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Subject: Council Conclusions on the Integrated Approach to External Conflicts and Crises
- Council Conclusions (22 January 2018)

Delegations will find in the Annex the Council Conclusions on the Integrated Approach to External Conflicts and Crises, adopted by the Council at its 3591st meeting held on 22 January 2018.

COUNCIL CONCLUSIONS ON THE INTEGRATED APPROACH TO EXTERNAL
CONFLICTS AND CRISES

The Integrated Approach

1. The Global Strategy for the EU's Foreign and Security Policy identifies the Integrated Approach as the framework for a more coherent and holistic engagement by the EU to external conflicts and crises and promotes human security and thereby also increases the security of the EU and its citizens. The Union has a wide array of policies and instruments at its disposal to respond to these challenges including in its immediate neighbourhood and beyond – spanning the diplomatic, security, defence, financial, trade, development cooperation and humanitarian aid fields (multi-dimensional). The Integrated Approach respects and reaffirms the various mandates, roles, aims and legal frameworks of the stakeholders involved. It is applied at the local, national, regional and global levels (multi-level) as needed and throughout all phases of the conflict – including protracted conflicts and crises – (multi-phase) in prevention, crisis response, stabilisation and longer-term peacebuilding, in order to contribute to sustainable peace. It is an approach that brings together Member States, relevant EU institutions and other international and regional partners as well as civil society organisations (multi-lateral).
2. The Council welcomes the steps undertaken since the adoption of the Global Strategy to implement and operationalise the Integrated Approach, including the establishment of a permanent structure within the EEAS, and work by the Commission and through EU Delegations to promote implementation of the Integrated Approach, and calls for further concrete and significant progress in this regard.

3. The Council stresses the importance of local ownership, inclusiveness, resilience and sustainability of supported actions, by engaging with national and local authorities, communities and civil society. The EU will further seek to reinvigorate effective multilateralism in line with the EU's commitment to global governance, based on international law, with the UN at its core, in full respect of the principles of the UN Charter. It will further strengthen its cooperation with the UN and other relevant international and regional organisations, including the international financial institutions, as well as non-governmental organisations. The Council underlines the key role of women, in line with UN Security Council resolution 1325 on Women Peace and Security, and youth in conflict prevention and peacebuilding and all relevant subsequent resolutions.
4. The Council stresses the need for EU's engagement in fragile contexts to work in a conflict sensitive manner. The Council emphasises the importance of rule of law, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms as well as the Responsibility to Protect. It reiterates the importance of adherence to International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and reaffirms the EU's role in taking a strong stand to promote the respect for IHL and the protection of civilians in all conflict situations.
5. There are strong synergies between the Integrated Approach and other follow-up processes to the Global Strategy, in particular with the Joint Communication on Resilience of 7 June 2017 and related Council conclusions of 13 November 2017 and the work on security and defence. Maximising the potential of the common security and defence policy in both civilian and military CSDP missions and operations, in a complementary manner, and in coordination with other relevant EU actors, including JHA agencies, as appropriate, plays an important role in widening the Integrated Approach to external conflicts and crises. The Council recalls that the Integrated Approach is also reflected in the new European Consensus on Development using development cooperation, as part of the full range of policies and instruments, to prevent, manage and help resolve conflicts and crises, avert humanitarian needs and build lasting peace and good governance, within established mandates.

6. The Council welcomes ongoing efforts to operationalise the humanitarian-development nexus, and the security-development nexus on the ground. In this regard, it reiterates the linkages between sustainable development, humanitarian action and conflict prevention and peacebuilding. The Council looks forward to the reporting on the humanitarian development nexus pilot countries in 2018. The Integrated Approach also contributes to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and in particular Goal 16 of achieving peaceful, just and inclusive societies. Moreover, the Global Strategy highlights human rights violations, climate change and environmental degradation as key factors contributing to conflicts and crises.
7. The Council recalls that EU humanitarian aid is guided by the principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence. It is provided solely on the basis of the needs of the affected populations, in line with the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid and beyond any political, strategic, military, economic or other objectives. Although a key part of EU overall response to crises, EU humanitarian aid is not a crisis management instrument as such and therefore should not be used for accomplishing any other objectives beyond humanitarian ones. EU humanitarian aid is therefore 'In-But-Out' with regard to the Integrated Approach.
8. The Council highlights that the Integrated Approach builds on and expands the scope and ambition of the Comprehensive Approach to external conflicts and crises. It deepens the policy framework established by the Comprehensive Approach, including the Joint Communication of 11 December 2013 and the subsequent Council Conclusions of 12 May 2014. The Integrated Approach concerns the need for an integrated effort at all stages of the EU response from planning to implementation and lesson learning, and succeeded the Comprehensive Approach following the completion of the 2016-2017 Comprehensive Approach Action Plan. The Council looks forward to the final reporting on the Comprehensive Approach Action Plan 2016-2017 including an assessment and lessons learnt.

Themes

Cross-cutting

9. The Council invites the High Representative and the Commission to ensure that joint conflict analyses are systematically carried out and updated for countries that are at risk of or facing conflict or instability and where the EU has a significant engagement. These analyses should comprise all relevant actors, including religious and cultural, in order to ensure a broad ownership and will feed into the ‘Single Country Assessments’ proposed in Council conclusions on Resilience. The joint conflict analyses will inform other processes of strategic engagement of the EU, such as regional and national programming and Joint Programming.
10. The Council highlights the unique potential of the EU in global mediation engagements, leveraging also on Member States' mediation networks and initiatives, including at local level. It underlines the need to further build up the mediation capacities of the EEAS to assist in prevention and resolution of local and national conflicts and further work on the ability to rapidly deploy mediation expertise to EU delegations and in support of other international and regional organisations whenever appropriate, also with sufficient emphasis on its use in early action. It also encourages the EU to support local actors for peace, including insider mediators and continue to deepen cooperation on mediation with the UN and other international and regional organisations.
11. The Council recalls its conclusions of 14 November 2016 and stresses the need for continued implementation of the Joint Communication on an EU-wide strategic framework to support security sector reform.

Conflict prevention

12. The Council requests the High Representative and the Commission to raise the political profile of prevention of external conflicts and crises including through dedicated ministerial discussions, when appropriate, on the basis of concrete cases, in order to attain a culture of early action to effectively address the risks of emerging, escalating violent conflicts. It welcomes the prioritisation of conflict prevention by the UN. The Council emphasises the importance of addressing atrocity prevention in the context of the prevention of conflicts and crises. It looks forward to the results of the on-going evaluation of EU conflict prevention and peacebuilding engagement for the period 2013-2017 as a basis to further strengthen the EU's role in these areas.
13. The Council welcomes the adjustments to the EU Early Warning System to make it more inclusive also through a more structured involvement of Member States, including in the Political and Security Committee, and looks forward to the establishment of a horizon scanning process, which aims to identify external pressures and their consequences in a short-term, with a view to informing a strengthened and timely EU political response. The EU will implement and monitor early action measures as identified through the early warning process, and discuss them in relevant Council bodies.
14. The Council recalls the need to integrate, where appropriate, the resilience approach into EU programming in order to contribute to the prevention of conflicts and crises, and to address the root causes of external conflicts and crises. It highlights the importance of flexible and rapid financing for the prevention of conflicts and crises and peacebuilding as well as to crisis response. In this regard, it recalls the key role of the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace.

The Council recalls the need to fully cover all requirements to further support partner countries in preventing and managing crises on their own, including in the context of CSDP missions and operations and calls on the Commission and the EEAS to swiftly identify and develop new projects. It reiterates the flexible geographical scope of CBSD and further recalls its proposal to work on a dedicated instrument for providing capacity building taking into account the necessary preparatory work.

EU response to conflicts and crises

15. The Council appreciates the establishment of the EEAS Crisis Response Mechanism, aimed at streamlining the response to external crises and emergencies, involving the EEAS, the Commission services and delegations. It invites the EEAS to further explore enhanced synergies between the new mechanism and emergency response systems in different EU institutions, notably the Emergency Response Coordination Centre in the Commission and the EU Integrated Political Crisis Response (IPCR) arrangements in the Council. It appreciates the Member States' enhanced coordination of consular response to crisis situations in third countries, and welcomes the implementation of the "Joint EU Consular Crisis Preparedness Framework".
16. The Council notes that CSDP missions and operations, both civilian and military, are more effective and have more impact when coordinated with wider EU engagement, including developmental, stabilisation, humanitarian and political dimensions. It welcomes that the strategic planning of missions and operations is coordinated with relevant actors at an early stage to facilitate the synchronisation with and the transition to other types of EU engagement ensuring a continuum of the EU action and impact in the country or region at stake. A more coherent approach increases the effectiveness of the EU's efforts and thereby paves the way for long-term sustainable peace and development. Furthermore, it stresses the importance of effective humanitarian civil-military coordination, as appropriate, in order to facilitate dialogue and enhance interaction between civilian and military actors.

17. The Council in this context also looks forward to the strengthening of civilian CSDP in line with its conclusions on security and defence of 13 November 2017. The added value of civilian CSDP within EU's Integrated Approach to external conflicts and crises and throughout the entire conflict cycle should be defined and the requirements concerning civilian capabilities should be met in the CSDP Compact in 2018.

Stabilisation

18. The Council takes note of first steps taken to implement stabilisation actions, including making use of Article 28 of the Treaty on European Union, like the EU stabilisation action in Central Mali. As the EU and its Member States can mobilise a broad set of relevant assets, tools and instruments that can be applied for integrated stabilisation action, coherent and coordinated planning is needed throughout stabilisation planning, in HQ and in the field. The Council looks forward to further development of an EU concept on Stabilisation, including a clear definition, as part of the EU Integrated Approach to external conflicts and crises.
19. The Council recalls its conclusions on the EU's support to transitional justice, as part of an Integrated Approach, and stresses the need to step up the EU's efforts in supporting and promoting transitional justice processes and engaging with partners at the international and at the country level.

It reiterates the importance of the fight against impunity for atrocity crimes and the EU's strong policy in support of the International Criminal Court.

Cooperation and coordination within the EU

20. 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. The Council looks forward to receiving a report on the implementation of the Integrated Approach to external conflicts and crises as part of the yearly report on the implementation of the Global Strategy.
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