

The EU and the issue of conflicts in Africa : peace-building, conflict prevention and beyond

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Introduction

The growing number of violent conflicts in Africa represents a major challenge to the international community. Most of these conflicts are intra-state wars, directed mainly against civilian and often fought by militias that are difficult to control. These conflicts result in increasing human suffering and loss of life, the creation of massive movements of refugees, devastating effects on local and regional economies as well as on the environment, and serious threats to the viability of neighbouring countries and populations. They can even lead to the implosion of states and major humanitarian tragedies.

While the international community is continuously called upon to handle these conflicts, the usual ad-hoc employment of its traditional instruments, in particular UN peace-keeping operations and humanitarian aid, has proved costly, sometimes ineffective or even counterproductive in relation to the longer-term goal of return to a non-violent, stable and self-sustainable situation. At a time of increasing donor fatigue as far as financial commitments are concerned, much needed international development assistance is thus channelled into emergency aid and, even in the longer term, concentrated on measures like mine-clearance, demobilisation of combatants and re-building of infrastructure.

Amplified by the Somalia experience, the international discussion about possible measures to better prevent, manage and resolve conflicts in Africa is evolving rapidly. The deliberations within a number of major international organisations (UN, EU/WEU, OECD, G7, OAU etc.), and many governmental and non-governmental initiatives as well as numerous conferences, seminars and academic publications all feed into this complex discussion that includes such diverse issues as early warning systems on community level or the enhancement of African peace-keeping capacities.

The European Union is heavily concerned by the issue of conflicts in Africa. This is not only because the international discussion necessitates an adequate response of the Union, not merely because of the moral obligation to reduce human suffering, nor simply the obligation to use its resources in the most meaningful way. For the European Union, the existence of violent conflicts in Africa is increasingly challenging the achievement of its declared policy goals. Fostering peace, stability, democracy and human rights under the conditions of conflicts is a nearly impossible task.

I. A BASIC APPROACH TO THE ISSUE OF CONFLICTS IN AFRICA

1. General remarks

Following the long and intensive discussions within the European Union that resulted in the establishment of a basic document on "Preventive diplomacy and peacekeeping in Africa", the Council, in its conclusions on "Preventive diplomacy, conflict resolution and peace-keeping in Africa" of 4 December 1995, has set out some basic guidelines and principles concerning the Union's response towards the issue of conflicts in Africa. The main focus of these Council conclusions lies on situations of open civil war or situations where the outbreak of violence is imminent, with explicit references to the role of the WEU in helping to carry out Union actions, as well as on the need to support African activities concerning conflict prevention, management and resolution (capacity-building).

Although the means available to the European Union are limited compared to the magnitude of the task of effectively preventing, managing and resolving conflicts in Africa, the Union should aspire to maximise its leverage through an optimal use of its instruments and resources. Therefore, the European Union should develop a comprehensive and pro-active approach along with the guidelines and principles of the Council conclusions. This approach should be pro-active because the European Union, without prejudging the basic principle that Africans are primarily responsible for handling the issue of violent conflicts, has not only an important interest but also an important potential for actively addressing this issue. The approach should be comprehensive in so far as the European Union, within its competencies, should address the entire cycle of conflict and peace.

While the European Union has to be prepared to respond to situations of violent conflicts in Africa rapidly and in a reasonable manner, it goes without saying that effectively preventing conflicts is better than responding to their consequences. As no amount of humanitarian aid and no effective peace-keeping operation will solve a crisis of peace and security, justice and resources in a sustainable way, there is a need to try to go beyond ad-hoc decisions and a policy of damage limitation. Furthermore, responding to the effects of violent conflicts in Africa has become an extremely costly endeavour.

In view of all these considerations, the prevention of conflicts should be at the centre of a comprehensive response of the European Union towards the issue of conflicts in Africa.

A basic pre-requisite for optimising the Union's instruments is a high degree of information exchange, common analysis, coordination and cooperation within the Union but also with other members of the international community and in particular with the recipients of assistance.

In all phases of the process, care should be taken to integrate the African debate on the subject, and not to impose solutions but to point to options and alternatives. At the end, it will depend on Africans themselves as to how far they are determined to engage in conflict prevention, management and resolution, and to build the institutions and establish the policy mechanisms that make a viable state.

2. Structural stability as the ultimate policy goal

Every carefully designed policy needs an overall aim that, ideally, all activities and measures should serve. The establishment of an ultimate policy goal for activities concerning conflicts in Africa will greatly facilitate a pro-active and targeted policy, it will facilitate the design and

implementation of measures in all phases of the cycle of conflict and peace.

Given the fact that (i) experience shows that lack of development is not the only major source of violent conflict; that (ii) the EU policy aims concerning Africa might be summarised as *helping to foster peace and stability, development, democracy and the respect of human rights*; that (iii) those aims are interdependent/mutually re-enforcing; and that (iv) sustained development is often interpreted in a narrow economic sense, the ultimate policy goal could be summarised under the term structural stability.

Structural stability is to be understood as a term denoting a dynamic situation, a situation of stability able to cope with the dynamics inherent in (emerging) democratic societies. Structural stability could thus be defined as a situation involving sustainable economic development, democracy and respect for human rights, viable political structures, and healthy social and environmental conditions, with the capacity to manage change without to resort to violent conflict. Working towards structural stability would mean the targeted reinforcement of those factors that enable peaceful change.

Operating with the term structural stability in no way implies a major departure from the current policies of the European Union. As it goes without saying that economic development and prosperity are major factors for ensuring non-violent change, sustainable development is a central objective for the attainment of structural stability. Operating with the term structural stability rather means to give expression to the fact that working towards economic development alone is insufficient for an effective policy of peace-building and conflict prevention, and that the policy goals sustainable development, democracy and human rights, viable political structures, healthy social conditions and healthy environmental conditions are interdependent which implies the need for a comprehensive approach.

Development assistance has always been intended as an instrument of stabilising societies, and the necessity to engage in building viable political structures is generally undisputed. Assistance for democratisation, institution building, strengthening civil society and so on have become explicit objectives of most aid donors. What is still missing, however, is not only the proper identification of how the available resources could be used most effectively concerning a particular country in a particular situation but also the linkage between this 'political' assistance, development aid, and the traditional foreign policy instruments (political dialogue etc.). The acceptance of structural stability as the ultimate policy goal is an expression of the fact that such a linkage is necessary.

3. The importance of the political analysis of structural root-causes of conflicts

The capacity of political analysis that focuses on root-causes of conflicts is central to the targeted deployment of assistance and an effective and consistent policy concerning the issue of conflicts in Africa in general. Such an analysis, focusing not only on events but also on political and socio-economic structures, will help to detect major obstacles to the viability of a state and/or policy mechanisms that carry the seeds of violent conflict. On the basis of this analysis, options for targeted measures could be developed, areas of activities or of adjustment of current policies defined. Relevant for the analysis are in particular interest and power constellations of different identity groups, their resources and needs, their level of interdependence, their disposition towards the use of violence, and the existence of effective mechanisms for the peaceful

conciliation of group interests.

A country-by-country / region-by-region analysis resulting in the establishment of comprehensive policy frameworks could also point to certain priority areas and in particular to the long-term options. As peace and security are closely interlinked with economic and social development, an adequate combination of political, economic, legal, social, environmental and, as far as helpful and feasible, also military measures of stabilisation in the above mentioned sense should be considered within these frameworks in the sense that their potential for addressing the root-causes of violent conflicts is fully taken into account, in particular their potential for balancing the interests and opportunities of different identity groups within a state, for encouraging a democratic government that enjoys widespread legitimacy among the population, for fostering a consensus on key national issues ("nation-building") and for building mechanisms for the peaceful conciliation of group interests ("targeted assistance").

Analysing the root-causes of African conflicts ultimately means touching upon the issue of the distribution of power and resources within a state and, in a wider sense, of forms of democracy, autonomy, self-governance and so on. This crucial issue should be given a central role in deliberations on stability, equity and legitimacy.

II. A SURVEY OF ACTIVITIES IN THE DIFFERENT SITUATIONS OF CONFLICT AND PEACE: WHERE DOES THE EUROPEAN UNION COME IN?

Given the complexity of the issue of conflicts in Africa, an analytical distinction between different situations of conflict and peace seems helpful. While in each of these situations specific measures move to the forefront, it should be clear that in practice, there is no clear-cut dividing line between the different situations and different measures. Generally speaking, the European Union should take an active stance on the issue and, on the basis of enhanced analysis, should aspire to use existing instruments in the most meaningful way towards the goal of structural stability. This implies that the best combination of all available instruments is deployed. In this respect, the Union should also engage in stimulating the debate on the issue, in encouraging effective cooperation of actors in the field of peace-building, conflict prevention, management and resolution, and in encouraging regional and sub-regional economic integration. The European Union should also help to build the capacities of other actors to effectively engage in these activities.

As it will be impossible to develop an overall blueprint for action, the following survey of measures that the European Union could take, support or advocate is intended as a general political orientation.

Situation without obvious tension

This is the situation where the country is seemingly stable and largely quiet but where (structural) sources of potential conflict may be discerned. For example, the constant marginalisation of an important minority or the use of repressive instruments in the absence of effective mechanisms for the peaceful conciliation of divergent group interests.

Immediate aims Peace-building: Establishment - under respect of democracy and fundamental

human rights - of viable political and socio-economic structures (mechanisms of peaceful conciliation of interests, viable democratic models and so on).

Instruments Targeted assistance incl. training, education, social and economic cohesion, strengthening human and social development, democracy building, good governance and civil society, institution building etc., political dialogue, watching changes, voicing concerns.

Situation of tension

This is the situation where conflict in society become clearly apparent (social unrest, armed opposition, mass demonstrations etc.). The gravity of the situation depends not only on the events themselves but also on the existing political and power structures (Is the opposition able to present negotiable demands? Is the government in a position to fulfil them? And so on).

Immediate aims Conflict prevention (in the strict sense): Reduction of tensions; prevention of full outbreak of hostilities

Instruments Political dialogue with the parties concerned (missions, preventive diplomacy); advocacy of specific measures (incl. preventive deployment of troops) and/or of specific solutions to the problems; (threat of) sanctions; deployment of observers; own and contribution to other humanitarian/emergency aid (also to prevent refugee flows for economic reasons). Peace-building measures could continue to apply and could even be intensified. They will have most effect if targeted to the heart of the conflict (easing the economic situation of a marginalized group while offering assistance to the government to find a sustainable solution, for example).

Open conflict

Immediate aims 1 Conflict management: Reducing the threat of vertical and horizontal escalation (incl. the reduction of immediate human suffering and the handling of the refugee problem).

Instruments Threat of sanctions (incl. to third countries), political dialogue, own and contribution to other humanitarian / emergency aid, (advocacy of) preventive military intervention, observer missions.

Immediate aims 2 Conflict resolution: Ending the hostilities and starting peace negotiations.

Instruments Sanctions, political dialogue, advocacy of specific solutions, support for peace initiatives, (advocacy of) peace-enforcement.

Post-conflict situation

This is the situation where there is no longer organised armed violence. A cease-fire or a peace agreement might or might not yet have been already signed. In any case, the consequences of the war are still present and obvious in a large part of the society (refugees and ex-combatants still in the progress of re-integration etc.), and it is still uncertain if the situation will deteriorate (back into the phase of tensions or open conflict) or improve (towards a situation without obvious tensions or structural stability).

Immediate aims Conflict resolution / peace-building: Successful peace negotiations, return to

normality

Instruments Demobilisation and disarmament, repatriation and re-integration, de-mining, post-de-mining, post-conflict relief and humanitarian aid, rehabilitation, peace-building measures (see above), political dialogue, advocacy of specific solutions, watching changes, confidence building measures, (support for) conflict resolution initiatives, re-building of government structures.

III. TOWARDS A POLICY OF PEACE-BUILDING AND CONFLICT PREVENTION I: APPROACH BY AIMS

Central to a comprehensive approach and a more effective engagement in the field of conflict prevention is a broad definition of the term: "Conflict prevention" should not only be understood as easing a situation where an outbreak of violence is imminent (= conflict prevention in a narrow sense) but also as preventing the occurrence of such a situation (= conflict prevention in a wider sense). Activities of conflict prevention in a wider sense should be summarised under the term peace-building. Defined as such, a policy of conflict prevention would apply mainly in a situation of tensions as described above. Peace-building measures, by contrast, could apply in all phases of conflict and peace. However, as peace-building measures will generally embrace projects and programmes with the longer-term aim of the stabilisation of societies, their impact will be greatest in non-violent situations.

For a policy of peace-building and conflict prevention, three main areas of activities might be distinguished. (i) enhancing peace-building capacities, (ii) detecting future trouble spots at a very early stage; and (iii) closing the gap between analysis and timely political action.

1. Enhancing peace-building capacities

The key for an effective EU policy for peace-building and conflict prevention in Africa lies - on the basis of enhanced political analysis - in a change of focus concerning its assistance, in particular development programs including those within the framework of the Lomé Convention. Measures should continue to serve the goal of sustained development but their socio-political impact should also be taken into account, they should be planned, designed, timed and implemented in a way that they help to address the root-causes of violent conflicts ("targeted assistance"). Systematically, a program design should consider (i) who are the main beneficiaries of the program, (ii) in how far - and in what sense - this program will shift the balance of opportunities and power within the state; and (iii) if and in how far this shift has a positive effect concerning the long-term goal of structural stability. The Commission has already started to include these deliberations into the programming of resources of the Lomé Convention as amended by the agreement signed in Mauritius on 4 November 1995.

In this sense, a policy of peace-building and conflict prevention does not necessarily require new programs, budget lines or procedures or the creation of new institutions. The key lies in the use of existing instruments at the service according to a systematic and comprehensive approach. Some additional deliberations in the following areas, however, should be taken into account:

- Support for democratisation is essential for establishing a stable and legitimate political framework. In this respect, democracy should not only be seen as a value per se but also as a means of establishing viable mechanisms for the peaceful conciliation of group interests. Support for democracy building should also go beyond the election process.

While procedural correctness and compliance with technical rules are important ingredients of the democratisation process, the contents of this process are at least of equal relevance. Long-term consolidation of democratic systems should be sought through programs on participatory development and good governance (as identified by the OECD/DAC Orientations on Participatory Development and Good Governance of 1993). In this connection, it is also necessary to consider that the fruits of democratisation must be felt among the population at large if a democratic government is to gain legitimacy through the democratisation process. Therefore, a consistent policy of rewarding democratic governments needs to be pursued.

- Legitimacy and effectiveness of government is indispensable for structural stability. This presupposes that government is representative and that government services function effectively and are accessible to all, including minority groups. Therefore, strengthening government services (information services, use of minority languages, revision of existing laws and procedures with the aim to establish an equitable legal system etc.) form an important part of a policy of crisis prevention. Such a policy should also include programs of decentralisation, of strengthening local government, and training programs for non-violent conflict resolution at the grass-roots level. De-centralised co-operation projects could be particularly helpful in this respect. Concerning programs for the building of a civil society, a balance should be sought between the development of civil society and the development of the political system.

2. Detecting possible trouble spots ('early warning system')

2.1. Enhancement of the exchange of information and analysis

In accordance with the views expressed by the Commission in its recent "avis" for the 1996 IGC, the detection of possible trouble spots at a very early stage necessitates the identification of structural root-causes of conflicts which, for its part, is dependent upon a thorough political and socio-economic analysis. Given the complexity of the matter, this will be an ongoing process that will be facilitated by the continuous exchange and pooling of relevant information and analysis. Such a regular exchange and pooling of information and analysis should be stimulated

- within the European Union (possibly also within the framework of the 'Rocard initiative')
- with the UN, the OAU (direct exchange of raw data through data basis, on refugee movements for example, could also be envisaged), African sub-regional organisations, directly engaged countries of the region and other important partners (the US in particular);
- with NGO's / political foundations, the academic world and other institutions working on the subject (in particular through participation and support of conferences);
- with existing research data bases;
- between the OAU crisis management centre, OAU member states and African sub-regional organisations;
- between the OAU crisis management centre and other relevant international organisations (the UN and its specialised agencies in particular).

2.2. Building the 'early warning' capacities of other actors

On the African side, the OAU is about to establish itself as the focal point for African efforts concerning conflict prevention in Africa, and is currently developing a "crisis prevention" data bank. While efforts of the European Union should centre on the co-ordinated support (equipment, training, organisation of seminars) of the OAU's activities, efforts of other actors should also be encouraged. Organisations within the country concerned or in neighbouring countries are often in a better position to notice critical activities such as increased inflow of weapons, the establishment of militias or specific local events. Sub-regional organisations could be particularly helpful in this respect. However, close cooperation of those institutions / organisations with the OAU's conflict management centre should be encouraged. Ideally, the OAU could serve as a focal point for an early-warning network.

3. Closing the gap between analysis and timely political action

The establishment of "early warning systems" will be useless unless serious efforts are undertaken for timely political action. While the development of specific indicators ("triggers") for action would be an ideal scenario, it seems unlikely that such triggers will be developed in the foreseeable future. Therefore, the following activities merit particular attention:

3. 1. Simulating the debate

Stimulating the debate (in all possible fora and with all possible partners) around the issue of peace-building and conflict prevention should not be underestimated as a means of closing the gap between analysis and action. Pointing to structural deficiencies and discussions about solutions will heighten concerns at a very early stage, even before tensions become obvious. In addition, these discussions and deliberations will also facilitate the elaboration of policy strategies (including those of relief and re-habilitation) for conflict and post-conflict situations.

3.2. Voicing concerns / Political dialogue

Voicing concerns (public or discreetly in consultation with third states or organisations) means trying to bring the issue of concern on the political agenda and to generate the political will for timely political action. It can be considered to be most successful if suggestions about concrete activities are at hand. Raising awareness on particular issues of peace-building and conflict prevention could be more successful if other organisations are amplifying international concern. Organisations which can be expected to be helpful in this respect should be supported.

3.3 Supporting and enhancing capacities for timely political action

Depending on the specific case or situation, support/advocacy of missions of preventive diplomacy of a number of different actors should be envisaged whereby local efforts and traditional African ways and means of conciliation merit particular attention. The EU should also encourage the cooperation of relevant 'preventive diplomacy' actors (in particular UN/OAU/EU/sub-regional organisations) and help to ensure the continuity of efforts. The

OAU's current efforts in this field should be stimulated and financially and politically supported, including the identification of eminent persons for missions of preventive diplomacy. Support should also be considered for NGO's working in the field of small-scale capacity-building which encourages local actors to increase their focus on key prevention strategies.

IV. TOWARDS A POLICY OF PEACE-BUILDING AND CONFLICT PREVENTION II: APPROACH BY ACTORS

The basic challenge for a consistent and effective policy of the European Union as outlined above lies, first of all, in the need for a regular and meaningful exchange of information and analysis within the EU, in particular on requests of other actors for support in this field, on countries where tensions are apparent but not yet obvious, on long-term solutions for particular problems, on past as well as intended activities concerning efforts of peace-building and conflict prevention - and beyond -, including the financing of projects.

Based on this regular exchange of information and analysis, the European Union should take the necessary steps to establish visionary but still realistic policy frameworks for the different countries and regions, in order to identify the measures which would ensure an optimal, co-ordinated and timely use of the available resources, including development assistance, for the goal of structural stability.

However, given that the magnitude and complexity of the issue requires effective international coordination and cooperation, the European Union, in pursuing the general aims as outlined above, should also adopt a pro-active approach towards the major actors concerned. The following merit particular attention:

1. The United Nations

As the United Nations will have an important role to play concerning conflict prevention / preventive diplomacy in Africa, the European Union should further encourage its efforts for a more active and imaginative policy in this field, and seek a structured relationship concerning this matter. In particular, the European Union should continue to support plans for an intensification of the collection and utilisation of early-warning information and better integration between the different components of the UN system so as to help to overcome the negative effects of the division of labour between various UN bodies, as well as between the UN, the OAU and African sub-regional organisations (information exchange, consultations, diplomatic and operational support, joint missions).

2. The OAU

In recent years, the OAU has undertaken considerable efforts to engage in the field of conflict prevention, management and resolution, mainly within the framework of its newly created "Mechanism of conflict prevention, management and resolution". The conclusions of the Council of the European Union on "Preventive diplomacy, conflict resolution and peace-keeping" of 4 December 1995 stipulate that the Union's support should be based i.a. on the following

principles: (i) increasing African involvement in the prevention and resolution of their crisis, and (ii) improving the interlocking between the efforts of the European Union and those of the African countries and other members of the international community. In order to ensure the operationalisation of these as well as other relevant principles of the Council conclusions, the Union should establish a co-ordinated support programme for the OAU's conflict mechanism that takes the latter's priorities into consideration. The European Union should also establish direct links of communication with the OAU that are less formal than the EU-OAU dialogue meetings with the aim to establish a permanent dialogue.

3. African sub-regional organisations

African sub-regional organisations like the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the Intergovernmental Authority for Drought and Development (IGADD) or the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) have an important potential in the field of peace-building, conflict prevention, management and resolution. Within the framework of the European Union's long-standing policy of fostering regional organisations to enhance "collective economic security", possibilities of engaging these organisations in the relevant activities, including possibilities of EU support in this respect, should also be studied. The EU should engage in a dialogue with these organisations on this matter, with the aim to encourage the full exploitation of their potential. This dialogue should also include the issue of cooperation among sub-regional organisations as well as their cooperation with the UN and the OAU.

4. African countries

While Africans should have primary responsibility for the solution of the problems of violent conflicts, the European Union should stimulate deliberations on the establishment of viable long-term solutions to structural political problems in African countries, and on the establishment of the necessary mechanisms. The EU should also advocate support by African states for the efforts of the OAU and, in given cases, other African sub-regional organisations.

5. The United States

Despite the recent reduction of its financial commitments in the field of development assistance, the US remains one of the most important actors concerning the issue of conflicts in Africa, and shares the mainstream analysis that looking for and working on the root-causes of violent conflicts in Africa is central for effective conflict prevention. In accordance with the "New Transatlantic Agenda" and the respective "Action Plan", the European Union should reinforce the dialogue with the US on this matter.

6. NGO's and political foundations

The importance of NGO's and political foundations working on the issue of peace-building, conflict prevention and resolution, in particular on small-scale local capacity-building (training

of local leaders etc.) as well as democratisation and civil society projects, should not be underestimated. While the European Union should support and facilitate NGO activities (including, where necessary, through dialogue with the government of the respective country), care should be taken of how their programs complement activities of other donors. Information exchange on activities of and support for NGO's and political foundations will help to increase the targeted impact of the European Union's policy. Established policy frameworks for countries and regions would help the Union to consider support for NGO projects within a 'strategic' framework. In countries where a number of different NGO's operate, the European Union could, as appropriate, facilitate the establishment of a structured relationship (focal points of information, principles of action etc.).

7. Seminars and conferences

Seminars and conferences have already been mentioned as an important means of exchanging information and experiences. The European Union should support such events, regularly participate and try to ensure African participation. Support for seminars and conferences in African countries could be particularly helpful.

V. BEYOND CONFLICT PREVENTION

While the prevention of violent conflicts in Africa should be considered as a primary field of activity, the European Union need also to be ready to effectively respond to situations of open violence as well as post-conflict situations. Such an effective response will be greatly facilitated if deliberations on structural root-causes of conflicts and possible ways and means of addressing them had already started so that there are at least some general ideas of a political framework that can guide activities in the field of conflict management / peace-keeping and conflict resolution towards a sustainable solution of the conflict. In the same sense in that development and other assistance should be deployed targeted at the root-causes of conflicts, measures of conflict management and resolution should take the long-term goal of structural stability into consideration, the need for the targeted reinforcement of those factors that enable peaceful change.

While it seems clear that the UN will remain the most important framework for major multi-national peace-keeping operations in the foreseeable future, African efforts and close cooperation between the UN and the OAU concerning this matter should be further encouraged. The European Union should also take a role concerning the enhancement of African peace-keeping capabilities, including the capacity for rapid mobilisation and deployment of troops (training, equipment, logistics, communications), and should offer assistance to Africans to identify their needs. Tasks which require military expertise should be co-ordinated within the framework of the WEU. African sub-regional organisations could make a substantial contribution to the enhancement of African peace-keeping capabilities and should also be considered for support. However, any support programme of the EU should always take African priorities into consideration.

Besides these 'technical' requirements, it is also necessary to address the basic underlying

problem of any intervening peace-keeping force, be it under the auspices of the UN, the OAU or any other organisation: The problem of mandate and legitimacy. Without a clear objective and a precise mandate that corresponds to the realities on the ground, all efforts to improve the effectiveness of peace-keeping operations risk becoming a mere cosmetic exercise. The European Union should take a role in keeping this issue also on the African agenda.

VI OPERATIONAL CONCLUSIONS

- Along with the guidelines and principles established by the conclusions of the Council of the European Union on "Preventive diplomacy, conflict resolution and peace-keeping in Africa" of 4 December 1995, and to complement the efforts undertaken by the Commission, in particular concerning the programming of the resources of the Lomé Convention as amended by the agreement signed in Mauritius on 4 November 1995, according to the approach as outlined above, the European Union should adopt a comprehensive and pro-active approach on the issue of conflicts in Africa in which the prevention of violent conflicts at a very early stage (peace-building) should be at the centre of the relevant activities.
- In accordance with the views expressed by the Commission in its recent "avis" for the 1996 IGC, the European Union should enhance its capacities for common political analysis of root-causes of conflicts by identifying appropriate channels of regular exchange of information and analysis, and, ultimately, by the establishment of comprehensive policy frameworks for each country and region concerned, with the aim of harmonising existing policies of the Community and its Member States concerning the issue of conflicts in Africa.
- Within the orientations of these policy frameworks, a combination of all available instruments should be used more targeted in particular for the early prevention of violent conflicts. In this respect, the Community and its Member States should include the concept of peace-building and conflict prevention into current assistance programs, in particular development assistance programs including those within the framework of the Lomé Convention, in the sense that their potential for addressing root-causes of conflicts is fully taken into consideration.
- As far as possible and appropriate, the European Union should also establish effective channels of exchange of information and analysis with other relevant members of the international community with the aim to reach the highest possible degree of coordination of activities.
- The European Union should undertake to revise its relevant mechanisms with the aim of ensuring timely political action.
- The European Union should stimulate and support relevant activities (including those of preventive diplomacy and peace-keeping) by other actors, in particular African organisations and initiatives such as the OAU and African sub-regional organisations (capacity-building).

- The European Union should undertake to continue to reflect on the issue of conflicts in Africa, in particular by drawing on the rapidly evolving international debate
- In the spirit of this Communication, the Commission will make an assessment of the activities developed by the EU in the field of peace-building and conflict prevention in Africa, and intends to transmit to the Council within 18 months a Communication on the progress made, the improvements needed, and on the difficulties that it may have encountered.