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EEAS/Commission services' issues paper suggesting parameters for a concept on Stabilisation as part of the EU Integrated Approach to external conflicts and crises

I. <u>Introduction</u>

The Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy ("EUGS") mentions the Integrated Approach to external conflicts and crises (IA) as one of its priorities. The IA requires the EU to further strengthen the way it brings together institutions, expertise, and instruments, and works with Member States in prevention, peacebuilding, crisis response and also stabilisation in order to contribute to sustainable peace. The Integrated Approach addresses all policy dimensions of a conflict by bringing together a multi-dimensional, multi-phased, multi-lateral and multi-level approach.

A Joint EEAS-Commission services issues Paper on the EU Integrated Approach to external conflicts and crises was presented to the Political and Security Committee (PSC) on 14 June. The issues paper indicated that, to strengthen the EU's stabilisation response, as part of the IA efforts, the EU will draft a Stabilisation concept and guidelines based on prior and existing EU engagement and lessons learned as well as on the EUGS and the principles laid out in the new European Consensus on Development[1].To improve the exchange of information and strengthen coordination, the EU will support discussions on concrete and specific stabilisation efforts with Member States and key actors.

In the conflict and crisis response field, Stabilisation has emerged as a term denoting specific types of situations in the spectrum of conflict and peace, and as a specific approach by international actors in such situations. A number of EU Member States and international partners have adopted the term and institutionalised it in different ways, including through the adoption of concepts on stabilisation, and the establishment of stabilisation coordination structures.

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[1] EU Global Strategy:

"When the prospect of stabilisation arises, the EU must enable legitimate institutions to rapidly deliver basic services and security to local populations, reducing the risk of relapse into violence and allowing displaced persons to return. We will therefore seek to bridge gaps in our response between an end of violence and long--term recovery, and develop the dual – security and development – nature of our engagement. [...]

This calls for greater synergies between humanitarian and development assistance, channelling our support to provide health, education, protection, basic goods, and legitimate employment. When the prospects for stabilisation arise, trade and development – working in synergy – can underpin long--term peacebuilding."

EU consensus on development:

"In their development assistance, the EU and its Member States will pay particular attention to fragile and conflict-affected states and will support the most vulnerable. By promoting and protecting human rights, democracy, the rule of law and good governance, they will proactively contribute to stability and security as well as resilience. They will integrate conflict sensitivity in all their work, to maximise the positive impact on peace."

"Stabilisation requires bridging the gap between conflict resolution and long-term reform processes, building trust between government and population including through jump-starting delivery of services."

In line with the EUGS and the expectation of Member States that the EU will step-up its engagement on conflicts and crises, the EU will benefit from introducing greater clarity on how it approaches stabilisation, and by ensuring it has the appropriate capabilities to make the EU an effective global actor and partner in this area.

II. Aim

This issues paper suggests a concept of Stabilisation in order to facilitate dialogue and coordination between all relevant EU actors – institutions and Members States, at headquarters, capitals and on the ground – as a prerequisite for a more integrated and effective action.
Some guiding principles for EU engagement are described together with a methodology for follow-up. This issues paper also describes the existing toolbox that can support stabilisation ranging from political dialogue and CSDP missions and operations to international cooperation and development and other options to achieve the desired effects.

III. Definition

"Stabilisation situations" are critical moments where there has been recent serious violence and insecurity and where there is a need and opportunity to support the foundations necessary for peacebuilding, resumption of development activities and preventing the cyclical re-emergence of violence. Stabilisation situations may also be contexts where there is a risk of ongoing violent conflict and instability escalating or spilling-over. There may be ongoing national, regional and international military operations; violence committed by state and/or non-state armed groups; and high levels of criminal violence. There may or may not be a peace agreement or peace process. There is likely to be a weak, contested and/or illegitimate and failed local or national governance authority and administration. These situations are likely to also include significant inter-communal tensions, human rights abuses, including sexual and gender-based violence, displacement, damage to infrastructure, absence of the rule of law, collapsed services, dysfunctional economies and lack of livelihood opportunities outside the illicit economy. There will often be an ongoing situation requiring humanitarian assistance.

"Stabilisation" always refers to the political objective to manage the prevention of or the exit from a crisis period in countries/regions suffering from a major weakening if not the breakdown of State structures and torn by internal and/or transboundary conflicts and violence. The stabilisation process should be seen as a transitory or bridging period, where there is a critical need for intensive action to move from violence to generate sufficient conditions for improved human security and the establishment of a more stable political settlement. Maintaining a strong political will to move forward throughout the stabilisation process is a key condition for its success. The more traditional medium-long term development agenda with clear resilience oriented objectives plays an essential role after the stabilisation.

Given the very different circumstances in which a stabilisation approach will be relevant, and the non-linear nature of such unstable contexts, it is difficult to establish a precise point in time where stabilisation efforts end. An important criteria of success is fulfilled when insecurity becomes manageable, when the local authorities (from the state and/or communities) can ensure or contribute to security on their own, and when local civilian population are free to circulate and carry out their activities.

Stabilisation could be defined as a set of swift actions aimed at creating conditions supportive of a political process, helping countries and/or communities to prevent or reduce violence, and initiating efforts to address the drivers of conflicts and the consequences of a crisis.

Stabilisation activities are characterised by (1) the need to address complex and difficult political and security situations, (2) the relatively short window of opportunity for the deployment of resources, (3) the ability to contribute to inclusive political settlements and, (4), the need to set the conditions on which longer-term approaches can build on.

IV. **Guiding principles**

The specificity of each situation on the ground requires pragmatic and flexible solutions. There are no ready-made recipes nor can a systematic political technique ensure success. However, the following key principles could guide EU stabilisation engagement.

1 – Address complex political and security situations.

- Take an **integrated approach**, based on clear EU political objectives. Successful stabilisation requires a range of interlinked and concurrent actions. Experience suggests that without a holistic and concurrent effort, stabilisation will only be partially successful and violence will be more likely to return. The EU will bring together all relevant tools and those of its Member States as appropriate in support of a coherent strategy defined according to agreed political objectives at the EU level; work closely with international partners including the UN and other multilateral and regional actors; and take a multi-level approach that acts at the international, regional, national and local community level.

- **Embed conflict-sensitivity**. Stabilisation environments are complex, highly political and risky. Keeping in mind that each stabilisation process could be not successful, the starting point will be to consider how the EU, using the relevant tools, could maximise its contribution to stabilisation in any given context, including where the risks are high, in the most difficult political and security situations. Success requires a thorough analysis and deliberate, planned and funded effort to ensure EU engagement minimises the risk of inadvertently contributing to continued conflict and human insecurity, and maximises the overall positive impact of EU engagement on stabilisation and longer-term peacebuilding. A serious approach to conflict sensitivity, including sound joint conflict and resilience analysis could also help mitigate risks to the EU – political, reputational, financial, as well as operational security risks, and will improve the chances of EU stabilisation activities being successful.

2 – Quick reaction and swift deployment

- **Remain flexible** and look ahead to **plan** for potential stabilisation situations. Given the fluid context for stabilisation, the EU will need to remain flexible in order to adapt to changing dynamics. Given the critical and often brief window of opportunity to initiate stabilisation activities, the High Representative/Vice-President will ensure early engagement between EEAS, Commission services and the Council/Member States and national and international partners to identify prospective stabilisation situations as far in advance as possible, and to undertake early analysis and planning in order to mobilise as soon as the moment arises.

3 – Contribute to inclusive political settlements

- **Fostering the emergence of a more stable and non-violent political settlement** between main actors, developing legitimate authority and laying the foundations for more effective and inclusive governance arrangements are fundamental for Stabilisation. This requires dealing with power dynamics, including addressing incentives and disincentives for peace and violence, and supporting the development of a new social contract. The EU should foster and promote the active inclusion of civil society and recognize the key role of women and youth in shaping Stabilisation. Stimulating inclusive dialogue is among the most important elements of a stabilisation approach. Dialogue should also incorporate transitional justice for peace to be sustainable.

- Promote and support **local ownership and inclusiveness**. Externally imposed approaches will not work, nor will purely top-down action. For any joint objective local ownership should occur through a sufficient level of support and commitment to implementation. Conflict has many sides, including various non-state actors (armed or not) with a stake in and influence over a final settlement. Failure to engage these actors outside the initial political accommodation has been shown to be detrimental to lasting progress. In advocating inclusivity, the EU should acknowledge its own commitment to continuing engagement and recognise this may provoke resistance from those with vested interests both within and outside the formal state.

- Emphasise **human security** as the primary lens through which we approach Stabilisation. This corresponds with EU values and is also crucial for success: unless Stabilisation ultimately contributes to addressing the insecurities experienced by the population, and delivers a tangible peace dividend at the community level (taking into account gender, age and other perspectives), it will not lead to peace and stability. The perceptions of the population are crucial and need to be monitored closely.

4 - Set the conditions on which longer-term approaches can then build on.

- **Avoid premature dis-engagement**. Stabilisation will rarely be about returning the situation to the way it was before violence and instability. Whilst addressing the drivers of conflict and fragility will be a longer-term endeavour, stabilisation engagement should address these drivers ('root causes') as far as possible. As such stabilisation is part of a longer-term peacebuilding strategy to help foster sustainable peace and prevent the re-emergence of

violent conflict. The EU needs to remain engaged after the critical stabilisation period, as premature international disengagement, risks undermining progress towards sustainable peace and cancelling-out previous investments.

- **Recognize the humanitarian space**. Humanitarian assistance can have an indirect stabilising impact by improving living conditions for the affected population. The European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid provides a clear framework for humanitarian assistance. EU humanitarian aid is guided by the principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence. It is provided solely on the basis of needs of the affected populations and beyond any strategic, military, political, economic or other EU objective ("In-But-Out). The distinct roles and mandates of different EU actors should be respected at all times, including in stabilisation related contexts. Effective Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination, based on UN OCHA guidelines and best practices, remains of key importance for the EU.

V. EU Stabilisation toolbox

The EU and its Member States own a broad set of relevant assets, tools and instruments that can be applied for integrated stabilisation activities. The challenge is to succeed in combining them in order to achieve the overall agreed objective. Therefore, a coherent planning from the outset is needed and should be maintained throughout the stabilisation effort both at headquarters, in capitals but mostly in the field. The following represent some of the key assets available to the EU:

1. Political engagement

Considering the political emphasis of stabilisation activities, the EU's political and diplomatic networks, (including EU Delegations, the EUSRs and Special Envoys) have a core role to play. The EU capacity to engage, through political dialogue, with national governments, regional and multilateral organisations is an essential asset and can provide a favourable political framework for any stabilisation activities on the ground. Stabilisation may be associated with the elaboration and implementation of a peace agreement, where the EU may itself have a direct mediation role, or support associated dialogue processes.

2. CSDP missions and operations

It is essential that there is complementarity and synergy between political and diplomatic efforts and CSDP missions and operations. CSDP action is never a stand-alone activity and should be part of the integrated approach. The requirement from Member States for CSDP to be a rapid crisis response tool requires quick, integrated analysis through a dedicated political document. Highly visible, characterized by strong political commitments and European expertise on the ground, CSDP missions and operations' contribution to secure a safer environment can be decisive as they may be providing valuable EU support in many third countries through education, training and advice activities or have an executive mandate allowing direct action and enforcement. Civilian CSDP priorities include strengthening police, rule of law and civil administration. Furthermore, Civilian and Military CSDP can address the new challenges identified in the Global Strategy, including irregular migration, hybrid threats, cyber security, terrorism, radicalisation, organised crime, border management and maritime security.

CSDP missions and operations can also play a role in rebuilding civilian administration. The role of military capabilities in support of Stabilisation is key to achieve a Safe and Secure environment in the host country, helping in the cessation of hostilities and/ or Large-Scale Violence, separation of parties by force, restoration of public order, improvement of physical security and territorial security; moreover, in conflict prevention scenarios, military capabilities constitute a key tool for Capacity Building and SSR, DSR, Small Arms and Light Weapons control and DDR activities.

3. International Cooperation and Development

The wide range of budgetary/financial instruments[2] can be of great importance for stabilisation and peacebuilding processes. The EFIs are a crucial tool to reach EU objectives and deliver political priorities with third countries and regions. They support a wide array of implementing partners allowing the EU to have a presence either through direct interventions or through partners such as International NGOs or international and regional organisations.

Given their flexibility and adaptability in programming, two financial tools seem to be the instruments of choice for stabilisation purposes:

The Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP), under its Article 3 (conflict and crisis response), Article 4 (conflict prevention, peacebuilding and crisis preparedness), and Article 5 (global and trans-regional threats), allows to implement activities quickly, where necessary, and can be used to test grounds, taking calculated risks where this is necessary to implement EU policy in order to pursue stabilisation. The new initiative for Capacity Building in support of Development and of Security for Development (CBSD)[3] introduces the possibility of providing EU assistance to military actors in exceptional and well defined circumstances. This could also be relevant in terms of stabilisation insofar as it will allow providing EU assistance to enhance partners' capacity to prevent, prepare for and respond to crises on their own, thus contributing to national and regional stability. Overall synergies and complementarity with action under CSDP military training missions could be sought

The Trust Fund, as an implementation modality, is used to pool financing from different sources, often from EFIs (such as ENI, EDF, DCI, IcSP and possibly others) or from non-EU sources (in particular Member States). In case of a crisis related Trust fund, which is the case for the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa, Madad and CAR, funds can be committed and contracted on specific projects more effectively, with particular attention to target local actors (by derogating standard rules).

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[2] Main EFIs within the EU Budget are: Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance; European Neighbourhood Instrument; Development Cooperation Instrument; Partnership Instrument; Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace; European Instrument for Human Rights and Democracy, and the Nuclear Instrument, in addition to the European Development Fund; and the CFSP budget, which is part of the EU Budget.

[3] A legislative proposal inserting a new Article into Title II of Regulation (EU) establishing an IcSP (No 230/2014) will extend the Union's assistance under exceptional circumstances to support the military, in support of development and security for development of partner countries.

4. Stabilisation action under article 28 TEU

The EU has developed a new way of intervening in crisis response through operational actions under Article 28 TEU, financed through the CFSP budget, consisting in the short-term deployment of Members States' experts in countries where stabilisation efforts are required. Stabilisation action under Article 28 TEU are meant to be light and flexible and the experts, are deployed under the auspices of the EU Head of Delegation in the country concerned. The PSC monitors their implementation and provides political direction, without prejudice to the responsibilities of the HR.

VI. **Methodology**

CSDP missions or operational actions under Article 28 TEU, development programming and bilateral activities by Member States usually take place on different timescales, with different purposes and different decision making processes. A more integrated approach is therefore essential to ensure appropriate preparation, conduct and termination of any EU stabilisation activity. The initial aim is to optimise the use of existing tools and instruments by ensuring close cooperation and coordination, first internally, and with Member States, and, when useful, with all relevant international stakeholders, such as the United Nations.

1. A shared analysis

A stabilisation process is grounded in a shared analysis of the country/region context. Shared analysis is the first step to define a shared political objective and establish a clear strategic direction. It aims to assess the underlying vulnerabilities and causes of conflicts and potential factors of resilience. By doing so, it lays the foundations for sequencing the use of available EU tools/actions and place stabilisation in the broader context of peacebuilding and of a sustained support to strengthen the legitimacy of the authorities. Shared analysis brings together all relevant EU actors and possibly other international organisations or local actors. It builds on analyses that already exists and help underline possible gaps and needs for update. Depending on the nature of the country/context, shared analysis may be conducted at different levels (local/national/regional). Engaging in conflict analysis is of utmost importance. It should mobilise not only staff in Brussels HQ but also experts working on the field (including local CSOs). There should be ongoing and iterative analysis work done throughout all phases of the process, including during implementation, in order to be able to adapt to shifting local contexts.

2. A shared political objective

Before launching a stabilisation process in a country/region, a political objective has to be clearly stated. Its implementation, based on a joint situation analysis, should bring together relevant EU programmes, policies and instruments. As a prerequisite, the definition of a political objective needs to be conducted in synchronisation with the EU's political priorities and based upon EU lessons identified and learned in the conflict affected area.

For effective coordination and cooperation to take place between EU institutional actors, a common vision of a stabilisation framework is indispensable. Association of Member States in the definition

of this common vision should be ensured through an early involvement of the PSC and, where relevant, the FAC, possibly through the elaboration of a dedicated political document.

3. A clear strategic direction

Applying an integrated approach while maintaining the ability to act swiftly is a major challenge. Therefore, coordination and planning of EU stabilisation activities requires strong political leadership, strategic direction, effective decision-making and clear mandates. A structured approach to planning and coordination should be done at both the local and headquarters level.

At the HQ level, on a case by case basis, the relevant crisis response structures may be activated to bring together the relevant stakeholders. Consistency of information exchange and action should continue throughout the stabilisation process.

In the field, the EU Head of Delegation has an essential role in coordinating and delivering an integrated approach bringing together the EU's tools and policies and acting in coordination with the Member States, as well as the Head of CSDP Mission and/or and EUSR where present.

4. Greater synchronisation of existing instruments

EU stabilisation efforts are expected to benefit from the integrated approach which, as a method, brings together multiple means of engagement such as diplomatic initiatives, CSDP missions and operational teams, development cooperation, humanitarian assistance, etc. Applying an effect-driven approach to existing instruments, structures and tools (SSR, Rule of Law, DDR, mediation support, development, etc.), can contribute to the political objective of stabilisation if they are applied in a coordinated, well-sequenced and adjustable manner.

Based on their mandates aiming at catalysing a more effective delivery of an integrated EU response in fragile and conflict-affected areas, EEAS (PRISM division) and Commission services will facilitate the establishment of bridges between different actors involved in crisis response in full respect of their respective competencies.

5. Partnerships and coordination with other actors

Effective integrated stabilisation should always entail close engagement with international partners such as United Nations, NATO, OSCE, regional organisations, such as African Union, but also with various states, international NGOs, civil society organisations and the private sector.

6. Measuring the effects of stabilisation missions

An EU integrated approach to stabilisation should be anchored to sound knowledge-management processes and investment into different kinds of impact assessments is essential. Capitalizing on the exiting processes, an evidence-based approach to stabilisation should be promoted through effective monitoring and evaluation (M&E) mechanisms involving all pertinent actors, including Head of Delegation, Head of CSDP Mission, EUSR, local actors (including CSOs) and PSC. Once an EU stabilisation activity is ongoing, an assessment of the entire EU stabilisation process' efficiency and proposed way forward might be needed, notably to inform EU Member States.

7. Effective Strategic communications

Given the volatile circumstances, the success of stabilisation is never guaranteed and the path is fraught with setbacks. This has to be acknowledged from the outset. The primacy of perceptions in the acceptance of stabilisation activities process underlines the importance of the behaviour, the image given and the messages sent by the EU actors. The ability to communicate effectively - preferably on tangible results achieved - to everyone, including the public at large and the decision-makers, has great impact on the result of stabilisation implementation processes. Each stabilisation endeavor should be accompanied with a clear communication strategy, informed by local realities and also EU public opinions. This is already the case for the CSDP missions and operations, but in crisis areas the responsibility frequently falls on the EU Delegations with limited capacities to address   these   aspects. EEAS StratCom remains responsible to elaborate and develop this strategy in coordination with relevant actors and also to contribute supporting EU Delegations to face this challenge.

8. Enhancing expertise for stabilisation

In order to follow through its ambition formulated in the EUGS, the EU, in close consultation with Member States, needs to dedicate sufficient and adequate efforts to the practice of stabilisation in Headquarters geographic and thematic units, and particularly in relevant EU Delegations.

The EU should continue to invest in stabilisation human resource capacity, ensuring notably that human resources policies generate the right expertise at the service of stabilisation. It entails specialised recruitment, tailored training and career development processes, but also temporary reinforcements by Member States expertise. In addition, the EU should reflect on the most adapted and effective way to develop a stabilisation roster of experts, deployable at short notice to initiate crisis assessment and planning work. It should be ensured that this capability includes relevant knowledge in the fields of civ-mil cooperation, transitional justice, governance, as well as Women Peace and Security (WPS) expertise.