**CONFLICT RESOLUTION AS A POLICY GOAL UNDER ENP
IN THE SOUTHERN NEIGHBOURHOOD**

**Report Prepared for the Committee on Foreign Affairs
of the European Parliament**

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Executive Summary

- Conflict resolution and prevention is subject to different interpretations and understandings. Distinctions can also be drawn between short term responses to crisis and longer term responses intended to deal with the root causes of conflict. Conflict resolution processes can be divided into distinct stages of negotiation, implementation, and operation.

- The Southern neighbourhood has an abundance of actual and potential conflicts within and between these countries. The neighbourhood faces three different types of conflicts: latent/unresolved conflicts between states; communal/sectarian civil wars; Islamic-fundamentalist insurgencies.

- ENP goals do not easily map on to the conflicts of the Southern neighbourhood and especially as conflict resolution was not the primary objective of the policy. To-date the ENP has not made a significant contribution to conflict resolution and prevention in the Southern neighbourhood.

- There are a number of other actors (most notably the UN) who have been engaged in conflict resolution and prevention in the Southern neighbourhood for a long time. EU member states have been contributors to such missions. The EU as an institution, however, is only a more recent participant in such activities, primarily through CFSP and ESDP operations in the neighbourhood.

- The EU has made a number of declarations of intent to enhance its conflict resolution and prevention capabilities in the neighbourhood but these have not resulted in the development and implementation of a distinct and coherent set of policies to that effect within the wider ENP framework. This can partly be explained with reference to constraints that the ENP faces in this respect: EU commitment to bilateral consensus in Action Plans (without parallel country strategies determined by EU priorities), commitment to multilateralism (support of existing initiatives regardless of their effectiveness), EU inter-institutional division of responsibilities (lead-role of CFSP/ESDP initiatives), and significance of the EU's internal security agenda. This also accounts, in part, for the fact that the civil society dimension of conflict resolution within the ENP has not advanced beyond a general commitment and to identifiable instruments of implementation.

- If the ENP is to be enhanced to make a significant contribution to conflict prevention and management in the Southern neighbourhood three key issues need to be addressed: a willingness to shoulder the financial and political costs that the successful implementation of a more robust and main-streamed conflict prevention and resolution component of the ENP would entail; ENP Action Plans need to be extended to all states in the Southern neighbourhood and new and successor Plans should mainstream conflict prevention and resolution; and there is the need to directly address the question of the strategic finality of the EU's relations with its Southern neighbours, including a re-think of the geographical extent of the 'neighbourhood'.

- It will be the role of the European Parliament to advocate strongly a clear 'tough-love' on the ENP to prod the Council and the Commission to move in the direction that this report recommends. Within the limits of its competence, the European Parliament has opportunities to monitor the ENP, to hold the other institutions with policy and implementation responsibility accountable for their actions or inaction, and to ensure, *qua* its budgetary powers, that the ENP is adequately resourced.

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1. Introduction: Conceptual clarification of conflict resolution and prevention within the EU framework

There is no agreed definition of the terms conflict resolution and prevention in either the academic literature or policy documents. For the purposes of this report, we define conflict resolution as efforts aimed at establishing an institutional framework in which the conflicting interests of the different principal conflict parties can be accommodated to such an extent that incentives for co-operation and the non-violent pursuit of conflicts of interest through compromise outweigh any benefits that might be expected from violent confrontation. As such, using the term conflict resolution is in fact not always completely accurate: in many cases, the conflict itself may continue to exist for a shorter or longer period of time after a peace agreement has been reached, or at least some of its underlying aspects will, but the conflict parties have found non-violent, sometimes even democratic ways in which they can address their differences. The Dayton process in Bosnia and Herzegovina can serve as an example for the relative success of conflict resolution policies in this respect, while the Oslo process in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is an example of an ultimately failed case of conflict resolution.

Among conflict prevention policies a distinction is normally made between short-term crisis management (aimed at preventing conflict escalation in the short term) and long-term structural prevention (aimed at removing the underlying or root causes of conflict). Examples of crisis management include high-level diplomatic mediation efforts (such as in Kosovo in 1998/9 prior to NATO's intervention and in Macedonia in 2001). Long-term structural prevention policies often manifest themselves in comprehensive programmes of aid, development, governance reform, etc., such as the EU's Stability Pact for Southeastern Europe.

A third term is also frequently used in the academic and policy literature: conflict management. This describes efforts to contain or limit the effects of an ongoing conflict. This can mean the provision of humanitarian aid to civilians in conflict zones or in refugee camps outside an actual conflict area, as in Kosovo, Macedonia, Albania and Montenegro during the Kosovo conflict in spring 1999. It can also mean the provision of troops to keep conflict parties apart—the case of Cyprus springs to mind—or to monitor ceasefire agreements, as was, for example, the case with the Independent International Commission on Decommissioning for Northern Ireland under the 1998 Agreement. Conflict management as containment can also imply preventing the spill-over of a conflict across international borders, something that was successfully achieved in Macedonia throughout the 1990s. Thus, conflict management is primarily a strategy that is chosen when the settlement of a conflict is impossible.

Leaving aside the question of overlap between these three areas, it is further necessary to distinguish between three stages of the conflict resolution process: negotiation, implementation, and operation. The negotiation phase is the one which is the most significant for shaping the institutional design of the agreement, and thus the nature of the political process during both the implementation and operation phases. Moreover, most conflict resolution agreements are at the same time very complex post-conflict reconstruction plans, involving economic, social, cultural and other issues alongside

constitutional design (for example, the Dayton Accords). Implementation refers to the process of putting in place the institutions and procedures agreed during negotiations. As this can often be a prolonged process, especially where agreements are complex and are applied in situations of previously intense or protracted conflict (e.g., Bosnia and Herzegovina, Northern Ireland) or require substantial legislative and administrative changes to existing structures (e.g., Macedonia), implementation and operation often run in parallel for a considerable period of time. This means that the implementation of an entire conflict settlement agreement is often far from complete when the former conflict parties have to operate at least part of the institutions established in the agreement. Uneven or incomplete implementation may affect the operation of a conflict resolution agreement: for example, constitutions are normally designed as whole packages and require, for their proper functioning, the existence and operation of all their institutions.

2. Mapping current and potential future conflict situations in the southern neighbourhood and ENP policy goals

The EU's southern neighbourhood, comprises the countries on the southern and eastern Mediterranean shores: Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, and Egypt; and the Palestinian Authority, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria and embraces the states participating in the Barcelona process that pre-dates the creation of the ENP. Obviously, there is an abundance of conflicts within and between these countries. These include for the countries of the southern Mediterranean:

- A serious Islamist challenge in Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, and Egypt: Of these, the situations in Algeria and Egypt pose the gravest dangers for regional security. The government of Algeria has, over the years, and especially since 9/11 received significant international and regional backing, notably from France and the US, as well as from neighbours Tunisia, Morocco, and Egypt. At the same time, Western criticism of Algeria's poor human rights record has significantly decreased. Islamist rebels, in turn, have enjoyed verifiable support from Islamic organisations and Sudan. Rumours about links with Iran and al-Qaeda persist, but evidence is circumstantial at best. Egypt receives similar Western backing in its protracted conflict with the Islamic Brotherhood. While the conflict there seems to be under better government control than in Algeria in terms of casualties, Egypt is generally considered a more unstable state, ranking 31 out of 146 countries in the Fund for Peace State Failure Index, whereas Algeria (72), Morocco (76), Libya (96), and Tunisia (100) enjoy a relative greater degree of security and stability.

- The unresolved status of Western Sahara/Morocco: This conflict has not seen any violence over the past several years, but the dispute between the POLISARIO liberation movement and the government of Morocco has yet to be settled.

As far as the eastern Mediterranean (Middle East/Near East) is concerned, current conflicts include:

- The Israeli-Palestinian conflict: The final status and borders of a future Palestinian state remain yet to be established. Following the Hamas electoral victory in January 2006, the peace process stalled completely but was partially revived after the escalation of intra-Palestinian fighting in 2007.
- The intra-Palestinian conflict between Hamas and Fatah: This conflict fully erupted in 2007 and has led to Hamas controlling the Gaza strip and Fatah the West Bank.
- The unresolved border disputes between Israel, Lebanon, and Syria: Except for the Israeli incursions into Lebanese territory in summer 2006, these border disputes have not generated inter-state violence for some time now, not least thanks to the presence of UN missions.
- The conflict in Lebanon between and within the country's various religious communities: This conflict has escalated anew following the forced withdrawal of Syrian troops after the assassination of former president Hariri. This conflict is primarily a power struggle between pro- and anti-Syrian parties that cross-cut, to some extent, pre-existing religious cleavages. Iran and Syria have both been linked to Hezbollah and are alleged to be the group's main arms suppliers, including sophisticated anti-aircraft missiles and long-range rockets.

This means that the EU's southern neighbourhood essentially faces three different types of conflicts:
- **Latent/unresolved conflicts between states**, primarily evolving around borders in the Middle East
- **Communal/sectarian civil wars**, primarily the power struggles in Lebanon and the Palestinian territories, as well as the self-determination struggle in Morocco/Western Sahara
- **Islamic-fundamentalist insurgencies**, primarily in Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, and Egypt

Existing ENP policy goals do not easily map onto these types of conflicts. This is because the ENP is a policy which has not been *primarily* devised for the purposes of conflict resolution or prevention. Conflict resolution and prevention are sub-components of the wider ENP policy objectives. The European Commission has so far produced three policy documents which outline in general terms the conflict prevention goals the ENP is meant to accomplish. In its Communication to the Council and the European Parliament of 2003, the European Commission stresses it as important "to create an enlarged area of political stability and functioning rule of law" and emphasises that a "shared neighbourhood implies burden-sharing and joint responsibility for addressing the threats to stability created by conflict and insecurity" (European Commission 2003). Significantly, the Commission sees greater involvement in crisis management and conflict resolution as an important signal to neighbouring countries about the EU's acceptance of burden-sharing. In line with the distinction made above between the actual reaching of a settlement and its implementation and operation, the Commission points out that "[o]nce settlement has been reached, EU civil and crisis management capabilities could also be engaged in post-conflict internal security arrangements."

The Commission's 2004 Strategy Paper on the ENP notes that, in its Action Plans, the EU will also seek commitments from partners (i.e., the countries targeted by the ENP) to make "efforts to achieve conflict resolution" (European Commission 2004). However, conflict resolution as a distinct policy within the wider ENP framework is given relatively little specific treatment. Most importantly, the European Neighbourhood Instrument, one of the six financial instruments operational in the EU's external relations, does not name conflict resolution as one of its four key objectives.

The Commission's 2006 Communication "On Strengthening the European Neighbourhood Policy" puts greater emphasis on conflict resolution. It emphasises that so-called "frozen conflicts and recent events in the Middle East and Southern Caucasus … are not only our neighbours' problems [because] they risk producing major spillovers for the EU, such as illegal immigration, unreliable energy supplies, environmental degradation and terrorism." In a critical assessment of its own success in contributing to conflict resolution, the Commission notes that, despite a few specific achievements, the ENP has by-and-large failed to live up to its commitments in this area. In a marked departure from the relative neglect of conflict resolution as a specific policy area, the 2006 Communication dedicates an entire section to it under the heading "Strengthening political cooperation". While recognising that "[t]he ENP can never substitute for the regional or multilateral efforts under way to address these issues [i.e., conflicts and their consequences]", the Commission emphasises the importance of concrete EU contributions: full participation in existing efforts (e.g., the Middle East Peace Quartet, the UN referendum support mission in Western Sahara), participation in civil or military monitoring or peacekeeping operations, border management operations (such as EUBAM Rafah), the development of concrete proposals in the field of conflict resolution, or concrete support for reform and development in countries affected by conflict. (European Commission 2006)

Two further issues need to be mentioned. The Commission's analysis of the broader security challenges in the Southern neighbourhood identifies a number of important issues, such as organised crime (including trafficking in humans, drugs and weapons), international terrorism, environmental degradation, security of energy supplies, and public health but assigns them by-and-large into the policy area of Justice and Home Affairs. In the context of conflict resolution as a distinct policy element within the ENP they figure as consequences of conflict and thus as reasons for EU engagement in conflict resolution. This linearity of reasoning (conflict causes terrorism, organised crime, etc.) does not do justice to the complexity of situations that the EU is facing in its Southern neighbourhood. On the one hand, conflicts often have their source, among others, in the presence of these issues and their effects on population groups, especially minorities, who may eventually turn to violence to address their grievances. These are also grievances that in some cases mask the greed of elites (at state or local level) who benefit from the insecurity created by conflict in pursuit of their own economically rather than politically driven agenda. In addition, in some of the long-lasting conflicts that the EU's Southern neighbourhood is confronted with, it is difficult to distinguish exactly between causes and consequences of conflicts: original causes of conflict may have given way to others that

now prevent the solution of these conflicts, and the insecurity of conflict environments and issues like organised crime, international terrorism, environmental degradation, etc. now are in a mutually reinforcing relationship that creates extra complexity for the resolution of these conflicts.

The second point is that a number of member states of the EU are linked in specific ways to countries in the Southern neighbourhood, and that these relationships create their own specific dynamics of interest and opportunity structures. This relates to both private sector interests (especially levels of FDI and trade between EU member states and countries in the Southern neighbourhood) and strategic political interests (e.g., the relationship between Spain and Morocco/Western Sahara, the relationship between France and Algeria). This creates additional challenges for the ENP, especially in policy areas where it overlaps with the Council, such as ESDP and CFSP which are of obvious importance for conflict resolution strategies developed under the ENP. It is also significant that there are ESDP/CFSP policies in place for countries that are outside the ENP target area but important for any success of the ENP (such as the situation in Sudan, the Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes Region, as well as for the Greater Middle East, including Afghanistan and Iraq).

3. Existing conflict prevention mechanisms applicable to the Southern neighbourhood

Because of the significant number of existing conflicts and the strategic significance of the area covered by the EU's southern neighbourhood, several mechanisms and initiatives aimed at conflict resolution and prevention exist, most of which pre-date the ENP.

- Among the international organisations most active, the **United Nations** currently sponsors four missions pursuant to UNSC resolutions: the UN Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO, since 1948, current EU contributors include Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, Slovakia, Slovenia, and Sweden), the UN Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF, since 1974, current EU contributors include Austria [providing the force commander], Poland and Slovakia), the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL, since 1978, see also below), and the UN Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO, since 1991, current EU contributors include Austria, Denmark [providing the force commander], France, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, and Poland).
- Pursuant to a Protocol to the Peace Treaty between Israel and Egypt in 1979 an ad-hoc coalition of states established the **Multinational Force and Observers** (MFO, deployed since 1982). Current contributor countries include several EU members: France, Hungary, and Italy.
- The **European Union** itself is present in the region with two ESDP missions of its own: EUPOL COPPS and EU BAM Rafah. The EU is also a formal member of the Middle East Quartet (alongside the UN, US and Russia), and has its own Special Representative for the Middle East Peace Process. In addition, UNIFIL received an enhanced mandate from the UN SC following the July/August 2006

escalation of hostilities between Israel and Hezbollah, including monitoring the cessation of hostilities, supporting Lebanese armed forces in their deployment in the south of Lebanon, ensuring humanitarian access to civilian populations and the voluntary and safe return of displaced persons. Apart from Italy as the 'lead nation' of the enhanced UNIFIL mission, EU members Belgium, Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Luxemburg, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, and Sweden are among the contributing countries, emphasising the degree of EU engagement, despite the fact that original plans to have a CFSP mission take over from UNIFIL whose mandate was due to expire in 2006 did not materialise.

The ENP can therefore build on existing EU relations with the region through both its own CFSP missions and through support of multilateral (UN) efforts, as well as pre-existing bilateral relations between EU member states and countries in the region.

The ENP's most valuable contribution would be to enhance EU engagement precisely in an area identified by the 2006 Commission Communication: the development of concrete proposals in the field of conflict resolution. This would be particularly important as existing international efforts have either stalled (Middle East Peace process, Western Sahara) or the UN is mostly engaged in maintaining a fragile status quo (e.g., in relation to the situation along the Israeli-Lebanese and Israeli-Syrian borders). A more proactive approach to conflict resolution in the Southern neighbourhood would also mean that the EU could take a more prominent role in the negotiation of peace agreements (*qua* a mediator/facilitator role), rather than be handed the task to finance and otherwise support the implementation and operation of agreements negotiated by others with little, if any, direct input from the EU.

4. Conflict resolution and prevention mechanisms within the ENP and their relation with existing frameworks

Conflict resolution and prevention mechanisms within the ENP that are distinct from existing EU policies and specific for the Southern neighbourhood are few and far between. Of the measures mentioned in the European Commission's Communication *On Strengthening the European Neighbourhood Policy* (European Commission 2006) most fall into other policy areas: full participation in existing conflict resolution and prevention efforts, participation in civil or military monitoring or peacekeeping operations, and border management operations are all part and parcel of the EU's CFSP/ESDP and fall within the mandate of the European Council's responsibility. In this Communication, the European Commission also calls for 'concrete support for reform and development in countries affected by conflict' (European Commission 2006). While this is also not an original policy development under the ENP, it has the potential to contribute to long-term structural conflict prevention under Commission leadership.

The final policy element that the European Commission stressed in its 2006 Communication relates to 'the development of concrete proposals in the field of conflict resolution' (European Commission 2006). While again not original *per se* to the ENP, the development and refinement of concrete proposals in the field of conflict resolution for

the Southern neighbourhood would represent a development of the existing EU policy practice under the ENP. However, at present policy is largely confined to declarations of intent rather than a developed framework for implementation. It is also unclear which distinctive contribution the EU intends to make to existing conflict and its resolution. For example, on the Western Sahara situation, the Morocco ENP Country Report has a specific paragraph on the status of this conflict, while the Commission Proposal and ENP Action Plan restrict themselves to mentioning merely a contribution to 'UN regional conflict resolution efforts' as one of the Actions.

However, there may be an inherent 'design flaw' in the ENP that mitigates against the ENP as a vehicle for conflict resolution. Joint ownership of the Action Plans is a cornerstone of the ENP. However, the EU's identification of a policy objective designed to mitigate conflict may not be shared by the partner country, and thus not find its way into the bilaterally agreed Action Plan. Unless the EU also develops a political strategy towards countries in the Southern neighbourhood that is independent of these Action Plans, the ENP will remain confined within a framework of mutually agreed Actions. This could mean that the ENP will only make indirect contributions to conflict prevention and resolution—by way of policies that create a political, social, and economic climate less conducive to conflict—and that the ENP will take a permanent second-place to CFSP/ESDP in the area of conflict prevention and resolution. The latter is already apparent in the numerous references to CFSP/ESDP in various Action Plans.

An additional problem in relation to the development and implementation of concrete policies in the area of conflict prevention and resolution is that many political objectives in the Action Plans relate to the EU's internal security agenda (transnational organised crime, illegal migration, international terrorism, etc.). Resulting policies that prioritise EU-internal security objectives are thus often largely irrelevant for conflict resolution and prevention (e.g., readmission agreements with Morocco and Tunisia).

5. Mainstreaming the civil society dimension of conflict prevention into the ENP
Currently the ENP has not moved beyond a rhetorical commitment to mainstreaming the civil society dimension of conflict prevention into the ENP. Mainstreaming civil society within the ENP is clearly articulated (for example in the three Commission Communications on the ENP). In the Commission Proposal and in the Action Plan, there is nothing more than a general commitment to promote the development of civil society networks and to encourage organisations for the defence of citizens' social, political and economic rights.

There is a neglect of the civil society dimension of conflict prevention across the existing Action Plans. This omission should be addressed in the Action Plans yet to be negotiated and be built into the negotiations for the successors to the existing Action Plans. As an interim measure conflict prevention and management should form a dedicated component of the country progress reports from which it is currently absent.

To ensure policy success there needs to be a clearer diagnostic of how the civil society dimension of the conflict prevention policy is addressed to the different forms of conflict

in the Southern Neighbourhood (latent/unresolved conflicts between states; Communal/sectarian civil wars; Islamic-fundamentalist insurgencies). Each of these conflict situations requires a policy response that is nuanced to address the contingencies of each form of conflict situation and the civil society dimension.

The slow pace at which the civil society dimension of the policy has been implemented has prevented real benefits from materialising. The ENP as a framework has the potential to be an effective policy. It has various strengths: being based on the concept of conditionality - which has proven its effectiveness in the past - and relying on a series of tools which could be useful guides in helping the partner countries through their reforms. This potential policy strength needs to be adopted to guide the conflict prevention and management components of the ENP.

Mainstreaming the civil society dimension is currently not effective because it is seriously weakened by several important structural deficiencies, the most critical of which is the absence of substantial incentives to implement within the partner countries. The result of this lack of incentives is that the policy is deprived of any substantial leverage.

In addition, the ENP (and the EU more generally) at present lacks any clear benchmarking standards for what it understands by independent civil society actors. It needs to develop a stronger monitoring system to ensure that 'real' rather than 'fake, government-sponsored' civil society is being engaged. Such standards, once established, could also increase available leverage if other funding under the ENP were to be made conditional on civil society activities taking place.

6. Conclusion: Conflict prevention/resolution as a precondition to progress under ENP—the place of conflict prevention/resolution in the ENP
The ENP has yet to offer compelling evidence of its ability to make a real distinctive contribution to conflict prevention and conflict resolution. Conceptually and practically the ENP is (self-) constrained in four distinct ways that can explain this failure to make such a contribution:

- The EU's commitment to **consensus** in the Action Plans means that it will always require the agreement of partner countries to any specific steps vis-à-vis conflict resolution and prevention. Where settling a conflict is not in the interest of the other state party or where the EU and the other state party have divergent visions of how best to achieve a sustainable settlement, the Action Plan will remain silent on any concrete measures towards conflict resolution and prevention.
- The EU's (otherwise laudable) commitment to **multilateralism** means that it will continue to invest itself in the support of existing international initiatives to resolve or prevent particular conflicts, regardless of whether these have brought any measurable progress to a given situation.
- The **inter-institutional division of policy responsibilities** within the EU means that, for the most part, the ENP is following (pre-existing) CFSP/ESDP initiatives. Support for these policies is important, but does not amount to a distinct ENP

contribution to conflict resolution and prevention, and, in fact, means that some ENP policies will be driven by the European Council rather than the European Commission.

- The significance that the EU's **internal security agenda** has assumed of late, especially in relation to counter-terrorism, means that the political dimension of the ENP and the creation of a stable and secure Southern neighbourhood is viewed from the inside out. That has meant, that organised crime and border security (i.e., symptoms of instability) have become priorities for the ENI, whereas unresolved self-determination conflicts or religious and sectarian violence (i.e., causes of instability) are not even mentioned among the ENI's four key objectives.

Overall if one evaluates the success of the ENP in achieving a key objective in spreading stability, security and prosperity in the EU's neighbourhood as a way to prevent the risks of instability flowing across the EU's borders, it is difficult to identify clear-cut policy successes attributable directly to the ENP. For the foreseeable future the EU will remain bordered by unstable neighbours in the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean affected by low living standards, high levels of corruption and organised crime, and vulnerable political systems. As these issues are intrinsically linked with the active and frozen conflicts across the Southern neighbourhood, the strengthening of conflict prevention/resolution within the ENP has to be an important priority.

The ENP is a strategic policy for the EU establishing, as it does, a blueprint for the intended relationships with the EU's near neighbours. The design of the ENP is not inherently flawed and it has the potential to offer substantial benefits to the partner countries. However, the policy is not *primarily* designed for the purposes of conflict prevention and conflict management. Three key issues need to be addressed if the policy is to be converted into a successful avenue for conflict prevention and conflict management:

- The first is a willingness to shoulder the financial and political costs that the successful implementation of a more robust and main-streamed conflict prevention and resolution component of the ENP would entail.
  - o The Commission needs to take on real responsibility in the area of CFSP/ESDP, set itself clear and manageable priorities in relation to conflict prevention and resolution, and implement them as a Commission policy independent of the European Council.
  - o Where necessary, the Commission needs to break with certain principles if these are counter-productive in relation to conflict prevention and resolution.
    - International efforts that have failed to bring about sustainable conflict settlements will not suddenly and miraculously succeed because the EU begins or continues to support them. Where new approaches are required, they should become a key element of ENP conflict prevention and resolution policies.

- Likewise, the fact that some partner countries reject concrete Actions on conflict prevention and resolution should not inhibit the EU from maintaining a country strategy (and an accompanying set of policies) vis-à-vis a partner country in parallel to an agreed Action Plan. This distinction between country strategies and Action Plans is essential to allow the EU to distinguish between its own interests overall (identified in a country strategy), and those interests that it seeks to realise in cooperation with its partners (through jointly agreed Action Plans). Action Plans thus would form one element of achieving EU policy objectives vis-à-vis a specific country, rather than the only one. As conflict prevention objectives seem to be difficult to agree in APs with several partners in the Southern neighbourhood, retaining them in country strategies would be significant for mainstreaming this policy element into the ENP, and developing a set of benchmarks and indicators for monitoring progress that should have an input into revised APs and their implementation.

  o Main-streaming conflict prevention and resolution will require that the Commission and the Council consider the impact of all policies under the ENP for ongoing and latent conflicts in the Southern neighbourhood. This will require both an initial assessment of the potential impact that any policy might have, as well as careful monitoring of any impact during the implementation of a specific policy and the willingness to adjust or abandon a policy if its impact is assessed to be detrimental in relation to a particular conflict situation. For example, endorsing the holding of elections in the Palestinian Territories in 2006 had clearly foreseeable negative consequences, and the EU would have been well-advised to break ranks with the Middle East Quartet rather than see its primary contribution in maintaining the unity of the international community in a process that neither until then nor since has resulted in any net gain of stability, security and prosperity in the region. Likewise, engaging with various governments in the Southern Mediterranean on counter-terrorism may benefit internal EU security priorities, but it means turning a blind eye to ongoing human rights violations that partially fuel the very conflicts that ENP, among other things, is meant to address.

  o The Commission and the Council need to focus in particular also at the regional or cross-border impact of ENP and related policies. The high degree of interdependence among the countries of the Southern neighbourhood (and their neighbours) will mean that such an assessment and monitoring procedure must not be country-specific, but rather needs to proceed from the existing and latent conflicts as a starting point.

- Second, a key structural problem that needs to be addressed is that ENP Action Plans are not currently in place for key states in the Southern neighbourhood (Algeria, Libya, and Syria). These states are important loci for conflict situations that currently exist and, consequently, key contributors to conflict situations

requiring prevention and management. Action Plans should be concluded with these states as a matter of priority. These Action Plans should main-stream conflict prevention and resolution and consider both ongoing and latent conflicts within the three countries and conflicts outside of them to which they may be contributors or by which they are affected. However, resistance on the part of 'partner' countries to conclude an Action Plan should not condemn ENP to inactivity and eventual failure. As a strategic policy in the arsenal of the EU, it is right and proper to offer countries in the neighbourhood an opportunity to sign up to the ENP and enjoy its benefits. Yet, as we note above, it is essential for the EU to extend its policy instruments under the ENP and pursue specific country strategies precisely because the realisation of its strategic interests cannot be left to the willingness (or lack thereof) of countries in the Southern Neighbourhood to cooperate within the framework of Action Plans.

- Third, there is the need to directly address the question of the strategic finality of the EU's relations with its Southern neighbours. Such a debate is linked to a wider debate of where the final borders of Europe are and where the EU sees its neighbourhood beginning and ending. This is a far more difficult undertaking but it is an imperative if there is to be a fully-informed understanding as to what a successful ENP can, or cannot, deliver in relation to conflict prevention and resolution.
  - o Especially if seen from a conflict perspective, the current 'external borders' of the Southern neighbourhood as determined by the Commission and the Council are unconvincing. For example, in the Southern Mediterranean, the current neighbours' neighbours are important players in ongoing and latent conflicts and are themselves often exporters of instability (e.g., Sudan, Chad). In the Eastern Mediterranean, Jordan is rightly considered part of the EU's neighbourhood, whereas Saudi Arabia and, perhaps more importantly, Iraq are not.
  - o Limiting the ENP in such a geographic sense will inevitably limit its long-term viability as a stand-alone policy (in particular on relation to CFSP/ESDP), and even more so constrain what it can contribute to conflict prevention and resolution. For the ENP to succeed in spreading stability, security and prosperity across its neighbourhood, the neighbourhood itself needs to be determined from a strategic rather than geographical perspective. This would mean to establish clearly within the EU what the purpose of the ENP is, apart from the rather vague and unspecified notion of spreading stability, security and prosperity. The EU needs to ask itself which countries are more (or less) important, which countries are key partners, and which countries are significant 'problem' cases in this respect. A strategic neighbourhood in North Africa cannot but include Sudan, one in the Middle East must incorporate Iraq and Saudi Arabia, precisely because these (currently non-neighbourhood) countries have significant influence on the dynamics in the neighbourhood (in its current geographic delimitation). For ENP to succeed in spreading especially stability and security, relevant policies must not only consider

the impact of these (non-neighbourhood) countries, but actively engage with them.

Given the degree to which the Southern neighbourhood of the EU is prone with latent and ongoing conflicts, conflict prevention and resolution is a *conditio sine qua non* not only for the overall success of the ENP but also for its very viability as a policy distinct from existing frameworks and initiatives. The Commission, which has overall responsibility for the ENP, and is thus accountable for its success or failure, cannot, and should not, rely any longer on existing multilateral frameworks or CFSP/ESDP initiatives by the Council if these have not resulted in any measurable progress towards the prevention or resolution of conflicts across the Southern neighbourhood. Relatively more free from the inhibitions of intergovernmentalism, yet equipped with the political and economic muscle of the world's most successful project of regional integration, the Commission can and must take a far more proactive role in approaching conflict prevention and resolution in its neighbourhood. It needs to think boldly and act decisively, staking out its area of responsibility and building stable foundations for the long-term success of the ENP.

It will be the role of the European Parliament to advocate strongly a clear 'tough-love' on the ENP to prod the Council and the Commission to move in the direction that this report recommends. Within the limits of its competence, the European Parliament has opportunities to monitor the ENP, to hold the other institutions with policy and implementation responsibility accountable for their actions or inaction, and to ensure, *qua* its budgetary powers, that the ENP is adequately resourced.

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