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OUTCOME OF PROCEEDINGS

From: Nicolaidis Group
To: Political and Security Committee
Subject: Outcome of proceedings of the reinforced Nicolaidis Group meeting, 28
September 2018

Delegations will find in annex the Outcome of Proceedings from the Reinforced Nicolaidis Group meeting held on 28 September 2018.

Reinforced Nicolaidis Group meeting, 28 September 2018

Draft Outcome of Proceedings

1. Introduction

On 26 July 2018 the EEAS, together with the Commission services, issued the joint information note: Progress Report on the implementation of the EU's Comprehensive Approach to external conflicts and crises - Action Plan 2016-2017 (WK 9350/2018).

A meeting of the Nicolaidis group, reinforced with CODEV representatives and experts from capitals, took place on 28 September. The objective of the discussion was to receive Member States' comments on the report on the Action Plan 2016-2017 and their further reflections on the subject. The discussion was facilitated by three guiding questions:

- In light of the challenges encountered, what measures could Member States and EU institutions take to improve information-sharing, coordination and collective institutional memories on the ground?
- What are the key incentives for Member States to engage in joint efforts in pursuit of an integrated approach in individual countries? And what measures or mechanisms are needed to boost those incentives?
- Concerning the local permanent EU presidency role of the Head of Delegation, how best can that role, in the view of Member States, be supported in order to ensure effective coordination and unity of purpose in agreeing joint objectives, strategies and multi-faceted interventions?

Short presentations of the report and its background were provided by the Nicolaidis Chair, the EEAS and the Commission highlighting that the successive Action Plans allowed deepening our understanding of the opportunities and challenges of applying the Comprehensive Approach, and that this way of working was progressively being generalised to all situations of crisis and fragility.

2. The concept of the comprehensive approach

Member States broadly welcomed the report and predominantly shared the valuable experience gained so far on the implementation of EU's Comprehensive Approach to external conflicts and crises. The comprehensive EU response to the migration crisis was an important case in point. They largely concurred with the process set in motion with the adoption of the Comprehensive Approach (CA) and noted that similar efforts at bridging different external action pillar were taking place also at the national level. They underlined that the further evolution from CA to the Integrated Approach (IA), foreseen in the EU Global Strategy, would benefit from the consideration of lessons learned both from CA and from national experiences, including whole of government approaches.

3. Challenges to the comprehensive approach/integrated approach

It was noted that, despite considerable efforts and progress, challenges still remained, notably a persistent silos culture and a tendency towards "single-set-of-actions". This needed to be addressed in order to sustain comprehensive approach/integrated approach becoming the normal way of working through concerted and complimentary efforts in tackling the current multifaceted crises. It was important to continue promoting a more cross-cutting comprehensive approach. Clear strategic and political guidance was essential to foster inter-pillar cooperation on the ground between the various EU stakeholders (notably EU institutions and Member States). The PSC could play a key role in this respect. Some noted that regular visits by Heads of Delegations to Brussels would help inform the political process. The value of joint multi-pillar missions, by different EU and MS services, was also highlighted.

4. External financial instrument - Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI)

Member States recognised that the integrated approach is one of the dimensions of the policy framework that underlies the proposal for the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI), the new financial instrument for the upcoming Multiannual Financial Framework. This would also strengthen the humanitarian-development-peace nexus in a more coordinated manner.

5. Best practices, information sharing and early warning/early action

Member States agreed on the importance of transparency, exchange of best practices and information sharing both on the ground and at capitals level, including sharing of relevant documents and reports. From the EEAS/Commission services it was noted that this should be a "two-way-street", especially in countries/regions where Member States had prominent knowledge or access. It was mentioned that a more systematic use of the Early Warning/Early Action system would help advance joint efforts in the field. Joint analyses would be the starting point to develop a truly integrated and common approach; experiences with Joint programming represented a good reference point in that regard. Coordination meetings could be useful to set up joint processes, but to avoid an overburdening of the system; the existing coordination structures should be used. Joint training sessions, also incorporating lessons learned, were also pointed to.

6. Role of EU Delegations and Member States in the field

Member States recognised the essential coordination and leadership role played by the EU Delegations (EUDELs) on the ground. EUDELs were also considered very important for their capacity to provide technical assistance and advisory capacity, as well as for their role as repository of institutional and collective memory which could be even strengthened. In parallel, it was felt that on some specific topics Member States could take the lead, especially in countries where they had specific knowledge and expertise. Consideration could also be given to pooling resources and tools together to enhance the impact. This would also increase EU and Member States' visibility, which was considered as a relevant motivating factor. Some Member States stressed the need for inclusivity and transparency in countries/regions where not all EU Member States were present.

7. Partnerships

Member States underlined the importance of effective coordination and partnerships with other international actors, notably the UN and the World Bank. Duplication of work needed to be avoided and complementarity pursued. The EU could not always be in the lead depending on the political context and the country-specific situation.

Ukraine, Mali/Sahel, Somalia, and Iraq among others were highlighted as particularly relevant geographical focal areas for the CA/IA. These areas have been good examples where the CA/IA had been applied with relative success.

8. Transition

At the end of the meeting, EEAS/Prevention of conflicts, Rule of law/SSR, Integrated approach, Stabilisation and Mediation (PRISM) described how the transition from comprehensive approach to the integrated approach was being undertaken. As stipulated in the Council Conclusion of January 2018 on the Integrated Approach, Member States and the EU institutions will continue to work closely together in Brussels and in the field, in the further conceptual development and the implementation of the Integrated Approach. The involvement of the Member States will be structured through regular interactions at expert-level in the relevant Council bodies as well as in the Political and Security Committee. Reporting on the implementation of the Integrated Approach to external conflicts and crises will be part of the yearly report on the implementation of the Global Strategy.

9. 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 in the context of the Integrated Approach.