

Regional Action Agenda for the Prevention of Armed Conflict

June, 2005

Por GPPAC - Region Latin America and the Caribbean

CIVIL SOCIETY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE PREVENTION OF ARMED CONFLICT IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN[1]

Table of Contents

Preamble

I. Recommendations for Civil Society Organizations

1. To strengthen the role of civil society organizations in order to achieve their effective participation in the prevention of armed conflict.

2. To influence subregional, regional and international governmental organizations (IGOs), governments and parliaments.

II. Recommendations for Governments

1. Regarding the institutional coordination of and training in armed conflict prevention.

2. Regarding the formulation of public policies and the relationship with International Governmental Organizations.

3. Regarding the relationship with Civil Society.

III. Recommendations for International Intergovernmental Organizations and Related Agencies

1. General Recommendations.

2. Recommendations for Subregional Entities.

3. Recommendations for the Organization of American States.

4. Recommendations for the United Nations.

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4. Recommendations for the United Nations.

Preamble

We, the representatives of different civil society organizations of Latin America and the Caribbean, driven by the escalation of armed violence in most of our countries, and the participants in regional and global initiatives in furtherance of trust, tolerance, engagement, human rights, democratic governance, sustainable development and peace:

- Aware of the urge to early detect the roots of potential violent and armed conflict, as well as to early address its prevention and potential escalation;
- Further acknowledging the positive contribution of Latin America and the Caribbean to the development of International Law and their long-standing experience in preventing and solving national and international armed conflicts through law-abiding practices;
- Highlighting the importance and capacity of civil society and citizen diplomacy actors to develop communication and understanding strategies supplementary to governmental diplomacy;
- Bearing in mind the specific dynamics, as well as the different political, cultural, social and economic features of each country and subregion;
- Aware of the need to be actively engaged in granting and maintaining security through non-violent and democratic means and acknowledging the importance of civil society participation in building a peace culture;
- Aware of the existence of genre, ethnic, racial, generational, or social and economic exclusion in Latin American and Caribbean societies and public policies hindering the protection of the human right to freedom, personal security and social articulation, which are essential to peace and security;
- And with a view to contributing to the non-violent transformation of the existing systems of rules, values and institutions aimed at creating the appropriate structural conditions that will enable all human beings to fully develop their potential

We propose the following Action Plan directed at civil society organizations, governments and international intergovernmental organizations, aimed at contributing to the prevention of armed conflict and the development of a peace culture for present and future generations throughout the region.

I. Recommendations for Civil Society Organizations

1. To strengthen the role of civil society organizations in order to achieve their effective participation in the prevention of armed conflict

- To create a regional network of civil society organizations engaged in armed conflict prevention and peace building and peace keeping activities in Latin America and the Caribbean, structured around national and subregional networks responsible for the following tasks, among others:

- Building and strengthening alliances with actors managing and/or promoting similar processes engaged in related issues (development; civil, political, economic, social, cultural and collective rights) with a view to increasing and reinforcing the capacities of civil society organizations (CSOs) and achieving a pluralistic, multiethnic and multicultural approach inclusive of women and the youth- to understanding armed conflict prevention and peace building.

- Promoting the understanding of security as a public good which commits the government to the citizens and guarantees appropriate consideration in the platforms of political parties and other political associations.

- Informing on the role that social actors in particular women and the youth- may and should have in the prevention of armed conflict; and promoting information and training programs on peace culture, particularly for the youth and children.

- Fostering the exchange of success stories, lessons learned, and good practices in relation to the prevention, management and solution of violent conflicts, including cross-border conflicts, and in relation to peace building, in particular the traditional processes of the indigenous, Afro-descendant and Romany peoples.

- Promoting information and training programs on reducing the availability and use of firearms as violence vectors and catalysts.

- To create an Armed Conflict Prevention Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean, with the following tasks, among others:
 - Conducting, supporting and participating in in-depth studies and research for understanding conflict and conflict resolution.
 - Using findings on the matter to elaborate and disseminate useful documents for civil society organizations, governments and international governmental organizations (IGOs), focusing on the contextual circumstances in which armed conflict occurs.
 - Developing and implementing an early warning system based on variables and indicators to identify potential armed and violent conflicts in the national, subregional and regional spheres; as well as monitoring the dynamics of possible armed conflict sources and informing about them. Within this framework, conducting systematic diagnosis on the internal and border situations of each country.
 - Creating and implementing methodologies to follow up national and international instruments and treaties on armed conflict prevention and peace building.
 - Developing and implementing training programs on armed conflict prevention, peace building and peace keeping activities, as well as on the exercise of citizens' rights.
 - Conducting, supporting and participating in in-depth studies aimed at drawing on success stories concerning the control over the proliferation of firearms and explosives and promoting the harmonization of legislation governing the control over the sale, use and possession of firearms, ammunition and explosives, as well as parts and components of firearms, ammunition and explosives.

2. To influence subregional, regional and international governmental organizations, governments and parliaments

- To fight for the creation, implementation and preservation of institutional mechanisms allowing for and increasing the participation of civil society in the processes of formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of global, regional and national public policies for the pursuit of peace and the prevention of armed conflict. To such effect, the following tasks can be carried out:

- To develop interlocutory strategies with international non-governmental organizations (NGOs), governments and intergovernmental organizations and to encourage CSOs to become accredited with IGOs.

- To develop initiatives for legislation and for the implementation by governments of mandatory consultations and free, prior and informed consent processes in relation to public policies and instruments to be implemented for conflict prevention and resolution, in particular regarding indigenous, rural and afro-descendant peoples' right to land, control over territories and use of natural resources.

- To get CSOs involved in the processes of elaboration and evaluation of public policies concerning citizens' security and defense and other peace- and security-related issues to guarantee that they fall within the democratic framework.

- To implement strategies aimed at guaranteeing governments' execution, ratification and implementation of the different international legal instruments on issues related to armed conflict prevention, disarmament, peace building and peace keeping, as well as the respect for human rights. In particular:

- Inter-American Convention against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives, and Other Related Materials (CIFTA)

- The provisions of the Model Regulations of the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD) concerning the laundering of money derived from illicit activities.

- United Nations (UN) programs against trafficking in firearms and ammunition.

- To call upon the governments to prepare and publish reports informing on the degree of compliance with the obligations undertaken upon ratification of international instruments and treaties on these matters.

- To promote initiatives aimed at the harmonization of legislation governing the control over the sale, use and possession of firearms, ammunition and explosives, as well as parts and components of firearms, ammunition and explosives.

- To promote public policies and legislation preventing the compulsory draft of young people.

- To propose to the parliaments feasible peace- and security-related public policies alternative to those promoted by governments and the international governmental organizations.

II. Recommendations for Governments

1. Regarding the institutional coordination of and training in armed conflict prevention

- To establish institutional mechanisms to coordinate the different Government entities, in particular those responsible for public security, justice, community development, environmental matters and the respect for human rights. To strengthen inter-agency work and create ad hoc commissions engaged in conflict prevention.

- To enhance the technical and political capacities of government officers in relation to conflict prevention and non-violent conflict resolution. To such effect, the following actions are required:

- To incorporate into the training of officers particularly those working in public security- specific programs of education for peace and human rights in line with UNESCO regulations in all dimensions (domestic, social and government violence, among others). The programs should also contribute to eliminating prejudices and all forms of discrimination and should be developed preferably in collaboration with CSOs.

- To guarantee a government officer selection process whereby candidates are required to favor the defense of human rights.

2. Regarding the formulation of public policies and the relationship with IGOs

- To ratify international legal instruments concerning the respect for civil, political, economic, social, cultural and collective rights and to elaborate policies in keeping with the obligations undertaken.

- To prepare, present to IGOs and publish periodic reports informing on the progress made and compliance with subscribed international agreements on these matters.

- To create and set up, in tandem with IGOs, Interstate Early Warning Observatories to detect potential armed conflicts. These Observatories shall:

- Incorporate institutionalized mechanisms for the participation of civil society and representatives of groups and populations highly likely to get involved in future armed conflicts.

- To establish and promote, within the applicable areas and populations, mutual trust measures, including the participation of civilians in observation and peace missions.

- To establish democratic, participatory and transparent processes for the design of defense policies encompassing international and regional strategic changes, actual defense needs of the countries, the imperative for the democratic management and control of the armed forces and unequivocal compliance with International Law, particularly concerning the use of force.

- To call upon countries to design defense policies and present them in the form of White Books or other official documents, taking into account the hemispheric recommendations on the matter.

- To promote, within the framework of the OAS and the subregional organizations, the execution and implementation of the memorandum of understanding for the establishment of institutional contact points for the exchange of information on legal and illicit transfers of firearms and ammunition.

3. Regarding the relationship with Civil Society

- To create and/or consolidate institutional fora for civil society consultation and participation in security, conflict prevention and peace building affairs.

- To promote discussion with civil society on legislation related to these issues.

- To promote CSOs participation in the design and planning of legislation related to human rights.

- To design, implement and secure citizens access to information and training programs on conflict prevention and human rights.

III. Recommendations for International Intergovernmental Organizations and Related Agencies

1. General Recommendations

- To secure mechanisms of effective civil society engagement in dialogs and consultations among different actors promoted by IGOs and subregional organizations on issues specifically related to armed conflict prevention, democratic governance, and international peace. Among these, specific consultation fora for conflict prevention could be set up.

- To facilitate the creation and/or implementation of mechanisms for early warning and armed conflict prevention in the region, and to analyze a possible collaboration or creation of alliances with CSOs initiatives. In this sense, to support the construction of Interstate Early Warning Observatories and their mechanisms and instruments, particularly those directed towards CSOs institutionalized participation.

- To promote CSOs accreditation with IGOs so that they may participate in the discussion, formulation, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of armed conflict prevention policies.

- To support and implement training programs for CSOs on armed conflict prevention and peace-building matters.

- To foster and support CSOs development and implementation of programs aimed at strengthening peace culture, particularly among children and the youth.

- To promote impact studies aimed at identifying which economic and social policies, projects and programs implemented and recommended by the governments contribute to the generation or escalation of violent conflicts in the domestic, national, subregional and regional arenas.

2. Recommendations for Subregional Organizations

- To direct the effort of multilateral subregional associations (CARICOM, Andean Community of Nations, Mercosur, SICA (Central American Integration System), the Group of Three, the Rio Group and the Association of Caribbean States) towards the implementation of subregional early warning systems for the prevention of armed conflict, through diplomacy

aimed at peace keeping, democratic governance and regional security. To promote the inclusion in these systems of standard mechanisms for CSO participation.

- To support the proposals for reform of the Central American Integration System (SICA) put forward by its Consultative Committee.

- To support and implement CSO training programs in the fields of armed conflict prevention and peace-building, and also to support and foster the generation of opportunities for training civilians in observation and peace missions.

3. Recommendations for the Organization of American States

- To consolidate the internal mechanisms to protect the effectiveness of the principles set forth in the foundational documents, such as the Inter-American Declaration of Human Rights and the Inter-American Democratic Charter.

- To strengthen the system for the defense of human rights and to guarantee that States abide by the decisions rendered by said system.

- To support the General Secretariat so that it may exercise its powers in the field of conflict prevention.

- To prepare a middle-term action plan for the fulfillment of the mandates set forth in the Declaration on Security in the Americas (Mexico, 2003), especially those contained in Chapter III on Commitments and Cooperation Measures regarding non-violent resolution of controversies, conflict prevention, establishment of peace zones, firearms control, disarmament and non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, reduction of military expenditure, mutual trust building mechanisms and control of legal and illicit use and trade of firearms and ammunition, among others.

- To lay special emphasis on issues such as international migrations, outcast and refugees in the strategies devised for the prevention of armed conflicts.

- To recommend that the Inter-American Commission of Women, in cooperation with the Pan American Health Organization, carry out a study on the progress made regarding the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women (Belén do Pará) and its connection with violent and armed conflict in the region.

- To create mechanisms that will enable CSOs to be heard in a special panel during the meetings of the Multilateral Evaluation Mechanism (MEM) of the CICAD (Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission) and that, subject to prior and anticipated request) they may participate as observers and submit written reports.

4. Recommendations for the United Nations

- To implement the recommendations contained in the document prepared by the Cardoso Panel, especially those related to civil society participation in the Security Council.

- To create a specific and institutionalized civil society exchange forum to discuss issues related to conflict prevention within the Security Council, in addition to the participation provided for under the Arria Formula.

- To have the UN Department of Political Affairs consider and provide for active civil society participation in the actions undertaken by said Department aimed at armed conflict prevention.

- To guarantee that UN strategies and field actions provide for the participation, consultation and monitoring of civil society actors engaged in armed conflict prevention.

- To guarantee better coordination and communication among UN agencies in connection with their armed conflict prevention actions in Latin America and the Caribbean.

- To institutionalize exchange mechanisms between civil society and UN agencies throughout the different countries in the region.

- We propose the establishment, under the UN umbrella, of a common forum consisting of civil society and UN agencies engaged in armed conflict prevention, structured around periodic consultation meetings and exchange between both actors.

- That UN agencies acknowledge, in different countries, local, national, regional and international CSOs as their allies and natural partners in implementing armed conflict prevention policies.

- Drawing on the experience of civil society in the development of early warning and conflict prevention systems, we request that the UN and its agencies support Civil Society in the development of specific early warning programs for Latin America and the Caribbean.

- That the UN and its agencies contribute to the training of civil society in early warning programs and the development of alternative conflict prevention capabilities.

- To promote the participation of CSOs in peace missions.

[1]These recommendations resulted from the consultation and discussion process that took place between 2003 and 2005, within the framework of the Program: The Role of Civil Society in the Prevention of Armed Conflict.