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

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The European Parliament adopted, by 399 votes to 25 with 27 abstentions, a resolution on the development perspectives for peace-building and nation building in post-conflict situations.

The report had been tabled for consideration in plenary by Nirj **DEVA** (EPP-ED, UK) on behalf of the Committee on Development.

The resolution recalls 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, Parliament investigates 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, Parliament believes 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.

Responsibility to protect: Parliament supports the concept of "Responsibility to Protect" as affirmed by the UN in order to reinforce rather than undermine state sovereignty. It stresses that the **EU and its Members States should regard themselves as bound by it**. Parliament states that "Responsibility to Protect" should be considered as a means to promote human security; by stressing that the primary responsibility for the prevention of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity against a population lies with the state itself. It reinforces the responsibility of each government towards the protection of its own citizens but considers, however, that where governments are unable or unwilling to provide such protection then the responsibility to take appropriate action becomes the collective responsibility of the wider international community. It notes further that such action should be preventive as well as reactive, and should only involve the use of coercive military force as an absolute last resort.

Peace building to development: this resolution highlights the importance of addressing the root causes of conflicts in EU political dialogues with third countries and in development cooperation programmes so as to develop mechanisms to provide early warning signs of failing states. Parliament strongly believes that every effort must be made to ensure 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. It believes that in post-conflict situations there should be coordination among peace-building, humanitarian aid and development activities, in accordance with the "Linking Relief, Rehabilitation and Development" strategic framework and to ensure coherence in the security and development nexus.

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: Parliament stresses 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: Parliament asks the EU, when supporting post-conflict SSR, to include a gender perspective, including when negotiating and implementing peace agreements. According to the Parliament, 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: Parliament considers 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. It also calls for zero-tolerance of sexual violence committed by peacekeepers or NGO staff.

Fight against small arms and light weapons (SALW): due to the fact that a majority of victims in conflict situations are killed by small arms and light weapons (SALW), Parliament calls upon the Council and the Commission to urgently follow up on the Court of Justice decision of 20 May 2008 on **Community competence in combating the proliferation of SALW** by accelerating the implementation of the European Strategy to combat illicit accumulation and trafficking of SALW and their ammunition, and by stepping up planning for EC funding, namely from the European Development Fund and the Stability Instrument, to be spent on SALW-related programmes on the ground. It requests that multilateral and regional financial institutions take measures, where appropriate, to establish SALW programmes in the framework of reconstruction and rehabilitation efforts in post-conflict areas and in efforts to consolidate governance issues, to strengthen legislation and to improve the operational capacity of law enforcement agencies regarding SALW. It calls on the Council and the Commission to continue promoting the creation of **an international, legally-binding Arms Trade Treaty** in all bilateral and multilateral settings.

Refugees: Parliament considers 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. Parliament also stresses 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, Parliament reiterates its commitment to protect the rights of women and children in post-conflict situations.

Strengthening governance: Parliament stresses 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. It calls 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. It also stresses 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”, Parliament notes that there is no peace without justice. That is why it calls 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, Parliament proposes to explore the possibility of carrying out a mapping of past human rights violations perpetrated during the conflict. At the same time, it calls for measures to enable the registration of births and land to ensure that refugees can reclaim their possessions on their return.

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

Role of the International Criminal Court (ICC): Parliament commends the interaction between the EU and ICC and stresses that EU support is essential for the enforcement of the ICC mandate. It believes that it is **vital that all states should sign and ratify the Rome Statute of the ICC in order to make the ICC system more operational**, coherent and consistent. It urges the EU and AU Member States to address the implementation of all warrants of arrest issued by the ICC in a consistent way immediately in all conflict situations.

The role of the European Union: Parliament fully supports the EU Programme for the Prevention of Violent Conflicts and the security and development measures envisaged in the EU Action Plan for 2009. However, it urges the Commission to attach high priority to the implementation of measures linked to peace-building and stresses the importance of the role of EU missions (including mediation and negotiation teams, and police and peace-keeping forces). It highlights, 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, it stresses that development assistance is an extremely important element in consolidating peace and preventing conflict in fragile States. Parliament emphasises 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. It calls 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, Parliament highlights its 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. It calls 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.