



# **Empowering Civil Society in a Volatile World**

## **2024 CSPPS Berlin Statement**

**Issued in context of CSPPS Annual Conference - 4th June, 2024**

The Civil Society Platform for Peacebuilding and Statebuilding (CSPPS), a global network of civil society organisations (CSOs) supporting peacebuilding and conflict prevention efforts in fragile & conflict affected settings, convened for its Annual Conference in Berlin, Germany on the 4th of June 2024.

In this context, we express our concern by the number of ongoing crises. We are witnessing an outbreak of conflicts in many parts of the world that are generating human rights violations, displacement, fatalities and all sorts of abuses. The death toll in Gaza, Ukraine, Sudan and Ethiopia is constantly increasing, reaching alarming rates. While armed groups are sowing terror in the Democratic Republic of Congo, gangs are taking over Haiti, ruling through fear and insecurity.

Recognising that these crises are driven and exacerbated by intersecting threats such as climate change, gender inequality, health and food insecurity; it is worth noting that the threats to international peace and security are numerous and varied and that conflict prevention and peacebuilding must be robustly integrated into programs targeting conflict affected and fragile states. Conflict sensitivity and a do no harm approach are not enough. Weapons proliferation, widespread corruption and disinformation, which are fuelling the dynamics of violence, make it challenging to establish or maintain sustainable peace. If military and autocratic regimes are more inclined to violence, democratic countries aren't spared. The rise of populism and fear of changing demographics due to displacement and refugees caused by conflict is increasing in democratic states including the United States and Europe. Additionally, the backlash against women's rights, which is not only observed in Afghanistan, but also in e.g. Poland and the United States, demonstrates that universal equality can't be taken for granted and that the pursuit of support for conflict prevention and peacebuilding must be ongoing globally.

Deploring the insufficient efforts made to prevent and resolve these threats to international peace and security. International law and international humanitarian law are being flouted, allowing these groups to act with inhumanity and impunity. The failure of the international community to support political processes to prevent and resolve these and future conflicts, despite the calls made by civil society organisations and others, bears witness to a flaw in the international system. Most importantly, available resources are currently not reaching vulnerable populations and all dimensions of human security aren't treated equally. Funding for international peace and security focuses on military resources whereas peacebuilding and conflict prevention should be the prevailing priority.

Acknowledging that throughout the current crises, civil society organisations play an important role and make a unique contribution in advocating for dialogue and reconciliation, working on conflict and crisis prevention and building peace. We also recognise that fragile and conflict-affected settings are a priority. Ineffective institutions fail to maintain the rule of law and order. In turn, they fail to protect populations and enable violence to thrive. By engaging with a variety of stakeholders and dealing with marginalised groups, civil society organisations aim to ensure that peace, when attained, is inclusive and sustainable.

Witnessing the shrinking of civic and political space, which hinders the ability of civil society actors to timely respond and operate; observing that civil society organisations are lacking governmental and international support, and are even target of violent attacks, we recall that peace can only be achieved through collective work, and that words must be followed by deeds. Disjointed and uncoordinated approaches will not succeed in establishing a sustainable and comprehensive peace, especially as long as the work of crucial actors, such as CSOs, is fraught with challenges.

Recalling the commitments of the International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding (IDPS) in the IDPS Peace Vision 2022-2024<sup>1</sup>, we affirm the 2030 Agenda's<sup>2</sup> commitment to peaceful, just, and inclusive societies (encompassed in SDG16), and we reaffirm our commitment to the Istanbul CSO Development Effectiveness Principles.<sup>3</sup>

Emphasising the importance of accelerated action in support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and recognising the unique value of the International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding (IDPS) in this context, we reconfirm the importance of tripartite collaboration between g7+ governments, INCAF-donors, and civil society (CSPPS) in promoting conflict prevention and sustaining peace.

**With these considerations in mind, the Civil Society Platform for Peacebuilding and Statebuilding emphasises the importance of all relevant stakeholders to commit to the following critical recommendations:**

### **1. Empowering Civil Society actors**

A vibrant civil society is a critical indicator of the health of a well-functioning cohesive democracy and it is vital that civil society organisations are a significant priority manifested both through support and protection of their space as well as through robust resources. Governments have the necessary resources to invest in peaceful, just and inclusive societies and it is essential that greater support is allocated to CSOs. Insufficient support and the distrust to the work of civil society actors threatens to undermine efforts accomplished by CSOs. Funding is not the only way for governments to enhance their support towards civil society actors, but they can also promote their role by engaging more closely with them. Governments and international institutions are encouraged to reduce the distance between CSOs and formal decision-making processes and mechanisms by providing more entry points for meaningful inclusion. Therefore, this statement calls on all peace stakeholders to facilitate the work of CSOs by creating an enabling environment and developing robust partnerships.

Integrating conflict prevention and peacebuilding into programs and policies throughout all conflict affected and fragile states. Conflict sensitivity and do no harm are not enough. Conflict prevention and peacebuilding must be centred and prioritised across all sectors including health, climate, food security. We call on all donors and stakeholders to require robust conflict integration.

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<sup>1</sup> [IDPS New Vision Launch 2022-2024 - IDPS \(pbsbdialogue.org\)](https://pbsbdialogue.org/)

<sup>2</sup> A/RES/70/1 - Transforming our world: [the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Istanbul CSO Development Effectiveness Principles](#)

## **2. Strengthening/revitalising multifaceted cooperation and programming for international peace**

International cooperation towards conflict prevention and peacebuilding are essential and should be at the core of our collaborative efforts, however it is not enforced enough. Follow up and review on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development via Voluntary National Review (VNR) processes is an example of how collaboration amongst governments and other stakeholders [including civil society] should and can be done. The reality often shows a disbalance of power and exclusion of civil society actors in these processes. Governmental authorities and institutions are called upon to lower barriers and obstacles CSOs may encounter when attempting to partner and collaborate with them. Injustices of the international system must be actively addressed and reforms initiated. The work towards peace, justice and inclusion must be carried out as a joint effort, with various stakeholders facilitating each other's work rather than hindering it.

## **3. Prioritising local approaches and solutions**

CSOs have a key role in ensuring locally-led approaches. CSOs proximity with communities allows them to offer solutions that are tailored to local realities and contexts, and that draw on local resources and leadership. Cultural practices and structural challenges hamper direct financing of local peacebuilding and conflict prevention action, limiting effective and sustainable changes. It is important that relevant stakeholders support this approach not only through rhetoric but also ensure that their policies, practices, and operations facilitate locally-led approaches.

## **4. Building resilience**

Countries experiencing fragility and conflict dynamics do not have to experience violent conflict. Resilient societies are an antidote against conflict dynamics. Societies with high levels of social cohesion (trust in institutions and promoting strong social relations and capital) show greater resilience to shocks and conflict, while lower social cohesion can lead to violent conflict and instability. Today, social cohesion and trust are rapidly declining globally. We call on donors and other stakeholders to prioritise rebuilding trust and social cohesion to increase a country's resilience to conflict and violence.

Among the countries that are the most affected by the climate crisis, a great majority are also affected by violent conflicts (IRC Watchlist 2023). It is important to recognise that peace intertwines with the environmental crisis and that it inherently must be systematically linked to climate initiatives. However, climate action and climate justice must not be at the expense of peacebuilding. Engaging in environmental policies is a necessary step towards more peaceful, just and inclusive societies, provided that it complements rather than wanes peacebuilding efforts.

## **5. Inclusion of marginalized groups**

Economic and political participation, social security and health, access to resources and access to justice promote social cohesion. They can prevent crisis and violence if they are inclusive towards civil society representing marginalised groups. Their participation and engagement in the context of peacebuilding, ceasefire negotiations and peace negotiations can prevent further violence and pave the way for sustainable peace. A non-violent transformation that overcomes traditional (including historically evolved and post-colonial) power patterns and structures, gender hierarchies and inequalities and questions militarised patterns of thought contributes to creating the global framework conditions that eliminate global injustices in the distribution of resources and power distribution, as these stand in the way of sustainable development and peace responsive policies.

## 6. Urgently tackling challenges CSOs are facing

Civil society actors face growing challenges globally. The shrinking of the civic space poses an imminent threat to peace and security. Attacks on CSOs, whether physical or attempts to delegitimize their work, must be addressed as a matter of urgency. Increasing data collection regarding these phenomena would help reporting and apprehending them in the most effective way so that solutions can be found.

## 7. Promoting and protecting data collection

Data analysis should be given greater value and protection. Increased advocacy efforts should be done to promote the use of data by policymakers to develop peace and security policies. Being in the digital age, cyberattacks are a real threat to peace and security and must be tackled. More transparency on the collection and the use of data will help to strengthen public trust.

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