



Sharing Best Practices on Conflict Prevention: *The UN, Regional and Subregional Organizations, National and Local Actors*

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Executive Summary

- ◆ Mainstreaming conflict prevention requires that the UN, regional, subregional, national, and local actors view the full spectrum of their activities ‘through the lens’ of conflict prevention and integrate preventive discourse, analysis and strategy into all areas of operation.
- ◆ Conflict tends to spill over national borders. It is therefore crucial that risk assessments take into account the regional and global context and that regional actors be involved in preventive initiatives.
- ◆ Effective conflict prevention strategies require increased cooperation and coordination between various UN agencies and between the UN and regional, subregional, national and local actors. Three areas where increased coordination could be especially productive are:
 1. early warning and risk analysis;
 2. regional and local capacity building; and
 3. conflict prevention training.
- ◆ The UN and other organizations have developed new methodologies, protocols, mechanisms and tools for conflict prevention. Specific tools that have been developed, and which were examined in the meeting, include, inter alia, early warning analysis and training in the UN system, capacity-building efforts in the OAS and OSCE, early warning units in ECOWAS and the OAU, and regional strategies for peacebuilding and prevention in the UN.
- ◆ These efforts represent a significant achievement, and should be examined further, refined, and built upon. However, a greater commitment to increasing knowledge, capacity, resources, and training is required if these initiatives are to become fully operational and institutionalized.

- ◆ 'Preventive action' should be considered not as an expedient product or event, but as a continuous, organic process. It should build on strengths as well as respond to crises. Building the resilience of societies to violent conflict necessitates:
 1. the highest degree of inclusiveness and multi-sectoral participation in dialogue, peacebuilding, and the development of conflict prevention capacity and strategies;
 2. a high degree of local ownership of conflict prevention strategies and initiatives;
 3. the strengthening of democratic institutions and empowerment of local actors through continuous consultation, assistance, and training.

- ◆ The costs of conflict prevention are immediate and visible, the benefits are long-term, and often silent and invisible. The challenge for academics and practitioners is therefore to keep the value of conflict prevention, including savings in lives and subsequent expenditures on peacekeeping and peacebuilding, at the fore.

I. Introduction

Background

Conflict prevention as an obligation of sovereign states is a cornerstone of the United Nations (UN) Charter. It is an underlying aim of all of the UN's work. The Secretary-General, in his speech accepting the 2001 Nobel Peace Prize on behalf of the organization, stressed that conflict prevention is one of his key priorities. The Secretary-General's report of June 2001 on the Prevention of Armed Conflict offered guidance for the realization of his pledge to move the UN from 'a culture of reaction to a culture of prevention'. The report, which refers both to 'structural' prevention and 'operational' prevention, identifies the promotion of coherence, information exchange and joint action within the UN system as aspects of embedding the culture and discourse of prevention in UN operations. It also outlines the benefits of increased interaction between the UN and regional organizations, and between the UN and civil society, and urges 'that we translate the promise of prevention into concrete action'. An upcoming high-level meeting between the UN system and 18 regional organizations will reinforce this goal.



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Against this background, the New York-based International Peace Academy and the Swedish Institute in Alexandria, organized the workshop, 'Sharing Best Practices on Conflict Prevention: The UN, Regional and Subregional, National and Local Actors'. The workshop, which took place in Alexandria on April 8-10, 2002, brought together some 30 participants including practitioners from within the UN system and various regional and subregional organizations, as well as diplomats, civil society activists, and academics. The workshop had a dual focus. First, it aimed to identify and share concrete best practices and experiences that can inform conflict prevention within and between the UN, regional and subregional, national and local organizations. Second, it aimed to explore comparative advantage and opportunities for partnering in this area. This report summarizes the very fruitful discussions that took place in Alexandria.

Causes and Characteristics of Violent Conflict

The causes of violent conflict are manifold and complex. Indeed even the concept of 'causation' in this context is controversial. Among the predisposing factors are endemic poverty; inequalities in access to resources; scarcity and economic decline; insecurity; the violation of human rights; exclusion or persecution of sectoral groups; and state failures including declining institutional and political legitimacy and capacity. Other key foundations for conflict include historic legacies, regional threats, economic shocks, and the extension or withdrawal of external support.¹

¹ Fen Osler Hampson and David M. Malone, eds., *From Reaction to Conflict Prevention* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2002) fig. 16.1, p.384.

States are particularly vulnerable to outbreaks of violence when sharp economic decline occurs, where there is a humanitarian and/or refugee crisis, and in periods of transition, particularly political transition, where groups may mobilize to seize or maintain power. Since so many of the predisposing factors for conflict involve structural fragility, activities that promote sustainable development and good governance can contribute to structural prevention. But forms of 'intervention', from development aid to peace enforcement, can also exacerbate conflict. All the activities of the UN and its partners within a region must therefore be conducted with sensitivity to their potential effects upon conflict risk.

It is also important to realize that conflict often serves the ends of a minority of actors, who may profit from the exploitation of resources such as timber, minerals, guns, and drugs, or the illegal trafficking in persons. The power of such individuals is enhanced by instability. The challenge of conflict prevention is not only to reconcile and build capacity for resolving differences amongst groups who may otherwise resort to violence in a peaceful manner, but also to decouple power and perceived advantage from the promulgation of violent conflict.

The importance of developing and implementing comprehensive preventive action cannot be overstated. In the post Cold War world there has been a shift in focus from inter-state to intra-state conflict – yet many 'internal' conflicts have regional, and global, dimensions and ramifications. Transborder flows of refugees, arms, narcotics, and mercenaries spill conflict across state and regional lines. Conflict may bring with it HIV/AIDS and other threats to health and social stability, which, like landmines, remain to destroy lives long after wars have subsided. Finally, terrorism illustrates the potential for violent conflict to be truly supra-national. Wherever it occurs, violent conflict endangers human security by multiple means and causes untold suffering.

The UN and its partners face the challenge of building their capacity to be forward-thinking and timely in their preventive strategies, but also of remaining patient and committed. Two obstacles hamper investment in conflict prevention. First, the costs of conflict prevention are incurred in the present, but the benefits may not emerge until far in the future. Second, successful conflict prevention is often invisible while its absence generates media coverage and international concern. To overcome these disincentives it is vital to ensure that all actors are

aware that conflict prevention is cost-effective as well as intrinsically valuable.

The Role of The UN, Regional, Subregional and Civil Society Actors in Conflict Prevention

The UN enjoys unique legitimacy, and a broad mandate for the prevention of violent conflict under Article 1 of the UN Charter. Its wide array of agencies and departments work continuously to mitigate the sources of conflict and the proximate causes of violence. The UN is often well placed to undertake initiatives ranging from capacity-building through preventive diplomacy, to post-conflict peacebuilding. The UN may not, however, always be the best placed actor to take on a conflict prevention role. As an intergovernmental organization, dependent on the political will of member states for its resources and operational mandate, it must find a path between what circumstances demand and what actors and interests allow. Moreover, the increasingly acknowledged multi-dimensional nature of conflict prevention, which requires complex responses, means that the UN must act in a coordinated manner – both internally and with regional, national and local actors. Flexibility, responsiveness, cooperation, and effective partnering are therefore paramount.

Regional and subregional organizations may be uniquely placed to affect several factors that are crucial to the prevention of violent conflict, and which can frequently facilitate and expedite the efforts of the UN system throughout its engagement in a conflict, or potential conflict, situation. Members of regional and subregional organizations may be more willing to allow these organizations to engage in preventive action. The actions of the regional and subregional organizations are likely to be more discreet than those undertaken by the various bodies of the UN, particularly at the early stages of a potential conflict. Regional and subregional organizations may also be better placed to act because of their greater familiarity with the actors and situation on the ground. In addition, though not always benign, neighbors frequently have a strong interest in preventing conflicts that could escalate to a regional level.

Regional and subregional organizations have an important role to play in developing a regional 'culture of conflict prevention' through the promotion of democracy, human rights, and sustainable development. They have also shown their potential effectiveness at long-term conflict prevention efforts involving capacity



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building and technical assistance. In recent years, this has included election monitoring and broader democratization assistance in several regions. Vitrally, regional and subregional organizations can also serve as conduits between international and national/local actors and processes. That said, several of the regional arrangements and initiatives devoted to conflict prevention that have emerged during the last few years need greater institutionalization, capacity-building and resource allocation if they are to be successful in this area.

Local actors are indispensable in building a culture of prevention and ensuring durable peace. It is their multi-sectoral participation, expertise, ownership, and commitment that can ultimately sustain conflict prevention and peacebuilding on the ground. Moreover, local actors are often free of many of the constraints of larger organizations. Their ability to speak out, for example, may not be hampered by the hierarchies and the need for compromise imposed by a multinational organization whose actions are the subject of critique. The views and knowledge of local actors need to be taken more seriously by actors beyond the donor community, and incorporated more effectively into the policy-making process. Where the concerns of local actors are not integral to the policy-making process, and local capacity is not enhanced, there is no organic basis for positive change.

II. Examining Practice

In the last few years a new and growing awareness of the need for conflict prevention initiatives has spread within

the departments and agencies of the UN, regional and subregional organizations and NGOs. This has resulted in the development of many new strategies and techniques to incorporate preventive thinking into the information-gathering, analysis, and implementation stages— but these strategies are still in the process of being refined and tested. Since 1948 the UN has undertaken more than 50 peacekeeping operations. However, only one can truly be categorized as a preventive operation, UNPREDEP, although others have had preventive dimensions. The OAU has mounted only two strictly preventive missions. The relative inexperience in this area of the UN and its partners underlines the importance of sharing ideas and initiatives.

Operationalizing Conflict Prevention

Opportunities and Challenges at The UN

Partly due to its scope, conflict prevention is sometimes perceived to have no *single* address at the UN. The Secretary-General has designated the Department of Political Affairs the focal point for conflict prevention initiatives, but numerous other departments, funds, and agencies are also engaged in preventive work. Coordination and mainstreaming of prevention is thus important. Recent reforms, and the commitment of the present Secretary-General, have gone some way to raising the profile of prevention and improving the quality and effective transmission of relevant data and analysis throughout the system. However, there remains a risk that, since prevention can often seem to be everyone's business, it may, at times, seem to fall at no one's door. Regional organizations and others that do not have a single, clearly designated 'address' for conflict prevention should consider creating one.

Preventive strategy needs to incorporate the Secretary-General, the Security Council, the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council as well as other UN departments and agencies. The near universal welcome given to the Secretary-General's Report on the Prevention of Violent Conflict and Security Council Resolution 1366 is heartening, and there is evidence that communication flow and timeliness in this area are improving. The Interagency Resource Group, which assisted in drafting the Secretary-General's Report, is currently developing an interagency implementation plan. However, the UN's structure and organs are still not sufficiently organized to mobilize all of the organization's resources and expertise concertedly and in a coherent fashion.

Fragmented systems of 'kingdoms and islands' still exist within the organization and its decision-making structures could benefit from reform. The UN needs to be more systematic in identifying opportunities and relevant actors in conflict prevention. It must also place greater emphasis on building and supporting national capacity and empowering local actors.

Peacebuilding offices, which the UN has since 1997 established in various societies emerging from violent conflict, with the purpose of consolidating peace, promoting reconciliation and strengthening democratic institutions, constitute an important initiative that seeks to links regional organizations, government and civil society. Their record of interaction with civil society has, however, been mixed.²

The active participation of local populations in the design and execution of UN-implemented programmes is crucial to their sustainability and success. Locally-conducted research, risk and early warning exercises with indigenous NGOs would help the UN and regional and subregional organizations toward a fuller understanding of cultural, political and economic dimensions of structural and operational prevention. A series of upcoming NGO seminars organized with the encouragement of the UN Secretary-General and concluding in a 2003 conference in New York are expected to bring civil society concerns closer to the UN.

Opportunities and Challenges for Regional and Subregional Organizations

Regional and subregional organizations differ widely in scope and mandate, tradition and culture, policy and practice. Some have no mandate for, vested interest in, or tradition of conflict prevention. Many lack capacity in this area. In some regions there is no organization that enjoys the confidence of various stakeholders. State and military conceptions of security also differ regionally and nationally, and cooperation or collective action in the area of conflict prevention may appear threatening to an organization that does not share basic assumptions about security with its potential partners.

Thus, while regional and subregional organizations have an important role to play in conflict prevention, that role must be consistent with their mandates, traditions, and



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capacities. In some cases the primary role of the organization may be one of promoting incremental confidence-building, facilitating trust, cooperation, the habit of dialogue, and developing the perception of interdependence and shared stakes. Consensus may be built around less contentious issues such as world trade, intellectual property, or media relations. Quiet diplomacy may be the best entry point, and the promotion of transparency a key contribution that such organizations can make.

Community-building within regional organizations can facilitate conflict prevention both through developing regular dialogue and consensus and by facilitating regional economic integration, which promotes the formation of shared stakes in peace and stability and may over time moderate the debate between the dictates of 'national sovereignty' and 'international intervention'. The presence of shared institutions, structures, and norms, however, does not automatically translate into a high level of regional capacity for conflict prevention. The expertise and commitment of individuals, and the strength and scope of their formal and informal peacebuilding networks, are still crucial in serving preventive ends.

A lack of capacity and resources to develop and follow through on promising initiatives, protocols and 'observatories' that have been established over the last decade remains a major barrier to effective conflict prevention in many regional and subregional organizations despite

² The peacebuilding office in Guinea-Bissau, which has worked closely with civil society organizations to approach the government on human rights issues, has been positively contrasted with that in Liberia, where such interaction has been limited.

notable localized successes. For example, in December 2001, ECOWAS adopted a Protocol Relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security, and it has established early warning systems and observatories in the Gambia, Liberia, Burkina Faso, and Benin. Yet the need for a more structured, institutionalized machinery for conflict prevention, management, and resolution, rather than the continued reliance on an *ad hoc* approach, persists.

Regional organizations may be well placed to oversee moratoria on light weapons and other instruments designed to affect the supply and demand of conflict materials. Former combatants must be given incentives to disarm including positive prospects of employment and inclusion within the community. This is a critical area where the international community could provide greater resources and support to regional, subregional and local actors.

A range of challenges face regional organizations, from lack of infrastructure and qualified personnel, to insufficient funding and limited or nonexistent early warning training. Entrenched formal structures and hierarchies can hamper creativity and prevent action, while mandates that preclude 'intervention', and endemic weakness in surrounding state structures and democratic processes, create conditions that favor interference by actors seeking to serve their own interests in a manner likely to exacerbate conflict.

The UN should thus seek, as outlined above, to build coordination with its regional and subregional partners through training and other initiatives that strengthen regional and local capacity; while regional organizations themselves need to pursue greater accountability, transparency, and mechanisms to turn paper commitment on conflict prevention into practice. Permanent mechanisms entrusted with the promotion and coordination of task-sharing within and among organizations operating in the same 'theatre' are necessary to improve coordination among the UN and regional and subregional organizations. Eminent individuals, who possess expert knowledge and enjoy the respect of both governments and representatives of disputing groups can play an important role in conflict prevention through good offices and peacemaking efforts at the behest of the UN and/or regional and subregional organizations.

Institutions and Mechanisms For Conflict Prevention

The Office of The High Commissioner on National Minorities, Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe

The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) established the Office of the High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM) in 1992. The HCNM is an instrument of conflict prevention aimed at preventing armed conflict in OSCE participating states. The High Commissioner, who has unique right of entry into 55 states and the ability to meet any person, enjoys remarkable freedom and flexibility to initiate contact. The comparative advantage of this position is that it has fast and discreet access to engage proactively with a variety of actors including governments, political parties, and human rights commissions. Using quiet diplomacy and offering advice and assistance, which may range from redrafting legislation or bilateral treaties to discussing questions of language use and education, the Commissioner is well placed to act before tensions escalate. The Commissioner's role is future-oriented and consensus-based. It is also cooperative, and no decision is made without state consent. Internationally recognized independent experts may subsequently be invited to elaborate general recommendations endorsed by the HCNM.

Recurrent issues in conflict prevention that the HCNM has identified over the last decade include the tension created by a real or perceived lack of opportunities for minorities to participate effectively in political decision-making processes, self-development, and national life. Education and language use are also key factors in the perception of marginalization. As discrimination is often a structural background to violent conflict, avoiding or redressing circumstances that disadvantage certain sectors of the community is a vital aspect of preventive work

The HCNM approach may be adaptable to other circumstances. While it has emerged from a particular historical context of regional integration, the similarity of challenges around the world posed by the necessity to reconcile the competing needs, aspirations and interests of various ethnic groups, involving complex and sensitive minority-majority relations, means that its practices may be of use elsewhere.



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Risk Analysis, Indicators and Early Warning

In recent years the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and the World Bank have sought to make their work more conflict-sensitive and to view their activities through a conflict prevention lens. To this end they have developed risk indicators for early warning. Regional actors are also developing early warning indicators. The joint project being developed by the Jordanian Institute of Diplomacy and the Italian Institute of International Affairs is one such initiative, being developed under the auspices of the European Union through the Barcelona Process.

The United Nations Development Program

Common Country Assessments (CCAs) are developed by the UN country teams to identify key internal and external risks to the development process in a particular country. A recent review of CCAs showed that there is considerable room for the future integration of information pertaining to the history and causes of conflict as well as a risk assessment. CCAs have traditionally assessed a country's development needs and challenges without specifically addressing the risk or presence of conflict. However, work underway seeks to ensure that the CCAs address issues of conflict, to make certain that development assistance does not unwittingly undermine security but instead contributes to peace and stability, and that development programs contribute to preventive activities. Historically periodic, CCAs are now expected to be updated annually.

The CCAs are designed to inform the UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) plan for each country. UNDAFs are the "business plan" for the country team, setting out a common and coherent strategy for UN planning and programming. The use of risk indicators in the CCAs should thus mean that development assistance is more conflict-sensitive and designed to be conflict preventive in the long run. However, risk indicators need to be understood contextually, it will not suffice simply to develop checklists of risk factors. Crises often emerge not because of difficulties in one specific indicator area (for example, the economy), but rather in several overlapping areas.

The World Bank

The World Bank has been developing a Conflict Analysis Framework (CAF), reflecting its heightened awareness of problem areas relating to both poverty and conflict. It aims to increase sensitivity to conflict in Bank assistance, to highlight priority problem areas and opportunities, and to strengthen resiliency to conflict via appropriate development interventions. Bank programmes will be assessed for their impact *ex ante*, in process, and *ex post*. Factors identified as characteristic of a conflict-resilient society are: political and social institutions that are largely inclusive, equitable, and accountable; economic, social, and ethnic diversity; growth and development that provide equitable developments across a society; and a culture of dialogue. The Bank's eight indicators, used to assess conflict risk, include the occurrence of violent conflict in the last ten years; low per capita income; high dependence on primary commodities and exports; regime instability; militarization; ethnic dominance; active regional conflicts; and high youth unemployment. Analysis of these indicators is supported by more detailed assessment of factors including governance, human rights, environmental, and external impacts. The project is just beginning to translate indicators into analysis and thus to strategy. Although there are purely quantitative aspects to the analytical framework (e.g. boxes to tick), the Bank aims to produce a qualitative assessment and this will be analyzed by a team with local knowledge.

The Jordanian Institute and Italian Institute Joint Project

The Jordanian Institute of Diplomacy and the Italian Institute of International Affairs have developed a



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regional project designed to enhance and develop shared tools for early warning and risk analysis. Created under the auspices of the Barcelona Process, whereby the EU seeks to enhance capacity and preventive work in the Mediterranean region, the collaboration has aimed at informational exchange, cooperation, and capacity building between Northern and Southern Mediterranean partners. The joint project has designed and created a database of information and analysis of the 12 Euro-Mediterranean partner countries assessed between 1992 and 2000, including 'country conflict profiles' and political, socio-cultural, economic, and security indicators. The project has also organized workshops, facilitating direct contact between researchers across the region. This kind of gradual, initially bilateral, initiative may provide a model for regional confidence-building, information sharing, and building early warning capacity.

Risk Indicators for Early Warning: New Frameworks and Opportunities for Rationalization and Coordination

New use of diagnostic tools for early warning and risk analysis represents a genuine step toward better conflict prevention consciousness, planning, and needs-oriented support and illustrates the increased commitment of development actors engaged in conflict prevention. However, the conflict indicators and analytic frameworks developed by UNDP, the World Bank and the Jordanian Institute/Italian Institute project are not uniform. Indicators are not infallible; they may predict conflict where none emerges, or the reverse. In addition, the public use of indicators and analysis is risky. A negative report can inadvertently contribute to instability. There is

also a danger of 'information overload' and of competing diagnostic systems and tools.

Better linkage and coordination between UN departments, agencies, and other organizations in developing risk assessment and early warning frameworks could help both to share information and to avoid overlap. Since conflict is rarely isolated, these frameworks should extend beyond country profiling toward regional analysis. Identifying opportunities for conflict prevention initiatives is as important as identifying risks. Finally, indicators are only helpful where they are combined with professional and local expertise and analysis that can capture the complexities of a conflict, or potential conflict, situation.

Conflict Prevention Initiatives

Too often, conflict prevention is exigency or emergency driven and is thus necessarily invasive. But the UN has been successful in playing a facilitative and catalytic role in capacity-building, particularly in certain African countries, to prevent and manage conflict. Positive preconditions that enable potential for work in this area include: the presence in the conflicted-affected countries of vibrant civil societies, especially women's organizations; the fact that the countries had often resorted to political and social processes to resolve their inherited contradictions; and previous involvement of the UN country team in structural prevention.

The Niger Forum on Conflict Prevention

Inviting government officials, opposition party leaders, and civil society representatives, to participate in UN training on early warning and preventive action has been recognized as a positive step towards building a constituency among national stakeholders for a culture of prevention. In Niger, the government and local actors requested that the UN run a five-day national forum on conflict prevention, during which the main causes of conflict were analyzed and appropriate responses developed.

The UN agreed to help with the organization of the forum, but established important parameters for ensuring local ownership firmly. The needs assessment for the forum was conducted entirely by individuals from Niger. The design of the forum was representative of all sectors, including the media, women's and religious organizations. The design and logistics were entrusted to national

organizing committee of representatives drawn from various government ministries and civil society entities. Discussions amongst those from Niger were held often in the local language, with a few foreigners acting as observers or facilitators. The follow-up, agreed to before the forum began, involved an action plan drawn up by a multi-sectoral group chaired by a high-level government representative. At the outset of the forum, participants were encouraged to imagine their country in 15 years, as they would like to see it, and then to work backwards in order to identify mechanisms to promote such a vision, and the factors that might endanger its achievement. Rural radio and other communication tools were effective in disseminating the conclusions of the forum.

Lessons from this successful example of capacity building include the importance of such efforts being driven and shaped by the desires and needs of the affected community. It is also crucial to have multi-sectoral representation in designing and directing the process, as well as attending, discussion on conflict prevention and peacebuilding. Civil society, especially women's groups, who are often marginalized, must be included in the debate. Location (the forum took place outside the capital), language, and attendance should reflect community ownership, and potentially exclude substantive foreign involvement at various stages. Follow-up mechanisms should ideally be identified and agreed at an early stage, to maintain momentum and encourage consolidation. The challenge is to transfer and institutionalize skills and recommendations 'from the workshop to the workplace'.

Future recommendations:

1. As the problems underlying violent conflict tend to trans-regional in cause and effect, future forums should invite representatives from neighboring countries and the analysis of the causes of conflict should include a regional dimension;
2. UN country teams should be involved from the outset;
3. Strategies agreed to by governments should be shared with the donor community;
4. When arranging such fora, it is vital to reassure government officials that their policies are not going to be 'on trial'; rather, conflict prevention should be presented as part of good governance, as an attempt to strengthen state's capacities to manage peacefully disputes arising from a variety of structural causes of conflict.

Initiatives in Central America

Experiences in capacity building by the OAS (Organization of American States) and the UN in Central America support the above emphasis on multi-sectoral, local ownership and participation in dialogue processes and the positive effects of abiding commitment. Conflict resolution and prevention take time. In Guatemala, work extended over many years, handing over mediation and other activities in peacebuilding processes gradually from international and regional actors wholly to indigenous participants. Not all parties initially possess the skills and tools to engage effectively in multilateral fora. Third party intervention can provide an impetus for dialogue and can support dialogue by providing tools that 'level the playing field', enabling opportunities for women's groups, youth and indigenous groups to talk alongside actors such as guerrilla groups and the government. However, the aim of all mediation should be to make itself dispensable. Conflict prevention cannot be top-down or bottom-up, it must be multilateral and simultaneous.

Recommendations:

1. Political parties, especially opposition groups, are vital partners and must be included in the dialogue process;
2. Equal weight must be given to political and 'civil' groups, and potential spoilers must be brought to the table wherever possible;
3. The notion must be inculcated that power is not mutually exclusive – that all have a place and rights in the debate.

III. Comparative Advantages and Collaboration Mechanisms

Information-sharing: Overcoming Mistrust

Regional organizations' perception of the UN as offering highly selective engagement, limited commitment, and ill-defined exit strategies has, at times, clouded the relationship between the UN and its regional and subregional partners, particularly in Africa. Regional actors have leveled various criticisms at the UN including claims that the organization:

- suffers from an incomplete understanding of the dynamics of complex conflict situations and their regional ramifications;

- has delayed in deploying peacekeeping missions and that such missions have been ill-conceived;
- suffers from a lack of transparency and democracy in decision-making (especially in the Security Council); and
- often fails to acknowledge the historic legacy and commercial interests of member states (especially Security Council members) in conflict-affected territories.

The UN and regional organizations need to overcome this mistrust by forging better-informed, more transparent and accountable partnerships.

The UN is seeking, and should continue to seek, to improve the quality of information it receives on conflict situations. African regional organizations have welcomed the Security Council's dispatch, for the first time, of fact-finding and consultative missions to West Africa and to the Central African region as a positive development. In the wake of the *Brahimi* report³ and *No Exit Without Strategy* report⁴, the UN has reviewed its practice on peacekeeping, determined to bolster communication, particularly between the Secretariat and the Security Council, and to enhance the timeliness, sufficiency, credibility, and forethought of peacekeeping missions. This evolution and sharing of best practice needs to embrace peace enforcement and other aspects of the UN's potential cooperation with regional partners.

Effective Task-sharing

The United Nations Interim Administration in Kosovo (UNMIK) model of UN/OSCE cooperation illustrates the possibilities for fruitful cooperation between the UN and its regional partners on the ground. Future joint missions should be still more conscious of the need to keep justice, peace, and stability issues at the fore from the outset, even in urgent humanitarian missions. The cooperation between the UN and the Organization of American States (OAS) in Haiti, which bore the hallmarks of efficient and effective task-sharing and coordination, contrasts positively with the failure of cooperation in Nicaragua, where tasks have been judged to have been artificially split between the two organizations.

The establishment of further protocols for cooperative action, for example, between the UN, the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the Economic Community of

West African States (ECOWAS), is highly desirable. One possibility is that OAU members might formally agree to sets of circumstances that warrant UN 'intervention' – such an accord on invitation to act might help reduce the tension between state sovereignty and intervention by the international community.

Training

While most organizations are eager to mainstream and to integrate conflict prevention into their daily work, few organizations have identified how and where to implement such programmes. The UN and regional and subregional organizations can benefit immensely from others' expertise and comparative advantage in this field. The OSCE, European Union (EU) and UN may serve as important templates.

Since a pilot project in 1998, the UN Staff College has conducted courses on early warning and preventive measures that have so far trained 930 participants from within the UN System. Training takes place in the field and emphasizes teambuilding. It also aims to build institutional capacity in early warning and prevention, and creative mutual exchange within and between UN agencies and offices, workers in the field and headquarters, who are involved in these activities. Between 30 and 40 participants attend the course and work, through lectures and small group discussions to examine the causes of conflict, factors that impact peace agreements such as spoilers, as well as preventive actions and responses possible using the UN system and coordinating UN departments and agencies. Small teams examine a country or regional situation and analyze early warning data, examining potential sources of conflict and stability, and seek to identify appropriate preventive measures.

The Staff College has made great strides in training ever increasing numbers of UN staff at headquarters and in the field. However, more attention must be paid to training local and international staff on short-term appointment or limited contract, who can comprise the bulk of mission employees. There should be opportunities for staff to participate in sessions with staff from other organizations and the local NGO community, and to continue the approaches and the working relationships they have built beyond the training session, creating a base for ongoing effective inter and intra

³ Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations, available at http://www.un.org/peace/reports/peace_operations/docs/ (August 2000)

⁴ S/2001/399 (20 April 2001).

organizational cooperation. Academic and training institutions can contribute by training trainers and contributing modules on conflict prevention to existing training programmes.

The Staff College programme could usefully be expanded and extended both within the UN system and to other regional and local organizations, although funding would have to be addressed. For optimal effectiveness, training should be tailored to the needs and functioning of individual organizations.

From Early Warning to Response: What Can Be Learned from the EU?

Different regional organizations face different challenges in Operationalizing conflict prevention and in their relationships with the UN and others. The following section outlines some of the lessons that have arisen from the EU's experience; while it is clear that the EU has developed for historically specific reasons, this does not mean that there are not implications from its development for other organizations. In particular, it is worth noting that many of the challenges faced by other organizations, such as concerns about sovereignty and non-interference, have been at issue for the EU, and that for much of its existence development was relatively slow. Thus, while other organizations face similar obstacles, and may be relatively slow in developing preventive capacity, this does not mean that it cannot develop over time.

The EU can draw on a longstanding history of cooperation among its members and can often speak with a unitary voice for all 15 members. It is nonetheless in continuous evolution—its membership is continuously expanding and redefining the organization. European common foreign security policy as such is only two years old. With its rotating presidency, the EU has had to strive for consistency and to establish focal points of contact in its public relations with intergovernmental and regional partners. A network of Special Representatives, like those acting for the Secretary-General at the UN, facilitate a continuous flow of information and dialogue between member states and head quarters in Brussels. There may be scope for developing coordination between the UN and the EU at Secretariat level.

Lessons learned by the EU in the area of conflict prevention include the need to strengthen its ability to respond



Mr. Augustine Touré and Mr. Enikanolaiye A. Olusola

to the tendency of conflict to spread rapidly, and to strengthen policing and peacekeeping capacity. Monitoring capability and the administration of justice are other areas where the EU hopes to consolidate and expand its capacity. General lessons include the following:

1. Partnerships depend upon the efficacy of all partners, as well as coordinated relationships with them;
2. Conflict prevention involves deploying a wide range of tools continuously – these include incentives as well as disincentives. In some instances, success may be dependent on the prospect of economic growth;
3. Comprehensive preventive thinking must recognize the tendency of conflict to spread and become regional in scope. Including neighbors and interested parties in conflict prevention strategy is increasingly important;
4. Although it is possible that multiple activities by numerous organizations in the field of conflict prevention can lead to duplication, competition for resources and initiative fatigue, in general overlap may be better than underlap and the goal of complementarity is as important as that of efficiency;
5. Early warning is part of a continuum. Situational information must lead to assessment and analysis and, in turn, to strategic and policy planning. There is fragility in the institutional linkage between these stages, and frequently a lack of professional expert knowledge of both situation and institution.

IV. Conclusion

Effective conflict prevention works simultaneously on a variety of levels, from quiet diplomacy and phone calls between the Secretary-General and heads of state and regional organizations, through to formalized linkages such as the Barcelona process, and working-level projects, such as UNDP capacity-building. Conflict prevention is a mindset, not a template – different situations call for different actors and approaches and flexibility is paramount. Successful prevention is both 'top-down' and 'bottom-up'. High-level one-to-one contacts and professional, dynamic individuals will always be important, but shared and institutionalized knowledge and networks must be strong enough to withstand staffing changes.

There is considerable room for further coordination between the UN, regional, subregional, national and local organizations particularly in the areas of early warning and risk analysis, training and capacity building. The role of external actors, such as the UN system, governments and international NGOs, must be to

support locally and regionally led conflict management processes.

Shared methodologies, terminology, and strategies help to prevent duplication and to enhance cooperation and information exchange. Groups of tools and practices that may be adapted and shared include the early warning and risk analysis mechanisms developed by UNDP, the World Bank, and the Jordanian Institute of Diplomacy and the Italian Institute of International Affairs; and the conflict prevention training programmes developed by the UN Staff College. Individual initiatives such as the Niger national forum on conflict prevention or the free-ranging quiet diplomacy of the HCNM also suggest opportunities for adaptability. Better internal coherence, transparency, and accountability can help to inspire greater mutual confidence and inter-reliance.

Preventing violent conflict is a matter of urgency for the international community. It poses a grave threat to global human security and implicates us all – our response must be correspondingly concerted, collective, and committed.

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

Sharing Best Practices on Conflict Prevention:
The UN, Regional and Subregional Organizations, National and Local Actors

Workshop, 8-10 April 2002
Swedish Institute in Alexandria

Agenda

Monday, 8 April

OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR CONFLICT PREVENTION

Chair: Dr. David M. Malone, International Peace Academy

9:00-9:30 INTRODUCTORY REMARKS:

H.E. Mr. Pierre Schori , Permanent Mission of Sweden to the UN

Dr. David M. Malone, International Peace Academy

9:30-11:00 PREVENTING VIOLENT CONFLICT: KEY THEMES

This session will introduce the key concepts and practices of conflict prevention, and outline the primary goals of the Workshop: sharing best practices and improving coordination

Discussion Leaders:

Dr. Chandra Lekha Sriram, International Peace Academy

H.E. Mr. Ragnar Ängeby, Conflict Prevention Secretariat, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Sweden

Discussant: Ms. Irma Raquel Zelaya, ASIES

11:00-11:15 Coffee Break

11:15-12:45 OPERATIONALIZING CONFLICT PREVENTION: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES AT THE UN

This session will highlight some of the key opportunities and constraints for the UN system. It will touch in specific on the report of the UN Secretary-General of June 2001 and the efforts that are being undertaken to work with regional and subregional organizations, and civil society, in conflict prevention.

Discussion Leaders:

Dr. Tapio Kanninen, Policy Planning Unit, UN Department of Political Affairs

Mr. Jamal Benomar, Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery, UNDP

1:00-2:30 Lunch

2:30-4:00 OPERATIONALIZING CONFLICT PREVENTION: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR REGIONAL AND SUBREGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

This session will offer an overview of differing types of challenges faced by different (sub)regional organizations, and their capacities to respond to these; their interaction with the UN and other actors, and some efforts that are being made to improve preventive efforts.

Discussion Leaders:

Dr. Albrecht Schnabel, Peace and Governance Programme, UN University

Mr. El Ghassim Wane, Conflict Management Center, Organization of African Unity (OAU)

4:00-4:15 Coffee Break

4:15-5:30 MOVING TOWARDS A CULTURE OF PREVENTION: THE IMPORTANCE OF LOCAL ACTORS

This session will discuss relations between civil society organizations (CSOs) and the UN, and between CSOs and regional organizations, and examine modes of coordination in preventive action amongst these actors.

Discussion Leader:

Mr. Augustine Touré, International Peace Academy

Discussant: Ms. Karen Tañada, Gaston Z. Ortigas Peace Institute

Tuesday, 9 April

TOOLS, PRACTICES AND MECHANISMS FOR CONFLICT PREVENTION

Chair: H.E. Mr. Pierre Schori, Permanent Mission of Sweden to the UN

9:00-10:30 IDENTIFYING OPPORTUNITIES AND MECHANISMS FOR EARLY WARNING AND EARLY RESPONSE

This session will address efforts to develop more effective early warning by development actors, as well as efforts to mainstream conflict prevention into development planning and implementation.

Discussion Leaders:

Mr. Jamal Benomar, Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery, UNDP

Dr. Shonali Sardesai, Conflict Prevention and Reconstruction Team, World Bank

10:30-10:45 Coffee Break

10:45-12:15 **STRUCTURAL PREVENTION: DEMOCRATIZATION AND INSTITUTION-BUILDING**

This session will examine efforts that seek to channel the potential for conflict into non-violent contestation, or defuse potential conflict through quiet diplomacy, through capacity-building and the promotion of good governance.

Democratization: OAS/Unit for the Promotion of Democracy in Latin America

Discussion Leader:

Mr. Steven Griner, Special Program for the Promotion of Dialogue and Conflict Resolution, OAS

Institutional Reform: High Commissioner on National Minorities (OSCE)

Discussion Leader:

Mr. John Packer, Office of the High Commissioner on National Minorities, OSCE

Discussant: Mr. Medardo C. Abad, Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)

12:30-2:00 **Lunch**

2:00-3:30 **DIRECT PREVENTION: ELABORATING RESPONSES**

This session will address efforts by organizations to address the proximate sources of violence, whether through mediation or other tools, and the development of early warning and other mechanisms.

Discussion Leaders:¹

Mr. Niall Burgess, Policy Unit, Council of the European Union

Samuel Doe, West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP)

Augustine Toure, International Peace Academy

3:30-3:45 **Coffee Break**

3:45-5:30 **PREVENTING ESCALATION: ACTING SWIFTLY, ACTING CONCERTEDLY**

The eruption and/or escalation of violence signals the failure of preventive efforts, which should seek to address the potential for violence before this stage. Nonetheless, when crises erupt there may still be an opportunity to stem conflict before it escalates further, and create the conditions for post-conflict peacebuilding when violence has ceased.

Discussion Leader:

Ms. Nasra Hassan

Best Practices Unit, UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations

Discussant: Mr. Samuel Doe, WANEP

¹ Henrietta Didigou of the ECOWAS Secretariat was originally scheduled to discuss early warning measures in that subregional organization, but was unable to attend due to logistical complications.

Wednesday, 10 April

EMERGING BEST PRACTICES: IMPROVING CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION

Chair: H.E. Mr. Ragnar Ångeby, Conflict Prevention Secretariat, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Sweden

9:00-10:00 RECENT JOINT INITIATIVES

This session will address some recent efforts to coordinate early warning and preventive action between organizations, including efforts by the UN in Africa, and efforts by the EU through the Barcelona process.

Discussion Leader:

Mr. Youssef Mahmoud, Africa II Division, UN Department of Political Affairs

Ms. Raghda Quandour, Center on Early Warning and Conflict Prevention, Jordan Institute of Diplomacy

10:00-11:00 LEARNING LESSONS TOGETHER: CONFLICT PREVENTION TRAINING INITIATIVES

This session will address efforts to develop training in early warning and preventive measures.

Discussion Leaders:

Dr. Albrecht Schnabel, Peace and Governance Programme, UN University

Mr. Amin Meleika, Cairo Center for Training on Conflict Resolution and Peacekeeping in Africa

11:00-11:15 Coffee Break

11:15-1:00 MOVING FORWARD: IMPROVING COOPERATION BETWEEN THE UN AND REGIONAL AND SUBREGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

This concluding session will draw together lessons learned during the conference on sharing best practices in prevention and furthering coordination amongst actors.

Discussion Leaders:

Dr. Chandra Lekha Sriram, International Peace Academy

Professor Assia Ben Salah Alaoui, International Law, Mohamed V University, Morocco

1:00 Lunch

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

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Mr. Augustine Touré
Civil Society Fellow

About the program

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

Program Associate: Dr. Chandra Lekha Sriram
 Program Officer: Zoe Nielsen
 Senior Program Officer: Karin Wermester (on leave)
 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 potential remedies need to be sharpened. 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. More information on program events and all of the program reports are available on the program website at <http://www.ipacademy.org/Programs/Research/ProgReseConf_body.htm>.

IPA's 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 the 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.

The prevention project has developed two meetings to examine the role of regional and subregional organizations. A workshop held in April 2002 with the Swedish Institute in Alexandria, Egypt sought to share best practices on conflict prevention and examine collaboration and cooperation between the UN and regional and subregional organizations at a working level to distill practical policy-oriented and operational suggestions. A senior level conference to be held at Wilton Park, UK, will build on insights from the workshop and focus on further steps that can be taken to strengthen the role of regional and subregional organizations in conflict prevention.



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