



COVID-19: Civic Space in Crisis

Polylateral Partnerships in times of a Pandemic

Draft Concept Note for End of Action Review Conference

Context

The Civil Society Platform for Peacebuilding and Statebuilding (CSPPS) is the unique South-North network of non-governmental peacebuilding organisations that coordinates and supports civil society participation in the International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding (IDPS). CSPPS has achieved considerable progress in deepening, broadening and strengthening civil society engagement, participation and inclusion in implementing the 2030 Agenda through New Deal principles in g7+ countries and beyond. The collaboration with EU/DEVCO has been instrumental in this: the partnership agreement has enabled us to support civil society engagement in fragile and conflict-affected countries to contribute to enhancing and solidifying state-citizen relations, social cohesion and efforts to prevent conflicts and sustain peace. These efforts had to be redoubled during the COVID-19 pandemic and are meant to be continued for years to come. An opportunity to review and share these past successes and experiences, but also to reflect on the current and future challenges related to the pandemic recovery during a virtual conference is therefore solicited by the CSPPS Secretariat in this concept note. In line with the 2017 European Consensus on Development call for a strong collaboration between all relevant state and non-state stakeholders, a polylateral approach to Global North-South collaboration in peacebuilding and statebuilding through a CSPPS-EU/DEVCO partnership was an inevitable confluence. Together, we are shaping and following up on the EU Country Roadmaps for Engagement with Civil Society and work to amplify the voice and agency of local civil society actors, especially in FCAS. Manifesting the importance of polylateral collaboration will continue to enhance and solidify a truly sustainable peace and resilient recovery to the pandemic through state-citizen relationships, aiding us in our shared objectives for Agenda 2030 and the 2019-2021 IDPS Peace Vision.

2019-2020: A brief overview

In 2019, CSPPS facilitated civil society participation in the Voluntary National Reviews in Côte d'Ivoire, CAR, Chad through nationally held orientation and awareness-raising workshops, as well as co-organised workshops in Nigeria, Sierra Leone and Timor-Leste in collaboration with

the Transparency, Accountability and Participation Network. Other highlights have been the drafting of the Rome Civil Society Declaration on SDG16+, the joint advocacy efforts around that and the Voices of SDG16+ event held at the UN High-level Political Forum in July, as well as a total of 8 projects in 7 countries which fulfilled all sorts of thematic objectives all whilst strengthening our implementing civil society members. The second year of our collaboration, amidst a global COVID-19 pandemic, is proving to be an interesting challenge in terms of rethinking peacebuilding. Yet, CSPPS feels confident to be able to revamp our traditional approach to supporting CSOs worldwide in their peacebuilding and statebuilding efforts. As we look proactively for ways to utilise our funds for what they were intended – that is, peacebuilding and statebuilding in line with the 2019-2021 IDPS Peace Vision and SDG16+ – particularly during COVID-19, we are in constant deliberation with the members of our Platform as well as with our IDPS partners.

Proposed Activity

CSPPS proposes a two-day virtual conference, allowing for in-depth discussion, reflection and knowledge-sharing amongst EU high level officials, G7+ and INCAF (IDPS partnership) representatives as well as the wider CSPPS membership.

The first day will be dedicated to high level panel discussions on the impact of COVID-19 on the nature of the social contract and the role of peacebuilding organisations (CSOs) in fragile and conflict-affected settings (FCAS), and on the future of peacebuilding in this context. Mrs Marlene Holzner, EU/DEVCO Head of Unit Civil Society and Foundations, will be joined by IDPS representatives and CSPPS membership representatives for this polyilateral dialogue focused on peacebuilding during COVID-19. On the second day, we propose to exercise polyilateralism in practice: the CSPPS membership will present key achievements made over the last two years, highlighting some of the most important lessons learned and we will be looking for possibilities for future collaboration amongst all relevant stakeholders through mixed break-out room sessions.

Objectives and Participants

In line with SDG16+ and CSPPS' mission '**Strengthening the voice and capacity of society to effectively engage in, and influence, the International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding process to bring results for all**', the Platform sees this polyilateral conference as the archetype of increased interaction and dialogue between civil society and governmental institutions on an international scale. Bringing together a multitude of voices and experiences on the last two years adds an invaluable dimension to the Annual Reports the CSPPS Secretariat submits, as well as the regular interactions that are held on a bilateral basis with EU/DEVCO. The focus of discussion shall be tailored to the shared priorities for the coming years: the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on civic space and the governance of peace and security in FCAS as well as a way forward towards a recovery that places peace, justice and inclusion at its heart will be at the center of discussion. The aim of this two-day conference is hence to allow for **polyilateral as well as bilateral presentations and in-depth discussions between CSPPS members, EU/DEVCO, EU missions and IDPS partners (approximation of attendees: 100)**. In this manner, the challenges and opportunities that are currently present as well as the outcomes and lessons learned over the two-year period will be open for polyilateral reflection and deliberation,

providing fresh perspectives on common policy grounds and challenges faced. After all, resilient recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, sustainable peace and conflict prevention all require genuine partnerships between all relevant stakeholders, which can only be built on repeated interactions of trust and respect.

Duration, timing and location

The conference will take place over two afternoon sessions on the 14th and 15th of December . The conference will be held over Zoom and translation will be provided from English to French and from French to English, as these are the two working languages of the Platform. The detailed agenda of the conference is shared in a separate document.