

**THE
CAPACITY
TO
PROTECT:**

**THE
ROLE
OF
CIVIL
SOCIETY**

**PERSPECTIVES
FROM
AFRICA,
ASIA,
THE AMERICAS
AND EUROPE**

JULY 2005



THE FUND FOR PEACE



The Fund for Peace

The Capacity to Protect: The Role of Civil Society

by

Patrica Taft
Jason Ladnier

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FOREWORD

This report contains the findings of the most extensive research conducted globally on the use of force in humanitarian intervention and the emerging norm of the responsibility to protect civilians. These are central issues of our time. They will be the focus of attention in various summit meetings this year and, undoubtedly, for years to come.

The Fund for Peace collected its data through hundreds of interviews in the field and six civil society workshops. The workshops were held in Ghana, Kenya, South Africa, Chile, the Philippines and Hungary. They followed four regionally-specific conferences convened in the United States. The entire project was conducted from 2001-2005. The research focused on examining how policy makers, opinion leaders and officials from regional organizations in Africa, the Americas, Asia and Europe think and act when confronted with violent internal conflicts in their own neighborhoods that are threatening civilians on a large scale.

The Fund for Peace believes that the question of protecting civilians is not the responsibility of the United Nations alone. We believe that there needs to be a new architecture of international response to protect civilians that involves responsible actors at all levels, from the UN to regional and subregional organizations and from nation states to civil society. Creating norms on how that architecture will be designed, and providing multiple actors with the capabilities to act, is one of the biggest challenges we face in the early 21st century as new atrocities, collapsed states and humanitarian crises arise.

This project was conducted in partnership with local organizations in Africa, the Americas, Asia and

Europe. They included: the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP) in Ghana, the Nairobi Peace Initiatives (NPI) in Kenya, the Institute for Security Studies (ISS) in South Africa, the Latin American Faculty for Social Sciences (FLACSO) in Chile, the Institute for Strategic and Development Studies (ISDS) in the Philippines and the Institute for Transitional Democracy and International Security (ITDIS) in Hungary. The Fund for Peace engaged a total of over 300 individuals and hundreds of organizations in this worldwide effort.

The Fund for Peace intends to widely disseminate the findings from these research missions and civil society conferences and to extend the debate in the future with new research on the Middle East. We also will share the knowledge and insights derived from this work with the United Nations and other regional and subregional organizations. Furthermore, we will make recommendations to policy makers on specific actions that can be taken to strengthen international responses to peace and stability operations, regardless of where they take place.

This project was led by Jason Ladnier, Patricia Taft and, in its first two years, Mary Locke. We would like to thank Major General (U.S. ret.) William L. Nash, Ambassador Chan Heng Chee (Singapore), Ambassador Cheick Oumar Diarra (Mali), Ambassador Paul Heinbecker (Canada), Ambassador Juan Gabriel Valdes (Chile) and Ambassador Joris M. Vos (The Netherlands) who co-chaired the conferences which took place at Airlie House in Virginia from 2001-2003. The Fund for Peace would also like to thank our advisory group on this project.

The Fund for Peace further wishes to thank the United Nations and its representatives, the many officials from the governments and regional bodies on the four continents where we conducted our research, and all of our partner organizations and NGO representatives that lent so much of their time, insights and expertise to this project. We would also like to thank the United States Departments of State and Defense and the Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization. We would further like to thank the many individuals at the United States Institute of Peace who assisted us in identifying organizations and people on the four continents who were highly relevant to our work.

Finally, the Fund for Peace wishes to acknowledge and thank the primary funders of this project: the Governments of the Netherlands and Canada and the Carnegie Corporation of New York. Additional support was received from the Stanley Foundation, the Ford Foundation, and the Saskasawa Foundation. In particular, we want to acknowledge the importance of the Canadian government's pioneering work on *The Responsibility to Protect*, a standard that is rightly emerging as the central organizing concept in UN peacekeeping reforms. It has contributed greatly to the awareness and willingness of the international community to do more to prevent and reduce the loss of civilian lives in weak and failing states.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

While long recognized as a crucial element in a gauging the health of the democratic structures of a country, civil society also has an important role to play in ensuring the protection of civilians caught up in internal wars. Over the past two decades, internal wars and state collapse have claimed the lives of millions of innocent victims in Africa, the Americas, Asia and Europe. From Africa, a continent that has seen the highest incidence of warfare, to Europe, where the bloody implosion of the Former Yugoslavia caught the world by surprise, civil society has been faced with the challenges of engaging governments and regional bodies in an effort to protect civilians.

In many cases, internal wars and state collapse have had wider regional implications, causing instability in neighboring countries that led to further warfare. In these instances, civil society found itself further confronted by the challenges of networking across national borders to face common threats. Additionally, a lack of outside donor funding and coordination strategies have repeatedly hampered efforts of civil society organizations to better address the issue of civilian protection. Overall, outside of the United States and Western Europe, civil society remains a weakly developed sector. In all four regions, there exists a strong need for civil society to be empowered to better address threats to civilians at the national and regional levels.

In recognition of this need, the Fund for Peace and regional partner organizations in Africa, the Americas, Asia, and Europe, convened six workshops on the role of civil society in early warning, humanitarian intervention and post-conflict peacebuilding from October 2003 to January 2005.

Participants were asked to discuss the criteria for military intervention to stop mass civilian casualties and relate their experiences in engaging national, regional and international organizations in their work. They were also asked to define the main security threats in the region and assess the impact of conflict on vulnerable groups. Finally, participants were asked to evaluate critically how they could improve their capacities to protect and promote human security and enhance their efforts to work across ethnic, religious, and national boundaries.

Human Security

Although the experiences and views of civil society organizations varied regionally based on historical and cultural factors, there were themes common to all four regions. It was also stressed, at each conference, that the term “military intervention for humanitarian purposes” had to be very carefully defined. The US-led invasion of Iraq, later justified on humanitarian reasons, and the resulting civilian casualties made many participants highly skeptical of using the phrase. It also led participants to debate the concept and various interpretations of human security which, in all four regions, is defined very broadly.

Human security, participants stressed, must be seen as part of a continuum of security needs if it is to be properly addressed. Particularly in Latin America and Asia, participants stated that human security is viewed quite separately from security achieved through military intervention. Both regions were subject in the past to outside military interventions that caused massive civilian casualties. There is a reluctance to tie the concept of security, achieved through military means, to development

or human rights. Participants felt that Western countries tend to view human security as a condition that must be “established or restored” rather than promoted across all sectors over time. A participant from Latin America noted that the U.S., in particular, tends to see human security in terms of a “black and white picture which then leads to black and white answers.” She noted that this narrow vision leads nations who have this view to see conflict resolution using non-military means as ineffective. Similarly, in Asia, several participants pointed out that this narrow view of human security makes the decision to turn to a military intervention to restore security “too much of an easy option.”

The overall failure of Western nations to recognize that human security must be viewed on a continuum, and not only as an “end-state,” has contributed to the overall failure of many military interventions and follow-on peacekeeping missions. The reluctance to get involved early and half-hearted attempts to build functioning institutions in the wake of internal wars have led to more instability and civilian trauma, it was noted in all conferences. Human security stems not only from stopping wars but from creating the conditions in their aftermath that allow for a country’s citizens to rebuild a functioning society. Establishing food and environmental security, as well as freedom from disease and the restoration of human dignity, are important factors in reducing the threat of armed attacks on civilians. The international community, participants felt, tends to get the military side of an intervention right while failing miserably at the development and institution-building side. One of the participants to the Europe conference summed it up: “The international community tends to leave and turn the lights out, but they don’t seem to remember that we are the ones they are leaving in the dark.”

Civil Society’s Role in Intervention

The failure of the international community to consult civil society prior to an intervention was also cited at all the conferences as being a main shortcoming in protecting civilian lives. As civil society organizations are closest to the ground and to the

populations at risk, participants felt that their input prior to an intervention was critical. Particularly in Africa and Europe, participants recounted how lack of consultation contributed to inaccurate military planning resulting in the deaths and injuries of innocent civilians. The Economic Community of West Africa’s (ECOWAS) first intervention in Liberia, where women and children came under fire, and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization’s (NATO) intervention in Kosovo, when civilians fleeing the violence were struck by bombs, were cited as two examples. On this particular point, however, a dilemma emerges surrounding the nature of military interventions, which are planned in secret in order to surprise the aggressor. A more practical solution would be to have more civil society representations within international, regional and subregional bodies that already possess local knowledge and can help guide military planners, so there is minimal collateral damage or unintended civilian casualties.

The failure of international, regional and subregional bodies to engage civil society actors was another theme common to all conferences. Overall, these organizations were seen as “elitist” and “disengaged” from the daily realities happening on the ground in the regions. This has led, participants believed, to poor decision-making processes and wasted time and resources. Although a few subregional organizations in Africa and Asia have recently made strides in including civil society representation at their headquarters, participants from these two regions still felt these efforts were inadequate. In Latin America and Europe, the confusing structures and unclear mandates of regional organizations have led to frustration on the part of civil society. An African participant noted that, to most African citizens, regional and subregional bodies are “organizations in the sky” that few understand, while a participant from Latin America stated that regional organizations are “too far removed” from the daily lives of people.

Funding

Civil society, in all four regions, is also heavily dependent on outside donor funding which has led to a sense of disempowerment on the issue of

agenda-setting. It was noted repeatedly that, although civil society organizations can identify the needs of local populations, they often do not get to address the real issues since outside funders set the criteria for projects. Reliance on outside funding has also created a dynamic of competition as civil society groups vie for scarce resources. This has discouraged cooperation nationally as well as regionally. Being self-critical, participants also agreed that relying heavily on assistance from outside the country or region has led to a lack of knowledge about how local organizations can raise revenue and influence the international community about threats to civilians. One participant in Africa stated: “We complain that they [the international community] are not addressing local needs but we are not doing a good job at making them aware of what’s really happening either.”

An issue that has further compounded the difficulties of civil society in getting the much-needed funding for their initiatives is the lack of foundations and private philanthropic communities outside of the U.S. and Western Europe. In Africa, the Americas, Asia and Eastern Europe, local NGOs are dependent upon government or intergovernmental bodies for funding. The sheer size and confusing application and accounting mechanisms of these agencies have made the procurement of money for local initiatives extremely complicated. Participants at all the conferences related how difficult it was for small, grassroots organizations to negotiate the myriad layers of bureaucracy in international organizations in order to get funding. In addition to a general lack of understanding of funding processes, there is usually not enough human capital available to dedicate to the task of procuring and managing resources. A participant to the Kenya conference noted, “We don’t have the time to fill out tons of paperwork and simultaneously try to address the needs of the people on the ground.” A participant from Asia related the same dilemma but suggested that institutions of higher education, often closer to national governments and regional bodies in that region, should be encouraged to assist local groups in fundraising to overcome the difficulties.

Threats

The current threats faced by civilians varied regionally but the common theme emerged that civil society remains the most authentic voice on security concerns faced by civilians. These threats are often far below the radar screen on the international agenda and are often missing from national security agendas as well. In the Horn of Africa, participants indicated that the transnational threats that stem from pastoral and agricultural conflicts, generated by environmental changes such as drought and desertification, have a particularly destabilizing effect. They also receive inadequate national or international attention. In Latin America, the threat posed by arms trafficking undermines regional security while internal land disputes have pushed some countries to the brink of collapse. Civil society remains one of the most crucial, and often overlooked, sources of early warning about these threats and it is a sector that should be engaged nationally and internationally to prevent conflicts before they emerge as large-scale humanitarian crises. It was agreed that a collective effort needed to be made at all levels to bring civil society more fully into the discussion and decision-making process.

Youth

Another saddening trend, common to all the regions, is the rising rates of disaffected and traumatized youth. In Africa, the wars that have ravaged the continent have left in their wake entire generations of children orphaned, maimed, or psychologically injured. The prevalence of child soldiers was given at all three African conferences as one of the most disastrous consequences of war. In Latin America, the increasing numbers of gangs made up of young boys and a general spike in the number of homeless children was cited as one of the continent’s largest tragedies and looming threats. In Asia, severe poverty and the aftermath of conflict have put children at particularly high risk to be injured by landmines, disease, and sexual exploitation. Lastly, European conference participants reported that a failure to rebuild institutions in the aftermath of the wars in the Balkans has resulted in a generation of young

people with few chances for employment and education. This has led to a sense of hopelessness and has contributed to the worrisome trend of greater youth participation in nationalist and anti-Semitic groups. “They have become easy prey for nationalists and war-monger politicians,” said a participant from the Balkans. On all four continents, the most vulnerable populations are children, and with them, future generations of these war-torn countries.

Regional Networking

Finally, aware that many of the threats are regional in nature, civil society needs to improve its capacity to network across national borders. Particularly in Africa and parts of Europe, where conflicts tend to be cyclical, and porous or ill-defined frontiers pose major threats to national stability, civil society has to develop strategies of communication and coordination to confront these issues. Participants said that civil society succeeded most in regional coordination on initiatives related to the protection of vulnerable groups. On issues thought of as more traditional “hard security” threats, such as weapons trafficking and land disputes, civil society has yet to develop clear regional strategies.

International Role

The international community has a clear obligation to engage civil society in all regions. Moreover, regional and subregional organizations, in order to be truly effective in confronting threats to human and national security, need to bring civil society organizations more fully into consultations on policies and processes they are adopting that affect the lives of civilians on the ground. Civil society itself, however, needs to decrease its heavy reliance on outside organizations for funding and develop the institutional capacities and awareness to be able to pursue money for their initiatives. Unless there is a coordinated effort by all actors to engage each other across sectors and national boundaries, civil society is likely to remain weakly developed and unable to play a large role in addressing the threats that cause regional instability in Africa, the Americas, Asia and Europe.

Note: At each conference, participants were asked to develop a series of specific recommendations that addressed how to improve the capacities of civil society in each region and subregion. These can be found at the end of each section.

AFRICA

While long a crucial element in the struggle for increased respect for democratic rule and human rights within African countries, civil society actors are slowly recognizing their role in addressing conflicts that pose threats to regional and subregional peace and stability. In many ways, this recent trend coincides with the increased attention paid by regional bodies to security issues. The Fund for Peace, a Washington, DC-based research, educational and advocacy organization, convened a series of subregional workshops in October and November 2003 that brought together civil society representatives in West, East, Central, and Southern Africa. At the three meetings in Ghana, Kenya, and South Africa, participants took part in plenary discussions on the role that civil society should play in strengthening African capacities to manage conflicts. The results of these meetings will play a critical role in evaluating and addressing the needs of a region steeped in historic change resulting from the dynamics of colonialism, the Cold War, and the emerging struggle against global terrorism. Often relegated to the official backwater of many nations' foreign policy considerations, Africa has repeatedly found itself thrust onto the international stage as a source of instability. The Fund for Peace workshops revealed that the victims of humanitarian conflict in Africa are fully aware of, and engaged in, finding a solution to the problems facing their continent.

Following the humanitarian disasters in Somalia and Rwanda from 1991 through 1994, the United Nations began a critical assessment of the acute humanitarian crises confronting African states in the post-colonial, post-Soviet environment of the early 1990's. As evidenced by the failed international intervention in Somalia in 1992 and

the international failure to act in the horrific Rwandan genocide of 1994, it became increasingly apparent that intrastate conflicts in Africa required a new toolbox of options to prevent and reduce civilian casualties in these conflicts. In many cases, traditional tools, such as economic sanctions, international condemnation or political isolation, did little to avoid or alleviate the sufferings experienced by civilians on the ground. The traditional view of warfare that informed the United Nations Charter gave exclusive authority for internationally sanctioned military intervention to the Security Council and enshrined the principle of non-intervention in the internal affairs of member states. However, the history of the post Cold War era showed that the concept of sovereignty had to be redefined. No longer were most wars limited to conflict between sovereign states or coalitions of sovereign states acting against others and fought primarily by professional soldiers. Instead, violent conflicts erupted within states and civilians were the primary targets, and perpetrators, of the conflict. With non-state actors playing such a prominent role, sovereign states were no longer able to protect their own people or, worse, created humanitarian disasters within their own borders. While leaders in previous historical eras also perpetrated large-scale atrocities against their own citizens, the world was becoming less tolerant of such crimes, albeit uncertain about how to stop them.

In Africa, the proxy wars fought by the United States and the Soviet Union during the Cold War, as well as the interests of former colonial powers in maintaining a presence on the continent, began to wane as new conflicts in the Middle East and the Balkans consumed much of the world's attention in the 1990s. In the power vacuum that

followed, the United Nations was ill-equipped to respond to humanitarian emergencies in Africa and it became the object of international scorn, especially in Africa itself, for its inability to prevent conflicts and its failure to alleviate the suffering of African people when conflicts erupted. In the past two decades, massive displacement, rape, murder, and grave human rights abuses have come to characterize the conflicts in sub-Saharan Africa. In the face of such overwhelming challenges in Africa and elsewhere, the United Nations commissioned independent studies to evaluate the role of outside actors, including military alliances like the North American Treaty Organization (NATO), “coalitions of willing states,” and regional and sub-regional bodies to respond to humanitarian crises.

In an attempt to analyze the new challenges confronting the international community and the United Nations, the Canadian government established The International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS) in September 2000. The findings were published in December 2001 in the report, *The Responsibility to Protect*. Ultimately, the ICISS Report agreed that the United Nations Security Council should sanction all military interventions but, in instances when it failed to act, the responsibility to protect civilians should fall to either the UN General Assembly under the “Uniting for Peace” clause or to regional or subregional organizations under Chapter VIII of the Charter. The ICISS report cautions against “coalitions of willing states” or unilateral state intervention as these actions would clearly undermine the legitimacy of the UN. The report further argues that military interventions for the sake of halting or averting grave human rights abuses should always be a last resort, proportional in scale, and have reasonable prospects for ending the humanitarian crises.

While the global debate revolved around the United Nations, the people and organizations most directly affected by conflict at the regional level were not engaged in the discussions. To close this gap, The Fund for Peace sought to have these voices heard on defining the acceptable parameters of, and capabilities for, humanitarian intervention in internal

conflicts that exist at the regional level. Four series of workshops were held in-region in Africa, the Americas, Asia and Europe from 2003 to 2005. Three African workshops were convened in October and November 2003 in Ghana, Kenya and South Africa on the capabilities for action. These built on the findings of international conferences held in Washington, DC from 2001 to 2003 that focused on defining the norms for an intervention. Conference participants were asked to address four main questions:

- Who should be able to authorize military interventions?
- When should a military intervention for human protection purposes be considered?
- Who should conduct it?
- How should it be carried out?

The participants represented a wide range of professions, including members of the military, government, UN, the press, academia and non-governmental organizations. Both the findings of the ICISS report and The Fund for Peace conferences concurred that internal conflicts in Africa constituted grave threats to human rights and, further, could cause regional destabilization. Empowering regional bodies to act while encouraging indigenous efforts by civil society groups were thus seen as interrelated and essential in humanitarian interventions as well as in post-conflict peacebuilding efforts. Reports on the conferences dealing with regional norms of intervention are available at The Fund for Peace website: <http://fundforpeace.org/programs/rriw/rriw.php>

In an effort to address the substantive issues central to civil society in Africa and to explore the findings of the ICISS report and The Fund for Peace Conference Report, three African workshops brought together more than one hundred representatives of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), churches, the media, women and children’s advocacy groups, scholars and conflict resolution practitioners on the continent. Each workshop was co-hosted with a local civil society partner. In two full days of plenary sessions and working groups, participants were asked to address

specific questions that were grouped thematically and to come to a consensus on concrete recommendations based on the discussions and working group meetings. In sum, African civil society representatives from 31 countries spent six days in discussion.

Workshop participants were asked to:

- Identify the greatest threats to the region and discuss whether the findings in the ICISS and the earlier FfP Africa Conference reports adequately address the criteria for military interventions in Africa for humanitarian purposes.
- Evaluate the role of civil society in the subregions and its current relationship with national governments and sub-regional and regional bodies and then assess the impact of these relationships on overall regional security.
- Report on the impact of regional conflict on vulnerable groups such as women, children, and the disabled and address national and subregional efforts to protect vulnerable populations.

Defining Regional Threats to Security in Africa

Definitions of internal war varied among West, Central, Eastern and Southern Africa, with historical, political, and cultural precedents each playing a role in how participants viewed the findings of the ICISS and Fund for Peace findings. In all regions, participants concurred that the United Nations was the most legitimate and preferred organization to authorize a military intervention to prevent or halt a humanitarian crisis. However, participants also recognized that the United Nations had been too slow to act, if it did act at all, in conflicts in sub-Saharan Africa, and alternatives must therefore be explored. While most participants agreed with the criteria for military intervention defined by The Fund for Peace Africa Conference¹, the findings of the ICISS report were regarded cautiously. Although some of the criteria set out by the ICISS report were agreed with in

principle, many attendees felt that it was far too general and did not address the particular dynamics that fueled crises in Africa.

In West Africa, conflict is cyclical and wars spill across borders resulting in continual refugee and internal displacement crises, traumatized populations, and the constant threat of regional destabilization. Ethnic and tribal linkages in West Africa are dominant across state lines and, as one conference participant remarked, “I am closer tribally and linguistically to those in Western Benin than here in southern Nigeria.” Porous borders and the failure to demilitarize and reintegrate combatants have led to the illicit cross-border trafficking of small arms and light weapons. It has also contributed to the destabilizing factor of mercenaries and former soldiers who, unemployed and marginalized by their communities, simply cross national borders and are recruited to fight in other wars or insurgency movements. The easy procurement of weapons and drugs, combined with a breakdown of traditional family and communal structures, was also cited as a prime cause of conflict in West Africa. The pervasiveness of rulers and regimes that finance wars both within their own borders and in neighboring states was another factor noted in the destabilization of West Africa, predominantly in the Mano River area.

Furthermore, acute poverty and the unequal distribution of resources, particularly in volatile countries like Nigeria, have fanned the flames of ethnic discord and have led to fractures at the state level. These fractures, despite attempts by national governments to crack down on militancy and ethnic and religious alliances, are evidenced in the recent outbreaks of ethno-religious fueled conflict. In this environment, it is imperative that outside peacekeepers or international monitoring bodies recognize the root causes of internal conflict if they are to address the crisis successfully. In West Africa, perhaps more acutely than the other regions, the concept of state sovereignty continues to dissolve while tribal and religious alliances align across borders and fuel the continuum of conflict in the region. The continuing destabilization of Côte d’Ivoire was given as a prime example of the state’s use of ethnic and religious propaganda to divide

the population and drive targeted groups across borders into other unstable countries. As one participant noted, “Côte d’Ivoire is now two states - the North and the South - separated by ECOWAS troops and French peacekeepers. Something must be done to address the conflict immediately because this is not a solution.”

In the Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes region, the history of conflict and outside interference in internal wars has left the region with a particularly fearful and negative view of military interventions for humanitarian purposes. In Eastern Africa, conflict was defined as “trans-generational” with internal wars that have continued for decades. Somalia and Rwanda stood out as examples of failed or grossly inadequate international military responses to humanitarian disasters while participants from Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo stated that outside interventions, whether by international actors or coalitions of frontline states, has contributed to the worsening of the conflict rather than its improvement. In direct response to the ICISS and FfP findings, participants asked, “When situations are so violent that they require military intervention, who is actually trying to stop these problems and why?” Moreover, participants from Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Congo-Brazzaville and Burundi stated that interventions into the conflicts that plagued their countries lacked transparency and were actually “a cover” for outside states and international actors to exploit natural resources for economic gains. This has led to contracting economies, debt, declining terms of trade and predatory investment in the region. A participant from Burundi stated: “In Eastern Africa, military interventions are about protecting interests, not people.”

Although conflicts in the Horn and the Great Lakes Region were not cited as being as overtly interconnected as those in West Africa, participants did agree that the cross-border trafficking of weapons, drugs and livestock posed a major threat in the border regions. The war between Ethiopia and Eritrea and the continuing tensions in those states despite the presence of UN peacekeepers (UNMEE) was noted as an example of a failure of the international body to resolve a “traditional”

interstate conflict in the region. The presence of refugees from the ongoing conflicts in Sudan and Somalia also were mentioned as being highly destabilizing internally to states that already lacked sufficient resources for their own populations. Despite these factors, the participants to the Kenya workshop were the most reluctant, based on prior history, to condone military intervention for any reason. One workshop participant even voiced the opinion that, “Instead of dying because of the military intervention, it may be better to continue to have serious problems and see what we can do locally. People are very afraid of another Somalia.”

Finally, if a military intervention was condoned as a last resort, participants all concurred that it would have to be comprised of actors with “absolutely no other interest than to stop the conflict for humanitarian purposes.” Such an intervention, therefore, must come in the form of a NATO or EU-led coalition and be almost exclusively international in force composition. A guest from Congo-Brazzaville said, “If it is a military intervention, then it must be a neutral military, which means it must not be from Africa.” This statement contrasted with earlier FfP findings where conference participants felt that it was better to have African peacekeepers in African conflicts and condoned the use of regional or subregional bodies. It also conflicted with the precepts and practices of the African Union, which emphasizes the use of African peacekeeping troops in African conflicts. Participants also stated that regardless of which international body led the intervention, there had to be a solid commitment to finance the intervention and contribute to peacebuilding and development after the cessation of violence. As a workshop participant from Burundi stated, “If the international community is not going to address financially the root causes of conflict in the region, then they must at least be willing to make sure that the peace is held through development after the war ends.”

In Southern Africa, several participants at the workshop articulated the core theme of humanitarian intervention in the form of a question: When and how do humanitarian and human rights issues become understood as security threats? There was substantial concern that such military

interventions are driven by national political motivations that would ultimately serve to destabilize further the affected country and the region. It was noted that, particularly in Southern Africa, acts of violence are not always obvious in their physical manifestations and can take the form of the politically motivated denial of food or basic needs as well as forcible dislocation. “Thousands are threatened with starvation in Zimbabwe; this is a humanitarian crisis although not one that a military intervention would fix.”

Participants also felt that the ICISS report did not adequately address the fundamental aspects of conflicts, such as insurgency movements, the role of outside actors in fueling or covering up conflicts in the region, and refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs). Historically, conflicts in Southern Africa have largely been characterized by strong independence movements against former colonial rulers or minority regimes and many states were subject to heavy outside interference during the Cold War. This legacy led individual states to take on leading roles in both the independence and insurgency movements in neighboring states and has enhanced the sentiment, at least on the political level, of a regional identity characterized by such struggles.

There remain, however, underlying tensions throughout the region based on what many view as the unfair hegemonic influence of South Africa. As the region’s most advanced economic and military power, participants from several states felt that South Africa unfairly monopolizes both regional and international trade agreements and encourages dependence rather than promoting region-wide sustainability. Several other participants were critical of South Africa’s political and military strategies, on the one hand citing the military intervention in Lesotho as “overboard” and, on the other hand, the failure to take a more aggressive stand against corrupt and repressive neighboring regimes such as Zimbabwe as “irresponsible.” Finally, the extremely high rate of HIV/AIDS in Southern Africa, the prevalence of child soldiers, landmines and small arms were also cited as root causes of conflict and destabilization in the region.

The Role of Civil Society, Subregional and Regional Bodies in Africa

The role of civil society in each region has been directly shaped by historical, political and cultural precedents that have defined the nature of regional conflict in sub-Saharan Africa. In each region, civil society has expressed a need for greater networking across national boundaries although some regions, West Africa in particular, have more experience working together to address crises. In all three regions, civil society organizations defined an over-reliance on outside donor funding as being a primary stumbling block in effectively addressing conflicts in a holistic and indigenous capacity. Moreover, in each region, workshop participants noted that many civil society organizations have historically had hostile relationships with national governments, resulting in marginalization at both the national and subregional level. Despite broad areas of consensus among the three regions, each workshop highlighted that civil society was unique in each sub region and confronted different challenges and sought different goals.

In West Africa, participants to the Ghana conference noted that civil society has often become part of the conflict by taking sides or becoming politicized by the government. Each country has a different relationship between civil society and the national government. Many of these relationships are viewed as antagonistic and characterized by high levels of distrust between the two parties. A participant from Nigeria stated, “They don’t trust us because for many years we protested against the government on its policies and actions instead of realizing we reflected the voice of the people.” It was noted, however, that civil society has had a history of engagement, both positive and negative, across borders in West Africa as conflicts in the region have necessitated interaction. Particularly with the recent wars in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Cote d’Ivoire, civil society organizations have often found themselves confronting the same issues — refugee and internal displacement crises, small arms and light weapons trafficking, the rape and mutilation of civilians, and the prevalence of child soldiers. Nevertheless, civil society cooperation in West Africa continues to

suffer from fragmentation and a lack of definition. In order to fully realize their collective agendas, there needs to be an overarching structure for communication and coordination among them. As one participant noted, “In West Africa we have non-governmental organizations, non-governmental individuals and many who are just interested in getting funding for their own agendas.”

In exploring civil society cooperation with the dominant sub regional body, The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), it was noted that experience in conflict intervention has also set precedents for action on the civil society level. ECOWAS has intervened in more subregional conflicts than any other regional body in the world, notably in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Côte d’Ivoire with military interventions; and in Guinea Bissau and Sao Tome and Principe in diplomatic interventions. However, participants felt that ECOWAS had largely failed to include civil society organizations in these processes and has ignored civil society organizations when sounding the signals of early warning. As civil society is the most familiar with issues affecting populations at the grassroots level, conference participants felt that ECOWAS should utilize civil society’s functions as “conflict watchdogs.”

While the appointment of a civil society liaison within ECOWAS and the summit of civil society organizations and ECOWAS, held in December 2003, were heralded as positive steps in formalizing relations between civil society and the subregional body, it was agreed that more cooperation was still needed. Specifically, participants felt that ECOWAS should work to strengthen civil society capacity through the creation of a West Africa civil society directory of expertise that could be readily called upon in conflict prevention and intervention. As civil society has direct experience working with civilians, particularly women and children, a failure to utilize their expertise in past interventions was cited as a fundamental flaw that had led to further human rights abuses. Moreover, by not including civil society input in interventions, participants noted that the institutional learning process was lost. “For ECOWAS, every intervention is like reinventing the wheel,” one participant remarked.

ECOWAS was not seen as effective in preventing humanitarian crises and human rights abuses in West Africa and is not generally respected for saving lives. Many civil society organizations see ECOWAS as “an organization in the sky” with little connection to the daily challenges and conflicts experienced on the ground. ECOWAS, by and large, is viewed as a “leaders club” and not an organization representative of the views and concerns of the people of West Africa. The failure of ECOWAS to deal with corrupt rulers and rogue regimes and punish member states for noncompliance with its treaties and the West African Moratorium on Small Arms and Light Weapons was also cited as a fundamental flaw in the organization. One participant characterized ECOWAS as a “toothless bulldog” run by several powerful heads of state but lacking the political will and resources to create an effective system to respond to conflicts before they become humanitarian disasters. Finally, a general lack of communication and information about ECOWAS treaties and actions is prevalent among civil society in all West African states. This has translated into an inability of civil society to convey information to local populations, particularly in respect to ECOWAS military interventions. A participant from Nigeria noted, “We found out that ECOWAS was intervening in Sierra Leone through the national news, the same way the rest of the world did. We had no idea that battalions of Nigerian soldiers were on their way there until after they had been deployed.”

The role of civil society in the Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes Region was characterized as distinctly different in many ways from civil society in West Africa. Although countries like Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda have vibrant and evolved civil society organizations, there is little networking across state borders. The ongoing crises in Sudan, Burundi, and the Democratic Republic of Congo, along with the complete collapse of Somalia and the terrorist attacks in Kenya and Tanzania, have led civil society organizations to focus inward toward more state-centered problems. As many conflicts in the region were defined as “trans-generational,” civil societies in countries like Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo have been

overwhelmed by the humanitarian crises occurring within their own borders for decades. As a participant from Sudan stated: “We have entire generations that have spent their lives moving from one refugee camp to another, depending on where the attacks occur and the government does not help.”

In the Horn of Africa, the effects of the war in Ethiopia and Eritrea and the failed state of Somalia have led to well-developed internal initiatives aimed at protecting local civilian populations but have not translated into a broad effort to act as a regional coalition of civil society actors. Furthermore, governments which have come to power through violence and the possession of weapons lack transparency and are not viewed as legitimate partners in civil society initiatives focused on promoting democracy and human security in the region. One conference participant noted, “How can you expect anyone to respect the government when the only legitimacy some presidents have is that they have more guns? Civil society must find ways to work together to minimize the capacity of armed groups to grab power.”

The relationship between the overlapping subregional organizations of IGAD, EAC, COMESA and civil society is not clearly defined.² Many civil society organizations, like those in West Africa, are largely unfamiliar with the treaties and protocols of sub-regional bodies and only have limited knowledge of their functions. A failure on the part of civil societies in the region to engage each other has translated into a failure to engage regional organizations and bridge the information gap. The perception of corrupt and undemocratically elected national governments that hindered cooperation at the national level has translated to similar perceptions at the subregional level. As one conference participant stated, “They are the same people except now they are in a group, what is the difference?”

Subregional bodies in the Eastern and Central Africa region have traditionally been focused on issues of food security and land reform and have no precedent for undertaking military interventions. In the past two years, however, IGAD has

demonstrated an interest in diplomatic interventions in regional conflicts and has hosted both the Somalia and Sudan peace talks. Particularly in the case of Somalia, there appears to be some progress on integrating civil society into the peace negotiations through the creation of technical committees tasked specifically with addressing the role of civil society organizations in the failed state. Additionally, the new government elected in Kenya in January 2003 has also demonstrated a desire to move away from state-centered politics and integrate regional initiatives aimed at reducing the incidence of conflict by creating spaces for civil society participation.

In the Somalia peace talks, for example, both Kenya and Uganda have taken a lead role in including civil society groups, women’s organizations among them, in the talks as well as attempting to employ traditional forms of mediation and reconciliation through the inclusion of village elders and “panels of the wise.” IGAD has also created a conflict early warning initiative, CEWARN, with fledgling attempts to stem pastoral conflicts through the direct participation of civilians in gathering information on potential conflicts. While the general findings of the workshop demonstrated that civil society interaction across state borders and engagement with regional bodies remains largely fragmented, there are attempts at certain levels to broaden and institutionalize conflict prevention and intervention mechanisms.

Overall, civil society participants to the Kenya workshop largely agreed that greater interaction and integration with other organizations, national governments, and regional and subregional bodies was a shared responsibility. A failure to learn about the mandates and functions of subregional and regional bodies and lobby at both a national and regional level hampered their abilities to influence policy and institute change on the ground. Participants further noted the need for subregional organizations to create local offices, as the region is so large that the ability of civil society actors to span the gap between local populations and national governments is limited. Finally, conference participants agreed that the best method of ensuring transparency and accountability of national and subregional bodies was through strong civil society

engagement in the policies and practices of governments and organizations. The creation of databases and directories of civil society experts, as well as national civil society platforms, was recommended as part of the process. A conference participant from Ethiopia noted, “We must counter the image held by governments that we are just a group of briefcase NGOs and unite as a collective force that gives a voice to the needs of civilians.”

In Southern Africa, some countries have active civic organizations capable of engaging in policy processes while others, especially South Africa, have a long experience with grass root movements that have confronted governments on political and economic issues. Participants to the South Africa workshop emphasized that a full understanding of civil society in Southern Africa must acknowledge the role played, not only by the anti-apartheid movement, but also by trade unions, religious groups, media organizations, and institutions of higher learning. A tendency for civil society and social movements to be urban-based was noted as being a key feature in Southern Africa. While this contributes to a degree of networking across national boundaries, it also limits contact with rural-based communities and grassroots organizations in other countries.

Civil society in Southern Africa, based on its participation in the independence struggles of individual countries and the fight to overcome the scourge of apartheid, has a history of cooperation, as one workshop participant noted, “It occurs naturally; we have a history of working together.” While participants agreed that civil societies throughout the region could benefit from greater networking, especially from joint skills training exercises, most Southern African countries have proactive civil society organizations that work across state lines. In South Africa, for example, civil society organizations with regional links have contributed to the peace processes in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Rwanda. In Mozambique and Zambia, according to participants, civil society has partnered with governments based on a mutual appreciation of the necessary roles played by each.

Southern African civil society’s views on its sub-regional organization, the South African Development Community (SADC), generally fell into two categories. Many participants viewed the organization as representative of an institutional desire to tackle conflicts and threats to human security from a regional perspective, while others saw the organization in terms of its overall inability to be more than a club for the region’s “big men.” Following the turbulent events in South Africa in 1994, the organization stated its commitment to ensuring the human security of the populations of member states. To date, however, SADC has not involved civil society organizations in regional processes of preventive diplomacy, early warning and peacebuilding.

As in the other regions, and some might argue to an even greater extent, there exists a pervasive lack of knowledge about SADC, its components and its protocols at the civil society level. Critics at the conference argued that the failure of governments and SADC to integrate civil society into diplomatic and conflict management initiatives reflects the organization’s tendency to place a higher value on protecting the sovereignty of its member states and their leaders than on addressing violence and potential humanitarian crises in the region.

SADC, like ECOWAS, has designated formal civil society representation within the organization through national committees and an NGO desk. The main problem in Southern Africa, however, is that few civil society members know that such points of entry exist or what they do. Furthermore, the ability of civil society actors to gain access to specific SADC protocols also remains problematic. As one conference attendee from Botswana recounted, “I spent hours trying to gain access to the Protocol on Peace and Security only to be told that I was not authorized to view a document that is supposed to be public knowledge.” Other participants noted that SADC representatives in their own countries had little information to offer and were unable to provide documentation about the structures and protocols of the organization. The failure of SADC to translate its protocols into the three main regional languages (English,

Portuguese and French) has also hindered the ability of civil society to explain the protocols to local populations or translate it into local languages.

A discussion of SADC's right to intervene militarily to halt conflicts in the region brought up questions of legitimacy, civil society participation, and the composition of intervening forces. As in the other regions, military interventions were seen as a last resort but were not unprecedented, as SADC had intervened in the conflict in Lesotho in 1998. Similarly, participants urged that, without prior consultation and training by civil society on issues of human rights, conflict resolution and the protection of vulnerable groups, such as women and children, military interventions could potentially do more harm than good. In post-conflict peacebuilding, civil society actors needed to be responsible for monitoring and providing feedback to SADC in order to create a unit devoted to "best practices" in intervention. Civil society representatives of some SADC countries also expressed concern that the military and political dominance of South Africa and its ability to undertake interventions alone might translate into other states being "pulled along" under the broader banner of SADC. Ultimately, while South Africa's economic, military and political clout were seen as a necessary component in leading the organization forward, broader civil society participation would also ensure that humanitarian interventions were well informed and representative of regional political will.

The African Union

When asked about the role of the African Union in conflict prevention and mediation, civil society representatives across Africa agreed that it was clearly too soon to assess the impact of the newly created organization, which succeeded the Organization of African Unity (OAU), and the newly established organs of the AU: the Peace and Security Council, the Continental Early Warning System, the African Standby Force and the Council of the Wise.³ Some voiced concern that the sheer number of members (fifty-three) makes it unable to react swiftly or decisively when crisis threatens or is occurring. Others worried that, like its

predecessor the OAU, the AU would ultimately guard state sovereignty over the security of its people. The location of the AU headquarters in Addis Ababa, and its recent intervention in Burundi made it a topic of concern in the conferences on the Horn of Africa, Great Lakes Region and Southern Africa. In West Africa, however, conference participants preferred to remain focused on the role of ECOWAS and its current and past military operations, as it was widely felt that it was likely to remain the primary future vehicle for intervention in the sub-region.

A further concern voiced by participants at the workshops was the tendency of the regional body to be dominated by the "big men" of Africa. Leaders from Nigeria, Libya, and South Africa, and to a certain extent Kenya and Algeria, have all been accused of dominating the politics of the organization and exerting pressure on less powerful states. Past incidents of powerful member-states paying the dues for other states has also reinforced the conviction that, despite the name change, the AU would never truly be a representative organization. A conference participant from Ethiopia remarked: "When one speaks about the strength of the AU, it is necessary to talk about the strength of individual states. The AU tries to convey that all members are equal but this only makes the organization look weak and it is not true." Moreover, other participants noted that most countries in Africa can barely afford to train and supply their own militaries and simply do not have the human or financial resources to contribute to an AU stand-by army or brigade. It was noted, however, that the acknowledgement by the AU that Africans had to assume responsibility for the security of their own continent was a very positive step. "It shows that we have learned that we cannot wait for the international community to rescue us from our own problems," a participant from Tanzania remarked.

Nevertheless, the reliance of the regional body on its member states for troops and supply contributions led many participants to dub it "the African United Nations." The recent African Union mission in Burundi (AMIB) was heavily reliant upon South Africa for support and also was only

mandated to act in self-defense and not to separate combatants or forcibly intervene to protect civilians. A lack of institutional planning also resulted in the reliance on draft Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) rather than a comprehensive mandate with defined Rules of Engagement (ROE). The African Union Mission in Burundi handed off responsibility to the UN quickly as the main donor states of South Africa, Ethiopia and Mozambique were overwhelmed by the heavy burden placed on their budgets and resources. The long-term sustainability of African Union missions must also be considered, according to participants, as the United Nations may not be as eager to take over the AU's responsibilities. Overall, the first deployment of troops under the aegis of the African Union was heralded as positive although most participants to the conferences recognized the need for a much greater focus on institutional processes so future missions do not appear poorly planned or ad hoc in nature.

The African Union undertook its most extensive conflict management endeavor with the African Mission in Sudan (AMIS). What began as a purely observer role when the monitors began in June 2004 has evolved into military mission with nearly 2,300 troops from African countries deployed throughout the Darfur region. Moreover, despite its inception as a ceasefire monitoring mission and ongoing concessions to the government of Sudan over who has the "formal" responsibility for the protection of civilians in Sudan, AMIS has undertaken activities that should be acknowledged as having a civilians protection effect. Moreover, the presence of the African Union on the ground in Darfur serves as a stark contrast to the inability of the United Nations Security Council to become actively engaged in civilian protection in Darfur.

AMIS has faced many challenges, however. Its difficulties in getting member countries to contribute troops to reach its deployment goals and its wholesale reliance on donor support for mission logistics, equipment, planning and strategic lift represent real weaknesses in the AU's ability to conduct such operations. At the same time, the AU has made progress in building cooperative relationships with other regional organizations, most

notably NATO and the European Union, in order to fill many of these gaps.

As with the subregional organizations, little is known about the African Union's treaties and protocols, and civil society feels largely alienated from its activities. One participant from the Democratic Republic of Congo noted, "We first need to promote ourselves and integrate with bodies in the subregion before we can think about the African Union." There is a perceived overall deficit of communication between the AU and its member states, which contributes to its relative obscurity for civil society organizations. As with subregional bodies, civil society organizations acknowledged that they bore partial responsibility in not reaching out to the African Union through advocacy or the creation of partnerships. Particularly in the case of the African Union, civil society participants felt that it was first necessary to unite as a collective force before approaching the organization because civil society organizations had been viewed as "spoilers" by the OAU. "We need to start with a campaign designed to promote mutual awareness and support because images need to be repaired," remarked a participant from Kenya.

In general, the ending of the OAU and the creation of the African Union, with the associated new initiatives proposed by the organization, were received well in theory but with a high degree of skepticism about their actual effectiveness. While civil society organizations in Eastern, Central, and Southern Africa seemed more aware of the role of the AU and its functions than participants in West Africa, there still remained large gaps in the flow of information from the AU to the civil society level. Increased networking and lobbying at the subregional level was, therefore, viewed as the necessary first step prior to efforts to engage the African Union.

The Impact of Conflict on Vulnerable Groups

It was recognized in all of the African workshops that, during wars, vulnerable groups were most likely to suffer both during the conflict and in its aftermath. Women, children, the elderly and the disabled were identified as being at particular risk

and were most likely to become refugees or IDPs and lacked access to social and civil services. In particular, attendees noted that in much of rural Africa, women suffer from a lack of basic knowledge about their rights and are completely dependent on traditional family structures that are eroded or destroyed during wars. In the aftermath, women often bear the full responsibility for caring for children, the elderly and disabled family members with no financial support or opportunities for employment. Additionally, as rape and mutilation have become systematically used as tools of war, women are at particular risk of becoming the victims of brutal sexual violence, which often leads to unwanted pregnancies, stigmatization and shunning from their local communities.

Similarly, children are often tortured or forcibly recruited to fight in wars and become disenfranchised from the family structure and have few opportunities for reintegration into civilian life once the hostilities have ended. The prevalence of child soldiers was noted repeatedly at each conference and one Liberian participant remarked, “A whole generation of children has been lost in Liberia.” Similar sentiments were echoed by participants from Somalia, Sudan, Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Women and children were also cited as being more vulnerable to attacks from rebels and at high risk for deaths and injuries from landmines. International efforts targeted at reintegrating women and child combatants are often under-funded or fall far short of addressing the specific needs of vulnerable populations. Further, there must be a close examination of cultural variables and an effort to work with indigenous civil society organizations on the ground in overcoming such obstacles. As one participant in West Africa remarked, “Even the most well-intentioned international efforts are often not effective because they fail to consider the culture of the people on the ground.”

In all three subregions, participants cautioned against viewing women and children simply as “victims” and pointed out that both groups are also stakeholders in conflicts. Women in all subregions had willingly joined insurgency movements and rebel groups and, in many cases, were highly revered as

fighters. In the war between Ethiopia and Eritrea, women were “on the front lines on both sides and were known for their courage and dedication,” noted an Ethiopian participant. Many women viewed the chance to fight as a form of emancipation from traditional structures and played main roles in recruiting other women. Women have also been used by governments and rebel groups to spy on their husbands and others suspected of subversion because they are not considered to be a threat. In Southern Africa, participants noted that both the government and rebel groups utilized a wide variety of recruitment tactics and incentives including education, emancipation from traditional structures, and promises of wealth and fame. This was particularly true in the struggle for the liberation of Zimbabwe; when the war was over, women who went back to their villages became “misfits” and were left out of the gains brought by emancipation.

It was also mentioned that children are known to be some of the most brutal fighters in wars but for different reasons. “Children who are taken [to become child soldiers] when they are very young do not have a developed moral sense of what they are doing and many of them are drugged so they just kill without thinking about it twice,” stated a participant to the West Africa workshop. When the war ends, these children, often infected with HIV or addicted to drugs, become street children or are recruited to fight in other wars. A participant from Uganda noted, “Now we have an entire generation of young people who are lost from wars, disease, and drugs.” The use of child soldiers, although officially denied, is still practiced by many governments as well as rebel groups in Africa. Until there are concerted efforts to prosecute violators, conference participants agreed that the practice would continue to flourish.

Women and children who are not combatants or direct victims of rape or abuse by the enemy during wartime still suffer in the aftermath. A participant from Lesotho noted that women are expected to encourage men to be violent as a display of their masculinity. This, in turn, creates a culture of conflict that results in further violence. Additionally, participants from Sierra Leone, Liberia, the

Democratic Republic of Congo, Sudan and South Africa all spoke of the high levels of domestic violence that occurred both during and in the aftermath of conflicts. In South Africa, the emasculation of black men often resulted in increased levels of the battering of women and children at home. In Liberia, the wars had robbed men of their livelihoods and many became alcoholics and abused their wives and children. Participants noted that, in these cases, national efforts at establishing reconciliation processes often failed to address issues of domestic violence or the psychological effects of war on men.

Indigenous reconciliation efforts spearheaded by women, however, were often quite successful at reaching a broader section of society. In Burundi and the Democratic Republic of Congo, reconciliation efforts undertaken by women were seen as particularly effective in contributing to national healing. Women's participation in national governments and subregional bodies, while still numerically low, was also believed to be a recognition on the part of many societies that women play a fundamental role in all aspects of peace and security. Civil society participants noted that they could play a role in pressuring regional bodies like the AU, which has mandated 30% of its seats to women, and subregional bodies to ensure that women are represented in the numbers guaranteed.

Conclusion

The three civil society workshops in Africa demonstrated that, while each subregion is shaped by its own unique history and current conflicts, civil society organizations have a valuable role to play in both preventing and intervening in humanitarian crises on the continent. While civil society organizations in West and Southern Africa have a history of working across national boundaries, all participants to the regional conferences agreed that greater networking was needed. In addition, participants called for the establishment of an overarching platform for civil society coordination. Reliance on donor funding and outside international assistance has often had negative effects on civil society organizations, creating competition and

necessitating organizations to change their mandates. Further, there was a recognition that civil society organizations must also look to their own governments, sub-regional and regional bodies for support in order to address the needs of affected populations in an indigenous and holistic manner. Creating national platforms and utilizing existing entry points, as well as identifying and linking with civil society organizations that were already involved with these bodies, was a recommendation that came from all three subregions.

The need to become more engaged in lobbying sub-regional and regional bodies to ensure civil society participation in decisions that affect populations on the ground was seen as fundamental. Also, across the subregions there was an acknowledgement that civil society actors need to assume responsibility for taking a more active role in finding out about the protocols and activities of subregional bodies in order to disseminate information to local populations. Similarly, participants agreed that the creation of national and regional databases on civil society expertise was needed in order to allow organizations to be able to access such information quickly both during and after an intervention. Improving cooperation and coordination through training, joint summits, and capacity-building exercises were all mentioned as activities aimed at integrating the work of civil society organizations and national and subregional bodies. Information campaigns in local languages and through the use of a wide variety of media were also cited in all regions as innovative measures aimed at raising civilian awareness of the organizations.

Finally, the role of women, children and other vulnerable groups in conflict was carefully explored and defined at each workshop with perspectives from many countries. Civil society experts agreed that, without a close examination of culture and history of vulnerable groups, military interventions could potentially exacerbate suffering rather than alleviate it. Furthermore, the necessity of including local civil society experts in all stages of planning, deployment and post-conflict operations was also highlighted, particularly in regards to women and children. The issue of child soldiers was identified as a problem that faced the entire continent and

needed to be addressed at the international, regional and national levels. A concerted effort by the current UN missions in Africa with assistance from the main subregional bodies and local civil society actors could help address this problem with targeted and culturally relevant disarmament and reintegration programs and donor assistance. The significant role that women have played, at the civil society and grassroots levels, in addressing the needs of vulnerable populations and promoting reconciliation and peacebuilding should be acknowledged by governments and multinational bodies.

Civil society organizations in sub-Saharan Africa have many burdens and limitations, but they are committed to eradicating the root causes of conflict in their respective regions and working to empower regional and subregional bodies to better address the needs of civilian populations. There is a growing awareness of the need to network with each other and become actively engaged in advocacy, monitoring and training across national boundaries.

In all three workshops, concrete recommendations and plans to move forward underscored two successful days of dialogue and workshops. As one participant in Kenya summed up, “We have a role and a responsibility to connect the grassroots with the leadership to help prevent the conflicts that kill so many innocents in Africa.”

ENDNOTES

¹ See attached summary document from the October 2001 Fund for Peace conference.

² IGAD: The Intergovernmental Authority on Development; EAC: The East African Community; COMESA: Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa

³ The Sirte Extraordinary Session (1999) decided to establish an African Union. The Lome Summit (2000) adopted the Constitutive Act of the Union. The Lusaka Summit (2001) drew the road map for the implementation of the AU and established the Peace and Security Council, Continental Early Warning System, African Standby Force and Council of the Wise. The Durban Summit (2002) launched the AU and convened the 1st Assembly of the Heads of States of the African Union.

AMERICAS

There is a need to establish new and effective tools to prevent conflicts, create early-warning systems, and strengthen the abilities of civil societies to prevent and respond to crises that affect Latin America and the Caribbean. These were the findings from the conference, “Building Regional Responsibility to Protect: The Role of Civil Society,” held in Chile on July 29-30th, 2004.

The conference was organized by The Fund for Peace and FLACSO-Chile and held at the FLACSO seat in Santiago, Chile. It gathered more than forty participants from a wide range of civil society organizations and academic institutions, as well as representatives of the armed forces and governments from throughout the region. Participants came from fifteen countries: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Costa Rica, Chile, Cuba, Ecuador, Haiti, Guatemala, Mexico, Nicaragua, Peru, the Dominican Republic, Venezuela, and Uruguay.

The Definition of Security

Debate focused around the necessity to seek a more inclusive concept of security that actively incorporates civil society in the Americas into the peacebuilding process. Participants recommended that this concept contain at least two elements.

First, national and regional visions of security should represent the diverse interests and priorities of the region. The Americas, it was noted, comprises four distinct areas; North, Central, the Andean region, and the Southern Cone. The Caribbean subregion, nearby and with cultural, political and economic links to the Americas, was discussed as well. All too often, participants observed, the

interests and internal problems of one state set the agenda for the entire subregion when each state has its own particular security needs. It was agreed that internal wars, such as the conflict in Colombia, spill over borders and cause wider insecurity for neighboring states. However, there remains a tendency in the international community to view the Colombian conflict as the sole source of instability in the region. Bolivia, it was mentioned, is also a state that is close to collapse. Internal instability in Venezuela and Peru were also cited as posing particular threats to the region that are often not taken seriously enough by the international community because of the greater attention paid to Colombia. Some participants noted that the strong preference on the part of the United States for military solutions to the Colombian conflict has contributed to the perception in Latin America that the US favors solving conflict in the region through military means.

Participants stressed that globalization has generated processes of differentiation rather than homogenization throughout the region, which becomes clear when examining the topic of regional security. In this respect, the nature of conflicts that affect security in the Americas differs according to the subregion. While Andean countries have problems stemming from uneven socioeconomic development and ongoing intrastate crises, Central America exhibits problems related to a lack of economic growth, persistent poverty, continuous border conflicts and an increase in crime. MERCOSUR¹ member countries, for their part, have problems related to internal security as well as issues that are transnational in nature (mainly trafficking in small arms and light weapons) and disputes resulting from unresolved territorial and

boundary issues. At the same time, even within the subregions, it is evident that each country has different security priorities.

Second, progress needs to be made in the ability of civil society to translate its concerns into concrete policy recommendations. Participants stated that far too often the topic of security and human rights is debated in academic settings but rarely translated into the policymaking process. Additionally, the nexus between human security, human rights, and state security is an area in which civil society could contribute strongly to policies aimed at prevention and reconstruction. It was noted that exclusion and social marginalization are particular problems that civil society works on in many Latin American states. Although they are factors that lead to insecurity, these are rarely considered in the context of state and regional security.

Furthermore, the group emphasized that it is important that the armed forces not be used for issues that are developmental in nature, avoiding the “securitization” of the development agenda. The “militarization” or “securitization” of social, economic and political problems – by deploying the armed forces – could aggravate existing conditions of unrest rather than mitigating them. Particularly in states already confronting weak and failing civilian institutions and a steadily deteriorating security environment, participants strongly warned against the use of the military as it could potentially lead to human rights abuses and undermine the rule of law. Participants feared a return to military dictatorships, which faced the region throughout the 1970s and 1980s. Clearly defining the concepts of human security, human rights and state security, and the links that exist among them, is fundamental and should not be overlooked in the search for a broader definition of security.

Understanding the Nature and Timing of Conflicts

Participants felt that conflicts in the Americas stem from three primary sources: a lack of socioeconomic and institutional development within states; latent and longstanding interstate conflict; and the emergence of transnational problems (drugs

and weapons trafficking and organized crime) that have a great impact on both domestic and regional security. In order to begin to address conflicts in Latin America, the interrelationship among these three causes of conflict must be understood, as they inspire conflicts within states, between states and across national boundaries.

Participants stressed the need to highlight the diverse nature of conflicts in Latin America and the Caribbean so that creating a successful plan for prevention and resolution would be based on the specific characteristics of each conflict. There were four types of conflicts defined: urban violence, political violence, transnational conflicts and interstate crises.

Urban violence, as detailed by a participant from Brazil, is not necessarily characterized by the existence of political motivations or the presence of insurgent groups. Rather, urban violence mainly stems from armed criminal groups comprised of young men, aged 15-29 years, coming from poor neighborhoods in large cities and with low levels of access to education and the formal job market. These criminal gangs are mainly engaged in the illegal sale of drugs and firearms and pose a significant threat to the stability of several of Latin America’s large urban centers. Violence, characterized as gang warfare over territory, has reached extremely high levels in the past several years and claimed the lives of significant numbers of young boys and men as well as innocent civilians trapped in the battle zones. An absence of effective state institutions and a lack of basic public services have also contributed to the escalation of violence.

Urban violence is most prevalent in Brazil and El Salvador, countries that are not experiencing “formal” wars, although the ineffective or incomplete demobilization of young guerrilla fighters in Colombia has also led to similar problems in the cities of Cali and Medellin. In many cases, participants noted, state attempts to stem the violence by employing strong police and military force had only exacerbated the situation rather than ameliorating it. The biggest victims of urban violence, one participant stated, are the families of

the boys killed by the police who then lose the only source of income they have. Addressing the root causes of urban violence, such as the provision of basic amenities by the state, would be far more effective at ending the crisis than trying to arrest or kill the perpetrators.

The threat of political violence continues to be a problem in many countries in the region. Participants pointed out that Latin America, in particular, has a long history of political violence with numerous internal conflicts of varying intensity spurred by guerrilla movements, state and rebel-sponsored terrorism, military coups d'état and revolutionary movements. The roots of political violence are found in the socio-economic structures of many countries in the region characterized by massive inequalities in income and wealth distribution as well as territorial conflicts. Despite reform campaigns undertaken throughout the past several decades, especially in Central America and the Andean region, chronic poverty and inequality place states at high risk for backsliding into chaos or collapse, participants warned.

Although Colombia and Haiti stand out as the most persistent examples of unresolved political violence in the Americas, other countries continue to linger on the brink. Venezuela, it was observed, remains politically and economically divided and has experienced several episodes of violence that easily could grow into a wide scale internal conflict.

Indigenous movements in the Andes, most notably in Bolivia and Peru, have grown in strength over the past several years and have become increasingly radical and violent in their opposition tactics. One participant warned that the discovery of vast gas reserves and the continuation of US-backed coca eradication campaigns have pushed Bolivia to edge of state crisis, with upheavals in 2003 and 2005 over the president's tenure as an example of the fragility of the state. In Peru, also having experienced violent protests that led to fall of the President Fujimoro in 2000, both endemic corruption and severe poverty have contributed to the rising levels of armed robberies, murders and gang-related warfare.

If the widening social and economic gaps in these countries are not taken seriously and steps taken to immediately address the issues, participants warned of a return to the brutal political violence of the past.

Both transnational conflicts and interstate crises were defined as largely stemming from unresolved crises in the region as well as part of the legacy of conflicts of the past. Conflicts in the Americas, it was noted, do not normally manifest themselves in widescale outbreaks of violence, and they are addressed as they "flare up" rather than being effectively resolved. Inter-American and international mediation efforts have focused on calming and containing crises rather than resolving them and, as a result, conflicts have simmered, often for decades. The wide availability of weapons resulting from continuing conflicts and partial or ineffective disarmament and demobilization processes in post-conflict states pose a continued threat of transnational and interstate conflicts becoming quickly militarized.

The Responsibility to Protect

Conference participants agreed that civilian protection is the shared responsibility of states and civil society actors in the region and includes the specific aspects of prevention, reaction and rebuilding. A need to focus on the role of civil society in preventing conflict was underscored. Most participants believed that military intervention should be the last resort in the region. However, it was agreed that it is important to advance the debate on when a conflict necessitated an intervention and who should intervene, both topics of critical relevance.

The Americas, with the exception of the ongoing crises in Haiti and Colombia, has seen few conflicts that have resulted in humanitarian emergencies on a scale comparable to those that consumed Southeastern Europe in the 1990s or that continue to rage in Africa. The wars waged in Central America over the past several decades were characterized by low-intensity armed conflicts and insurgency movements that, over time, resulted in civilian casualties and internal displacement crises.

Nevertheless, because these conflicts at times were amenable to temporary political solutions and did not garner the international outrage at genocidal or ethnic cleansing campaigns that resulted in outside military interventions in Europe and Africa, participants had a difficult time conceptualizing something on par with the NATO interventions in the Balkans occurring in Latin America.

Since crises in the Americas have often been political in nature and not the deliberate and sustained targeting of religious or ethnic minorities by the state, most participants felt that a military intervention would only exacerbate political tensions and awaken or embolden minority secessionist aspirations. One participant pointed out that the potential for a humanitarian disaster in some of the unstable states of the Central American and Andean regions is also held in check by the existence of their more powerful neighbors to the north and south. While many states continue to experience political upheaval and guerrilla insurgencies, a massive humanitarian disaster that would result in high numbers of civilian casualties and a refugee crises could, it was felt, quickly be mitigated by either the United States in the north or one of the more powerful Southern Cone countries of Brazil, Argentina or Chile. The problem, however, as mentioned earlier, is that long-simmering conflicts are often addressed in the short term and states can remain in a semi-permanent state of “near collapse.” Haiti, it was stated, is often viewed as an anomaly in the Americas but, as it has twice been the subject of military interventions to stop humanitarian catastrophes, it must be more closely examined.

The fact that, in little over a decade, Haiti has experienced two political crises that have necessitated outside military interventions should not be seen as an anomaly but as example of a wider regional inability to confront the deeper factors leading to state collapse. More importantly, participants argued, Haiti presents the tragic example of how poverty and a lack of development can fuel political unrest that can rapidly spiral into the level of violence that claims innocent civilian casualties. Despite two military interventions and subsequent UN administrations, Haiti has remained

the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere. The international community and the region in general have not responded to the root causes of Haiti’s collapse and only reacted to its symptoms.

A participant from Haiti questioned whether the intervention was motivated by a desire to protect civilians from grave human rights abuses or by a larger concern on the part of the United States of a massive flood of refugees in the southern state of Florida. This question, combined with the failure of the first UN intervention to address the severe developmental gap between Haiti and the rest of the countries in the hemisphere, has given rise to the sentiment in Haiti that the international community is only committed to short-term stability arrangements meant to end the immediate violence. Through committed and sustained international efforts to help Haiti become a truly democratic and developed nation the region as a whole can truly demonstrate the principles of *The Responsibility to Protect*.

Multilateral Responses

As it stands, the region depends on ad hoc mechanisms which seek to contain conflicts rather than prevent them. This dimension makes it very difficult to build subregional or hemispheric solutions to national problems that threaten regional security. The Colombia conflict was given as an example of a national crisis that, if it worsens, would have negative regional consequences. It was noted, however, that the region has experienced successful multilateral attempts to end internal conflict, as in the case of the Arias Peace Plan, the diplomatic efforts by the heads of Central and South America countries to bring peace to Central America, which began in 1987.

The Organization of American States (OAS) simply has not played a major role in the protection of civilians in the region. To be fair, the fault lies not in the OAS itself but, as in instances in which the UN and other regional bodies have failed to act, in the lack of will on the part of its member states to impart any real authority or capacity to the organization to intervene. As a result, the OAS does not possess the institutional authority to

intervene to stop widespread human rights abuses or massive loss of life. There is also no “coercive” mechanism within the OAS Charter and a lack of consensus on the part of the OAS members about when confronting serious threats to constitutional democracy. Hence, the Inter-American Democratic Charter, which was adopted in 2001, has remained only at the level of the expression of principles. It can be said that while there have been some steps towards greater respect for human rights and the protection of civilians in the region, especially at the level of rhetoric, many Latin American countries still hold fervently to the principles of respect for national sovereignty and non-interference in domestic affairs. In addition, given that very few countries are exempt from civil unrest or internal conflict of some sort, pushing for action to be taken in a neighboring country is seen as opening up oneself for similar interventions.

The OAS has demonstrated a significant inability to act, not only when confronted with humanitarian emergencies like Haiti, but also when countries in the region flagrantly abuse the rule of law, suspend democratic processes, and perpetuate human rights abuses against their citizens. Although it successfully mediated the political crisis in Peru in 2000-2001, the OAS has continued to exhibit shortcomings as a regional body to mitigate and manage crises. The obstacles to action are familiar. The OAS relies on member consensus before action and, like the UN, relies on its member states to provide the financial and military resources for undertaking an intervention. Beyond being hampered by the need for consensus and member state contributions, the OAS has failed to move beyond rhetoric in regard to activating its “Cooperative Security” principle outlined in Santiago in 1991. Although the OAS Democratic Charter outlines the need for an “inter-American system” of collective security based on the “defense of democratic systems of governance,” it contains no actual mechanisms to mandate an intervention in the instance of a crisis.

When the Bush administration, at the OAS General Assembly in May 2005, called for the creation of a mechanism to respond to threats to democratic governance in the region and for an increased role

for the region’s civil society organizations, two dynamics combined to see the proposal rejected. First, countries of the region have grown increasingly skeptical of US interference in the region’s, to the point of calling the proposal. Second, the proposal struck at the heart of the organization’s inability to obtain from its members a commitment to any type of binding mechanism that could infringe on state sovereignty. As a result, the proposal was significantly weakened to the point that the final declaration called only for the incoming OAS secretary general to produce *a report* evaluating the organization’s effectiveness at protecting democracy. The idea of an expanded role for civil society was completely rejected by the General Assembly and failed to reach the final declaration.

In addition, the OAS has suffered from a lack of credibility on the part of many of its member states because many of them feel that too large a role has been played by the United States. The location of the OAS headquarters in Washington and the perceived instances of the U.S. “bullying” the OAS to concede to actions other member states deemed unacceptable has only underscored this belief. Additionally, within the organization itself, there are sharp disagreements over the role of the organization as a protector and enforcer of democracy and human rights. Key nations, like Mexico, refuse to consider the adoption of coercive mechanisms to enforce the right of the body to intervene in intra-state conflicts. Despite acknowledgement on the part of many of its members that the hemisphere is facing new and emerging threats that fuel internal conflict and lead to state collapse, it has been unable, in mandating action, to play a greater role in regional security and the protection of civilians.

Finally, participants noted that there exists a mutual relationship of distrust between the United States and many countries in the region which has impeded attempts to create a more formal Inter-American security system to solve regional conflicts. From the perspective of countries from Central America and the Southern Cone, the politics of hemispheric security are driven by the interests of countries in North America and the Andean region, most notably

the war in Colombia and U.S. tensions with Venezuela, and not necessarily inclusive of their broader regional concerns.

The Role of Civil Society

In general, regional topics are not on the agenda of civil society organizations. Civil society actors rarely work on issues such as region-wide peace and security, the development of a multilateral agenda, the lack of democracy within regional and subregional bodies. Most civil society organizations are engaged at the academic level or focus on topics more closely related to peacebuilding rather than crisis response and humanitarian intervention. It was noted that civil society has failed to produce concrete solutions to the region's security problems that go beyond the ideological debate. These matters are still seen as falling within the domain of state responsibility.

Participants stated that the process of globalization has caused some civil society organizations to focus solely on the local level and how to respond to development-related issues without fully incorporating a regional security perspective into their work. Moreover, as each country in Latin America and the Caribbean emerges from the conflicts and political crises of the past, the nature of civil society and the issues being addressed differ widely. As such, it is difficult to form a network of organizations to address issues on a regional basis.

As most civil society organizations rely on outside funding and donor support, it presents a constant challenge to remain both financially sustainable and autonomous as civil society actors often find their work dictated by and reliant upon outside agendas. This variable also makes it problematic to formulate organizational agendas and long-term strategies. Participants also noted a general lack of accountability and transparency among civil society organizations in the region.

Further, civil society in the Americas has not always been successful in establishing channels of communication with local and national governments and at the multilateral level, making networking across national boundaries difficult. It was noted

that the nature of governance in Latin America differs vastly in each subregion and relationships between civil society organizations and governments are highly reflective of this dynamic. In many cases, such as Chile and Costa Rica, the lines of communication that allow for greater civil society input into government policy occur mainly through academic institutions that have formed effective links to governments. In Colombia and the Dominican Republic, civil society organizations work with the government but they are focused on communicating the grievances of particular marginalized groups operating within the state. In other states, such as Argentina, Brazil and Venezuela, civil society has at times achieved action but has also been co-opted by the government in various neo-populist movements. In other Caribbean and Central American countries emerging from internal conflict in the past two decades, civil society is only beginning to emerge as a legitimate actor in fragile democracies. In Haiti and Cuba, civil society has had limited space to operate and needs to be fostered.

In underscoring these challenges, participants to the conference highlighted that the diverse nature of social and democratic development that hinders inter-state civil society cooperation is magnified when attempting to engage regional bodies. Finding a single platform to lobby regionally is difficult, if not impossible, in the Americas as subregional threats vary so widely. The OAS, while nominally representative of all states in the Americas, is not confronted by the same regional threats to security but rather threats that predominate by subregion. The conflict in Colombia and the developmental disparities faced by civil society in Central America and the Andean region are virtually non-existent in North America and steadily improving in South America. Similarly, the state collapse of Haiti and its continued alarming poverty and developmental crises are not acutely replicated anywhere else in the region. Thus, threats to regional security in the Americas are viewed more on a subregional basis and fall within the domain of subregional bodies, like the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and MERCOSUR, but still vary widely enough to hinder the formation of an active civil society movement based specifically on threats leading to a greater

humanitarian emergency. This has led to the trend of civil society organizations focusing much more deeply on a national level, often divorced from both a regional and subregional identity.

It was noted, however, that the trend to focus on a local level has united civil society on several platforms related to peacebuilding and development issues that can be utilized as active lines of communication and foster a greater sense of regional cooperation. In most of Latin America and the Caribbean, for example, civil society organizations are engaged in campaigns concerning human rights, women's movements, indigenous rights campaigns and other movements based on the negative effects of globalization. Moreover, as noted earlier, the growing trend in urban violence and the violence resulting from urban overpopulation afflicts many countries in the region. There are many successful experiences in terms of the impact of civil society organizations on these topics, especially on issues related to supporting human rights and the environment, and participants stressed the need for civil society to share experiences, particularly positive ones.

Recommendations:

Creating Instruments

Creating an analytical matrix of the conflicts occurring in Latin America and the Caribbean in an attempt to raise the awareness level of civil society

By promoting greater awareness of the different types of conflicts, civil society organizations can participate in the prevention, resolution and rebuilding process. It was proposed that the matrix should include strategies and policy options for the prevention of possible conflicts; responses to present conflicts (Colombia); post-conflict situations (Haiti), and the identification of new threats (urban violence).

Designing a virtual network for conflict prevention and resolution at the regional level

The aim of the network would be to obtain information rapidly and to create a common system for better coordination of civil society efforts.

Creating new sources of information that provide data on particular issues, for example, on small arms and drug trafficking

Impact and dissemination strategies

Strengthening networks through the Internet

Create a registry of civil society organizations that are working on security and conflict prevention issues at the hemispheric level. Participants favored the use of the Internet as a tool for establishing a web site. This site would facilitate the exchange of experiences and best practices among civil society actors.

Setting the agenda for action at the national level

Define action strategies to be applied when engaging government officials and parliamentarians.

Generating new spaces of influence at the multilateral level

Promote the incorporation of new societal groups into existing spaces of influence, both formal and informal, in hemispheric organizations. For example, the OAS allows non-governmental organizations to participate in General Assembly meetings although this channel has not yet been fully utilized by civil society organizations.

Creating a dialogue with the media

Establish communication with national and regional media in order to bring issues of peacebuilding to the greater public.

Training

Good practices

Promote the sharing of successful experiences by civil society organizations through seminars and professional NGO exchanges.

Peacekeeping operations and training

Foster a dialogue between the armed forces and civil society through national and regional seminars focusing on each group's experiences during peacekeeping operations.

Support the inclusion of civil society organizations working on security issues in the courses held at regional peacekeeping training centers.

Courses for journalists

Provide training in conflict management issues to journalists in order to promote a discussion on new visions and approaches to these matters within the region.

ENDNOTES

¹ Mercosur membership comprises Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay. Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Venezuela are associate members.

ASIA

On October 12-14, 2004, The Fund for Peace and the Institute for Strategic and Development Studies brought together civil society representatives from throughout Southeast Asia to discuss the role of civil society in protecting civilians threatened by armed conflict.

The workshop, which was convened in Manila, opened with a discussion of how the principles put forth in the *Responsibility to Protect* report might apply in the context of Southeast Asia. In particular, the chairs pushed participants to consider regionally-specific scenarios that met the threshold for outside military intervention for human protection purposes outlined in the report and how the region would react if the host government refused to uphold its responsibility to protect civilians.

Participants struggled to reconcile a growing acknowledgement of the need to protect civilians in conflict areas with a deep concern over the dangers of unleashing outside military intervention. Two main points were made:

- Military interventions often fail and cause more damage than they prevent; and
- Powerful countries frequently ignore rules and guidelines for military intervention.

Hence, the context for the discussion of criteria guiding military intervention was the inability of the international community to enforce existing guidelines surrounding the use of force. In short, how will the international community ensure that guidelines are respected and followed by countries that intervene?

The group held that military intervention, even to protect civilians, could not be separated from national security calculations. Since September 11, 2001 the issue of humanitarian intervention has been muddled and must be considered alongside other interventions. The ongoing violence in Afghanistan and Iraq has led to a loss of confidence in the ability of military interventions to protect the lives of civilians. Nevertheless, the group conceded the value of the concept of *The Responsibility to Protect* and that concept's commitment to protecting civilians in conflict zones.

The topic of military intervention to protect civilians has received greater attention in the region in recent years. Examples were given of meetings between policy think tanks and government officials to discuss the topic. In each case, government officials expressed resentment over the potential intrusion on state sovereignty implied in the *Responsibility to Protect* report. But now, given the greater attention being paid by outside actors to internal conflicts, especially in fragile states, there is a more realistic understanding that intervention in a multilateral context is a better alternative than, and may prevent, unilateralism. This is especially relevant in intense conflict areas or when there is a compelling humanitarian need to resolve conflict quickly and avoid more bloodshed and loss of lives.

Participants argued that while Southeast Asians are hesitant to accept the concept of military intervention in its entirety, increased discussion of the topic has produced a realization that, if states failed to protect their people, responsibility shifts to the international community to protect them. Nonetheless, participants were extremely skeptical of outside interference and quick to remind the

group that not all military interventions are geared towards protection of civilians.

Against such skepticism, participants emphasized certain principles present in *The Responsibility to Protect* report would improve the chances of a legitimate intervention:

- The intention of the intervening forces must be made clear from the very beginning of the intervention. This would enable observers to assess whether the intervention achieved its intent.
- With respect to timing, interventions should come before intensification of a conflict. Otherwise, it may be too late.

It was noted that military intervention for the protection of human life was experienced in the region, particularly in the case of East Timor. Participants maintained, however, that because the mission took place only after Indonesia gave its consent, that it should be considered as a traditional peacekeeping operation. Thus, participants argued against using the term “military intervention” because it might be misunderstood. This term is often taken to mean “changing a regime.” It was therefore suggested that the term “peacekeeping” be used instead of “military intervention.” Furthermore, many in the region emphasize that the objective of peacekeeping operations is to establish peace and not engage in combat, which limits outside action when a peace agreement has not been achieved or armed spoilers continue to target civilians. It was also stressed that the UN framework for the use of force was applied in the cases of East Timor and Cambodia. And as a result, the peacekeeping forces in Southeast Asia operated under the authority of the UN.

According to participants, the question: “Is the *Responsibility to Protect* viewed as a regional norm in Southeast Asia?” highlights the importance of raising people’s consciousness about issues of civilian protection. It also promotes norms that make governments accept and realize their responsibility to protect vulnerable groups. States and societies must consciously think of their responsibility to protect women and children. In

the ASEAN region, the norm that has been ingrained in the region is non-interference. However, the 1997 Asian financial crisis led to the increasing awareness among countries in the region that what happens in neighboring countries matters to them. Thus, there was a proposal to change the norm from non-interference to “flexible engagement” or “enhanced interaction.” However, it is still questionable whether this idea has the support of governments in the region.

The Role of Civil Society

Participants were highly aware that the *Responsibility to Protect* means more than military intervention to protect civilians: as such, much of the discussion focused on the broader spectrum of conflict management and peacebuilding. In this context, participants gave the following examples of how civil society in Southeast Asia might address ongoing and potential conflict:

- Monitor and publicize massive violations of human rights and monitor international and regional responses;
- Advocate for the protection of civilians throughout the region;
- Participate directly in peace-making and peacebuilding in conflict areas;
- Analyze and address the root causes of conflicts to make outside interventions more holistic in approach;
- Provide non-military services and humanitarian assistance in conflict areas;
- Ensure that local perspectives in conflict areas are amplified and not neglected in the intervention process;
- Work with governments to prevent conflict;
- Work with civil society networks at the regional and international level to alert the international community regarding conflicts; and
- Build and strengthen human security norms in the region, such as banning land mines, encouraging a respect for human rights, etc.

Participants also made observations on the character of civil society groups in the region, identified threats to peace and stability for their country and the region, discussed the challenges

that civil society organizations (CSOs) face, and outlined what they have done to address regional threats.

Character of Civil Society in the Region

This discussion provided a window on the uneven nature and structure of civil society in the region. Differences can be assessed by the amount of political space allowed for civil society to operate in each country as well as in the level of engagement between CSOs by governments on policies. Participants noted that civil society is more developed in Thailand, Indonesia, and the Philippines. With respect to countries such as Singapore and Malaysia, participants spoke of those governments' ability to provide goods and services to the populations, thus minimizing the role of civil society organizations in this regard. In other countries, such as Vietnam, Cambodia, and to a much greater extent Burma, governments view civil society as a threat to regime stability. As a result, the presence and impact of civil society on the policy-making process is limited.

To participants, civil society organizations in the region have worked on a number of different issues that reflect the kind of challenges faced by their constituencies. Some civil society organizations work on poverty alleviation, economic development and the environment; others are locally-based actors that promote accountability and transparency. This type of work has reached a level of maturation such that, to some extent, civil society is able to engage government and international financial institutions on selected, mainly developmental, issues. Despite greater consultation with civil society on development discussions, governments in the region still conceive of security along traditional lines, focusing on state security. This translates into little attention paid to human security issues and a low level of engagement with civil society organizations in the realm of security.

Throughout the meetings, participants distinguished between two general types of nongovernmental actors: those involved in Track II and Track III activities. This system of classification breaks down in the following manner with respect to the

relationship among certain actors and the policy-making process. Track I activities consist of meetings of government officials and inter-governmental organizations; the outputs of these meetings are policies and do not involve civil society. Track II activities include think tanks, government officials (in their private capacities), business and media. Initially, civil society organizations were not included in Track II because of the resistance of some civil society groups to engage governments and vice versa. Track II institutions participate in policy dialogues but government officials who are engaged in this level do so in their private capacities. Track II does not produce official policy but provides indirect input to policy making. Track III activities involve non-governmental organizations and other civil society organizations at the grassroots level. Throughout the discussion, the group returned to the need to link more effectively these three types of activities and actors together.

Participants recognized that established lines of communication among Tracks I, II and III institutions are lacking. In some ASEAN countries, civil society organizations are weak or do not exist at all. Hence, there is a need to support civil society groups where they are fragile through networking and the transfer of learning and resources. Moreover, the group agreed that civil society groups can no longer rely on confrontational tactics – for some the “traditional approach” – in their dealing with government actors. Track III actors should engage Tracks I and II to get their agenda to official channels and influence policy making. At the same time, Track II actors have an important role to play, serving as the link facilitating interaction between Tracks I and III.

In general, civil society organizations in the Southeast Asian region have done extensive work in the area of promoting and protecting the rights of vulnerable groups, particularly at the grassroots level. However, their main challenge continues to be delivering their message to governments as well as to the general public. At the same time, some governments in the region are reluctant to engage community-based groups. Despite these difficulties, and in order to achieve their goal of contributing to

the protection of civilians, civil society organizations must continue to engage governments. In some countries within the region, there is also the perception that Track II groups are too closely linked to governments and this has hampered their efforts to work with local communities and grassroots actors.

Examples of mechanisms by which a better understanding among these actors may be achieved include the ASEAN People's Assembly (APA) process and the ASEAN-ISIS Colloquium on Human Rights.¹ Regional initiatives such as these should be intensified. However, an observation was made that, thus far, the APA process has tended to involve mostly Tracks II and III actors. Hence, in order to increase the utility of the APA process as a venue for discussion and sharing of views among governments, policy institutions and grass roots groups, more government officials must be brought into the process. In addition, more sustainable and systematic communication channels among these three sets of actors must be put in place to bridge differences among them. In relation to the general public, efforts must also be exerted to improve the public's awareness and understanding of the processes within ASEAN as well as the ASEAN-ISIS. This can be done through seminars and other information-sharing initiatives.

In the case of the Philippines, there are already many civil society organizations working on regional human rights and security issues and they are likewise well-represented in local and national planning bodies. Dialogue and consultations between government and civil society actors have been formalized and institutionalized through national and local legislation. As such, CSOs can voice their concerns directly to the national government and its officials. However, there is a need for Tracks II and III actors in the Philippines to reach out to the international community, specifically by strengthening their networking with other organizations in the region and beyond.

The discussion on the capacity of civil society organizations in the region included challenges that civil society organizations face in obtaining financial support and how this affects their work. On the

whole, participants stressed the importance of identifying potential donors who will support such initiatives with resources, and, importantly, sharing this information. In addition, participants made the following points:

- Regional self-reliance must be achieved to avoid over-dependence on resources provided by donor institutions. Participants argued that civil society groups should be accountable, but not beholden, to donor institutions.
- Resources provided by donor institutions should be spent on improving civil society capacities. This includes skills training and assistance in developing human capital rather than only financial support.
- The region's CSOs should push for access to financial support from the ASEAN Foundation Fund.
- Civil society groups should improve their knowledge of available financial resources and the relevant funding processes. This would require CSOs to be more proactive in looking for funding opportunities, rather than waiting for donor institutions to request proposals.
- CSOs should examine the potential for partnerships with the business sector and, if possible without losing autonomy, government agencies.
- Funders are looking for partners whose work is perceived to be "cutting edge" or "state of the art." While participants were clear not to advocate that CSOs constantly shift their work to reflect prevailing preferences, there was a feeling that CSOs should strive to utilize innovative approaches in their research, advocacy and dissemination efforts.

Threats to Peace and Security

Participants were hesitant to acknowledge that the problem of failing states plagued Southeast Asia to the degree that it affects other regions of the world. The priorities of the region, it was argued, rather

lay in improving human rights and addressing the challenges of developing economies. The region does generally enjoy peace, it was argued, but the question of stability is less certain. Some countries experience political instability emanating from gaps created by economic development policies. Since security is viewed in a comprehensive manner, other threats to the region include food insecurity, conflict over scarce resources, environmental degradation, and SARS, bird flu and similar worldwide epidemics.

Some participants said that, from the “traditional” Southeast Asian perspective, threats emanate from internal matters, mostly issues relating to national economic development. To avoid military intervention, governments must be able respond to the needs of the people, and must assume the primary responsibility of looking into their internal affairs. To prevent conflict, one has to look into threats and problems from within, as these might threaten the state. Certain countries in the region also suffer from fears of outside attempts to influence (or even change) the government.

In the Southeast Asian context, stability is seen as deriving from strong states that are resilient, a core principle of ASEAN. Participants noted that this strengthening of the state, however, must be coupled with an empowering of civil society which should be ensured the proper space to act through respect for the rule of law. If this happened, then the threat of instability would come from a breakdown of state and society relations and the abuse, by either side, of the rule of law. Such tensions can be exacerbated by the gap created by uneven economic development, which highlights the importance in post-conflict societies of addressing the issues of justice and rule of law.

Challenges and Obstacles to Civil Society in Pursuing Their Issues in the Region

According to participants, the biggest challenge for them has proven to be expanding the channels of communication between civil society and national governments. Communication between civil society and government is impeded by a mutual lack of trust. In some instances, civil society organizations

are even seen by government as provocateurs and troublemakers. Therefore, confidence building activities must be initiated to bridge this gap.

On the role of government, participants recommended policy-makers to engage civil society. In this regard, there should also be recognition on the part of civil society that government does have the primary responsibility for public welfare and thus civil society must be ready to collaborate with government. Civil society as a whole should also do more to coordinate its own messages.

Participants expressed dissatisfaction that ASEAN has not yet accredited more than a small number of NGOs working on peace issues. Most of the NGOs accredited by ASEAN are professional or trade associations (e.g. cosmetic company groups, dental associations, etc.).

Citizens may not be aware of what is happening in other countries in the region. In some instances, they may know the issue, but the question is whether they want to do something about it. Two examples related to Malaysia demonstrate different reactions. Participants argued that incidences involving Islam would incite Malaysia’s involvement. On the other hand, Malaysia was unwilling to address the situation in the Indonesian province of Aceh and treated Acehenese refugees in Malaysia as illegal immigrants.

Impact of Conflict on Vulnerable Groups

Participants shared their views on the matter of vulnerable groups as well as their actual experiences in working with women and children caught in conflict situations. Participants also discussed the situation of refugees displaced by conflict situations both within and beyond national borders and the impact of conflict on youth. Participants also examined how internal conflict affects the lives of indigenous peoples.

Across the region, vulnerable groups have been and continue to be adversely affected by various forms of internal conflict. In Cambodia for instance, women and children often lack access to formal

education and they usually belong to the poorest sectors of society. Women in particular are prohibited from going to school and this translates in to their inability to support the schooling of their children. Thus, they end up being victims of prostitution and/or human trafficking. Additionally, participants noted that children are put to work against their will in rice fields.

Burmese women refugees in particular live in dire circumstances because there are no refugee camps for them. Their plight must be brought to the attention of the governments of the region. Moreover, there is a tendency for governments in the region to view women and children as adjuncts of armed combatants. Women and children belonging to minority groups are targeted in conflict situations. A continuing challenge for those working with women and children and other vulnerable groups in the region is how to raise public awareness regarding this issue and bring this matter to the agenda of national governments. Civil society groups working with women and children also witness a certain gender-blindness and ethnic bias in the official policies of governments towards groups involved in conflict situations. For this reason, a special focus on women and children involved in and affected by conflict situations is needed to improve their condition.

At the regional level, the fact that there are thousands of young people who are victims of human trafficking is evidence that national governments and/or regional bodies have not addressed this issue effectively. Few governments have taken up the issue and there is insufficient information regarding the routes taken by human traffickers as well as the exact number of those involved in trafficking. There is a lack of research to provide support for policy proposals to resolve the problem. In this regard, civil society initiatives may focus on conducting more research to determine the magnitude of the problem as well as to promote a comprehensive policy-making approach on the matter.

Various Philippine NGOs have embarked on nationwide initiatives that seek to bring issues concerning women and children to the attention of

the government as well as the general public. This is an issue that can be addressed through increased coordination and networking among regional groups that will provide opportunities for information sharing. This is vital as it will allow people in one country to know what is going on in other countries. Channels of communication do exist in different countries, but the existence of these channels is not enough to ensure that the voices of women and their children are heard by the proper authorities. Whether such channels of communication are available on a nationwide basis or whether they only exist in urban areas, is an important concern.

This issue is also related to the absence of representation in government of women and children advocates (particularly in legislatures). For women to have adequate channels of communication to articulate their needs and those of their children, they must have sufficient representation in the formal institutions of government.

Some participants noted that governments are not aware of the unique impact of conflict on women. This may be due in part to the influence of the church and religious beliefs/practices, which serve to worsen an already grave situation. Participants spoke of the need to challenge some institutions in society that hamper efforts to resolve issues concerning vulnerable groups.

In addition to gender-related concerns, it is also necessary to give attention to ethnic issues, particularly in light of the violations of ethnic rights in the region. Also, there is the possibility that post-conflict reconstruction efforts and policies may conflict with the traditional values of ethnic and other minority groups in a country. If this conflict of values is not adequately addressed, it is unlikely that reconstruction initiatives will succeed.

The work of civil society organizations in handling potential crises involving illegal migrant workers in Malaysia could serve as a model. The orderly repatriation of Indonesian workers was made possible by coordination among government and NGOs.

Within ASEAN, one way to address the issue of child soldiers is to ensure the enforcement of international conventions agreed to by governments in the region, particularly those that have to do with the promotion and protection of women's and children's rights. Through these agreements, governments of ASEAN countries can be made more accountable.

Some participants, however, voiced the need to use caution and advised that a less confrontational approach must be taken in addressing the issue of child soldiers so that civil society avoids stepping into the sensitive issue of ASEAN's non-interference policy. A first step is for governments in the region to recognize the existence of child soldiers. Another approach is to provide space for regional discussions on the matter. Here, emphasis may be placed on using regional Track II mechanisms and the ASEAN People's Assembly (APA) process to bring the issue to the attention and the agenda of national governments.

Another approach taken by some civil society organizations on the issue child soldiers is to engage rebel groups that are involved in conflicts and frame the practice within the context of international humanitarian laws. One problem, however, is that there has been a tendency for national laws to treat child soldiers as criminals. Further, it is difficult to enforce national laws and international conventions because most rebel groups do not recognize the authority and legitimacy of states and governments.

On a positive note, there is a World Bank program that seeks to break the cycle of children of armed combatants becoming combatants themselves or the widows of those killed in conflict situations also taking up arms eventually. Women and children and other vulnerable groups must be viewed not only as victims of conflict situations but also as stakeholders in such conflicts. Many examples exist within the region wherein women as stakeholders actively participated in setting up peace zones, organizing themselves, conducting training, engaging in peace negotiations, and advocating for an end conflict situations.

Participants also discussed the need to address the problem of persons injured by landmines. While some ASEAN countries have ratified the Ottawa Landmine Convention, there continue to be many landmine victims in the region. The problem is that, despite governments' ratification of this convention, they have not fully committed themselves to clearing mines in their territories and providing assistance to victims of landmines. Civil society groups, participants concluded, should embark on continuous lobbying work to pressure governments that have ratified the convention to commit fully to the document as well as get more Southeast Asian governments to be a party to the UN Convention on Landmines.

ASEAN, ASEAN+3 (China, Japan and Korea) and the ASEAN Regional Forum

ASEAN is an organization of governments that focuses on political and economic activities. Political problems among member countries are addressed through bilateral and diplomatic means. In the past 37 years, ASEAN has prevented inter-state conflict from taking place between its members.² ASEAN has also been cooperating well in the economic field. Although there are still a lot of things to do, such as harmonizing rules and establishing a currency union, ASEAN has become a free trade area and is on its way to becoming a common market.

ASEAN has made considerable achievements when it comes to improving the relations and understanding among ASEAN member states. However, it is important for ASEAN to define the direction that it will take in the future to address the questions of protecting civilians, internal conflicts and becoming more responsive to civil society. In this respect, it is important for ASEAN to look at the experiences of other regional and international institutions and learn from them.

At present, the role of ASEAN as well as of ASEAN + 3 and ARF in protecting civilians and responding to internal conflicts is vague.³ ASEAN's principle of non-intervention prevents it from playing a significant role in protecting civilians. The general perception is that ASEAN has the

tendency to protect governments rather than civilians. If the principle of non-intervention is not modified, then ASEAN will not achieve anything in this area.

In relation to this, participants were critical of the lack of development with respect to the proposed ASEAN Human Rights Commission. This mechanism has been advocated for the past ten years by Track II and Track III institutions but the prospects for the establishment of such an institution are still not clear. ASEAN should define its agenda on human rights to be responsive to the need to protect civilians, participants said.

ASEAN states tend to prefer a “passive” stance when it comes to confronting other member states on issues of human rights violations or internal conflict. For example, in the East Timor case, there was hesitation on the part of the Philippine government to take an active stance on the issue because Indonesia might be offended.

It also seems that ASEAN has a credibility problem, especially with regard to Burma. ASEAN is generally perceived as an organization of “golfing buddies” or a “boys club”. Moreover, the so-called “ASEAN way” of dealing with regional issues through gentle pressure behind closed doors is simply not enough. Participants expressed the need, in light of norms promoting the protection of civilians, to examine this ASEAN approach. Another important criticism was the fact that ASEAN lacks high level officials to champion issues relating to increased participation of civil society groups in ASEAN processes.

Even more so than ASEAN, the newer organizations of ASEAN + 3 and the ASEAN Regional Forum are still young institutions. Their focus is far from resolving political conflicts. Moreover, the problems confronting these three institutions are basically the same. At present, the objective of ASEAN + 3 is economic cooperation and it will take some time before it will be able to deal with the topic of protecting citizens. The process of building an East Asian community is a long-term goal for ASEAN + 3 and it has started through economic cooperation.

ASEAN, ASEAN + 3 and ARF are not effective at all in addressing internal conflicts because they are not prepared to do so. Although these organizations address inter-state conflicts, they do not necessarily deal with the resolution of issues and the transformation of conflicts. ASEAN is still re-thinking its role, especially after the 1997 Asian financial crisis. In terms of institutionalization, ASEAN remains weak because it is not yet well-organized. Even when there are areas of agreement among governments, these organizations usually only issue declarations and fall short on concrete actions. Bureaucratic capacity is weak and, at this point, ASEAN plays a role only at the level of coordination.

The ability of ASEAN to work with civil society is also plagued by several problems. One is that civil society organizations that work with ASEAN are tagged as “co-opted” by the larger civil society community. However, in order for ASEAN to be effective and for civil society groups to place their interests on ASEAN’s official agenda, these sectors must work together. Thus far, ASEAN, ASEAN + 3 and ARF have not been responsive to civil society demands. For this reason, civil society groups hold ‘parallel meetings’ alongside the official meetings of these organizations but they achieve minimal results due to limited exposure.

Ultimately, participants argued that focusing civil society efforts on the regional level will, for the near term, produce few results. Hence, civil society groups often focus on the national level. In relation to this, it was noted that civil society groups could engage their respective governments through the National Secretariat of ASEAN so that their agenda could be brought to the organization through official national channels.

In discussing the role of ASEAN, participants pointed out that the organization can, in the future, be encouraged to focus on peacekeeping and peace building. For example, it can serve as a third party institution to monitor the implementation of peace agreements. Furthermore, for ASEAN to be effective, it must take a stand on issues such as the human rights situation in Burma. In addressing the various conflicts in the region, the purpose of

ASEAN should be clarified. To do this, ASEAN needs to re-think its position on non-interference as its guiding principle.

How Can Civil Society Work More Effectively to Protect Civilians?

Workshop participants identified as a primary problem the lack of trust and confidence among government actors (Track I), think tanks (Track II) and grassroots organizations (Track III). In some cases, think tanks that work closely with governments are viewed by grass-roots organizations as co-opted by the government. In other cases, think tanks regard grass roots organizations as overly confrontational in their activities and lacking in expertise in policy-making matters and security issues. These tensions serve to hinder cooperation between Track II and Track III actors and limit the opportunity for those actors that frequently have access to information in conflict zones to provide information to those actors who shape government and ASEAN policy. Hence, the first step in strengthening civil society's ability to protect civilians is to improve the relations among these three sets of actors.

Some participants highlighted the cultural elements at work in the region's political institutions. ASEAN, it was stated, has always taken on a consensual approach to policy-making and that approach is unlikely to change in the near future. Taking this into consideration, CSOs might consider creative strategies to push ASEAN to take up various issues and put them on its agenda so that civil society's causes may finally find their way to governments' agendas.

Participants argued that the think tanks of ASEAN-ISIS are favorably situated to play the role of bridging the span between governments and grassroots organizations. Given that Track II mechanisms in the region such as ASEAN-ISIS are expected to take the lead in communicating the people's agenda to policy-makers, it is imperative on their part to build their capacity to lobby and persuade governments to understand issues from an alternative perspective. And despite efforts on the part of grassroots organizations to

maintain their independence from state institutions, they must also work in cooperation with governments to affect policy.

The group concluded that grass roots organizations should identify those channels of communication which can be used to engage policy-makers, including legislators/parliamentarians. This requires, in some instances, that civil society organizations develop greater understanding of the policy-making processes of their governments. Gaining such skills would provide a way to build civil society capacity. Language training would also allow civil society organizations to communicate their agenda to regional and international networks.

Recommendations for grassroots organizations included using the signing of international declarations and conventions as a point of leverage for them to engage governments and hold them accountable to fulfill their international obligations on issues related to the protection of civilians. Regional forums such as ASEAN and the Asia-Europe (ASEM) summits and meetings provide official documents that can be used to help civil society organizations identify areas which may be newly opened to pressure.

In addition, individual government officials who support increased attention to the protection of civilians should be enlisted to champion the agenda of grass roots organizations. Advocacy organizations should lobby governments to post particular officials to ASEAN who are sympathetic to their causes. Participants also noted that some ASEAN member countries have taken the lead in certain issues areas (e.g. Indonesia in relation to security issues, the Philippines on human rights) and that civil society organizations should target these governments.

The ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Organization (AIPO) was also identified as a forum that could allow grass roots organizations to communicate with national legislatures. ASEAN's Eminent Persons Group and Troika provide another way for grassroots organizations garner more influence over policy.

More attention to the role of the media, national and international, should be given in order to amplify the message of civil society organizations, particularly in cases in which the media calls attention to the early warning signals in potential conflict areas.

An annual calendar of activities involving Tracks II and III actors should be created in order to inform all those concerned about on-going or scheduled activities that are relevant to their respective work. This initiative will also help civil society organizations to adequately prepare for their participation in any of the relevant events.

Civil society organizations that have developed conflict mediation skills should partner with Track II organizations to provide training to government officials. This would provide opportunities to make personal connections and to shape the mindsets of decision-makers.

The issue of capacity-building should include attention paid to improving the accountability of civil society organizations. Participants recommended that these organizations take steps to improve the management of their work operations, particularly in terms of financial management. Towards this end, closer partnerships between CSOs and business schools should be pursued. Such partnerships could help CSOs develop better management of their finances as well as auditing. One example is the case of the Asian Institute of Management (AIM) in the Philippines, which has been working closely with NGOs in order to develop financial capacities.

Due to their critical role in the promotion and protection of people's rights, CSOs must work to strengthen their research capacity, particularly by incorporating an interdisciplinary approach in their work. Sometimes, it is the political dynamics and competition over funding within the CSO community itself that hamper information-sharing activities and prevents them from working cooperatively with each other.

The working partnership between civil society organizations and universities, particularly in the

area of research and information-dissemination, should be strengthened through more exchanges and interaction between these actors. Such partnerships should take place at the national, regional, and international levels. Policy-focused organizations must continuously engage people at the grassroots level. Focus must be put on building trust in order to improve their ability to generate information from the public.

Thus far, differences in the values of research institutions and advocacy organizations have hampered attempts to work together. NGOs and other grassroots organizations tend to hold that advocacy is more important than academic research. Based on this experience, it was suggested that, instead of viewing the issue as an either-or question, research and advocacy should instead be viewed as being complementary and should be made to feed into each other. On the part of research think tanks, there must be a recognition that advocacy is as important as the need to improve their research capacity. Research groups must also consciously undertake less narrow and more integrative studies and make efforts to interlink their work with those of other organizations dealing with related issues.

Contributing to Humanitarian Interventions

Civil society organizations can play a positive and significant role, contributing to the effectiveness of humanitarian military operations in several ways. Participants cited the case of Thai NGOs that have been working for a long time in East Timor and Aceh. These groups were involved in information sharing activities and conducted briefings on the situation in these conflict areas for the benefit of the military peacekeepers and other government officials trying to establish law and order. Civil society organizations can also provide training for peacekeepers to develop cultural sensitivities and provide background to particular conflicts.

Civil society can provide information and identify populations that need relief and rehabilitation. They can also be directly involved in relief operations by serving as the local partners of international institutions and facilitating the entry of international

humanitarian groups and donors. CSOs may also advocate continuity of development assistance to conflict areas and serve as monitors for how project funds are utilized.

Recommendations

Capacity-building

- In order to be able to identify areas where capacity building for civil society organizations is necessary, there needs to be a comprehensive map of CSOs in the region, which would include a classification of CSOs depending on their orientations and activities and an inventory of current capabilities.
- CSOs should develop technical expertise in early warning, alerts, and pre-conflict mitigating options as well as post-conflict, election-related activities and reconstruction and relief operations. If centers with expertise in these areas already exist, CSOs should form partnerships.
- CSOs should develop greater capacity for conflict analysis and research. CSOs must contribute to the field of conflict analysis so that the findings reflect reality on the ground. Academic institutions should help CSOs to be more systematic in their analysis and to develop lessons learned and best practices from their experiences. Skills training can be offered from research institutions to grassroots organizations.
- Grassroots organizations provide data that may be difficult for academics to obtain. Both should work together rather than one exploiting the work of the other. Grassroots organizations can actively help academics define a common research agenda, and academics can help CSOs do more rigorous conflict analysis.
- CSOs should continue to develop tools and techniques relevant to constructive policy advocacy in order to communicate more effectively their messages to governments. CSOs should enter into policy dialogues to get the attention of governments in the region.
- Human rights organizations have been successfully networking throughout the region. Networking of CSOs engaged in the area of *The Responsibility to Protect* should build on these existing networks.
- Scholarship/exchange programs with other countries' civil society organizations should be developed so that personnel can improve or gain the skills outlined above.
- Links among local groups, the United Nations and civil society must be established. CSOs should brief UN missions on the local cultural, historical and political dynamics when peacekeeping missions are contemplated and taking place.
- CSOs should seek to familiarize themselves with previous humanitarian interventions by examining the literature and official reports documenting UN experiences.

Communication

- ASEAN-ISIS should share information about humanitarian intervention and other related matters with CSOs; CSOs should also reach out to ASEAN-ISIS for such information. ASEAN-ISIS is currently engaged in two such programs: the ASEAN-ISIS Colloquium on Human Rights and the ASEAN People's Assembly. In another example, ISDS produced three volumes as the research output of the Development and Security in Southeast Asia (DSSEA) project where academics documented human security from the grassroots perspective.
- CSOs should work with research institutions so that research projects include policy advocacy components. Advocacy should also be done by academic institutions, NGOs and policy institutions together. This would involve some active lobbying, publication of findings and public campaigns.
- The sharing of information should be made a priority, especially among grassroots

organizations and between grassroots organizations and Track II actors. One example was given of the Indonesian Human Rights Monitor sharing its human rights documents with other CSOs and universities in the region. Such sharing should utilize web-based resources, and organizations with greater resources should undertake to provide the foundational inputs.

- Channels should be created that would allow the immediate communication of urgent information to networks that influence government and regional policies.
- There is a need to have smaller and continuous forums aside from the ASEAN Peoples Assembly that serve as a venue for exchanges between Tracks II and III.
- Establishing links with ASEAN desk officers in their respective foreign ministries and national legislatures is important for civil society groups.
- Civil society organizations should work to increase the role of ASEAN's Eminent Persons Group (EPG) or create such a mechanism to bridge the efforts of government and civil society. EPG can potentially serve as mediator, providing good offices, and could be part of an early warning system.

ENDNOTES:

¹ For information the ASEAN People's Assembly see http://www.aseanpeoplesassembly.net/conf_info.htm and the Colloquium on Human Rights is an annual meeting of regional and international experts to discuss the impact of ASEAN efforts to improve human rights in Southeast Asia.

² Vietnam joined in 1995; Burma and Laos joined in 1997. Cambodia became a member in 1999.

³ ASEAN PLUS THREE ASEAN invited China, Japan and Korea to participate in the Second ASEAN Informal Summit in Kuala Lumpur in 1997. The ASEAN+3 process was further strengthened in 1999 with the issuance of a *Joint Statement on East Asia Cooperation* by the ASEAN+3 leaders. The statement committed the thirteen countries to strengthening cooperation and collaboration in the areas of economics and finance. <http://www.aseansummit2001.org.bn/org/as2001/asean+3.doc> The ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) was created in 1994. It draws together twenty-three countries that have an impact on, or are involved in, the security of the Asia Pacific Region. ARF membership comprises the ten member states of ASEAN as well as Australia, Canada, China, the European Union, India, Japan, Mongolia, New Zealand, North Korea, Papua New Guinea, Russia, South Korea and the United States. <http://www.dfat.gov.au/arf/arfintro.html>

EUROPE

In early 1991, after the fall of the Soviet Union and the dissolution of communist regimes across the continent, Europe seemed poised to usher in the final decade of the twentieth century free from the bloodshed and warfare of the past fifty years. Then, with the “hour of Europe” on the horizon and the possibility of stable peace for the continent, events began to unfold in the Balkans and the Caucasus that would herald some of the most turbulent years Europe would experience since the end of World War II. In the aftermath of these wars and in hope of once again finding a stable peace for wider Europe, its representative regional organizations and citizens needed to look back on the lessons learned of the past decade and decide upon the best strategies for future stability.

In an effort to explore how Europe has evolved in its abilities to face the challenges of weak and failing states and address post-conflict reconstruction, representatives from European non-governmental organizations, inter-governmental organizations, including the European Union (EU) and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), and international organizations, gathered in Budapest in January 2005 to discuss ways of strengthening the abilities of European regional institutions to prevent and mitigate conflicts that threaten civilians. The conference was co-hosted by The Fund for Peace and the Institute for Transitional Democracy and International Security (ITDIS) and occurred over two days, highlighted by plenary and workshop discussions.

In Europe, given its own particular history of conflicts and interventions and loss of life experienced in the last century, there is a commitment to limit the use of force by relying

more heavily on non-military approaches. While the use of military force to end conflicts remains an option, participants felt that it should be viewed within the context of a larger policy toolbox that includes regional cooperation and integration among all sectors of society. Thus, while the United Nations and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) are both seen as vitally important institutions for security cooperation, particularly in the traditional understanding of military security, the OSCE and EU are also seen as important bodies for achieving security through non-military means.

Europeans, however, are acutely aware of the past failures of the OSCE and the EU to stop humanitarian crises. The failure of these organizations, along with the United Nations, to end the massive violence that consumed the Balkans in the 1990s, despite numerous attempts at a political solution, led to the ultimate use of military force. Particularly in volatile Southeastern Europe, participants argued, the threats posed by fragile and transitioning states need to be effectively confronted to avoid the return to chaos that exploded just over a decade before. While it was largely agreed that organizations like the EU have come further along in their willingness to confront the challenges facing the region and utilize a wider set of tools to prevent and mitigate conflict, the lessons of the recent past have proven that more needs to be done in order to guarantee civilian protection.

The Development and Growth of Civil Society in Europe

Compared with other regions of the world, civil society in Europe is highly developed although, participants pointed out, this does not necessarily

translate into linkages across borders. In Central and Eastern Europe, civil society movements developed primarily in opposition to oppressive communist regimes as a vehicle to demand greater freedoms and protest human rights abuses. In countries like the Czech Republic and Poland, civil society movements count among their greatest successes the overthrow of communism and the establishment of free and functioning local press. In other countries, however, like Romania and Serbia, civil society movements were brutally crushed by Soviet-style regimes and replaced with state-controlled equivalents. In these cases, the growth of truly free social movements has been dramatically slow and, where it does exist, remains very fragile.

Participants also pointed out that an analysis of civil society in “Europe as a whole” is impossible because the continent cannot be considered in its entirety but must be broken down subregionally into Western Europe, Central and Eastern Europe, and Southeastern Europe. Furthermore, the countries of the Caucasus, often considered the farthest edge of Europe, have their own unique histories influenced both by Soviet occupation and Asian domination. Thus, the wars that raged in both the Balkans and the Caucasus over the past decade greatly defined the nature of civil society in those regions but did little to alter the nature of civil society in other parts of Europe. As a participant from the disputed Nagorno-Karabakh region of the Caucasus pointed out, Europe barely noticed the vicious civil war between Armenia and Azerbaijan that claimed thousands of lives because “it was not in their backyard like Bosnia and Kosovo were.”

While Western European countries have for the most part enjoyed healthy traditions of civil society movements that have developed along with democratic governments, the rest of “new and emerging European countries” are at greatly varied stages. The legacies of communism and Soviet domination have also left a heritage of dependence on the state and a lack of true grassroots initiatives which have made civil society groups vulnerable to government influence and dependent on outside resources for their livelihoods. This has also

manifested itself, one participant noted, on a heavy reliance of civil society groups upon Western external support, both financially and for “agenda-setting.” Several other participants from the Balkans pointed out that in Southeastern Europe, NGOs were “built from the outside” by the West, particularly in the wake of the wars of the past decade. As the region has generally stabilized and funding is beginning to dry up, civil society groups have not only been left without financial support, but also without the institutional knowledge about how to carry on independently. “They told us what to do without ever teaching us how to do it,” a participant from Serbia observed.

The heavy reliance on outside donor funding and the delicate ethnic makeup of certain areas, particularly in the Balkans, has led to another characteristic of civil society in Europe that has had a particularly negative impact: the encouragement of competition and deepening separation rather than cooperation. As participants explained, most Eastern European NGOs have traditionally been reluctant to work across ethnic lines and, in Southeastern Europe, years of state-institutionalized segregation of minorities has translated into a similar pattern in civil society. International funding has tended to exacerbate rather than ameliorate this problem, despite intentions to the opposite.

A participant from Bosnia explained, “Bosnia is already a country that is legally separated along ethnic lines, but when NGOs apply for outside assistance we have to state whether we are Bosnian Muslims, Croatians, or Bosnian Serbs because many aid organizations have criteria about how much money they can give to certain ethnic groups in a given cycle.” This, in turn, has led to a tendency for ethnic groups to compete with each other out of necessity and subtly contributed to the perception that the international community sees some ethnic groups differently, or more worthy, than others. “Rather than encouraging us to look past the ethnic differences that leaders manipulated in the past and led to much bloodshed, we are constantly reminded that they are there,” said a participant from Serbia.

Overall, civil society in Eastern, Central and Southeastern Europe is still highly dependent on outside sources for both funding and infrastructure support. The current trend of Western donors beginning to exhibit “donor fatigue” and quickly trying to wean NGOs away from their heavy reliance on outside funding has caused alarm among civil society in the region because they lack the necessary skills to operate independently. Participants recommended that rather than funding one project in one country with one ethnic group, donors should begin to fund regional programs aimed at the transfer of knowledge and best practices across national boundaries. Donors need to include civil society in the designing of agendas and in building local capacities in fundraising and the execution of programs. Regional cooperation programs, such as the Bratislava Process¹, and partnerships between Western NGOs and local civil society groups would be highly beneficial to a region that is slowly recovering from years of war and the legacies of the brutal dictatorships of the past.

Defining Threats to European Security

Participants were asked to define what they perceived to be the greatest threats to the regional security of Europe and what measures civil society could take to address these threats. While several participants felt that Muslim extremism and acts of terrorism posed a growing threat to all of Europe, most believed that there was much more of a tendency on the part of the United States to focus on this threat than is the actual reality. The Madrid train bombings of March 2003 and the discovery of Al Qaeda cells in Bosnia over the past several years have resulted in heightened vigilance by most governments and have led to the reduction in acts of terrorism rather than an increase in the threat. As a participant from Switzerland explained, “In Western Europe, we have been confronting the threats posed from fundamentalist groups for much longer than the United States and have developed very coherent intelligence and monitoring systems...even now, we are less likely to face a terrorist attack than the United States.” In Eastern Europe, participants agreed that ironically the legacy of complete state-domination of all aspects of the public and private spheres left little room for

the infiltration of terrorist groups or the growth of fundamentalism. Although the old regimes are gone, this legacy has remained in many countries and has made it very difficult for terrorists to gain a solid footing in most countries, a participant from Romania stated.

The biggest threats to European security that exist today stem from two areas: the rise of nationalist movements and the existence of rampant corruption and transnational crime. These two elements pose the greatest risk to the security of not just Eastern Europe, but all of Europe as a whole. Participants referred to the recent elections in Serbia, Slovakia, Hungary, Austria and several of the Baltic republics that brought into power government coalitions with strongly left-leaning nationalist agendas. The increase of attacks on minority groups, like the Roma, and the crackdown on opposition movements in these countries has evidenced the threat of rising nationalist propaganda on the populations. In several Central and Eastern European countries, there has been a sharp increase in the participation of youth groups in neo-Nazi movements and a spike in anti-Semitic demonstrations and marches. In Poland and Slovakia, one participant noted, the increasing proliferation of newspapers and journals espousing anti-Semitic and anti-minority rhetoric should cause major concern over the influence of these movements on both youth and workers’ movements. Moreover, the reluctance on the part of the governments in many countries to crack-down on this problem points to the complicit role nationalist coalitions have had on fomenting these tendencies.

Transnational crime, which is characterized by the smuggling of both humans and goods across state boundaries and a general increase in criminal activity, is on the rise. This fact, coupled with the near-institutionalization of corruption in several Southeastern European states, poses the second main threat to European security. Participants noted that transnational crime and corruption and the growth of nationalism should not necessarily be seen as separate, as they emanate from the same source: disaffection and isolation brought about by rising economic inequalities and growing

unemployment rates. Although Western Europe has always been more economically prosperous than its neighbors to the east, the wars of the past decade and the tendency of the European Union and the United States to favor and assist one country's transition to democracy over others has had negative regional effects.

After the fall of communism in the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary and Poland, Western aid, in the form of both financial and technical assistance, allowed these countries to transition more easily to democratic structures than their neighbors. Although there are, and continue to be, "bumps in the road," the recent accession of all four countries into the European Union evidenced their quick transitions from Socialist structures to Western-based democratic institutions. Similarly, with a high degree of aid and influence from the United States, Bulgaria and Romania, once considered two of the most corrupt countries in Eastern Europe, have mostly transitioned to democratic and transparent systems of governance. In the former Yugoslavia, however, the civil wars that lasted from 1991 until 1999 have left disastrous economic effects in their aftermath. Yet, participants noted, an analysis of the economic situation in the Balkans is not that simple.

Within the former Yugoslavia, participants from Serbia and Croatia explained, there were vast economic differences based on resources and location. Slovenia and Croatia were closest to Western Europe and long the favored vacation spots of German and Italian tourists. They were also the economic backbone of the former Yugoslavia which depended heavily on the natural resources and tax revenue generated from these two republics. In the other republics of Yugoslavia and in neighboring Albania, a reliance on Soviet-style economic structures and policies greatly retarded growth resulted in a near-paralysis in the transition to Western-style democracies. Furthermore, although Slovenia and, to a much larger extent, Croatia, were crippled by the wars of independence fought in the early 1990s, Western aid and assistance flowed more quickly into transforming these two countries' economic and governance structures than in the rest of the region.

Although Bosnia and to a lesser extent Macedonia became the recipients of much foreign aid and assistance, little of it was directed towards the fundamental transformation needed to prepare either country for eventual European Union membership. Albania, emerging from decades of isolation and war, and Serbia, the pariah state in Europe, were largely left to stumble along on their own.

The legacy of this very disparate history of war and Western engagement has led to a rise in corruption and transnational crime in the region since these countries, long ignored by the rest of Europe, lack the vital knowledge and financial assistance to transform their institutions. One participant from Serbia noted, "It seems like everyone thinks we want to be corrupt...the problem is that we don't know any other way to survive." In Bosnia, one participant stated, the international community has been "driving the car" for the past decade but has never been very interested in "turning over the wheel" to build local capacities for transparent governance. An Albanian participant echoed a similar statement on how the international community has acted in Kosovo where, directly under the auspices of international stewardship, a flourishing criminal network has formed and created parallel structures of governance based in part on criminal allegiances. The problem is so serious that Kosovo, as has been recently documented in a report from the International Crisis Group and in private briefings with regional experts, could be more at risk for internal war arising from competing criminal gangs than from animosity between Serbs and Kosovar Albanians². Even more worrisome, the growing evidence of drug and human trafficking routes stretching all the way from Afghanistan (also under international stewardship) through Turkey and up into the Balkans should be high cause for concern for the international community and Western Europe, in particular.³

The presence of corruption and the failure of the international community to tackle the uneven economic growth of the region has reverberated throughout Europe, participants agreed. The problem must be seen as interconnected or an

effective strategy to combat the threat will remain elusive. As participants from Austria and Switzerland stated, the Balkan wars led to massive refugee flows from Southeastern Europe into the rest of Europe and contributing to the rise in nationalism in many countries, particularly in fragile Eastern and Central Europe. “Now nationalist leaders are telling the people that they not only have to worry that their jobs are being threatened by the Roma and other national minorities, but also from all of the immigrants that came to our country after the wars and are trying to steal our jobs,” a participant from Hungary pointed out. In countries like Hungary, Slovakia and Poland, still grappling with high unemployment rates as they attempt to adapt to EU regulations, these sentiments are increasingly finding a larger audience. It was mentioned that, ironically, what is being overlooked is the fact that what is undermining national economies is not the presence of refugees competing for jobs, but the failure of the international community and the various peacekeeping missions in Southeastern Europe to tackle corruption and organized crime that flows over borders and undermines regional security. As one participant from Bosnia stated, “We have all of these peacekeeping missions and international advisors in the region but does anyone really talk to each other?”

Finally, participants pointed to the existence of “frozen conflicts” in border areas in the region that have translated into the phenomenon of “states within a state” that operate as criminal black holes. The Transnistria region of Moldova and parts of the Caucasus and Chechnya have all experienced brutal warfare in the recent past but once the fighting ceased or was ended by outside intervention, these areas have been allowed to fester away from international attention. Because they still remain part of the territorial jurisdiction of another state but operate, in practice, completely outside the political or legal frameworks of that state, they remain largely autonomous. In the wake of international obscurity, flourishing criminal enterprises have taken over. These areas remain resistant to political solutions although the crime they export destabilizes the region. “You can’t buy them off,” one participant stated, “They have plenty

of money and no interest in negotiating.” It is in these border regions, participants warned, that the threat of terrorism remains the greatest. Many are in former Soviet countries that harbor large stockpiles of weapons and potentially other dangerous nuclear material. A participant summed up: “The international community is so worried about terrorism in the places it is paying most attention to but it is completely ignoring the lesson that it is in the places where no one is looking that the threat remains the greatest.”

The Role of Regional Organizations in Europe

Except for Africa, the countries of Europe have had more direct experience with interventions by regional organizations than any other area in the world. This in turn has led to a well-developed sense of the successes and failures of the OSCE, NATO, the EU and the UN in prevention, intervention and post-conflict peacebuilding. Overall, participants still considered the UN as the the most legitimate actor to sanction an intervention. However, the failures of the UN, the OSCE and the EU to act successfully in the wars in the Balkans has led to a general sense that, if a military operation is to be undertaken to stop large-scale civilian atrocities, NATO remains the most legitimate and capable regional body. Participants analyzed each regional organization individually on its strengths and weaknesses across a wide spectrum based on the principles of human security and greater regional security.

Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe

The OSCE remains one of Europe’s oldest institutions for the monitoring and guaranteeing of human rights and the promotion of principles of fair and transparent governance. Participants agreed that the organization has generally been engaged in attempts to broker political solutions to crises in Europe and has remained a presence on the ground in most post-conflict peacebuilding efforts. The two main setbacks to the ability of the organization to function effectively remain the necessity of all member states to reach consensus before taking action and the lack of centralized mandates and coordination among the missions.

These two problems have translated into a lack of action when confronted by growing crises and a failure to anticipate and address properly the needs of affected populations on the ground. Further, the sense of institutional disorganization has led to the perception by civil society organizations that the OSCE is non-transparent in its operations and not nearly inclusive enough of local knowledge and capacities. “It seems, at least in Bosnia, that they are just kind of bumbling around sometimes and not really sure what they’re supposed to be doing internally...never mind considering what we need them to be doing on the ground,” said one participant.

Each OSCE mission has its own mandate and coordination mechanisms. These functions are not well-defined and the organization is viewed differently in each country in which it operates, depending on the strength of the head-of-mission and the areas of reform it is undertaking. Although the OSCE is generally credited with the successful formation of the Kosovo Police Service, it is still viewed negatively by many Kosovar Albanian citizens for its failure to prevent atrocities in the province prior to the NATO intervention in 1999 and its inept attempts to verify them. Even among OSCE participants at the conference, there remained a general feeling of bitterness that the Kosovo Verification Mission, undertaken in 1998 and at the height of the hostilities, was so poorly executed from mission headquarters in Vienna. “They didn’t know who they had on the ground, how bad the situation was, or how to get anyone out when it was clear that we were in the middle of a war zone...plus we were there but had no mandate to stop the atrocities being committed before our eyes....it was a very frustrating experience” said one participant. Another participant noted: “Everyone wanted to know why the international community was more interested in documenting the atrocities rather than interested in actually stopping them. The horror stories didn’t need to be written down, they needed to be stopped.”

Another problem noted by participants is the process of “secondment” that the OSCE relies upon for hiring its international staff. Generally,

positions are solicited through the Foreign Affairs or State Department branches of member countries and there is little training received by staff prior to deployment. This has resulted in a lack of the necessary knowledge of local customs and the history of the conflict and has in turn led to inaccurate assessments of the needs of affected populations. Another issue raised by participants was the short term of employment of OSCE staff members, usually six months, and the subsequent “lack of ownership” for the mission demonstrated by international staff. Beyond the inability to demonstrate the needed dedication to the task, the quick turn-over rate of staff members also results in the loss of valuable lessons learned that the OSCE has not been seen to be addressing properly. “You start to work with someone on a project that you know is fundamental and then they’re gone in six months and someone else replaces them who knows nothing of what’s going on...after a while you just give up and work alone,” said a participant from the Balkans.

Participants also felt that the OSCE has generally failed to involve enough people with local experience in both the planning and execution of its mandates. Although this varies from mission to mission, most agreed that the OSCE has generally failed to incorporate civil society into its work even though many of its tasks are specifically focused on strengthening local capacities. There was a strong sense among participants that the OSCE “arrives with a mandate decided on in Vienna with little to no local input, goes about trying to fulfill the mandate alone, and only later realizes that they need local help in doing anything successfully.” The failure of the organization to communicate with civil society groups has also led to the general perception that it is a non-transparent actor. A lack of information campaigns and clear communication strategies was raised as a problem throughout the conference.

Like the UN, the need for the organization to have member consensus before acting has lessened its credibility and legitimacy in the region. Particularly in former Soviet countries in the Caucasus, the inability of the OSCE to act when Russia threatens a veto has greatly diminished its effectiveness. In

Georgia, the relatively successful OSCE border monitoring mission was abruptly brought to a halt when Russia threatened to veto a new mandate and not pay its dues. Similarly, as a participant from Nagorno-Karabakh pointed out, the OSCE has been present for more than a decade in attempting to resolve the status of the disputed territory but is seen by the local population as having done largely nothing because it is constantly subject to the political whims of Russia and the United States.

Additionally, much like UN missions, participants felt that the strength of the OSCE missions was heavily reliant upon the head-of-mission and the specificity and clarity of the mandate. In certain cases, such as Serbia, a dynamic and strongly engaged head-of-mission made all the difference in local perceptions of the organization. In others, particularly in some of the larger OSCE missions in Southeastern Europe and the Caucasus, the sheer size of the mission and the lack of communication and coordination among the various branches operating within the country amounted to similar confusion for civil society groups engaged at the local level. “We talk to each other more than they do,” observed two participants. Although the OSCE has recently introduced a new computer system intended to streamline communications among various missions and headquarters, participants felt that additional improvements needed to be made in the communication and coordination process between regional missions and civil society actors working on the ground.

European Union

Participants, on the whole, viewed the primary role of the EU to be one of economic integration rather than as a guarantor of regional security through preventive diplomatic and military mechanisms. The EU has been mainly engaged in post-conflict efforts to reform and restructure the financial institutions of emerging states in Eastern and Southeastern Europe. Participants felt, however, that it has largely failed in its efforts to prevent violent conflicts or respond appropriately when humanitarian emergencies occur. The historic December 2004 EU takeover of the NATO peacekeeping mission in Bosnia was judged by

participants to be too early in its inception phase to judge progress, although most agreed that, at least in the goals laid out for the mission, it was a fundamental step for the organization in accepting responsibilities for the security of wider Europe. On other issues, however, the EU was criticized for a lack of transparency and a failure to articulate its policies at the local level. “You need to have a degree in understanding the EU alone to begin to fathom what the organization does,” cited one participant. “Who has the time for that when we are dealing with real issues on the ground?”

Beyond the inherent complexities of understanding the various bodies and their respective powers and duties within the European Union, participants felt that the EU had been too slow to act in addressing problems in the region. Particularly in the Balkans, the EU had failed to understand the severity of the crisis until too late and even then engaged in “half-measures” to try to placate all sides without ever addressing the root causes of the conflicts. Several participants voiced the perception that the EU was too busy “having tea” and attempting to come to the most agreeable political settlement while blatantly ignoring the realities on the ground. “We were killing each other and they were trying to figure out how to make everyone look good at international press briefings...in reality, they were doing nothing but saving face at the cost of many lives,” one guest from the Balkans remarked. Others felt that the EU had manipulated its role during and after the conflicts to try to coerce unity at the expense of dealing with the root causes of the problems. “They seemed to think that a ticket to EU membership, in and of itself, was enough to make us forget the recent past and the realities of surviving in the near future,” one participant stated, “it’s important but you cannot heal wounds with the promise of Euros alone.”

The confusing structure of the EU, its various components, funding mechanisms, and complex doctrines have further contributed to the notion on the part of civil society that the organization barely understands itself well enough to help fragile states recover from conflict. Although the EU has attempted to present a united face in helping the rest of Europe confront its economic and political

fissures, the perception that the Western European founding members of the alliance are still competing on many of the same issues was not lost on participants to the conference from Southeastern Europe. “They want us to reform and act as a united region when they can’t even decide if they agree upon a common agenda in Brussels,” one participant remarked. There remained the fear and hesitancy to “buy into” the EU platform of reforms and goals as the organization itself seemed so “disorganized.” Particularly in the Balkans, Western European interests continue to compete for national allegiances and economic trade agreements based on historical alliances which, in turn, have undermined the notion of a “wider European community” based on a common agenda of integration. “The EU needs to figure out its own agenda before imposing it on us,” observed one commentator.

The presence of the EU on the ground in many post-conflict stability operations was given mixed reviews on the part of civil society organizations. While generally viewed to be more transparent than the UN or the OSCE, the EU still fails to engage local NGOs and civil society actors in post-conflict peacebuilding efforts and effectively explain the mission of the organization. The failure of the EU to open channels of communication with local civil society groups and institutionalize a process for sharing information was cited as a major shortcoming of the organization. Finally, almost all participants criticized the EU for being too quick to fund large international NGOs rather than civil society groups, and for a lack of transparency on how its funding mechanisms worked so local actors could compete for grants. With over 70% of EU funding in the region going to non-local initiatives, according to participants, most felt that the EU had a strong obligation to do a better job in addressing how to incorporate and fund civil society initiatives on the ground if the organization was to gain more credibility for its efforts in the future.

North Atlantic Treaty Organization

NATO was viewed by most participants as the most legitimate guarantor of security in the region and the most willing to act when large-scale

humanitarian crises occur. The two NATO interventions in Bosnia and Kosovo to stop the wars in the aftermath of UN and EU inaction was viewed by some participants as proof of the organization’s willingness to uphold the principles of the *Responsibility to Protect* civilians from violence. Others, however, pointed out that the political decision to use military force to intervene in the conflicts was primarily made by the United States and that NATO was merely the military vehicle for the decision. Concerns were raised that the “illegal” intervention in Kosovo set a dangerous precedent for how the organization might be used in the future. One participant questioned, “How much of an alliance is NATO really? It’s just a more palatable disguise for US unilateralism.”

Largely due to its military structure, NATO was viewed as being far better organized in the execution of its mandate than either the OSCE or the EU. Until the EU assumed full responsibility for both the military and civilian sides of the peacekeeping mission in Bosnia in December 2004, NATO was responsible for both military operations in Bosnia and Kosovo. In both cases, most participants agreed that the presence of NATO in both missions was essential in ensuring that hostilities did not resume. Some participants voiced concern, however, that the military separation of warring parties had gone on for too long and had impeded efforts at peacebuilding although most agreed that this was less the fault of NATO and more the fault of the other organizations tasked with reconciliation and reconstruction. Some also felt that the presence of armed military patrols had contributed to the “militarization” of societies which proved to be detrimental in putting the past behind and moving forward.

Participants believed there had been far too little consultation on the part of NATO in incorporating local views and knowledge. One participant from Belgrade noted that early efforts to engage Serbian NGOs in stopping the violence and assessing the best way to confront the conflict using non-military means was merely window-dressing, especially leading up to the Kosovo intervention. “They asked us to put together an assessment and then the next week went ahead and bombed anyway....we were

just like ornaments on a Christmas tree to make them look good so they could say they exhausted every option when they really did not.” The failure to consult civil society groups and incorporate them into planning the military interventions and subsequent peacekeeping operations has also led, in many cases, to an exacerbation of trauma experienced by victims. One participant from the region observed that the constant presence of the military, and the “macho culture” of military organizations, was a daily reminder of atrocities just recently endured. Similar sentiments were voiced on how a failure of sensitivity-training about local religions and customs had led to some fundamental misunderstandings that could have been easily avoided if civil society assistance had been solicited.

Overall, NATO is viewed in a positive light for its role in stopping the wars in the Balkans when the EU and UN were unwilling or unable to act. The role of the organization in maintaining security in Bosnia and Kosovo was generally lauded, although many Serbian participants noted that they were distrustful of NATO’s initial intentions to protect Serbian minorities in Bosnia and Kosovo: “How can you trust an organization to protect your citizens when they have just attacked your country?” asked one participant. Most felt that NATO, as a military organization, did its job well but should not be tasked with the “soft side” of peacekeeping that falls within the mandate of other international bodies, like the UN, OSCE and the EU. Participants also believed that greater local knowledge should be solicited by the organization to avoid incidents where “more harm than good is done” in protecting local populations.

Finally, a main concern on the part of civil society about all three regional organizations is their failure to communicate well with each other and with the UN. Beyond shortcomings in not engaging civil society in their missions, the OSCE, EU and NATO are viewed as often having no clear lines of communication with each other. In Bosnia, where the Dayton Accords set up multiple and often redundant structures of interim governance and responsibilities, civil society participants noted a general lack of communication among the various

regional bodies that manifested itself in either needless duplication of activities or complete inaction. “It seems that they’re not sure who is supposed to be doing what from month to month, which makes it difficult for us to determine which regional organization to talk to about our specific concerns,” said one participant. Another noted that, in Bosnia specifically, it was often more about competition than cooperation, with each organization being more concerned about “ownership” over its area of responsibility than working together to get tasks completed. Similarly, the March 2004 riots that swept unexpectedly through the province of Kosovo caught all three regional bodies, and the UN, off-guard and led to unnecessary destruction property and loss of life until NATO finally quelled the violence. “Someone should have anticipated the violence and it shouldn’t have taken all of these organizations so long to get their acts together,” said a Serbian participant, “It was obvious that no one had been talking too each other very well.”

The Impact of Conflict on Vulnerable Groups

Participants were asked to evaluate the impact of the past decade’s conflicts on women, children, the elderly and the disabled and how civil society and regional organizations have played a role in addressing the needs of vulnerable groups in the aftermath of conflict. Participants debated the role that international interventions have had in contributing to the exploitation of women and the increase in human trafficking in the region and how such negative consequences of an intervention can be avoided or reduced in the future.

In the Balkan wars, as in most other internal conflicts, rape was used by all parties systematically as a weapon of war to demoralize and defeat. Women and girls were most often the victims of rape, although men and boys also suffered. What participants pointed out as being particularly traumatic to victims were the rapes that were committed by former neighbors or friends and not unknown assailants. This made many victims unwilling to come forward about the crime and more likely to hide it out of shame. One participant conveyed privately to the hosts that many women

felt embarrassed rather than enraged at having been raped by “the next-door neighbor’s son” who, until a year earlier, had gone to school with their children. Other participants emphasized the sheer shock at seeing the conflict escalate so quickly and claiming so many lives. This resulted in many victims of violent crimes merely wanting to “go on surviving” rather than confront individual horrors. One participant who works with women in the region, said, “It was enough that, for either side, your husband, son or brother was likely to have been killed....it was considered selfish to spend too much time on your own problems when you had a family to take care of.”

A participant from Bosnia identified a deeper problem: “Women in Bosnia, Serbia and most of the former republics were all well educated and very engaged in the social and political life of the federation....we had one of the highest percentages of female participation at both the local and national levels of governance. So admitting to being raped was admitting to being defeated, not as an ethnic group, but as a gender.” Similarly, another participant spoke to the crimes committed against Muslim Albanian women in Kosovo and there equally demoralizing and traumatic consequences on the population as a whole: “It is a traditional society and many women were shunned by their families afterwards.” Although in the years following the wars, many women have come forward to seek counseling and help, several members of the group said that a large percentage still live with the trauma in silence.

Another, and less talked about, consequence of the wars was a rise in domestic abuse and sexual violence towards women after the hostilities ended. A participant from Romania noted that after the fighting ended in Kosovo many men who had taken up arms or been members of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) found themselves without “a war to fight or a job to return to.” In both Bosnia and Kosovo, the staggering rates of unemployment following the interventions was directly correlated with a sharp spike in the level of domestic abuse incidents reported to police as well as rising rates of alcohol-related crimes. A participant from the Balkans also related that many men felt

“emasculated” by the traumas they had endured and, in turn, took out their frustrations on their wives and children. “Although some women came forward for help and counseling, it is almost unheard of for men to do the same in our culture. . . unfortunately, it was usually their families that suffered,” another participant stated.

The wars and the devastated societies that existed in their aftermath had particularly negative effects on children. In Serbia, one participant said, the single largest problem facing the country is disaffected youth. Prior to the war, Serbia enjoyed one of the highest rates of education and employment for new graduates in all of Southeastern Europe. It also sent thousands of students abroad every year in exchange programs with Western European and American universities. After years of sanctions, the NATO interventions and continued international isolation, the largest victims continue to be Serbia’s young population. “It’s not the older generation that’s suffering the most,” said a participant from Belgrade, “it’s an entire new generation that is growing up angry and with few prospects for employment.”

In all of Southeastern Europe, the high rates of unemployment have contributed to “brain drain” as parents who can afford to send their children abroad increasingly do rather than have them face the bleak prospects that exist at home. An Albanian participant noted that most of Kosovo’s young population is working abroad and, with official unemployment rates hovering over 60%, the province is highly dependent on a remittance economy. The other negative effect of having so many young people unemployed and with few prospects for higher education is that they are increasingly turning to the black market and criminal gangs for their livelihoods. They are also much more susceptible to nationalist politicians preaching anti-minority or, as is the case in Serbia, anti-Western views. “They are telling these kids that the U.S., Western Europe and western institutions like NATO and the EU are bad when joining them is really the only hope for their countries and their futures,” said a participant from Serbia.

Similar problems of isolation and hopelessness confront the handicapped and the elderly in Southeastern Europe. Most countries are simply unable to pay adequate pensions or provide compensation for individuals injured in the war or from landmines. It was noted, however, that, particularly in regard to the handicapped, civil society has been quite successful in lobbying governments and international donors for funding to help train landmine victims and provide jobs to those injured in the wars. Another participant agreed that civil society has had other successes in pushing governments to recognize the rights of the elderly and handicapped in law. "In these areas, we have worked across national boundaries with each other and closely with Western Europe," said a guest from Romania.

Civil society in the region is also closely engaged in fighting human trafficking. Fueled by the large presence of international personnel in the peacekeeping missions in Bosnia and Kosovo as well as the demand in Western Europe, the trafficking of women and girls has exploded in the region in the past decade. Criminal gangs use well-established routes for the trafficking of drugs and other contraband to smuggle humans across national boundaries. The majority of these women come from Ukraine, Moldova and Romania and are trafficked through Southeastern Europe into Western Europe. Many are also sold to brothels and bars in Bosnia and Kosovo where international personnel are present. The mountainous terrain and porous borders make it particularly difficult for national police and militaries, as well as international peacekeepers, to close down the smuggling routes.

Participants reflected that civil society has been working closely with international organizations in both countries of origin and destination to confront the human trafficking problem but they needed to create more networks across the region. A participant from Romania noted that civil society in that country is working closely with border police and has been successful in lobbying for the presence of more female police officers at national frontiers. There have also been successful media campaigns launched by civil society organizations

aimed at informing the public about the problem. "We need to really work better with the local communities that these girls are coming from," said another Romanian participant. Because many girls from poor villages are lured into the trade with false promises of employment as waitresses or maids in Western Europe, participants agreed that information campaigns needed to be more targeted at these communities. Others stated that civil society can do more about working with international peacekeepers and personnel to educate them about human trafficking and how to recognize it and prevent it.

Conclusion

While civil society in many parts of Europe has an evolved history of working with national governments and international organizations, it needs to be able to work more cooperatively across national and ethnic lines on a regional level. In Eastern Europe, it is particularly important that civil society learn to operate free of donor-imposed agendas and improve their fundraising capabilities. Participants agreed that civil society could learn a lot from the successes and failures of other regions and they needed to make an effort to reach across state lines and form more regional coalitions. In lobbying outside funders to give money to regional coalitions of NGOs as well as local initiatives, civil society organizations could focus on cooperation rather than on competition.

Participants also viewed the biggest threats to the region emanating from nationalism and corruption and agreed that more needed to be done on the local and regional level to combat these two dangerous trends. In lobbying for greater government accountability and educating the public on corruption and organized crime, civil society can be a powerful voice in effecting change. The dangers posed by "frozen conflicts" and territories that are beyond state control also need to be effectively addressed as they pose threats to the entire region with the crime and weapons they export. Participants underscored that the threat of terrorism stemming from these areas needed to be confronted quickly.

In reviewing the efforts of regional organizations to respond to humanitarian emergencies, participants concluded that the efficacy of the OSCE, EU and NATO could be enhanced by increasing their transparency and accountability within mission countries. They also agreed that the efficacy of the UN could be increased by encouraging a more active role for local NGOs in all phases of an intervention and in post-conflict peacebuilding. Civil society itself has a responsibility in engaging regional bodies and also educating the public on the functions of these organizations.

Finally, participants concurred that civil society has enjoyed most of its successes in lobbying for the rights of vulnerable groups across the region. Participants pointed out that more needed to be done, at local and international levels, to address the growing trend of disaffected youth turning to crime and nationalism. The regional problem of human trafficking is also being tackled at the local level but needs to be addressed regionally in order to end the phenomenon.

Recommendations

I. The EU, OSCE, and NATO need to increase their transparency, their efficacy, and their accountability in humanitarian military interventions.

International organizations need to be clearer in communicating their mandate and adhering strictly to its parameters.

Local expertise should play a greater role in the shaping of any intervention by an international organization.

There should be both internal and external evaluations on the progress of field-mission programs to ensure transparency and accountability.

IGOs should establish an appeals board so that local populations have a way to address their concerns and better communicate their needs when decisions taken by international bodies are not in the best interests of local populations.

There should be greater cooperation between and among IGOs to make their work more effective and less redundant.

IGOs should strive to shift resources wherever possible away from internal administration costs and into actual programming needs.

International organizations need to do a better job to communicate their organizational structure and the availability of resources to local populations. The EU in particular needs to streamline and simplify its funding mechanisms.

II. Non-governmental organizations should work to improve the effectiveness of the EU, OSCE, and NATO in protecting civilians.

Prior to an intervention

NGOs should serve in an early warning function. NGOs have a wide range of local knowledge and access and should serve more actively as a source of information for both local populations and intergovernmental organizations. NGOs could play a particularly important role in alerting intergovernmental organizations to potential outbreaks of conflict and in identifying and executing programs to offset conflict.

NGOs should serve as advocates for their constituents. NGOs can function as a conduit of information from citizens to intergovernmental bodies, especially in reporting violations of human rights where national authorities are either unwilling or unable to address the problem.

NGOs should have an active voice in shaping any international intervention through the provision of local expertise and strong advocacy campaigns aimed at influencing policy decisions. NGOs have a role in ensuring that there is effective communication between local actors on the ground and intergovernmental bodies.

During an intervention

NGOs should play a more active role in disseminating information about or from IGOs to their constituencies concerning their structures,

mandates, processes and the availability of funding and other types of resources.

NGOs should promote dialogue between local populations and IGOs in order to create better linkages and facilitate more common understanding.

NGOs should serve in a monitoring function in order to ensure the accountability of the work done by IGOs on the ground as well as local developments.

NGOs should facilitate contact groups between peacekeeping forces and local communities.

NGOs should improve their ability to communicate the needs of civilians to multilateral organizations by:

- Cooperating among themselves more effectively,
- Engaging more constructively with media,
- Advocating that national governments include NGO representatives in their delegations to multi-lateral organizations,
- Serving as an institutional base for cooperation between individual EU countries and affected countries.

Post-Intervention

Through advocacy, NGOs should help ensure that post-conflict peace-building is a part of any intervention. NGOs should help involve local populations in the peace-building process.

III. IGOs need to actively foster their partnerships with NGOs.

- There should be greater interaction between civil society organizations and IGOs at every level, including the decision-making level. There should also be regular meetings in the region between civil society organizations and IGOs on the ground.

- IGO-sponsored training for civil society organizations should be tailor-made and designed in response to local needs. Training should also not rely exclusively on international experts, who are often costly and not well informed about local issues and culture.
- IGOs should fund NGOs to undertake research at the local level, not just activism.
- IGOs and NGOs should cooperate in building databases of existing financial and human resources.
- IGOs should identify and support relevant pre-existing or ongoing programs that are being carried out by local NGOs.
- IGOs should reexamine their policies of “secondment.” Short-term deployments of international staff undermine relationship-building with local NGOs and also contribute to the loss of institutional knowledge.

ENDNOTES

¹ The Bratislava Process began in 1999 at a conference in the Slovakian capital that brought together representatives of pro-democracy forces from throughout the Former Republic of Yugoslavia including the major opposition parties, trade unions, NGOs and independent media along with key figures of the international community like the EU, Council of Europe and the OSCE. The purpose of the initiative was to promote networking across the region on democracy, transparency and free enterprise. For the next two years the Bratislava Process Task Force worked on promoting democracy in Serbia. Many credit the movement, and its ability to cut across all sectors, with the overthrow of Slobodan Milosevic in 2000.

² “Kosovo After Haradinaj” International Crisis Group Report Number 163, 26 May 2005. Available online at : <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=3474&l=1>

³ See website of Southeast Europe Cooperative Initiative: www.seccenter.org

 GHANA WORKSHOP

Prosper Nii Nortey Addo
African Security Dialogue and Research
 Ghana

Claudine Ahianyo-Kpondzo
West African Network for Peacebuilding
 (WANEP)
 Togo

Ecoma Alaga
 WANEP
 Ghana

Emmanuel Alkwetey
Institute for Democratic Governance
 Ghana

Halima Amadou
Association Nigerienne pour la Defense des
Droites de l'Homme
 Niger

Dorcas Coker Appiah
The Gender Centre and WILDAF
 Ghana

Severan Attolou
The Research Group on the Democratic,
Economic and Social Development of Africa
 Benin

Dr. Shedrack Best
Centre for Conflict Management and Peace
Studies, University of Jos
 Nigeria

Emma Birikorang
African Security Dialogue and Research
 (ASDR)
 Ghana

Emmanuel Bombande
 WANEP
 Ghana

Louise Corbin
Canadian High Commission
 Ghana

Mohammed Coulibaly
Oxfam West Africa
 Senegal

Thelma Ekiyor
West Africa Women in Peacebuilding
 Ghana

Leymah Roberta Gbowee
WANE/Women in Peacebuilding Network
 Liberia

Mohammed Ibrahim
Centre for Democracy and Development
 Nigeria

Mariatu Kassim Loum
Women in Service Development and
Management Organization
 Gambia

Emerson Kai-Banya
Campaign for Good Governance
 Sierra Leone

Richard Konteh
Economic Community of West African States
 (ECOWAS)
 Nigeria

Victoria Kunbour
*Regional Partnership for Conflict
 Prevention*
 Ghana

Linus Malu
*African Strategic and Peace Research Group
 (AFSTRAG)*
 Nigeria

Cyril Necku
*Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping
 Training Center (KAIPTC)*
 Ghana

Robana Nhate
WANEP
 Guinea-Bissau

Elizabeth Nsarkoh
WANEP
 Ghana

Arnold Quainoo
Centre for Conflict Resolution
 Ghana

William Saa
WANEP
 Ghana

Alioune Tine
*Rencontre Africaine Pour La Defense Des
 Droits De L'Homme (RADDHO)*
 Senegal

Suzanne Traore Logbo
*Vision et action des femmes Africaines
 contre la guerre (VAFAG)*
 Cote D'Ivoire

Afi Yakubu
*Foundation for Security and Development in
 Africa (FOSDA)*
 Ghana

KENYA WORKSHOP

Anisia Achieng
Sudanese Women's Voice for Peace (SWVP)
 Sudan

Angela Achiro
Focus on Rural Development
 Uganda

Sam Aisu
EU Civil Programme
 Uganda

Wesley Chebii
National Council of Churches of Kenya
 Kenya

Arthur-Desire Nkoy Elela
Commission Episcopale Justice et Paix
 Democratic Republic of Congo

Betty Gahima
Pro-Femme Twese Hamwe
 Rwanda

Kebreab Habtemichael
Citizens for Peace in Eritrea
 Eritrea

Asha Haji
Save Somali Women and Children
 Somalia

Abdu Elmajjed Hassan
Faith in Action
 Kenya

Mulletta Hurisa
*Research Center for Civics and Human
 Rights Education*
 Ethiopia

Emmanuel Kagabo
*Reseau de Concertation et d'Appui al'Action
 de la Societe Civile (RECASO)*
 Burundi

Bizuwork Katete
Saferworld – Horn of Africa
 Ethiopia

John Katunga
Nairobi Peace Initiatives-Africa (NPI)
 Kenya

Pascal Kisembi
Heritiers de la Justice
 Democratic Republic of Congo

Hassan Mohamoud
Centre for Dialogue
 Somalia

Khamis Ndabikunze
Ansar Alloh au Rwanda
 Rwanda

Dorothy Ndungu
NPI-Africa
 Kenya

Alex Nyago
Africa Peace Forum
 Kenya

Jean-Paul Nyirindekwe
*Collectif de Ligues et Assoicaiton de Defense
 de l'Homme au Rwanda*
 Rwanda

Naison Nzoyishaba
Consiel National de Eglises du Burundi
 Burundi

Rose Othieno
Centre for Conflict Resolution (CCR)
 Uganda

Severine Rugusamu
Institute of Development Studies
 Tanzania

Maxwell Shamala
East African Community (EAC)
 Tanzania

SOUTH AFRICA WORKSHOP

Joseph Butiku
*Mwalimu Nyerere Foundation for Conflict
 Resolution*
 Tanzania

Jakkie Cilliers
Institute for Security Studies (ISS)
 South Africa

Naftal Donaldo
*Centre for Strategic and International
 Studies*
 Mozambique

Simon Kabanda
*Foundation for Democratic Process
 (FODEP)*
 Zambia

Ana Leao
 ISS
 South Africa

Tumba Lola Mitheo
*African Strategic and Research Group
 (AFSTRAG)*
 South Africa

Mark Malan
*ISS/ Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping
 Training Centre*
 South Africa/Ghana

Noria Mashumba
*Human Rights Trust of Southern Africa
 (SAHRIT)*
 Zimbabwe

Tasila Mbewe
Mindolo Ecumenical Foundation
 Zambia

Angela McIntyre
 ISS
 South Africa

Norman Mlambo
*Southern African Political Economy Trust
 Series*
 Zimbabwe

Kwezi Mngqibisa
*African Centre for the Constructive
 Resolution of Conflict (ACCORD)*
 South Africa

Marasoeu Moholi
Lesotho Network for Conflict Management
 Lesotho

Verity Mundy
*Southern African Resource Bank for
 Democracy and Human Rights Training*
 Zimbabwe

Undule Mwakasungura
*Centre for Human Rights & Rehabilitation
 (CHRR)*
 Malawi

Steven Nakana,
Centre for Conflict Resolution
 South Africa

Felisberto Njele
Centre for Strategic Studies
 Angola

Gina Van Schalkwyk
*The South African Institute of International
 Affairs (SAIIA)*
 South Africa

Oscar Tembo
*Southern Africa Centre for Constructive
 Resolution of Disputes (SACCORD)*
 Zambia

Shelly Whitman
University of Botswana
 Botswana

Alifiado Zunguza
*JUSTAPAZ Centre de Etude e Trans de
 Magato de Conflictos*
 Mozambique

CHILE WORKSHOP

David Álvarez
*Facultad de Latinoamericana Ciencias
Sociales (FLACSO), Sede Chile*
Chile

Raúl Benítez
*Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México
(UNAM)*
México

Adrián Bonilla
FLACSO
Ecuador

Roberto Cajina
*Red de Seguridad y Defensa de América
Latina (RESDAL)*
Nicaragua

Claudia Castañeda
FLACSO
Chile

Pablo Dreyfus
Viva Río
Brasil

Natalia Escobar
FLACSO
Chile

Anayancy Espinoza
*Centro para la Paz y la Reconciliación,
Fundación Arias para la Paz y el
Progreso Humano*
Costa Rica

Claudia Fuentes J.
FLACSO
Chile

Claudio Fuentes S.
FLACSO
Chile

Ana Glenda Tager
War-torn Societies Project- Internacional
Guatemala

José González Quiroga
Universidad del Pacífico
Perú

Claudia Gutiérrez G.
FLACSO
Chile

Francine Jácome
*Instituto venezolano de Estudios Sociales y
Políticos (INVESP)*
Venezuela

Isabel Jaramillo
Centro de Estudios sobre América (CEA)
Cuba

Colonel Carl Marowski Pilowsky
*Centro Conjunto para Operaciones de Paz
de Chile (CECOPAC)*
Chile

Paz V. Milet
FLACSO
Chile

Juan Ramón Quintana
*Observatorio de Democracia y Seguridad
(ODyS)*
Bolivia

Alba Ramírez
FLACSO
 República Dominicana

Rony Smarth
Ex Primer Ministro
 Haití

Francisco Rojas Aravena
FLACSO
 Chile

Víctor Valle
Universidad para la Paz
 Costa Rica

Jorge Rojas
Consultaría para los Derechos Humanos
(CODHES)
 Colombia

Andrés Villar
FLACSO
 Chile

Carmen Rosa de León
Instituto de Enseñanza para el Desarrollo
Sostenible (IEPADES)
 Guatemala

Tte. CrI. Guillermo Voguet
Centro Argentino de Entrenamiento
Conjunto para Operaciones de Paz
(CAECOPAZ)
 Argentina

Ricardo Sennes
Centro de Estudios de Negociaciones
Internacionales, Universidad de Sao Paulo
 Brasil

Cristina Zubriggen
Instituto de Ciencia Política de la
Universidad de la República
 Uruguay

Andrés Serbín
Regional de Investigaciones Económicas y
Sociales (CRIES), Universidad de Belgrano
 Argentina

Nieves Zúñiga
Centro de Investigación para la Paz-Madrid
(CIP)
 Spain

PHILIPPINES WORKSHOP

Kamarulzaman Askandar
Southeast Asian Conflict Studies Network,
Research and Education for Peace,
University Sains
 Malaysia

Marylou Birondo-Caharian
National Peace Conference
 Philippines

Fides Bagasao
CO-Multiversity
 Philippines

Rowena Bolinas
Southeast Asia Regional Institute for
Community Education (SEARICE)
 Philippines

Mely Caballero-Anthony <i>Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies (IDSS)</i> Singapore	Alfredo Lubang <i>Philippine Action Network on Small Arms (PHILANSA), Philippine Campaign to Ban Landmines (PCBL), Gaston Z. Ortigas Peace Institute (GZOPI)</i> Philippines
Jemmimah Jewel R. Canoy <i>Philippine Partnership for the Development of Human Resources in the Rural Areas (PHILDHRA)</i> Philippines	Noel M. Morada <i>ISDS</i> Philippines
Pham Sanh Chau <i>Institute for International Relations (IIR)</i> Vietnam	Raymund Quilop <i>Office of Strategic and Special Studies, Armed Forces of the Philippines</i> Philippines
Brady Eviota <i>Initiatives for International Dialogue</i> Philippines	Marie Rose Ramos <i>CO-Multiversity</i> Philippines
Grace Gorospe-Jamon <i>Institute for Strategic and Development Studies (ISDS)</i> Philippines	Maria Victoria Raquiza <i>Social Watch</i> Philippines
Carolina G. Hernandez <i>ISDS</i> Philippines	Kang Rashid <i>Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development Forum-Asia</i> Thailand
Sisouphanh Keobandavong <i>Institute of Foreign Affairs</i> Laos	Bhatara Ibnu Reza, Imparsial <i>The Indonesian Human Rights Monitor</i> Indonesia
Sophann Ket <i>Cambodian Institute for Cooperation and Peace</i> Cambodia	Malaya Ronas <i>ISDS</i> Philippines
Carmen Lauzon-Gatmaytan <i>Initiatives for International Dialogue</i> East Timor	Mansor Salaeh <i>Focus Paaktai Newspaper</i> Thailand
Stephen Leong <i>Institute of Strategic and International Studies (ISI)</i> Malaysia	Antonio C. Santos <i>Undersecretary for Policy, Department of National Defense</i> Philippines

Ramon G. Santos
*Office of Strategic and Special Studies,
 Armed Forces of the Philippines*
 Philippines

Landry Subianto
*Centre for Strategic and International
 Studies (CSIS)*
 Indonesia

Chanto Duong Sisowath
*The Khmer Institute for Post-Conflict and
 Development Studies*
 Cambodia

Chalida Tajaroensuk
*Asian Forum for Human Rights and
 Development – Forum Asia*
 Thailand

Jessica Soto
Amnesty International
 Philippines

Cosmas Adi Utomo
Asian Human Rights Commission
 Indonesia

HUNGARY WORKSHOP

Professor Gabriel Badescu
Babes-Bolyai University
 Romania

Christophe Gillioz
OSCE Civil Society Coordinator
 Bosnia-Herzegovina

Anna-Maria Biro
*Former Minority Rights Group International,
 Former Senior Advisor on Minority Affairs,
 OMIK*
 Kosovo

Katharine Cornell Gorka
*Institute for Transitional Democracy and
 International Security (ITDIS)*
 Hungary

Snježana Bokulic
Minority Rights Group
 Hungary

Sebestyén Gorka
ITDIS
 Hungary

Miljenko Dereta
Civic Initiatives
 Serbia-Montenegro

Mila Gracanin
Demokratski Centar Nove Nade
 Serbia-Montenegro

Kai Frithjof Brand-Jacobsen
*Peace and Transformation Research Institute
 (PATRIR)*
 Romania

Sotiraq Hroni
Institute for Democracy and Mediation
 Albania

Jana Hradilkova
Berkat
 Czech Republic

Erin Jenne
Central European University
Hungary

Ilona Mihaies
Euroregional Center for Democracy
Romania

Caroline Milow
OSCE
Albania

Karen Ohanjanyan
Nagorno-Karabakh Committee of Helsinki Initiative '92
Nagorno-Karabakh

Tatjana Popovic
Nansen Network in the Balkans
Serbia-Montenegro

Zorica Raškovic
America's Development Foundation
Serbia-Montenegro

Nicole Reckinger
European Union Council Secretariat
Belgium

Sonja Stanic
Center for Peace, Nonviolence and Human Rights
Croatia

Dan Vexler
International Crisis Group
Belgium

Miroslav Zivanovic
Human Rights Center, University of Sarajevo
Bosnia-Herzegovina