAST

In June 2008 Hamas and Israel agreed a ceasefire to stop missiles being fired into Israel, halt Israeli incursions into Gaza and lift the blockade. At first, rocket fire reduced, while goods started to be allowed entry. Yet after a few months tensions started to mount again, climaxing after an Israeli incursion in November. Hamas called off the truce last December. Soon thereafter rocket attacks increased. Israel first responded with a tighter blockade; then launched *Operation Cast Lead*, aimed at stopping the firing of rockets, on 27 December. Following 13 days of fighting, the UN Security Council approved [UNSCR 1860](#) (14 in favour; US abstaining). It called for an immediate ceasefire, leading to a withdrawal by Israel; unhindered provision of food, fuel and medical treatment in Gaza; and a plan to prevent the smuggling of arms and ammunition. Neither Israel nor Hamas accepted 1860. Eventually, *Operation Cast Lead* last 22 days. Israel declared a unilateral end to offensive military operations on 18 January. Hamas followed later the same day. Approximately 1,300 Palestinians died during the offensive and more than 5,000 Palestinians were wounded, including many children. Israel counted 10 military casualties, while 3 civilians were killed by rocket fire and over 80 got injured. And violence is not over yet. Tensions have spiralled in the weeks since Israel's pull-out. Resumed rocket fire presents a major challenge to the current Israeli government and the peace process. Israeli elections take place the second week of February and polls forecast victory for hard-line opposition leader Nethanyahu (Likud).

During the Gaza operation, President of the United States George W. Bush stressed that it was up to Hamas to end the war, supporting Israel's view that the operation was one of self-defence. Barack Obama, who took over on 20 January, refused to make any lengthy comments on the fighting in Gaza. Once in office, however, he selected former Senator George Mitchell as the envoy charged with moving forward the Middle East peace process. Mitchell served earlier as Special Envoy to Northern Ireland. Obama vowed that his Mideast envoy would engage "vigorously" in the quest for Israeli-Palestinian peace. Mitchell toured the region last week.

The diplomatic vacuum in the Middle East created by the outgoing U.S. administration led Europe to seek a bigger role, sending two missions to try to broker a ceasefire. As the

EU Presidency had just passed to the Czechs, the official mission was led by Czech foreign minister. It comprised the French and Swedish ministers too, as well as High Representative Javier Solana and Commissioner Benita Ferrero-Waldner. Simultaneously, however, President Sarkozy travelled to the region on his own mission. Early February, the French received Mitchell and spoke with Palestinian President Abbas. A European Parliament delegation made a visit to assess the offensive on the Gaza Strip mid-January, which was followed by an [EP resolution](#) calling for a ceasefire. Just before the conflict broke out, the Council [Presidency Conclusions](#) stressed that progress towards 'comprehensive peace' in the Middle East will remain a priority for 2009. In the [Council Conclusions on the Middle East process](#) (26-27 January) this statement was reiterated. The conclusions also called for the full implementation of UNSCR 1860. Moreover, the EU stressed its readiness to support 'the sustainability of the ceasefire', referring to a possible reactivation (and extension) of the EU Border Assistance Mission (EUBAM Rafah). The EU will focus on humanitarian relief, prevention of trafficking in arms/ammunition, reopening of crossings, rehabilitation/reconstruction, and resumption of the peace process. The Commission is to provide €32m in humanitarian aid to Gaza this year.

With US and EU support, Egypt is currently seeking a long-term truce deal that would end smuggling of weapons into the Gaza Strip as well as result in a reopening of border crossings. Cairo has been holding separate talks with Israeli officials and Palestinians from both Hamas and Mr Abbas's Fatah party, leading the Palestinian Authority (PA) in the West Bank.

Several EPLO member organisations released statements and reports on the crisis, including:

- FRIDE: [Gaza's hell: why the EU must change its policy](#)
- International Crisis Group: [Gaza: If not the EU, Who?](#), published in European Voice
- Kvinna till Kvinna: [Stop the Violence in Gaza!](#)
- Pax Christi International [Statement](#)
- FWCC EMES [statement](#)
- Saferworld: [Stopping arms supplies to Hamas and Israel](#)
- SFCG: [Common Ground News Service](#)

NEWS OF THE INITIATIVE FOR PEACEBUILDING



The paper on ***Building Inclusive Post-Conflict Governance: How the EU Can Support Women's Political Participation in Conflict-Affected Contexts***, identifies four fields where the EU can promote women's political participation. First, it is

crucial that the EU uses all its diplomatic power to promote the inclusion of women in peace negotiations to guarantee a more inclusive and representative settlement. Second, women's access to political spaces should be increased through more gender-sensitive electoral laws and processes, implementation of specific quotas and capacity building programmes for female candidates, as well as awareness-raising among political parties and the general public. Third, the EU can play an important role in supporting women's participation in civil society. Finally, women's participation in peace processes, political institutions and CSOs can only be meaningful if it leads to more representative and inclusive policy, practice and outcomes.

The paper on ***official and unofficial mediation***

explores the differences and complementarities between official and unofficial formats of mediation and dialogue, and the relevance and effectiveness of these strategies in the context of protracted violent conflicts, with particular emphasis on the conflicts in the South Caucasus. Recommendations to the EU as a political mediator and as a donor and for the European peacebuilding NGOs as regards the design and application of mediation and dialogue include flexibility of funding, development of proper evaluation strategies, and support for innovative and cross-sectoral unofficial dialogue formats, such as on second-order issues across the conflict divide, through mass media and intertwined with practical



INITIATIVE FOR PEACEBUILDING

More information on the
Initiative for Peacebuilding on:
www.initiativeforpeacebuilding.eu

EUROPEAN COMMISSION 2009 WORK PROGRAMME

Last November, the European Commission published its work programme for 2009. Entitled "Acting now for a better Europe", the programme defines the priorities of the Commission in these times of crisis, when "the need for active solidarity across Member States and between Institutions is greatest".

Under the chapter dedicated to 'Europe as a World Partner', the Commission devotes particular attention to pursuing the enlargement process, with a particular attention to developments in Kosovo. The EC wants to develop the relationship with the EU's neighbourhood, both in the South with the Barcelona process and in the East with the Eastern Partnership and plans to build an effective working partnership with the new US administration will also be a priority, especially in tackling key global challenges like climate change, security and stability as well as the

economic and regulatory cooperation. On the development cooperation side, the completion of the Doha Development Agenda will remain a high priority. The programme notes that Doha is "one of the best ways to bring new market opportunities to EU's business, foster development, and limit protectionism worldwide". The Commission also wants to consolidate its relationship with developing countries based on the delivery of the Millennium Development Goals.

The ENP package, the budget review, the Report on EU Financing for Development and Aid Effectiveness, as well as the review of the financial instruments for external cooperation are amongst the main initiatives foreseen in 2009.

The work programme and its annexes are available [here](#).

EPLO MEMBER ORGANISATION FOCUS: BERGHOF CENTER FOR CONFLICT RESEARCH

The *Berghof Center for Conflict Research (BCR)* conducts, supports and disseminates research on peacebuilding and conflict transformation in societies affected by ethnopolitical conflict. BCR cooperates with civil society actors, development agencies and state institutions on a global level and provides research findings and political advice. Our research is mainly focused on practical support of initiatives that contribute to preventing or overcoming violent conflict.

BCR's research is practice related and aims at achieving peaceful social change. At the same time it is theory guided. Most of the research is based on the concepts of conflict transformation and on methods of participatory action research. With empirical contributions and knowledge gained from practice, BCR's reflective approach seeks to enrich current theoretical debates and to influence political processes.

The Center's key concern is to increase knowledge about the impact of concrete initiatives and to encourage learning processes in peacebuilding, development policy, human rights work and humanitarian assistance.

History and Current Focus

The Berghof Research Center was established in 1993 as a branch of the *Berghof-Foundation for Conflict Studies* in Berlin, Germany. The founders, Prof. Georg Zundel and his family, wanted to foster the idea of non-violent conflict transformation and to find concepts for the peaceful settlement of conflicts arising after the end of the Cold War. The Center's mission was to provide action research and to promote peace constituencies, fostering regional networks of individuals and institutions engaged in conflict transformation in the European Union's neighbouring regions. Since then BCR has come to offer a wide range of expertise, placed at the intersection between theory and practice, going far beyond the original regional foci.

BCR maintains close cooperation with another branch of the Berghof Foundation, *Berghof Peace Support (BPS)*, which has a clear focus on peace *practice* and consultancy. A "joint vision" guides the work of both organisations.

Today, BCR's research covers three overlapping issue areas:

- Preconditions and processes of peacebuilding and "dealing with the past" in war-torn societies;
- Transformation of non-state armed actors into political organisations;
- Interaction of state and non-state actors in conflict transformation.

Berghof Handbook for Conflict Transformation

BCR's most important publication, the *Berghof Handbook for Conflict Transformation*, is a web based resource that is constantly developing in quantity and quality as a "work in progress". It offers a platform for extensive and global exchange of experiences and theoretical findings in the field of conflict transformation and peacebuilding. It has become an important hub where practitioners, researchers, academic students and teachers can meet, discuss and contribute to increased expertise. The Handbook offers context analysis and case studies; moreover it engages in current debates on the potential and limits of non-violent crisis prevention, peacebuilding and conflict transformation. The editorial team promotes dialogue between scholar-practitioners from development, human rights and peacework.

The *Berghof Handbook* is published in English, and selected articles are also available in Russian, Spanish, French, Turkish, Sinhala and Tamil (*for more detailed information see www.berghof-handbook.net*).

Partners and Networks

Apart from research and dissemination, networking and policy advice are important activities for BCR. The Berghof staff maintains close contact with local partners, representatives of international NGOs, political parties, members of parliament and ministries, and also with international organisations such as the UN and the EU. Besides its membership in the EPLO, BCR is also a member of the German Platform for Conflict Transformation.

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EPLO MEMBERS

Berghof Research Center for Constructive Conflict Management

Civil Society Conflict Prevention Network—KATU

Crisis Management Initiative—CMI

European Network for Civil Peace Services—EN.CPS

European Centre for Conflict Prevention—ECCP

ESSEC Iréné

Fundación para las Relaciones Internacionales y el Diálogo Exterior—FRIDE

German Platform for Peaceful Conflict Management

International Alert

International Center for Transitional Justice—ICTJ

International Crisis Group

International Security Information Service - ISIS Europe

Interpeace

Kvinna till Kvinna

Life and Peace Institute

Nansen Dialogue Network

Nonviolent Peaceforce

Partners for Democratic Change International—PDCI

Pax Christi International

Quaker Council for European Affairs—QCEA

Saferworld

Search for Common Ground

Swisspeace

Toledo International Centre for Peace—CITpax

World Vision

www.eplo.org

PUBLICATIONS & TRAININGS

Trainings

International Center for Transitional Justice: Rabat Francophone Fellowship Program in Transitional Justice, May 2009.

The **Austrian Study Center for Peace and Conflict Resolution** published its training opportunities for 2009. Courses include project management, election observation and assistance, conflict transformation as well as core courses. More information [here](#).

Publications

CITpax: Security Sector Reform: A new area for Spain's action abroad (in Spanish)

FRIDE: Is the European Union supporting democracy in its neighbourhood?, this book has been produced in collaboration with ECFR.

International Alert launches new website for the European Group on Training (EGT)

The EGT endeavours to advance the civilian component of the EU's ability to mitigate crisis management by developing training courses, material, fostering the cooperation with OSCE, UN and international NGOs. As an open network, the EGT continues to operate on an informal basis. The EGT currently comprises European training institutions and NGO training providers, as well as relevant ministries engaged in the recruitment and training of civilian crisis management personnel.

www.europeangroupontraining.eu



THE EUROPEAN PEACEBUILDING LIAISON OFFICE — EPLO

EPLO is the platform of European NGOs, networks of NGOs and think tanks active in the field of peacebuilding, who share an interest in promoting sustainable peacebuilding policies among decision-makers in the European Union.

EPLO aims to influence the EU so it promotes and implements measures that lead to sustainable peace between states and within states and peoples, and that transform and resolve conflicts non-violently. EPLO wants the EU to recognise the crucial connection between peacebuilding, the eradication of poverty, and sustainable development world wide and the crucial role NGOs have to play in sustainable EU efforts for peacebuilding, conflict prevention, and crisis management.

EPLO advances the interests of its members through common policy positions and consequently advocating for those common positions. EPLO disseminates information and promotes understanding of EU policies of concern to its Members. The Office builds also solidarity and cooperation amongst its members and with other relevant NGO networks. Finally, EPLO raises awareness about the contribution the EU should make to peacebuilding and the need to hold the EU accountable to its own political commitments of helping secure peace within and outside its borders.

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