



Council of the
European Union

029012/EU XXVI. GP
Eingelangt am 03/07/18

Brussels, 3 July 2018
(OR. en)

10715/18

CFSP/PESC 643
COPS 244

OUTCOME OF PROCEEDINGS

From: Nicolaidis Group
To: Political and Security Committee
Subject: Outcome of proceedings of the reinforced Nicolaidis Group meeting, 12
June 2018

Delegations will find in annex the Outcome of Proceedings from the Reinforced Nicolaidis Group meeting held on 12 June 2018.

Reinforced Nicolaidis Group meeting, 12 June 2018

Outcome of Proceedings

1. Introduction

On 23 May, PSC welcomed the EEAS/Commission services non-paper on "The EU as a Global Player on Conflict Prevention" (ref WK 5955/2018 INIT), underlined the need for joined-up efforts in taking forward the actions as part of the EU's integrated approach and tasked the Nicolaidis group together with other relevant working groups to follow up on the paper.

Against this background, a meeting of the Nicolaidis group, reinforced with CODEV representatives and experts from capitals, took place on 12 June. The objective of the discussion was to draw together Member States' further reflections on the paper on the basis of a set of guiding questions in order to collectively operationalise the stepped-up approach to the conflict prevention agenda.

As a follow-up to the Nico++ discussion on 10 January, the "EEAS/Commission services' issues paper suggesting parameters for a concept on Stabilisation", EEAS also provided a brief update on progress on the work on stabilisation.

2. Heightening political attention and action on conflict prevention at EU level

Member States expressed support for the increased EU focus on conflict prevention but underlined the need to stay operational. There was overall agreement on the need to mainstream gender, youth and climate change in the preventive work of the EU.

Member States welcomed the idea of discussing specific conflict prevention cases in the **Foreign Affairs Council (FAC)**, including in restricted format, and emphasised an important role of PSC in preparing for such discussions. The cases should touch vital EU interests and be geographically balanced, however, they should not be confined only to the immediate neighbourhood. Due to the sensitivity and confidentiality of some cases, particular care in terms of preparation for FAC discussions as well as communication was underlined. It was also advised to present Ministers with operational proposals or decisions on actions to be undertaken rather than with general discussion points.

3. Strengthening operational engagement between EEAS/Commission/CSDP missions and MS to implement the agenda

The next Multiannual Financial Framework was identified as an important opportunity to operationalise the increased ambition on conflict prevention and the integrated approach more broadly. Flexible funding, also through the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP) was considered as an important element in this regard, including for example to enable rapid/short-term support for mediation efforts, which may also complement humanitarian assistance.

Member states expressed broad agreement on the importance of having joint/shared EU-level analysis as the basis for driving preventive action. CSDP missions can also contribute in this regard. The need for more information sharing, including informing each other on existing and planned analysis was also stressed. The need for regular exchange of information between EU Delegations and Member States embassies was emphasized. Member States expressed the need for an exploration by the EEAS of opportunities for a mainstreaming of conflict prevention across the CSDP missions.

EU Early Warning System was emphasised as an important element in driving concrete and significant conflict preventive action. In this regard, Member States requested to be informed on the findings of the external study on the EU conflict Early Warning System to be consulted on the selection of Early Warning priority countries, also to ensure that Early Action would be focused on those areas where the EU has significant interests and tools available. Member States were invited to coordinate EU conflict prevention efforts on countries that were not selected as priorities but nevertheless have a high structural risk for violent conflict.

4. Strengthening expertise and joint working arrangements

Member States' secondments to support the EU's conflict prevention agenda were recognised as essential in maintaining EU internal capacity. There was agreement on the need to further strengthen collective Member State and EEAS/Commission services/EU Delegation capacities to intensify work on conflict prevention. Possibilities for strengthening joint training and learning seminars organised by the EU will be explored.

5. Engaging key partners on conflict prevention

There was overall agreement that this is an important moment to engage with the UN on prevention, in particular in the context of the wider Sustaining Peace agenda. To this end, the EU will upgrade its conflict prevention dialogue with the UN by raising it to senior officials' level. It was agreed that common messaging to UN, AU, and other regional organisations, and to governments at country-level and from Brussels could be further strengthened. Think tanks and civil society were also recognised as key partners, including for example the European Peacebuilding Liaison Office (EPLO), the European Institute of Peace and Horizon 2020-funded projects.

6. Ensuring we have an effective platform for collectively taking forward this programme of work

There was overall support on the idea of establishing a senior focal points group (to link with the EEAS DSG-level Conflict Prevention focal point), with Member States noting that potential focal points may have a broader remit than just conflict prevention (e.g. also stabilisation).

There was agreement on the usefulness of having dedicated discussions on conflict prevention and stabilisation in the NICO+ format. The chair expressed the intention to hold discussion in this format more regularly, bearing in mind that the primary role of the Nicolaidis Working Group is to prepare PSC meetings. The Early Warning/Early Action Forum (EWEAF) and informal meetings of EU mediation experts will continue to serve as informal expert discussions.

In addition, Member States expressed interest in establishing a virtual community of conflict prevention experts among Member States and EEAS/Commission services with a view to sharing lessons learnt and analysis as well as developing collective capacity and exploiting technology to support such a platform. The EEAS and Commission Services will explore how to bring forward this idea.

7. Stabilisation update and issues for joint reflection

Member States had an exchange of views on the implementation of the EEAS/Commission issues paper on stabilisation, including on the shared analysis, shared political objective, and strategic direction of the stabilisation process.

Member States agreed on the need to share burden and information regarding conflict analysis in stabilisation contexts, stressing the importance of avoiding duplications. Geographical Council Working Groups could be an appropriate forum to inform Member States in this regard. In addition, a number of Member States expressed readiness to share their analysis with the EU on a case-by-case basis. Introducing stabilisation on the Council (FAC) agenda on a more regular basis was proposed, based on concrete cases.

Member States stressed the importance of developing a shared political objective and a common vision of a stabilisation framework. This could be done in the form of a document with a structure similar to the current Political Framework for Crisis Approach (PFCA) but much shorter and focusing on the stabilisation process.

Member States will continue to work closely with the EEAS to develop shared guidance to maintain a clear strategic direction for the stabilisation action.

Member States also emphasised the importance of involving relevant EU institutions and services to ensure coordination between Heads of Missions on the ground. The key contribution of CSDP missions in this regard was also reiterated. Moreover, the importance of lessons learned in order to adjust and make progress on stabilisation actions was highlighted.

8. Recommendation

PSC is invited to take note of the outcome of proceedings and welcome its findings, with a view to further follow up by the EEAS, Commission services and Member States.