

***The EU and Civil Society in the South Caucasus:
a Common Effort to Build Sustainable Peace***

International Conference, 10 June 2010
Berlin, Germany

In May 2009 the EU launched the Eastern Partnership (EaP) with Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. Building on the European Neighborhood Policy, the Eastern Partnership is the new framework under which relations between the EU and the six Eastern neighbours will be developing. It includes a bilateral dimension between the EU and each country and a multilateral dimension involving all Partners, the latter being accompanied by a Civil Society Forum which first met in November 2009 in Brussels.

The three countries of the South Caucasus pose a particular challenge to the Eastern Partnership. They all experienced violent conflicts on their way to independence that did not allow them to develop with the desired speed, to create new economic opportunities and to ensure their security. The unresolved conflicts in Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Nagorno Karabakh have become a major issue of international politics, and there is growing awareness that the spill-over from these conflicts can have a serious impact on Europe's security. Since the war in August 2008, relations between Georgia and Russia are extremely tense and are further burdened by Georgia's aspirations of NATO membership. Moreover, Nagorno-Karabakh continues to pose a serious threat of conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

Following the August 2008 war in Georgia, the EU has become fully engaged in conflict settlement in the South Caucasus. It worked out a comprehensive policy approach encompassing the EU Monitoring Mission and a broad set of soft policy instruments, which include political as well as economic and social means. After the termination of the mandates for OSCE and UN it is the EU who has slipped into the role of monitoring cease fire lines in Georgia. Its comprehensive peace building effort enjoys the full support of the international community, including Russia. These efforts are accompanied by some promising developments in the relations between Armenia and Turkey, which have been hampered over the past decades particularly because of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

However, efforts undertaken on the government level alone are insufficient. What is urgently needed is a strong engagement by the civil society. Unless there is a complimentary effort by civil actors' peace building in the South Caucasus will hardly be sustainable. Above all this concerns such vital areas like confidence building and the restoration of people-to-people contacts.

The Berlin Conference will consider the role of civil society within the new peace-building landscape. It aims to take stock of the institutional setting which civil society organisations are facing. This would serve as a basis to identify opportunities for confidence-building initiatives suitable to reduce mistrust, to hold governments accountable and to support the EU's conflict resolution activities in particular.

Thursday, 10 June 2010

**Venue: Representation of Sachsen-Anhalt (Landesvertretung Sachsen-Anhalt)
Luisenstr. 18, 10117 Berlin**

09:00 – 09:30 Arrival, Coffee

09:30 – 09:45 Opening remarks

Ingrid Hamm, Executive Director, Robert Bosch Stiftung, Stuttgart (tbc)

Gabriele Freitag, Executive Director, German Association for East European Studies (DGO), Berlin

George Zarubin, President, Eurasia Partnership Foundation, Tbilisi

09:45 – 12:00 Panel One:

The EU's Contribution to Conflict Settlement in the South Caucasus

Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia do not have identical objectives in their relations with the EU. However in their aspiration to advance links with the EU, all three South Caucasus Countries to varying degrees implemented political, social, and economic reforms. In addition unresolved conflicts in Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and Nagorno-Karabakh further hinder the process of the European Integration. What is the EU's present contribution to conflict settlement? Where are the largest opportunities, and where the shortcomings of the present instruments applied? And is there a win-win strategy for Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia engaging with the largely unrecognized territories of Nagorno-Karabakh, Abkhazia, and South Ossetia?

- Political landscape and conflicts in the South Caucasus – general overview
- Dimensions of the EU's engagement (incl. Eastern Partnership instruments, EaP Civil Society Forum)
- The EU's role in conflict resolution initiatives (OSCE, UN, Council of Europe)
(Is there any European example of peace-building and conflict transformation? How can it possibly impact the peace processes in the South Caucasus?)

Short Introduction – Facts and Figures:

Hans Gutbrod, Regional Director, Caucasus Research Resource Center, Tbilisi

Speakers:

Peter Semneby, European Union Special Representative for the South Caucasus, Brussels

Giorgi Baramidze, Vice-Prime Minister of Georgia and State Minister for Euro-Atlantic Integration of Georgia

Tabib Huseynov, Political Analyst, International Crisis Group Correspondent in Azerbaijan, Baku

Gevorg Ter-Gabrielyan, Armenia Country Director, Eurasia Partnership Foundation, Yerevan

Moderator:

Dieter Boden, Ambassador (ret.); former Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General in Georgia; Member of the Board of Trustees, Eurasia Partnership Foundation, Berlin

12:30 – 14:00 Luncheon Address

Cornelia Pieper, Minister of State, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Germany, Berlin (tbc)

**Venue: Restaurant Habel
Luisenstr. 19, 10117 Berlin**

14:00 – 16:30 Panel Two:

The Role of the Civil Society: What Can be Done to Make the Effort Still More Effective?

Societies function most effectively when the state and its citizens engage openly in debate on how policies and decisions that affect them are formulated and implemented. What can be done to support peace processes and confidence-building? What is the role of civil society in dismantling and preventing confrontations, simultaneously serving as a mean of developing conditions where the states and the peoples of the region can enjoy friendly relations and close cooperation amongst each other as well as with the EU? And how can the EU engage Russia to help promote peace-building in the South Caucasus?

- Civil society initiatives addressing conflict dimensions (towards their own governments; confidence building with breakaway territories; confidence building between South Caucasus states and/or with Russia, Turkey)
- Interaction between civil society and the EU – where to focus (incl. opportunities provided by EaP, Civil Society Forum to raise issues to the EU level)

Speakers:

Farda Asadov, Director, Open Society Institute Azerbaijan, Baku (tbc)

Jonathan Cohen, Director of Programmes, Conciliation Resources, London (tbc)

Walter Kaufmann, Heinrich Böll Stiftung, Berlin

Giorgi Khutsishvili, Head of the International Center for Conflict Negotiations, Tbilisi

Amalya Kostanyan, Head of Transparency International in Armenia, Yerevan

Moderator:

Sabine Freizer, Europe Program Director, International Crisis Group, Brussels

16:30 Closing Remarks

George Zarubin, President, Eurasia Partnership Foundation, Tbilisi

Andreas Wittkowsky, German Association for East European Studies (DGO); Member of the Board, European Integration Strategy Association, Berlin