

Development perspectives on peace-building and nation building in post-conflict situations

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The Committee on Development adopted the report by Nirj **DEVA** (EPP-ED, UK) on development perspectives for peace-building and nation building in post-conflict situations, recalling that almost half of all countries that emerge from conflicts return to conflict within five years and that there are 42 ongoing civil conflicts around the world. In this context, MEPs investigate the best way to build peace in these countries and reiterate the responsibility of each government towards the protection of its own citizens (“Responsibility to Protect”). In order to build peace, MEPs believe that there are two phases: the **stabilisation** phase where the emphasis is on security, law and order and the provision of basic services, and the second phase of **state-building** which focuses on governance and the institutions which will deliver it.

Conflict prevention: MEPs highlight the importance of addressing the root causes of conflicts by developing mechanisms to provide early warning signs of failing States. In this regard, the Commission should designate conflict prevention as a cross-cutting issue in development cooperation, ensuring minimum standards of basic services for those populations affected by conflict, in particular in relation to access to food, clean water and sanitation, medicines, health care (including reproductive health) and personal security.

Enhance Civil-Military Coordination: in post-conflict situations the transition from military to civilian security must take place as soon as is practicable and international forces should be gradually supplemented and replaced by a national and regional civilian police force, professionally trained. It is therefore important to train local police forces but also to continue to develop the military capacity of the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) in order for the EU and its Member States to be better able to contribute to the stabilisation and development of post-conflict societies.

Security reform: MEPs stress the importance of Security Sector Reform (SSR) and Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) processes as key factors to ensure long lasting peace and sustainable development. That is why the Parliament calls on the Council and the Commission to accelerate the implementation on the ground of the EU's Policy Framework for SSR and the EU Concept for Support to DDR, with a special emphasis on those countries where the EU has already deployed ESDP missions.

Include women in post-conflict strategies: MEPs ask the EU, when supporting post-conflict SSR, to include a gender perspective, including when negotiating and implementing peace agreements. According to MEPs, any reconciliation strategy must take account of the role of women but also children (including child soldiers) and include them at all stages. Women must also be involved in economic activities in post-conflict societies in order to support their socio-economic and business empowerment through, for example, micro-credit.

Put an end to sexual violence and impunity: MEPs consider it crucial to put an end to the impunity that perpetrators of sexual violence towards women enjoy and to exclude these crimes from amnesty provisions. It is important to ensure that women and girls have equal protection under the law and equal access to justice, as well as access to sexual and reproductive health services. MEPs also call for zero-tolerance of sexual violence committed by peacekeepers or NGO staff.

Refugees: MEPs consider that the voluntary return of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) must be a high priority, while ensuring that they have sustainable means for survival. IDPs should be spread across the country and resettled in their original villages or towns and not concentrated in large groups which can lead to conflict and violence. MEPs stress that action must be taken to promote family reunification and reintegration of children affected by armed conflict.

Reintegration of former combatants and child soldiers: the Commission's proposal in terms of DDR should take account of former combatants, in order to help them reintegrate into civil society as quickly as possible. MEPs also stress the need for action to combat the use of child soldiers and the recruitment of girls into the armed forces and their subsequent subjection to sexual abuse. Overall, MEPs reiterate their commitment to protecting the rights of women and children in post-conflict situations.

Strengthening governance: MEPs stress that State legitimacy can only be built through good and effective governance: measures must be taken to strengthen institutions, electoral processes and anti-corruption mechanisms. They call on the Commission to create a deregulation unit which can advise countries emerging from conflict on how to structure their economic infrastructure and lift the country out of crisis as quickly as possible. MEPs also stress the need to remove bureaucratic controls which stop or delay the creation of small businesses, the opening of bank accounts and the registration of land and companies, as well as the need to monitor the use of resources.

Strengthening the legal system: recalling that peace is not only "the absence of war", MEPs note that there is no peace without justice. That is why they call for the implementation of measures aimed at strengthening justice in post-conflict situations: justice for victims of conflict is, in fact, essential and tribunals must do their best to judge war crimes and punish the perpetrators. In this context, MEPs propose to explore the possibility of carrying out a mapping of past human rights violations perpetrated during the conflict. At the same time, MEPs call for measures to enable the registration of births and land to ensure that refugees can reclaim their possessions on their return.

Involve local communities: MEPs stress that that support to local communities, families, civil society organisations, including women's organisations, is necessary for any successful development policy. They therefore call on the Commission and the Member States to give political and financial support to local peace and human rights actors. They recall that sustainable peace is in many ways contingent on community-based involvement and ownership of the peace process. They also stress that relevant civil society organisations can be used as facilitators for dialogue among conflicting groups.

Promote mediation: MEPs also stress the need to establish standing Peace Commissions that include influential members of all contending parties so as to pre-empt eruptions of large scale violence. It is also important to ensure there are interlocutors capable of strengthening donor coherence.

The role of the European Union: MEPs fully support the EU Programme for the Prevention of Violent Conflicts and the security and development measures envisaged in the EU Action Plan for 2009. However, they urge the Commission to attach high priority to the implementation of measures linked to peace-building and stress the importance of the role of EU missions (including mediation and negotiation teams, and police and peace-keeping forces). MEPs highlight, in particular, the need to mainstream a gender perspective into peace research, conflict prevention and resolution, peacekeeping operations, post-conflict rehabilitation and reconstruction. At the same time, MEPs stress that development assistance is an extremely important element in consolidating peace and preventing conflict in fragile States. They emphasise that the Commission has an obligation to support the efforts of partner countries to develop democratic domestic accountability capacities (parliamentary control and audit capacities) where Community assistance is delivered via budget support. They call for the development of monitoring and oversight mechanisms to ensure that budgetary resources allocated by the EU are used properly.

The role of the European Parliament: lastly, MEPs highlight their intention to continue to take an active part in the work organised by the Commission on situations of fragility and regret the fact that the work of the Commission and the Council in this area has been slow. They call on the Commission to keep the Parliament fully informed of measures taken and to develop best practices for issues that require broad cooperation among political, military, humanitarian and developmental actors in the areas of conflict prevention, mediation, peacekeeping, respect for human rights, the rule of law, humanitarian assistance and long-term reconstruction and development.