

Conflict prevention: regional integration and cooperation, short-term prevention

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PURPOSE : to present an initiative to improve EU's civilian intervention capacities. **CONTENT:** this Communication on conflict prevention contains a comprehensive review of all the recent initiatives undertaken by the Community to promote peace and stability. The communication proposes a consolidated and realistic approach of the EU to conflict prevention. It recommends a series of concrete proposals in order to gain more from Community actions and programmes with the aim to improve the integration of conflict prevention objectives into the EU's external action. This communication is a follow-up to the joint report on conflict prevention which had been prepared by the Commission and the High Representative/Secretary General of the Council for the Nice Summit in December 2000. It is the Commission's contribution to the elaboration of the European Programme for Conflict Prevention which could be adopted by the European Council at Göteborg. The Commission's Communication pursues four main objectives: 1) A more systematic and co-ordinated use of Community instruments, in particular of external co-operation programmes; 2) Improve the efficiency of actions by developing specific methods to identify and fight against the root causes of conflicts at an early stage instead of only addressing the symptoms at times of acute crises; 3) Improve the capacity of the EU to react quickly to nascent conflicts; 4) Promote targeted international co-operation on conflict prevention with all the EU's principal partners. The most efficient instruments to deal with the underlying causes of conflict (such as poverty, social inequality, ethnic and regional tensions, weakness of socio-political structures, exploitation and illicit trades and the competition for natural resources) remain the EU's programmes of aid and co-operation. In view of this and based on a consolidated approach, the Commission proposes a systematic integration of conflict indicators and the objective of prevention into the programming of Community external aid programmes. Moreover, the Communication puts forward a series of recommendations for specific actions. These are targeted at preventing nascent conflicts from developing in the long term and at improving the capacity of the EU to react in emerging crises situations. These recommendations can be found in the annex to this text.