

## **How can NGOs contribute to the European Security and Defence Policy?**

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### **1. NGO's role in conflict prevention and as service providers**

The question “how can NGOs contribute to the European Security and Defence Policy” can be seen from several angles. The first approach should be the reflection on the essential contributions of NGOs in the field of crisis management and conflict prevention. In fact, NGOs have developed a wide range of conflict prevention and resolution activities including monitoring conflict and providing early warning of new violence; opening dialogue between adversarial parties; playing a direct mediating role; strengthening local institutions for conflict resolution; and helping to strengthen the rule of law and democratic processes in countries affected by violent conflict.

Situations in Southern Sudan, Darfur, Democratic Republic of Congo and Rwanda are examples of cases where NGOs have played a decisive role in heading off major conflicts. Most civil society groups have worked on different aspects of these crises, including monitoring the conflicts, seeking to prevent the delivery of arms and assist in promoting peaceful dialogue, addressing socioeconomic disparities, attempting to strengthen government organs like the judiciary, security systems and aiding with efforts to bring war criminals and human rights violators to justice.

We can see also NGOs leading the way in democratization, in battling diseases and illnesses, in promoting human rights and in increasing standards of living.

I know that, speaking about European Security and Defence Policy, we can not forget that there are concrete proposals on how the EU could collaborate with European NGOs in order to make additional capabilities available under the EU Civilian Headline Goal. On the other hand, as ESDP missions become more complex and multi-functional, the relevance of the NGOs contribution, both strategically and in the field, increases significantly.

## **2. NGOs acting as think tanks**

A second approach could be to focus our thought in NGOs acting as think tanks, playing a key role in policy-making and in providing support to national governments and the European institutions. They develop independent policy research on several areas, including security and defense issues and they promote policy recommendations to governments and European Institutions. The European Commission supports the development of such organisations not only because of the quality and substance of their contributions but also in order to assure a balanced counterweight to the interests of powerful industrial lobbies, acting in Brussels.

Taken together, the advice generated when they act as think tanks and their operational activities as service providers in the field of conflict prevention or humanitarian security, NGOs can have a considerable impact on European Security and Defense Policy from policy analysis research to the implementation on the ground and follow-up of operations.

## **3. Contributions of EuroDefense Associations to the ESDP**

Let me conclude with the example of one very single NGO acting as think tank whose objectives are: to deepen the thinking on the concept of an European security and defence policy; to discuss and promote on public opinion a better sense of security and defence and to make proposals to the relevant parties, at national and European level. I am speaking of the EuroDefense Associations integrated in the European network EURODEFENSE.

On the introduction of this panel, our Chairman did explain what EuroDefense is about. I would like to take advantage of this opportunity to go deeper in the substance of their contribution to the ESDP development.

The European Working Groups (EWGs) are the basis of the EuroDefense activities. On an annual basis, the Council of Presidents of the National Associations defines the major themes, taking in consideration the need for a prospective vision. Each theme is assigned to a EWG to be workable within a limited period of time. The EuroDefense papers produced by those EWG are a

privileged way to communicate and a base for debate among the members. After an enlarged discussion it can originate EuroDefense Recommendations sent to the main European Institutions.

Just to conclude I would like to give you one example of that methodology which is the work that is being done by the EWG 10, lead by EuroDefense-Portugal, focusing on the “EU as a Global Actor for Peace”.

The background paper prepared for debate inside the Group is a good starting point for a final text that will be discussed at the next International Conference of EuroDefense in Rome, next November.

The first draft of the paper took into account a certain number of items aiming to demonstrate the need to give the EU the capabilities required to guarantee its role as a global actor for peace. Europe has already played and is playing certain roles on the international and global arena, as shown by the recent military engagements in Afghanistan through NATO, in the Democratic Republic of Congo in the framework of the EU and in south Lebanon, under United Nations mandate.

From this perspective, the background paper highlight the following conclusive elements that we believe deserve an attentive study to help to define the path of EU as a global actor for peace, in the 21<sup>st</sup>. century:

- A. A strategic partnership with the United States of America to promote interests and share efforts, in an institutional framework that provides a deeper and easier relationship between the two sides of the Atlantic. We need a partnership that allows a more consistent vision in the long term and that involves NATO in its interconnection with ESDP.
- B. The stabilization of the Muslim World, especially the Wider Middle East in a framework of modernity and cooperation with Europe helping the alliance of civilizations and avoiding the clash.
- C. The share of responsibilities in an international order of democracies that favors a stable world order, based on regional organizations that promote transparency and cooperation.

D. The development of cooperative relations with the emerging powers

The world is watching the raise of potential great powers. Brazil, Russia, India, China (the so-called BRICs) are the classical examples of possible great powers of the future. Others will tend to be more affirmative in the coming future. Building bridges between them, good relations and cooperative strategies can contribute to the international order and to peace.