



**COUNCIL OF
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Subject: Conflict Prevention
- Council conclusions

Delegations will find attached the Council conclusions on Conflict Prevention, as adopted by the Council on 20 June 2011.

COUNCIL CONCLUSIONS ON CONFLICT PREVENTION

1. The aim of preserving peace, preventing conflicts from erupting into violence and strengthening international security is an important element of the external action of the European Union as laid down in the Lisbon Treaty. Violent conflicts cost lives, cause human rights abuses, displace people, disrupt livelihoods, set back economic development, exacerbate state fragility, weaken governance and undermine national and regional security. Preventing conflicts and relapses into conflict, in accordance with international law, is therefore a primary objective of the EU's external action, in which it could take a leading role acting in conjunction with its global, regional, national and local partners.
2. The EU Programme for the Prevention of Violent Conflicts – the “Gothenburg Programme” – adopted by the Council 10 years ago – set out a series of actions to be undertaken by the European Union to prevent violent conflict, human suffering and social and economic dislocation. Informed by a period of reflection under the joint leadership of the European External Action Service and the Hungarian Presidency, the Gothenburg Programme remains a valid policy basis for further European Union action in the field of conflict prevention

3. Substantial progress has been made in implementing the Gothenburg Programme and there are a number of positive examples where preventive action was successful. Policies and priorities for preventive action have also been set through the European Security Strategy and its implementation report of 2008, the Commission Communication on conflict prevention, and the development of policies on dialogue and mediation, security sector reform, the security and development nexus and situations of fragility. EU instruments for long and short term prevention have been strengthened, notably through the development of civilian and military CSDP, including the rapid deployment and security sector reform pools, and the establishment of the Instrument for Stability. EUSRs have also played an important role in conflict prevention work. Partnerships with key actors, notably the UN, World Bank, OSCE, NATO, the AU, other regional organisations and individual countries such as the US have been strengthened. Early warning capabilities, notably through SITCEN, have been enhanced. Furthermore the Union has acted, often in conjunction with partners, in a substantial number of actual and potential conflicts in our neighbourhood and beyond.
4. The EU already has conflict prevention tools at its disposal. Successful use of these tools relies on strengthening and combining them more effectively. There is scope for reinvigoration of EU efforts to prevent violent conflicts and their recurrence. The Lisbon Treaty and the creation of the European External Action Service, with its enhanced and integrated resources provide the opportunity to give renewed impetus to preventive action by the EU. This will be done by forging comprehensive approaches to preventing conflicts, by better integrating conflict prevention and key cross cutting issues, particularly human rights, gender, protection of civilians, children and armed conflicts and responsibility to protect, in all areas of short and long term external action.
5. The Council considers that early warning needs to be further strengthened within the EU, by better integrating existing early warning capacities and outputs from all sources, including from Member States, and drawing more extensively upon field based information from EU Delegations and civil society actors, in order to provide a more solid foundation for conflict risk analysis. Enhancing early warning will also enable the EU to work more effectively with partners regarding responsibility to protect and the protection of human rights.

6. More emphasis also needs to be put on taking early action, to mitigate the risks of outbreak and recurrence of conflicts, for example through the effective utilization of conflict risk analysis. There is scope for the EU and its Member States to strengthen their capacity to design viable, operational, coherent and realistic options for preventive action. One form of early action is mediation: the EU will build on the “Concept on Strengthening EU Mediation and Dialogue Capacities” of 2009 and strengthen mediation capacities by providing support and training to mediators and their staff and increase their readiness. The Council welcomes the support of the European Parliament in this regard. The EU will continue to support local, regional, international partners, relevant non-governmental organisations and institutions for conflict prevention and resolution and the strengthening of peace efforts, as appropriate.
7. The Council also emphasises that mutually reinforcing, beneficial and sustainable partnerships with key partners such as the UN, OSCE, NATO, World Bank, African Union and other international actors and individual countries such as the US need to be further strengthened to enable the European Union to operate successfully in the field of long term structural conflict prevention to complement shorter term crisis management and peace support operations.
8. The Council invites the High Representative and the Commission to implement the lines of action as mentioned above in consultation with the Member States and decides to come back to the issue by the end of the year.
