

Conference on EU cooperation with regional organizations on conflict prevention

Brussels—22 November The final workshop on making the EU a lead player in conflict prevention was held. The focus was on increasing the capacity of regional organisations in conflict prevention.

The workshop “Cooperating with regional organisations” was organized by the Madariaga European Foundation and Folke Bernadotte Academy with the support of the European Commission. The high-level meeting gathered representatives from the EC, regional organizations [Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Organisation of American States, Association of Southeast Asian Nations, Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the League of Arab States, and African Union], and the ILO.



Panel of speakers at conference on conflict prevention

This workshop was supported by the Portuguese Presidency to the European Union, and was the final meeting of the two-year series “Conflict prevention—creating a leading role for the European Union.” The initiative was launched in March 2006 with the workshop on placing the EU at the forefront of conflict prevention. Two more workshops were later held on promoting common action with international organizations and enhancing cooperation with major players in conflict prevention.

The EU has become increasingly aware of the fact that conflict prevention can only be effective if carried out at the multilateral level. Accordingly, the EU is strongly committed to enhancing cooperation with not only international organizations, but also reaching out to regional organizations and the civil society of partner countries.

The realization of the need to engage regional organizations was catalysed by the fact that regional organizations have been increasing their role as levers of peace through conflict prevention and management. In the second workshop on collaboration with international organizations, it was noted that in West Africa, for example, the African Union and ECOWAS were becoming more involved in peacebuilding.

The seminar aimed to see how these regional actors could be engaged in the early stages of conflict. The purpose of the meeting was to create a handbook on dialogue and mediation for regional organizations. The Initiative for Conflict Prevention through Quiet Diplomacy, based in Ottawa, was invited to participate to this end.

Despite the conference focus on prevention, there was attention on peacebuilding initiatives, especially in regards to preventing cyclical crises through economic and social development. ILO highlighted its partnerships with international actors in the areas of post-conflict employment creation, income generation, and reintegration. Although the ILO is not involved so much in prevention, it was recognized that it has the technical expertise and regional networks to consolidate peace in post-conflict countries.