

FOREWORD

Dear Reader,

You have in your hands the last part of a trilogy exploring the European Union's approaches to conflicts and crisis. The titles of these books present well the evolution of the international policy debate and thinking during the first decade of the 21st century from a relatively narrow pre-conflict perspective to a wider approach which encompasses all phases of the crisis. The first part published in 2004 was called 'The European Union and Conflict prevention', reflecting how conflict prevention was high on the agenda as a response to the Balkan Wars. In 2008 the second part, 'The European Union and Crisis Management', was published as the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP)-missions had been operational for some years. Finally the series is completed in 2010 with "The European Union and Peacebuilding".

Peacebuilding is a somewhat flexible concept, of which there is currently no officially agreed international definition. However, this descriptive phrase is perhaps most useful in its most comprehensive sense – efforts aiming at a solid and lasting peace. For the European Union, peacebuilding requires bringing together a variety of external policy tools which include security aspects, mediation and preventive diplomacy, development cooperation and trade relations, in order to make an impact, be coherent and achieve sustainable results.

The European Union has made systematic efforts to ensure an integrated approach to peacebuilding. In this regard, the decisions adopted on the security and development nexus and on fragility in 2007 were a strategic step forward. We are engaged in various activities across the globe, such as for example supporting conflict resolution processes and ensuring the engagement of women in these, as well as building the peacebuilding capacities of regional organisations.

Successful peacebuilding requires taking on a preventive focus. Conflict prevention continues to lie at the heart of all European Union activities, as it is the most cost effective and life saving approach. Conflict prevention implies providing early and sustainable assistance to countries under stress and it is the best measure to avoid a relapse into conflict. While building for the future, we must strive to put an end to the suffering caused by legacies of conflicts, such as the scourge of landmines and other inhumane weapons, which continue to create a burden even decades later and delay development and prosperity goals.

Moreover, peacebuilding is also a joint effort in which the international community needs to work together. In this regard the United Nations, international and regional organisations and especially civil society are all vital partners for the European Union. However, international efforts need to involve local communities early on in order to create a nationally owned process, which is a requisite for lasting

peace. Only through partnership with local actors can international norms be combined with a respect and understanding of local context, and promote the transfer of responsibilities and ownership to the populations concerned. In this work we need to engage with local civil society as well as representatives of media and local business communities.

The link between peace, security and development has been widely recognised by the international community, and as a response, the United Nations Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) was created in 2005. The European Union is committed to actively supporting the work of the Peacebuilding Commission on the basis of its experience, resources and worldwide operability.

During the first five years the PBC has brought together all key players on the ground to enable a comprehensive approach to peacebuilding in selected post-conflict states. In 2010 the progress of the PBC so far will be examined in order to take on board lessons learned for the next steps, ensuring that it can discharge its mandate more effectively and better deliver real progress on the ground. 2010 is also the year for the Review Summit of the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDG) aiming at eradicating poverty. The link between countries affected by fragility and conflict and those lagging most behind in attaining the MDGs indicates clearly the need for stronger ties between security and development efforts.

I congratulate the authors of this informative and well-written book, who are not afraid of taking a critical approach. From the point of view of the EU institutions, it is published at a particularly timely moment, as we embark upon a new era in the European Union's external relations through the implementation of the Lisbon Treaty. I hope that you as a reader will find enriching this thorough and wide ranging description of the various aspects of peacebuilding, a concept that we will undoubtedly keep on discussing in the coming years and a goal at which we will continue to aim.

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