

Empowering Local Actors: The UN and Multi-Track Conflict Prevention

INTERNATIONAL POLICY WORKSHOP

10 December 2001, New York

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary	1
I. Introduction	3
II. Addressing Key Challenges	4
III. Recommendations for Empowering Local Actors	8
Processes of Collaboration: Values, Methods and Attitudes	8
IV. Conclusion	10
Agenda	11
Participants	13

Executive Summary

The International Peace Academy convened an international policy workshop in New York on 10 December 2001 in the conference room of Chadbourne and Parke LLP bringing together approximately fifty members of the UN system and civil society representatives from around the world. The purpose of the workshop was to follow up on the June 2001 report of the United Nations Secretary-General on the Prevention of Armed Conflict and address some of the opportunities and challenges involved in working to prevent the outbreak of armed conflict in tandem with *relevant local actors*.

The conference was designed to extract lessons from three case studies of partnerships between the UN and local actors, and among local actors—more specifically civil society organizations (CSOs)—that could inform future efforts in multi-track prevention where a multiplicity of actors have complementary, and conflicting, mandates and objectives. The lessons informed several normative and operational recommendations that follow at the end of this report.

The key elements that emerged from the conference proceedings are as follows:

- ❑ Conflict prevention is one of four key priorities for the United Nations (UN). However, the primary responsibility for the prevention of armed conflict rests on local actors. The UN must focus on the ways in which it can support their efforts to manage conflicts before they turn violent.
- ❑ Relevant CSOs and actors have a crucial role to play in creating the conditions for sustainable peace. There are two key obstacles to greater collaboration between civil society actors and CSOs, and the UN:
 - Perception and misperception: Raised expectations combined with lack of familiarity regarding the operating procedures, mandates, resources and limits of the many UN departments and

agencies and the many civil society actors and CSOs generate frustration and militate against collaboration.

- Identifying entry points and appropriate partners: The timing and nature of the UN's role in supporting civil society actors and CSOs in conflict prevention is extremely important. Identifying entry points requires early warning that links, effectively, analysis of the local conditions and response.

- The UN urgently needs to focus on ways in which it can better interact with civil society actors and organizations. Specific options include fostering better linkages through contact with the Security Council as well as the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). Intermediation by international NGOs might be the most feasible entry point for other CSOs and actors. In the field, the responsibility of the Resident Coordinator or Special/Resident Representative to ensure coordination and collaboration must include enhancing interaction with and support of relevant civil society actors and organizations.
- There is a clear role for two-way advocacy and intermediaries—and intermediation mechanisms—to

enhance collaboration between the UN and CSOs and civil society actors. Such mechanisms include the creation of sustainable partnerships and networks that bring together relevant parts of the UN system and appropriate local actors with international NGOs, academics, regional organizations and subregional organizations.

- At the same time, CSOs and actors are no panacea, and there are limits regarding what the UN can achieve in attempting to create the conditions for peace. In determining whether and how to engage together, both the UN and CSOs and actors could benefit from establishing clear goals as to how and why their collaboration would seek to prevent conflict by asking themselves basic questions before proceeding:
 1. *Why* should the UN and CSOs be engaged in this matter?
 2. *When* should they be involved?
 3. *What*, precisely, would the UN and CSOs be called on to do?
 4. *Where* would they be involved: at what political level and in what geographic area?
 5. *How* best should the UN and CSOs engage, with what processes, personnel and financing?



(l-r) Amb. Dieter Kastrup, David M. Malone, and Julia Taft

I. Introduction

In June 2001, the United Nations Secretary-General issued a comprehensive report on the prevention of armed conflict. The basic premise of the report “is that the primary responsibility for conflict prevention rests with national governments and other local actors.”¹ The International Peace Academy held a one-day international policy conference in New York on 10 December 2001 entitled *Empowering Local Actors: The UN and Multi-Track Conflict Prevention*, which sought to address some of the opportunities and challenges involved in working to prevent the outbreak of armed conflict in tandem with *relevant local actors*.

The conference was designed to extract lessons from three examples—in the Crimea, the Mano River subregion, and Central America—that could inform future efforts in multi-track prevention where a multiplicity of actors have distinct (complementary as well as conflicting) mandates and objectives. The conference began by examining existing UN capacities and tools for supporting local preventive initiatives and to discuss the avenues open to the UN and local actors to engage early, and together, in the prevention of armed conflict. Through a practical focus on case studies of partnerships among the UN, national governments and local actors, the conference attempted to extract preliminary best practices from past efforts. These lessons inform several operational recommendations that follow at the end of this report.

Many UNs, and many ‘other local actors’

There are a multiplicity of organizations, networks, businesses and people that fall under the definition ‘local actor’. For the purposes of this conference, the term civil society organizations (CSOs) was defined so as to indicate the focus on the range of non-state actors active in conflict prevention work including religious organizations, the media, trade unions, civic associations, registered NGOs and private sector organizations. CSOs are not seen in opposition to governments; rather civil society is seen as encompassing the range of domestic and international social organizations that surround, and in many ways shape, the state.

Similarly, the UN is multifaceted: it comprises a set of departments, funds, and agencies with differing mandates, objectives and structures. The public face of

the UN in any country or region may be very different from that experienced in another. Typically a few agencies have an established, long-term presence in “the field”—this is especially true of UNDP. Often, several agencies and sometimes departments will be active, and their efforts coordinated by a UN resident representative or coordinator. In some countries, a Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) may have been appointed.

Partnerships between the UN and CSOs can thus be difficult to arrange and even harder to replicate. Every case is likely to be unique. This workshop attempted to focus on the extent to which modes of engagement could move beyond *ad hoc* arrangements to some generalized guidelines for cooperation applicable in multiple situations.

Bridging the gap between Perception and Misperception

A key theme that emerged from the proceedings of the conference was the difference in perceptions and expectations within and between CSOs and the UN system. This perceptual gap is the primary obstacle to improving collaboration between these groups and to empowering local actors to play a lead role in conflict prevention. Conference discussions revealed criticisms of the UN based on misperceptions about the capacities and mandates of the various UN organs. Conversely, calls by the UN for civil society to play a more forceful role in conflict prevention often fail to recognize the limits on CSO operations.

Nonetheless, while increased mutual familiarity amongst UN and civil society actors should enhance the process of empowerment, not all barriers to increased cooperation can be explained by mere misunderstanding. In some cases CSOs have a clear idea of what the UN can contribute in a given situation, and yet they find that the UN does not deliver—sometimes because it cannot, sometimes because it should not, and other times because it tries, but fails. CSOs often offer serious critiques of the way in which the UN is organized at the country level, how financial assistance is administered and the lack of cooperation among CSOs with similar expertise that could render partnering slightly easier. Some of these critiques are included in this report.

The problems encountered when the UN and CSOs think about, and attempt, collaboration reveals an important

¹ United Nations, Report of the Secretary-General on the prevention of armed conflict, A/55/985-S/2001/574, 7 June 2001, pg. 6.

opportunity for the future: the importance of two-way advocacy and the role of intermediaries—and intermediation mechanisms such as networks and partnerships—between the two types of actors.

Learning from Experience

The workshop examined three conflict prevention initiatives notable for their innovative methodologies and relationship to the UN system in an attempt to draw out some initial lessons and best practices for the future. While each case was unique in its approach to conflict prevention, collectively the three case studies were intended to allow the debates to build upon and refer to specific examples that apply across programmes. They were as follows:

Programme for Displaced People and Returnees (PRODERE): PRODERE was set up and administered by various agencies under the UN system such as the International Labour Organization (ILO), the World Health Organization (WHO) and the UN Office for Project Services (UNOPS) with support from several European governments. The programme, designed to alleviate tensions caused by several wars in Central America in the 1980s, was unique at the time in its participatory approach to agenda setting and the planned, and actual, sustainability of its activities. The Local Economic Development Associations (LEDAs) established under the programme placed resources for and decision-making power relating to economic regeneration in the hands of local authorities. In many cases these continued to function after the completion of international support for the programme.

Crimea Integration and Development Programme (CIDP): CIDP was established by UNDP at the request of the Ukrainian government in 1995 to assist with the reintegration of the Formerly Deported Peoples² displaced under the Soviet regime into the region. Its main objective is to promote the maintenance of peace and security in the Crimea by supporting the socio-economic development, integration and self-reliance of the returning Tatars.

Mano River Women's Peace Network (MARWOPNET): MARWOPNET was created in May 2000 in an effort to increase women's involvement in conflict resolution and peacebuilding initiatives in the Mano River sub-region.

The regional NGO network has members and chapters in three countries throughout the region: Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia. It brought together the leaders of these three countries to meet face-to-face to discuss regional insecurity, a feat other actors had not been able to achieve. MARWOPNET has operated independently of the UN system. It operates through partnerships with organizations in those countries as well as with Femmes Africa Solidarité, based in Geneva.



(l-r, at table) Hussein Bulhan and Tecla Wanjala

II. Addressing Key Challenges

Based on the case studies and the rich experiences of the conference participants, the following issues emerged as requiring attention in fostering partnership between the UN and local actors.

Mandates

The task of empowering local actors is complicated first and foremost by collective misunderstandings about the nature and capacities of the UN system and CSOs in different regions and countries. This is, in part, a function of the varying mandates of each. The limits under which both operate may explain to a considerable extent the difficulties in achieving cooperation.

The United Nations: CSOs often expect “the UN” to intervene in given situations and at various phases

² The UNDP background document on CIDP describes the programme's purpose as “facilitating the process of resettlement of the FDPs [Formerly Deported Peoples],” ethnically composed mainly of Crimean Tatar, as well as Bulgarian, Armenian, Greek and German peoples. (<http://www.un.kiev.ua:8080/undp/brief/docs/ukr-00-006.pdf>)

of conflict. When violence is, or is perceived to be, imminent, the UN can deploy peacekeepers or send an SRSG to negotiate with warring factions and/or the government, though in practice this has been very rare. While such measures require the consent of the host country, the mandate is explicitly preventive in both cases. In contrast, when the underlying conditions suggest a potential for conflict, there are agencies, institutions and occasionally departments that could, and may be, attempting to forestall violent conflict early through structural prevention initiatives—often implicitly. The various UN actors that may be engaged in structural prevention work have circumscribed mandates that are, at times, not specifically linked to the more explicitly preventative activities of other parts of the system. Often, their work is limited to technical support and/or capacity building and does not allow the field staff to lend to CSOs the political or moral support that they may need. While these actors can benefit from a tacit elision of the distinction between conflict prevention and developmental objectives, which renders their work less politically sensitive, their access and ability to produce results relies heavily on work relations they have developed, often over many years, with national governments and other local actors—some of which may be forces for conflict rather than stability.

Civil Society: CSOs represent diverse groups and political positions within society. They do not necessarily share a common or objective analysis of an impending, or potential, conflict; nor do they automatically constitute partners for peace. There is rarely a single or natural peacemaker in a given situation and the UN may expect too much if it equates ‘empowerment’ with identifying a local liaison. Further, CSOs cannot fulfill the primary responsibility for conflict prevention without adequate capacity and resources. Often the need for UN or international involvement in a conflict stems from the inability of local actors to contain it. Nevertheless, CSOs have a privileged perspective and presence on the ground; understanding the roles of these organizations is crucial for developing genuine partnerships.

In sum, while ideally the UN and its agencies and institutions would seek to bolster local actors’ efforts to prevent conflict, in reality the UN must be realistic about the limits of such a strategy given the respective mandates of each.

Political Limits and Unintended Consequences

For the UN, a central challenge is to support local actors without disrupting the local processes and political economies within which they are active. Moreover, the symbolic role of the UN cannot be underestimated. Often, rather than material support or intervention, CSOs seek legitimation through some form of collaboration with the UN (usually the UN field office) in an effort to further their own goals. A question immediately arises, however: which CSOs are legitimate forces for peace? Identifying partners, from the UN perspective, is extremely difficult. Conflict prevention efforts may have implications for local and national political dynamics that are overlooked or misunderstood. Moreover, partnering can be treacherous: it can lead to perceptions that the UN is biased, and/or have the unintended consequence of strengthening a particular group—for better or for worse.

Many CSOs want explicit, public support for their prevention efforts from the UN. Understanding and acknowledging this fact could make the UN a more effective partner for CSOs, and perhaps be less costly as well. Formal and public statements in defense of (for example) human rights or condemning election abuses are sometimes more helpful to CSOs and serve the cause of empowering local actors much more effectively than informal pressure on governmental authorities or material support. However, there are also political costs for UN actors on the ground, such as Resident Representatives, in making such statements. Finally, the UN must sometimes be prepared not to be involved. According to CSOs themselves, sometimes the best way to empower local actors is to leave them alone.

A large-scale preventive effort through the infusion of resources or application of political pressure will undoubtedly affect the social structures and political landscape in unintended ways. In Central America, PRODERE sometimes operated in areas of minimal civil presence, and in some instances became the primary source of resources and administrative authority in a region. In the absence of other countervailing institutions or functioning public structures, some parties on the ground viewed its activities as social engineering driven by the programme’s agenda without reference to the needs of other social groups. Issues of social and economic change often underpin conflict. The challenge for conflict prevention initiatives is to ensure that interventions do not lead to further conflict and instability, not only when the UN is present but also after

it leaves. This does not necessarily mean that the UN should leave the political economy of a region unchanged (that is often the problem), but it does mean, at the very least, not worsening it through the creation of unsustainable economies.

Conflict prevention initiatives can also, unintentionally, become entangled in the agendas of various local actors. The CIDP was one of the first UN programmes that sought, explicitly and at the request of the national government, to mitigate the so-called root causes of conflict through the use of development tools. The programme addressed the reintegration of Crimean Tatars. CIDP saw its role as ensuring basic human needs for the returning population. Others, including the informal Crimean parliament Mejlis, set the bar for success differently, demanding the restitution of land rights taken away under the early Soviet regime. According to the goals set by CIDP, the project has been and continues to be a success. According to Mejlis, the project has neglected to address the fundamental issue of restitution, and as a result has not helped the people whom it is mandated to serve: displaced Crimean Tatars.

UN support, whether public and formal or offered through *ad hoc* arrangements that lend legitimacy to particular initiatives at the civil society level, can be effective. A closer working relationship between the UN and local actors could lead to the creation of sustainable relationships as CSOs and the UN each gain better understandings of the nature of the other. This could allow both CSOs and the UN to tailor their work to local conditions and according to their respective comparative advantages, perhaps initiating complementary processes.

Information

The flow of information between the international and local levels is important for building relationships and trust; it is also critical to the success of collaboration efforts between the UN and CSOs. These very different types of actors have access to different sources and types of information, all of which may be critical for developing comprehensive early warning. Understanding the structures and modes of operation of each, in addition to the local context more generally, is necessary in order to identify partners from the UN and CSOs.

Early Warning: While CSOs may have some advantage in localized early warning, they may lack the regional and global picture. CSOs do not have access to the same

intelligence and knowledge resources as national governments and the UN. Some would likely benefit from consistent information-sharing with the UN or consistent signals from the offices of the UN with which they might interact. The UN needs either its own analysis of the CSO sector or it needs to cooperate with other actors such as international NGOs that can provide such information and analysis. Potential partners should be identified on the basis of their standing and durability within society: will they remain in place after the current crisis passes? The UN must seek to build capacity in such enduring NGOs; it cannot rely upon UNDP or INGOs alone.

Understanding the Wider Context: Causes of conflict may derive from regional or global political and economic events. The UN or any CSO attempting to mitigate a dispute must work within an understanding of regional and international context in which the conflict is unfolding when addressing the root causes. Moreover, this is frequently why local actors turn to the UN: because the disputed issues fall beyond the purview of any one national government.

Duplication

UN efforts and CSO projects often have similar mandates and may result in redundant structures. New projects and engagements should respect and seek to build upon existing structures. Partnerships such as MARWOPNET are in fact not collaborations between the UN and NGOs but among NGOs. Such civil society actors, deploying traditional modes of conflict resolution, in addition to governmental actors, may be central to conflict prevention and peacebuilding. Thus prior to any engagement, an identification of such extant projects should first take place.

Entry and Exit

When the UN becomes involved, the timing of its engagement and exit are crucial. The relevant local actors have a vested interest in the UN entry and exit in a region, and care should be taken to create sustainable conflict prevention by engaging them through the UN's involvement. Whether after short-term initiatives or long-term projects, planning for a future without a UN presence is essential. However, the extended deployment of UN facilities can contribute to the normalization of an abnormal situation, to the detriment of home-grown institutions, projects and economies.



(l-r) Amb. Patricia Durrant, Amb. Kersten Asp-Johnsson, and Amb. Stig Elvemar

Flexibility

The analysis of the nature of the challenge and of potential policy responses takes time, as does the implementation of that response—and this is probably especially true in the UN system.

One of the foundational principles of MARWOPNET was the need to provide a rapid and flexible response to the needs of those on the ground. Its key achievement was convening the Presidents of Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea to meet and discuss the rapidly deteriorating regional security situation. The meeting may not have ensured the end of hostilities in the region, but it was successful in bringing together the key actors to the conflict where the UN had sought to do so without success for some time. In retrospect, the UN could have mobilized quickly in favor of the peace process, not by deploying its own mediators or organizing talks but by supporting the efforts of the women of the Mano River Network.

Financing

Modes of financing conflict prevention work can enhance or hinder possibilities for the empowerment of local actors. In seeking accountability, donors place conditionalities on funds, sometimes hampering local action. Further, competition for resources between UN agencies and CSOs may hamper efficient spending and effective use of resources. Funding patterns for prevention may fail to take account of broader economic constraints. Finally, there is a danger that programmes that are developed may not be designed to be sustainable.

Accountability: Donors place conditionalities on funds in an attempt to ensure that the target goals are reached, and that benefits from projects are not unfairly distributed. However, the strictures of donor reporting requirements constrain recipients, who often consider them unhelpful and time-consuming, driven more by donor definitions of success and accountability (quantitative – what can be measured) rather than community definitions of accountability (qualitative – what people feel). Funding limited by time or by project may fail to serve the interests of the intended beneficiaries. Moreover, the indicators of success in conflict prevention work are unclear. Relative levels of violence are difficult to measure and the political and moral contribution of a project is often intangible. Conflict prevention activities are likely to have more of an impact in creating the conditions in which it is less likely that violence will occur; success is all but impossible to demonstrate.

Competition: Collaboration becomes less likely in circumstances where the UN and CSOs compete for the same funds. Such competition can engender resentment and undermine UN claims to ‘partnership’ if not sensibly managed. Competition between CSOs is also potentially divisive. Nevertheless, competition need not lead to reduced possibilities for collaboration. Enhanced collaboration, through dialogue and perhaps joint project design and implementation (further elaborated in the last section of this report) could help build the credibility of CSOs in the eyes of donors and goodwill towards the UN on the part of local actors.

The global economy: National economies do not operate in a vacuum. They are increasingly constrained by global economic realities such as debt obligations, trade agreements, and global economic interdependence. Conflict prevention initiatives must, to be successful, take account of these economic conditions and constraints.

Sustainability: Conflict is often characterized by institutional breakdown, and CSOs have long called for the funding of institutions as opposed to individual projects. The establishment of effective administrative mechanisms for managing resources and services is central to both conflict prevention and reconstruction after a conflict. The sustainability of the LEDAs established by the PRODERE project is



(l-r) Isha Dyfan and Yasmin Jusu-Sherrif

a good example of institutions that have acquired a permanent function. They continue to channel development assistance according to locally agreed priorities. However, sustainability of institutions *per se* is less important than the endurance of effective and successful mechanisms for managing potential conflict. The prioritization of sustainability at the expense of other criteria can lead to the replication of inequities and mistakes, rather than the replication of successes.

Learning Lessons?

Evaluations of conflict prevention projects are sometimes seen as a formality. Worse, they are often conducted by the organization itself or by a close associate. More rigorous use of evaluations to learn from past mistakes and to design new processes and programmes that take account of lessons learned are required. In the rush to create sustainable projects, mistakes may be institutionalized, or projects that are deemed to have 'worked' may be translated wholesale into new and different contexts with no attempt to examine their appropriateness or shortcomings.

III. Recommendations for Empowering Local Actors

The conference generated both normative and operational guidelines for partnership between the UN and local actors.

Processes of Collaboration: Values, Methods and Attitudes

Coordinated development of preventive action must build upon a shared set of values. Technical arrangements about funds, responsibilities and reporting mechanisms can mask underlying differences of opinion about not only the goals of the project but also the spirit of its work. Further, a strong agreement on the values embodied by the project and the approach to be taken can in some cases render many technical arrangements unnecessary.

For example MARWOPNET and their partner organization in Geneva, Femmes Africa Solidarité, established five operating principles to govern their work which merit attention:

1. Support local initiatives and be flexible to adapt to the needs of those partners.
2. An international presence is important, indeed crucial, but the agenda must be driven by events and by analysis from those directly involved.
3. Trust the local partners completely and be prepared to act rapidly and flexibly according to their needs.
4. The presence of a third party, an objective observer/analyst, such as the UN or an international NGO is helpful to maintain balance and an image of impartiality.
5. Relationships and projects must be sustainable and endure beyond the task at hand, in other words there must be a community of values and interests.

Further principles and considerations can be drawn out of the discussion at the workshop:

- The UN and international community at large help to promote a normative international framework of rights and responsibilities, which is centrally important to conflict prevention, providing a context within which CSOs can claim moral legitimacy even when the UN cannot publicly support each individual organization.
- It is important to identify partners that will remain active over the long-term. International human rights organizations such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International have extensive knowledge of the political context of

and key actors in conflict situations. There is potential for that knowledge to be used by development (and, by extension, conflict prevention) organizations to target institutions for support.

- CSOs are tantalized by the possibility of access to the UN offered to NGOs with consultative status with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the UN. As a practical matter, this might best be facilitated through the good offices of NGOs with such status working on behalf of CSOs. Arrangements such as Arria Formula consultations would enable NGOs to discuss prevention cases with the Security Council on a continuing basis; a number of such consultative arrangements were suggested in the Secretary-General's report. UNDP and UNIFEM have also held consultations with CSOs.
- Taking the recommendations of the report further, CSOs could and should be able to provide information to the UN system on prevention, with the expectation that it will be received and used where appropriate.
- Where they have jointly assessed a situation and planned a strategy, the UN and CSOs could apply jointly for international assistance rather than duplicating efforts or competing for the same funds.

Improving Outcomes: Specific Reforms

Conflict prevention seeks to create the conditions in which violent conflict is less likely to erupt. "Success" is most often incremental, manifested in attitudes and interactions within communities. Even when peace agreements are signed at the national or international level, what constitutes success in implementation must still be defined. Such imprecise objectives fuel criticisms that conflict prevention is simply old wine in new bottles—a new name for 'good governance' or social justice. However, more fundamentally, conflict prevention seeks to ensure the existence of a safety net such that regularized channels exist to address normal social conflict in ways that help to avert violence.

The following recommendations are intended to complement the normative and procedural ones above with specific proposals for institutional reforms that can make collaboration in conflict prevention easier, clearer and more effective:

- *A single clear point of contact* for both potential and existing UN partners in a region.
- *A strong Resident Representative or SRSG* would help considerably in coordinating operations, avoiding duplications, facilitating a flexible and rapid response, and providing legitimacy and symbolic support to CSOs intimidated by obstructive governments.
- *Domestic education* is important to ensure that qualified personnel are available to initiate and staff homegrown prevention efforts. Education and increased social spending in general should be considered prevention activities and encouraged by the UN.
- Conflict prevention initiatives should be subject to *independent evaluations*, not conducted by sister agencies or sympathetic organizations, and learning should be institutionalized to prevent the replication of mistakes across projects.
- UNDP could conduct a mapping exercise to *identify problem areas of social exclusion and inequality in different regions*.
- The UN system and its operations remain unfamiliar in much of the world. A *familiarization campaign* is needed in many areas. This might take the form of a renewed effort to expand the model UN programme, particularly to poorer countries.
- There is a need for *intermediation mechanisms* between the UN and CSOs to facilitate greater understanding of the institutional and local contexts in which each work and regularize their further collaboration.



(l-r) Julia Taft, Eleanor O'Gorman and Tecla Wanjala

IV. Conclusion

Clearly, both the UN and local actors have much to gain from each other in conflict prevention work. This means that the UN must trust the expertise of local actors, and that local actors seeking UN cooperation must accept the limits and operating procedures of the UN system. The UN is not an alternative to local or domestic political processes, but a complement to them. Moreover, in many cases regional organizations and neighboring states offer the best hope of mobilizing political leverage to effect change: a reliance on local actors may sometimes obscure other more appropriate or effective mechanisms of conflict prevention.

When engaging with each other both groups should be clear about what they expect from the other and what they expect from themselves and other organizations. Each party would do well to consider the following

questions before entering into a partnership. Joint assessment of expectations can provide the starting point for a more rigorous and effective collaboration.

1. *Why* should the UN/CSOs be engaged in this matter? What is their comparative advantage?
2. *When* should they be involved? Depending on their strengths and structures they may be better suited to take or avoid different types of risks.
3. *What*, precisely, would the UN/CSO be called on to do? Do their capacities and resources support this goal? Under what political constraints do they operate?
4. *Where* would they be involved--at what political level and in what geographic area? Is this solely a local issue? Are there appropriate regional forums that could be engaged?
5. *How* best should the UN/CSO engage, and with whom?

EMPOWERING LOCAL ACTORS: THE UN AND MULTI-TRACK CONFLICT PREVENTION

A PROJECT OF THE INTERNATIONAL PEACE ACADEMY

*International Policy Workshop
Monday December 10, 2001
New York*

AGENDA

8:30 *Light Breakfast*

9:00 WELCOME REMARKS

H.E. Dr. Dieter Kastrup
Permanent Mission of Germany to the UN
David M. Malone
International Peace Academy

9:15 OPENING ADDRESS

Julia Taft
Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery
United Nations Development Programme

9:30 – 11:00 FIRST SESSION: THE UN AND MULTI-TRACK CONFLICT PREVENTION

Chair: *H.E. Dr. Dieter Kastrup*

Brief overview of the Secretary-General's report on conflict prevention: what does it mean for civil society?

Speaker: *Tapio Kanninen*
Policy Planning Unit, UN Department of Political Affairs

The role of civil society in peacemaking: the case of the Guatemala peace process

Speaker: *Jean Arnault*
Princeton University

The intergovernmental perspective: what are the opportunities and constraints facing states and inter-governmental organs in conflict prevention?

Discussant: *H.E. Miss Patricia Durrant*
Permanent Mission of Jamaica to the UN

11:00 – 11:30 *Coffee Break*

11:30 – 12:30 SECOND SESSION: CASE STUDIES IN HOMEGROWN PREVENTION

First Case Study: Programme for Displaced Persons, Returnees and Refugees (PRODERE)

Chair: *Gay Rosenblum-Kumar*
UN, Department of Social and Economic Affairs

Speaker: *Alfredo Lazarte*
International Labour Organization, PRODERE

Discussant: *Carmen Rosa De Leon*
Instituto de Enseñanza para el Desarrollo Sostenible (IEPADES), Guatemala

12:30 – 2:00 *Buffet Lunch*

2:00 – 3:00 SECOND SESSION CONTINUED

Second Case Study: Crimea Integration and Development Programme (CIDP)

Chair: *Kseniya Temnenko*
Taurida National University, Ukraine

Speaker: *Edem Bakhshish*
UNDP Ukraine

Discussant: *Nadir Bekirov*
Mejlis Crimean Parliament, Ukraine

3:00 – 4:00 SECOND SESSION CONTINUED

Third Case Study: Mano River Union Women's Peace Network

Chair: *Solomon Akpata*
Consultant, UN Department of Political Affairs

Speakers: *Haja Saran Dara Kabbah* and *Yasmin Jusu-Sherrif*
Mano River Union Women's Peace Network

Discussant: *Margaret Vogt*
Office of the Assistant Secretary-General, UN Department of Political Affairs

4:00– 4:15 *Coffee Break*

4:15 – 5:30 THIRD SESSION: LESSONS LEARNED—OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE FUTURE

Chair: *Virginia Gamba*
SaferAfrica

Processes, methods and modes of collaboration in conflict prevention activities among various parts of the UN system and other local actors—what options for the future?

Speaker: *Alejandro Bendaña*
Centro de Estudios Internacionales, Nicaragua

Speaker: *Alejandra Pero*
UNDP, Civil Society Organization team

5:30 CLOSING REMARKS

Necla Tschirgi
International Peace Academy

PARTICIPANTS

Solomon Akpata
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Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Sweden

Jean Arnault
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Edem Bakhshish
UNDP, Ukraine

Nadir Bekirov
Mejlis Crimean Parliament, Ukraine

Alejandro Bendaña
Centro de Estudios Internacionales, Nicaragua

Amanda Brisbane
National Human Rights Center of Liberia, Liberia

Beverlee Bruce
Social Science Research Council, USA

Hussein Bulhan
Academy for Peace and Development, Somalia

Nikhil Chandavarkar
UN, Department of Economic and Social Affairs

Rosny Desroches
Initiative Société Civile, Haiti

Martha Doggett
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Patricia Durrant
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New York University, USA

Fernando Costa Freire
Permanent Mission of Portugal to the United Nations

Virginia Gamba
SaferAfrica, South Africa

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About the program

From Promise to Practice: Strengthening UN Capacities for the Prevention of Violent Conflict

Program Associate: Dr. Chandra Lekha Sriram

Senior Program Officer: Karin Wermester

Duration: September 2000 – June 2003

While preventing violent conflict has many advocates at a general level, knowledge about how it is to be done, under what circumstances, when, and by whom, remains significantly underdeveloped. This is partly a problem for analysts, whose techniques for assessing volatile situations and prospective remedies could be sharpened further. It is also a significant problem for organizations and institutions, whose practices, cultures, and styles of decision-making, and whose systems of learning and accountability, often inhibit effective responses to the complex environments in which conflict may turn violent.

In 2000-2001, IPA conducted an initial research and policy development project entitled "From Reaction to Prevention: Opportunities for the UN System in the New Millennium." The project aimed to determine the degree of consensus and discord in recent research on conflict trends and causes of conflict and peace, and to use these findings to help shape policy and action on conflict prevention within the UN system. We drew several conclusions from this initial work, including recognition of the urgent need to address the developmental aspects of conflict prevention. In light of this, IPA launched a three-year project entitled "From Promise to Practice: Strengthening UN Capacities for the Prevention of Violent Conflict." The goal is to find opportunities to strengthen the conflict prevention capacity within the UN system. The project devotes considerable attention to structural prevention, emphasizing the role of development and capacity-building.

The profile of conflict prevention has been raised by the publication of the Secretary-General's report on the subject in June 2000. The development of this report engaged broad sectors of the UN community, including member states, and IPA contributed to the advancement of the concept prior to the report by holding a number of workshops and informal discussions, including a Security Council workshop. The project is organized around three interrelated components: policy development, networking, and research. Policy development involves briefings, workshops, conferences, and policy fora bringing together the UN and New York-based policy community with international experts and practitioners to discuss research findings and present new ideas. We seek to build networks of expert practitioners in the UN system and among the UN, member states, and relevant NGO personnel and academics in order to sustain and increase involvement in preventive efforts.

Research aims to identify the most appropriate tools, actors, and strategies for a range of preventive actions to be undertaken by the United Nations. Case studies of preventive action were commissioned on the following nine countries: Georgia (Javakheti), Burundi, Tanzania (Zanzibar), Fiji, Kenya, East Timor, Colombia, Tajikistan, and Liberia. In order to develop cases that are both rigorous and as policy-relevant as possible, consultations have involved the UN system and its agencies, research institutes, civil society actors, experts, and others, developing guidelines for authors to give priority to the policy insights gained from cases. An edited volume of these cases will be published in 2002.

A policy report on lessons from the case studies was disseminated to the UN and larger policy community in the spring of 2002. The report presents ideas on best practices and policy recommendations for a wide variety of situations and identifies cooperative potential among UN actors, regional and subregional organizations, member states, NGOs, civil society, and the business community in preventing violent conflict. All of the program reports are available on the program website at <http://www.ipacademy.org/Programs/Research/ProgReseConf_body.htm>.

The prevention project is also developing workshops to examine the role of regional and subregional organizations. A goal of one is to examine collaboration and cooperation between the UN and regional and subregional organizations with national and local governments and civil society actors to distill practical policy-oriented and operational suggestions. The focus is on local/field perspectives in order to draw lessons from practical experience. A conference at a more senior level will build on insights gained from the workshop on what further steps can be taken to strengthen the role of regional and subregional organizations in conflict prevention.



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