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Conflict Prevention, Civil Society and International Organizations: The Difficult Path for Peace Building in Latin America and the Caribbean

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This paper identifies existing formal and ad hoc mechanisms developed to foster civil society participation in the prevention and resolution of conflicts in Latin American and the Caribbean (LAC). The study demonstrates that there is a lack of participation by civil society organizations (CSOs) in the LAC region as a result of three interrelated phenomena. First, conflict prevention and peacebuilding strategies have developed primarily through state and military channels due to the emphasis on national security. Second, the concept of state-controlled conflict prevention is reinforced by civil society and its networks because the vast majority believe that conflict prevention is primarily the concern of the state. Thus, CSOs have not traditionally incorporated these issues into their agendas. Finally, participation of civil society in forming the conflict prevention agenda is further hindered by weak civil society networks, the lack of resources and the sometimes un-representative (non-participatory) decision-making practices of CSOs. This paper argues that it is imperative to engage in capacity-building efforts that better prepare CSOs to deal with these issues. Moreover, it stresses that it is essential to implement strategies for the consolidation of alliances between CSOs and other institutions and organizations in the area of conflict prevention that will enable them to strengthen their efforts on the national, regional and hemispheric levels.

RÉSUMÉ

Ce document analyse les mécanismes officiels et spéciaux mis sur pied pour faciliter la participation de la société civile à la prévention et à la résolution des conflits en Amérique latine et dans les Caraïbes. Cette étude démontre qu'il y a un manque de participation de la part des organisations de la société civile dans la région de l'Amérique latine et des Caraïbes et ce, pour trois raisons qui sont intimement liées. Premièrement, les stratégies de prévention des conflits et de maintien de la paix ont été surtout développées à partir de mécanismes gouvernementaux et militaires en raison de l'importance accordée à la sécurité nationale. Ensuite, le concept de la prévention des conflits contrôlée par l'État est renforcé par la société civile et ses réseaux du fait que pour la vaste majorité, la prévention des conflits est avant tout une question qui concerne l'État. Par conséquent, les organisations de la société civile n'ont pas, en règle générale, inscrit ces questions à leur ordre du jour. Enfin, la participation de la société civile à l'élaboration de programmes de



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prévention des conflits est freinée par la faiblesse de ses réseaux, le manque de ressources et les pratiques de prise de décisions des OSC qui sont parfois non-représentatives. Le document fait valoir qu'il est impératif de renforcer les capacités des organisations de la société civile pour mieux les préparer à faire face à ces questions. De plus, il souligne qu'il est essentiel de mettre en oeuvre des stratégies pour consolider les alliances entre les OSC et d'autres institutions et organisations en matière de prévention des conflits pour qu'elles puissent consolider leurs efforts aux niveaux national, régional et hémisphérique.

RESUMEN

El presente trabajo identifica los mecanismos formales y ad hoc que existen con el fin de facilitar la participación de las organizaciones de la sociedad civil (OSC) en la prevención y solución de conflictos en América Latina y el Caribe (ALC). El trabajo demuestra tal participación es aún escasa debido a tres factores interrelacionados. Primero, las estrategias de prevención de conflictos y consolidación de la paz han sido diseñadas fundamentalmente a través de canales estatales y militares producto a consideraciones de seguridad nacional. Segundo, la idea de que la prevención de conflictos es potestad exclusiva del estado se refuerza aún más por la creencia de la sociedad civil de que la prevención de conflictos es en lo esencial una función del estado, por lo que tradicionalmente este tema no ha tenido ningún espacio en los programas de trabajo de las OSC. Tercero, la participación de la sociedad civil en la conformación de los programas de trabajo sobre prevención de conflictos se ve limitada aún más por la debilidad de las redes de OSC, falta de recursos, y los procesos de tomas de decisiones a veces no representativos (no participativos) de las OSC. Además, apuntamos la necesidad imperiosa de que las OSC desarrollen sus habilidades para estar mejor preparadas a la hora de abordar estos asuntos. Asimismo subrayamos la vital importancia de aplicar estrategias para la consolidación de alianzas entre OSC y demás instituciones y organizaciones que trabajan el tema de la prevención de conflictos que les ayude a fortalecer sus acciones tanto en el ámbito nacional como regional y hemisférico.

OVERVIEW

The purpose of this paper is to analyze the role of civil society organizations (CSOs) and networks with regards to regional security as well as conflict prevention and peacebuilding in both the hemispheric and subregional contexts of Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC). This paper is an initial attempt to pinpoint the formal and informal—ad hoc—mechanisms implemented during the past 15 years (1989-2004) for conflict prevention and resolution as well as CSO participation in these mechanisms.

Despite the debate that was initiated in the 1980s regarding broader security notions, which transcended the specific domains of national defence and the military, and the opening of spaces for civil participation in the development of national and regional security policies, state-centric approaches continue to prevail. Contrary to the rhetoric, there is still an absence of established mechanisms for civil society participation that could help consolidate democracy and strengthen policy-making processes in response to the requirements and demands of society. In addition, the majority of the predominant approaches to security introduced by this debate in the last 15 years permeate the diverse initiatives and actions regarding conflict prevention promoted in recent years by different actors—both governmental and non-governmental.

After reviewing the initiatives developed by international organizations to deal with CSO participation and conflict prevention and resolution in the region, the paper stresses that these processes still face a set of major challenges. First, the spaces and mechanisms created to facilitate CSO inclusion are, more often than not, ad hoc in nature and are not the result of formally established procedures. As a consequence, the CSO's role is limited to that of observers, consultants, recipients of capacity-building programs, as well as to the implementation of some previously designed programs. Currently, few civil society organizations and networks on a regional level are able to move from a normative to a proactive approach on these issues. Further, they often have difficulty engaging in a substantial process of designing, negotiating and implementing conflict prevention and peacebuilding policies on their own or in the framework of the initiatives promoted by international organizations and national governments.

Therefore, the conclusions of this paper point towards a deficit of civil society participation whose root cause lies with three inter-connected phenomena. First, security, conflict prevention and peacebuilding issues have primarily been the domain of the state and the military. Second, this approach has taken a firm hold within CSOs, which have come to believe that these issues should be dealt with by the state and, with few exceptions, do not include a role for CSOs in governments' agendas. Third, the institutional weaknesses and limited capacities of CSOs are well documented. These are often permeated by personality-centric, corporatist and clientelist political cultures, and by serious difficulties to update and to adapt their agendas to changing political environments, which seriously hinders their current ability to influence or implement conflict prevention policies.

This paper argues that it is imperative to engage in capacity-building efforts that better prepare CSOs to deal with these issues. Moreover, it stresses that it is essential to implement strategies for the consolidation of alliances between CSOs and other institutions and organizations in the area of conflict prevention that will enable them to strengthen their efforts on the national, regional and hemispheric levels.

INTRODUCTION

Although Latin America and the Caribbean is primarily a peaceful region, several types of conflict exist in the area whose characteristics and development differ from those of two decades ago. Currently, interstate conflict is not predominant; the last conflict of this kind—involving national armies—took place nearly a decade ago between Peru and Ecuador. At the same time, for those cases in the region where differences and tensions over territories and borders persist the principal sources of conflict are either domestic or transnational.¹

The first section of this paper will provide a brief profile of current debates on security issues in LAC following the end of the Cold War, which have generated a new, broader notion of security that incorporates new threats and actors in the region. The impact of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 (9/11) introduced new elements to the discussion that, in some cases, suggest a return to a narrower perspective on these issues. In the context of this debate, the second section of this paper will review different conflict prevention and resolution programs and mechanisms implemented throughout the region by international organizations in the last 15 years. The third part examines the main agendas and strategies developed by CSOs concerning security issues and conflict prevention and resolution as well as the spaces made available for CSO participation in international organizations. This is based on the viewpoint that there is an important deficit in CSO participation.

THE CURRENT DEBATE ON SECURITY

From the narrow definition to the broader concept

The end of the Cold War sparked a debate in LAC around the need to replace the existing narrower definition of security—focused on issues of national defence—with a new, broader perspective. In addition, these new concepts attempted to supersede the National Security Doctrine (NSD) that had prevailed in many countries. This was particularly the case for countries that had been under authoritarian rule and in which national defence had been articulated with the internal security mechanisms, allowing for a strong repressive apparatus and severe violation of human rights.

Consequently, since the 1980s, both the security agendas and the actors involved have experienced significant changes. The new security concepts stem from the premise that security is not the exclusive province of the state, but rather that it also concerns the people. This approach leads to the re-evaluation of what are considered to be the main security threats, expanding these to include the so-called "new threats," a process also affected by the redefinition of the concepts of hemispheric and global security in the 1990s. Unlike traditional state-centric perspectives that revolve around the role of the Executive branch and the armed forces, these re-conceptualizations incorporate non-state actors into the new complex dynamics of the field.

The concept of **human security**, first proposed by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) in 1994, gives precedence to citizens' well-being and

introduces the need to consider a wide spectrum of non-conventional threats including poverty, environmental issues, and natural disasters. Nevertheless, it is the notion of **democratic security**—developed in the framework of the Central American peace accords²—that combines the perspective of human security and citizens' security (the rule of law and security for people and their property) with the concept of the defence of the democratic system and juxtaposes these with the notions of state security.

The concepts of **cooperative security** and **regional security** also emerge within this discussion and against the backdrop of increasingly complex integration schemes. The first seeks to foster collaboration among states to tackle common security issues, advance bilateral cooperation and promote mutual trust. The second expands upon this theme and constitutes a response to the current globalization process. Just as the advancement of the processes of economic integration and cooperation has been both a result of and a complement to the globalization process, effective adaptive responses are also being sought in the area of security. This implies a rethinking of security at the hemispheric level. Regional security is based on the credo that the political and economic stability of one country guarantees the security of its neighbours. It is characterized by the adoption of measures that foster mutual trust and contribute to cross-border security in terms of both public and national security. The majority of concerted regional responses to new threats are seen as multidimensional and transnational in nature (Grabendorff, 2003).

Within this framework, a number of sub-regional security initiatives have been implemented. The first was the Regional Security System (RSS), which was established in 1982 by Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean islands and now includes other Caribbean Community (CARICOM) countries. In 1995 the Framework Treaty on Democratic Security in Central America (TMSDCA) was approved as part of the peace processes implemented in the region. Other such initiatives include the North American Aerospace Defence Command (NORAD), the Andean Charter

for Peace and Security—part of the Lima Commitment—and the Ushuaia Protocol on democratic commitment, which established a "peace zone" comprising all member states of the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR) and its associates. In every case, although the conceptual debate included non-state actors, it should be noted that the issue of security has remained the privileged domain of the state and the armed forces.

State-centric perspectives continue to dominate the debate despite the fact that broader perspectives were introduced into the security debate in the 1980s. In addition to the specific military and defensive dimensions of security, these approaches encompassed aspects of civil society participation in regional and national security policy formulation. Despite the rhetoric, the institutionalization of CSO participation mechanisms that contribute to further democratic consolidation, as well as the formulation of policies consistent with the needs and demands of the citizens are yet to be accomplished.

More recently, within the United Nations (UN) framework, a new perspective has been added to the debate: the right of **humanitarian intervention**, based on the concept of the responsibility to protect (R2P). It stipulates that States can take coercive, and in particular, military, action against other states when they fail to fulfill their responsibility to protect their own citizens because they are either unable or unwilling to do so. Two fundamental questions stem from this assertion: what institutional mechanisms will determine when a State is unable or unwilling to protect its citizens? Who will be involved in the decision-making process and through what type of procedures will foreign intervention be implemented to protect the citizens of a country? In short, important questions are raised with regards to the legal, institutional and procedural aspects of this so-called humanitarian intervention, particularly in the context of LAC, where the foreign policies of the majority of the countries are based on principles of non-intervention and respect for national sovereignty. This is a sensitive issue particularly for countries that have a historical record of external interventions, including US military and covert operations.

Regional security is based on the credo that the political and economic stability of one country guarantees the security of its neighbours

The impact of 9/11: A return to a narrow definition of security?

The debate over new security perspectives and the implementation of different subregional mechanisms was affected by the events of 9/11 and its repercussions for global and hemispheric security. Since then a series of changes shaped by the United States' vision and strategy got underway in the hemisphere, marked by a return to a narrower definition of security that favours the legitimate use of coercive force against terrorist threats and against drug-trafficking. This has triggered trends towards the re-militarization of security and the "securitization" of agendas as well as the eventual prioritization of national security over regional security. It has also raised serious concerns about the prevalence of human rights and the rule of law.

September 11 presented an opportunity for the US government to launch a new unilateral global strategy geared toward a rearrangement of the global power structure and particularly, the geopolitical and geoeconomic environment in the Middle East. At the same time, this unilateral tactic weakened and raised questions about the role of the UN and the trend towards complex multilateralism and global governance (Serbin, 2003). This was particularly evident during the invasion of Iraq. Likewise, it undermines the development of international law, progress in global governance consolidation, human rights and the role of CSOs within the international system.

However, it should be noted that this shift toward more restrictive perspectives does not only occur because of the influence of the new US security agenda, which revolves around the notions of homeland security and pre-emptive war. As the Central American experience shows, the proliferation of new threats has limited the ability of states to implement security agendas and has increased the potential for the militarization of civilian responsibilities. As a result, there is currently a debate over the need to formulate a narrower definition of security that overcomes the difficulties posed by the broader perspective. In the context of the various security problems this is presented by an increasingly complex social and political environment and hinders the implementation of focused, consistent and effective policies.

Therefore, at the centre of this debate lies the definition of the new threats for LAC, particularly within the framework of the identification of terrorism as a top priority. This situation creates a tension between the agendas of many of the countries in the region and the United States. In this regard, Mónica Hirst (2003) has identified six fundamental challenges for security cooperation in the hemisphere:

- Intra-regional fragmentation and political diversity. There remains a clear differentiation between various sub-regional dynamics, which leads to contrasts in their security and defence priorities and agendas.
- Economic integration and security cooperation. Progress in economic integration has translated into stronger cooperation in the area of security. However, persisting differences in perspectives have prevented the formulation of a common security strategy in the region; in other words, security cooperation is currently limited to specific issues.
- The traditional agenda. Based on interstate conflicts, in the last few years it has led to an increase in military expenditures in several countries. Nationalism remains a major cohesive factor within the armed forces, which does not facilitate cooperation, particularly among countries with latent border disputes.
- The new agenda. Characterized by the definition of non-military threats, like environmental damage, drug-trafficking and illegal migration, among others, it generates a proclivity toward its "securitization." There is a tendency toward unilateral action rather than effective cooperation to tackle these new threats.
- The latest agenda. The repercussions of 9/11 and the war against terrorism have caused the US to reinforce and expand its intelligence-gathering mechanisms in the region. Response to the terrorist threat has been a unilateral rather than a concerted effort.
- Perpetuated hegemony. Predominance of the United States and its policies over the rest of the countries in the hemisphere. Lack of a common LAC position vis-à-vis the United States. Military capabilities are asymmetrical and LAC is not an area of current priority for the United States.

This has triggered trends towards the re-militarization of security and the "securitization" of agendas

From a LAC perspective, there is general consensus that the main security threats are related to increasing democratic governance problems, instability and weaknesses of democratic institutions (Rojas, 2004). Political and economic crises as well as social unrest have had serious repercussions in many of the region's countries (Annex 1). These perspectives that acknowledge the multiple threats faced by the countries of the region, do not endorse a US agenda revolving around the threats of terrorism and drug trafficking. These were reflected in the Special Conference on Hemispheric Security, held in Mexico in October 2003, where there was agreement regarding a multidimensional approach to security. However, it has been pointed out that establishing a hemispheric agenda that will address all the threats is highly improbable. Therefore, the role that subregional security schemes can play increases as they are better prepared to confront specific threats (Rojas, 2004) if they have the necessary resources and political will to do so.

In summary, threats to security can be divided into three categories: interstate threats; transnational threats—including drug-trafficking, organized crime, the illicit trade of firearms and related material, terrorism, assets laundering, migration and environmental issues—and internal threats, linked to inequality and social exclusion, problems of democratic governance and ethnic confrontation. Nevertheless, difficulties in addressing these issues today are compounded by a tendency toward fragmentation in the sub-regional integration schemes, creating barriers for the development of common security policies both at the sub-regional and hemispheric levels.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION AND PREVENTION IN LAC

With regards to the subregional analyses of these threats, the Southern Cone in the 1990s was characterized by a noticeable reduction of border tensions and disputes. This was primarily due to of a series of diplomatic initiatives promoting collaboration, transparency and non-violent conflict resolution, as well as the advancement of regional economic integration and cooperation. Nevertheless, new conflicts have arisen in this subregion resulting from extensive inequality and exacerbated social exclusion, associated with growing difficulties to maintain democratic governance.

In Central America, a process has been implemented that seeks to consolidate democracy in every country, particularly those where the commitments of last decade's peace accords are being fulfilled. Despite renewed issues linked to decade-old border disputes, the regional integration process has pushed forward although there has been an increase in social insecurity and violence associated with transnational crime and the drug trade. In this region, public security threats, like those posed by the *maras*—criminal youth gangs—have become a major concern.

In the Caribbean, there have been cases of the asymmetrical intervention by external actors. A case in point is the Grenada invasion in 1983 and the endemic confrontation between Cuba and the United States. However, with the exception of Suriname, Guyana, Jamaica, as well as Trinidad and Tobago where ethnic and political tensions have led to outbreaks of violence, there are no instances of domestic violent conflict throughout the English and Dutch-speaking

Caribbean. At the same time, the region is experiencing a growth in the activities of transnational criminal networks that have managed to penetrate some of the governments of the region, such as the Dominica, St. Vincent and the Grenadine Islands, and their respective financial systems, including some of their offshore banks (Serbin, 1998; Tulchin and Espach, 2000). In this subregion Haiti is a case

where for over two decades and despite the intervention of different international actors such as the UN and the OAS, efforts to articulate an institutional system capable of ending the political, social and criminal violence have failed.

In the Andes, most of the countries are facing increasing internal crisis, characterized by the development of internal armed conflicts, growing social tensions, political confrontations of varying magnitudes and the possibility of regional spillover of the Colombian internal conflict. This area has plunged into an acute social and political crisis that threatens its fragile democratic processes and turns it into a breeding ground for domestic and, eventually, regional armed conflict situations. This is compounded by the presence of the drug trade, transnational organized crime, and intensified ethnic confrontations.

Over the past 15 years this framework has yielded a series of conflict prevention and resolution mechanisms, the majority of which have been

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implemented under OAS and UN supervision. These have been geared toward a variety of internal political and ethnic conflicts and, to a lesser extent, interstate disputes. In the case of Central America, different initiatives were taken supporting and assisting in the implementation of the peace accords of the 1990s, mainly in El Salvador, Guatemala and Nicaragua. In the Caribbean, as indicated above, there have been few instances of violent conflict, thus international interventions of this sort have been correspondingly sparse with the exceptions of Haiti, Guyana and Suriname where international assistance in the area of security were required. Meanwhile, the Andes is without doubt the current hotbed of armed conflict, both potential and in progress. Of the five countries that make up this subregion, four have required the implementation of various conflict prevention and resolution mechanisms, with the participation of the OAS and the UN. In the case of the Southern Cone, despite institutional crises in both Argentina and Paraguay, no direct international intervention was implemented.

INTERNATIONAL PARTICIPATION IN CONFLICT RESOLUTION AND PREVENTION IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN (1989-2004)

Conflict resolution:

Andean Region

1. Colombia (1996-2004):
 - UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).
 - UNDP.
 - UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.
 - UN Assistance in establishing Groups of Friends for negotiations with the *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC)* and the *Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN)*.
 - OAS Mission to Support the Peace Process.
 - European Union (EU) Consultative Group in Support of the Peace Process.
2. OAS/UPD Mine-Action Programs in Peru, Ecuador and Colombia (2001 to present).
3. UN Facilitation in Dialogue between Venezuela and Guyana (1990).

Caribbean

1. Haiti (1993-2004):
 - Joint OAS/UN International Civilian Mission.
 - UN Peacekeeping force with RSS participation.
 - UN Resolution 1529: Multinational Interim Force.
 - UN Resolution 1542: Stabilization Mission, which included peace forces from more than 20 LAC countries.
2. Suriname (1992):
 - OAS/Unit for the Promotion of Democracy (UPD) Special Mission.
3. OAS Belize-Guatemala Facilitation Process (2000-2003).
4. CARICOM Intermediation Guyana-Suriname (2000).

Central America

1. Nicaragua (1990-1995):
 - UN Observer Group in Central America.
 - UNHCR.
 - UN Observation Mission for the Verification of Elections.
 - OAS International Support and Verification Commission.
 - OAS Technical Cooperation for Peace and Reassimilation Program.
2. El Salvador (1989-1995)
 - UNHCR.
 - UNDP.
 - UN Observer Mission, later UN Mission.
3. Guatemala (1994-2004)
 - UN Verification Mission.
 - UN National Transition Volunteers Program.
 - OAS/UPD Program for Support of the Peace Process, which included the Program for a Culture of Dialogue: Development of Resources for Peace-Building (Propaz).
4. OAS/UPD Mine Action Programs in Costa Rica (1991-2002), Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua (1991 to present).

5. OAS dialogues for interstate disputes: Belize-Guatemala; Honduras-Nicaragua and El Salvador-Honduras.
6. OAS Program for the Promotion of Dialogue and Conflict Resolution in Central America (PAC).

Conflict prevention:

Andean Region

1. Bolivia (2003-2004)
 - OAS/UPD Specialized Agency for the National Governance Program.
 - OAS/Argentina and Brazil mediation between government and protesters.
 - OAS assistance for the establishment of a Constituent Assembly.
 - OAS Electoral Observation Mission.
 - OAS/UPD Project for the Design and Implementation of a Conflict Prevention and Resolution System.
2. Colombia (1997-2004):
 - World Bank: Program for Development and Peace in Magdalena Medio and creation of "Peasant Reserves".
 - Inter-American Development Bank: *La Paz es Rentable* (Peace is Profitable) initiative.
 - UNDP Reconciliation and Development program (REDES).
3. Peru (2000)
 - OAS High-Level Mission.
 - OAS Electoral Observation Mission.
4. Venezuela (2002-2004):
 - Special Mission headed by the Secretary-General (April 2002).
 - OAS/Carter Center/UNDP assistance in Table of Negotiation and Agreements Process.
 - OAS Electoral Observation Mission for presidential recall referendum.
 - Carter Center Electoral Observation Mission for presidential recall referendum.
5. OAS/UPD Program for Assisting Member States in promoting dialogue and peaceful resolution of disputes.

6. Andean Community of Nations (CAN): Decision 587 "*Lineamientos de la Política de Seguridad Externa Común Andina*" which includes among its operative mechanisms the Andean Framework for the Peaceful Resolution of Controversies as well as the development and implementation of Confidence- and Security-Building Measures.

Caribbean:

1. Guyana (1998-2004):
 - CARICOM Mediation.
 - UNDP/Department of Political Affairs conflict prevention program.
 - UN assistance for Social Partners Initiative and Commonwealth Facilitator.
2. Haiti (2001-2004):
 - OAS Secretary-General and Assistant Secretary-General initiatives.
 - OAS Special Mission to Haiti.
 - OAS Special Mission to Strengthen Democracy.
 - CARICOM Election Observer Mission.
 - CARICOM/OAS Initiative.
 - CARICOM Special Mission.
 - CARICOM Fact-Finding Mission.
 - CARICOM Task Force on Haiti.
 - CARICOM Prior Action Plan, backed by the OAS and the EU.
2. Trinidad and Tobago (2002):
 - CARICOM Mission to Mediate in Electoral Impasse.

Central America:

1. Central American Integration System (SICA)/Central American Security Commission (1997-2004):
 - Study of peaceful conflict resolution, crisis management and peacekeeping.
 - Annual Program of Confidence-building Activities.
 - Central American Mechanism on Information and Communication for Security.

A series of preliminary conclusions can be drawn regarding mechanisms that have been implemented in conflict resolution and prevention in LAC by international organizations.³ Among these:

- Conflict resolution and post-conflict building has played a more important role than prevention, though there seems to be a recent tendency towards implementing preventive strategies.
- The majority of the initiatives have been undertaken by the UN, and to a lesser degree by the OAS, while the role of subregional schemes is weak if not practically non-existent, CARICOM being the exception.
- Joint missions are few.
- “Operational prevention” has been predominant. It has been only recently that international organizations have started addressing “structural prevention”.
- The majority of the mechanisms are ad hoc and do not lead to wider institutional undertakings.
- Some early-warning mechanisms have been implemented but they have not been efficient.
- Though international conflict resolution or prevention mechanisms have not been established, two cases of potential conflict should be taken into account: Puerto Rico (Vieques) and Cuba, both related to confrontation with the US.

civil society concerns at the community, neighbourhood and city levels have focused on public security

values in LAC by building on several previous grassroots experiences, and the creation of human rights networks. The latter, however, show some distinctive traits worth mentioning, namely the institutional weakness of emerging organizations and networks, the ambiguity between originally anti-state positions and a collaborative relationship with state agencies, as well as the difficulty of articulating regional networks with focused agendas despite the influence of globalization. Likewise, with very few exceptions, CSOs in the region have no systematic track record in the areas of peacebuilding and security.

Due to the growing illicit drug and arms trades that have been spurring already rising crime rates and local violence in recent years, civil society concerns at the community, neighbourhood and city levels have focused on public security. Ineffective police work combined with a growing lack of popular trust, and a loss of credibility of political actors and local

authorities, have given rise to broad grassroots movements and initiatives demanding better security, in some cases even calling for more repressive action and police presence, to the detriment of human and civil rights achievements of previous years. The movement led by Blumberg in Buenos Aires or the recent social mobilization in Mexico City help to illustrate this, and point to the high levels of mistrust generated by the ineffectiveness of state institutions,

including the police, the judiciary and the prison system. In some cases, these grassroots actions focusing on public security are linked with state initiatives, as in the case of the Peace Management Initiative in Jamaica, while in other cases, like some indigenous people's initiatives in Colombia, Ecuador and Peru, these ties are completely non-existent.

Conversely, at the national, subregional and regional levels, civil society concerns have been focused since the 1970s on human rights issues; however, in the post-9/11 context the spotlight has turned to regional security redefinition and policies. In some cases, this concern has led to the creation of more extensive networks, like the Forum for Citizen Diplomacy, a network of networks with an agenda geared toward participation in multilateral fora, particularly after the successful experience of human rights organizations within the OAS framework. In turn, as these and other regional CSO initiatives converged upon a common

DEFICITS IN CSO PARTICIPATION IN CONFLICT RESOLUTION AND PREVENTION

CSO agendas and strategies

The development of civil society organizations and networks in LAC in the last two decades is associated with a series of exogenous and endogenous factors. Among the exogenous elements are the reassessment of the role of civil society following the end of the Cold War, the emergence of transnational CSO networks as a result of the globalization process that began in the 80s, and the significant increase in the political role of CSOs during the Eastern European democratic transition processes as well as in Latin America and the Caribbean. Endogenous factors include the growing role of CSOs in spreading fundamental democratic

concern for security, conflict prevention and peacebuilding issues, as well as on the human rights agenda, similar agreements and synergies emerged within the LAC academic community, which engaged in defence and security research. A good example is a recent initiative by FLACSO and CRIES that promotes the development of a joint program involving researchers and CSOs, which approaches peace and security as regional public goods. This clearly points to a shift from a perspective that viewed regional security as the ultimate goal to a new concept where regional security is perceived as an instrument for conflict prevention and peacebuilding in a region beset by governance crises and deep social and ethnic schisms. Similarly, this shift responds to the new conceptual debate currently ongoing in the region.

However, since the end of the Cold War, there has been little CSO involvement in the specific area of security in LAC. Important regional initiatives of the last 20 years include the South American Peace Commission, the Latin American Peace Research Council (CLAIP), the initiatives of the Arias Foundation for Peace and Human Progress and the International Relations and Peace Research Institute (IRIPAZ) in Central America, as well as the Democratic Human Security Support Program developed by the University for Peace in conjunction with several other regional academic institutions and CSOs. In the Andean region, Brazilian and Andean institutions are currently promoting an initiative to develop research on "The Andean-Brazilian Security Agenda," sponsored and coordinated by the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung in Colombia (FESCOL). Likewise, in this subregion the Andean Services Committee and the Andean Information Network cover security-related areas. Other Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) initiatives have also been recently developed specifically for the Andean and Caribbean within the framework of their program "Security in a Globalized World".

In the last five years, CRIES has carried out two initiatives in Central America. The first was a research program on democratic governance and public security in the region that comprised several national studies and one at the regional level. Later, CRIES coordinated the project "Framework Treaty on Democratic Security in Central America: Assessment and Reform from a Civil Society Perspective" that

examined the implementation of the treaty in four countries of the region (Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala and Panama) and formulated a series of proposals, from a civil society perspective, for its evaluation and reform (Jácome: 2004). These projects, like the one currently coordinated by CRIES in Latin America and the Caribbean as part of the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC), are based on a participatory approach that allows for the involvement of CSOs and scholars at different levels of public policy formulation, implementation and monitoring, as well citizenship-building.

Clearly, the majority of these initiatives have been restricted to subregional contexts, although more recent programs have expanded their approach to encompass the hemisphere. Among the latter, it is worth noting a series of initiatives seeking to formulate recommendations for different meetings

of the Inter-American system, like the Ministerial Conference in Mexico and the Conferences of Defence Ministers promoted by FLACSO-Chile and FLACSO-Ecuador. Likewise, geared toward the UN-sponsored Conference on Armed Conflict Prevention, to be held in New York in July 2005, CRIES is advancing the program "The role of civil society and NGOs in the prevention of armed conflict in Latin America and the Caribbean," which entails extensive consultation with Latin

American and Caribbean CSOs in order to prepare recommendations for the participation of CSOs in this area. Also at the hemispheric level, the Forum for Citizen Diplomacy has included the issues of peace and security among its main areas of concern. Similarly, since 9/11 the issues of peacebuilding and conflict prevention are increasingly included in the panels and the agenda of the World Social Forum (WSF).

Therefore, it can be concluded that from a general perspective, CSO participation on security issues remains weak, and this deficit can be ascribed to three interrelated factors. First, security issues have historically been the province of the state and the armed forces. It is usually governments, particularly the executive branch, and the military that deal with these issues. In most cases, it is not included in the agendas of other government branches or political parties.

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Second, the notion that security issues are the responsibility of the state is propagated among many civil society organizations, and with few exceptions CSOs do not include security issues on their agendas. As a result, when national consultation with the CSOs was conducted in 18 countries to formulate proposals to be submitted to the 3rd Summit of the Americas, no recommendations were suggested on the topic of security. However, in preparation for the civil society recommendations for the Mar del Plata Summit of the Americas to be held in November 2005, a joint effort by a group of CSOs, including Partners of the Americas, Participa, Funpadem, FOCAL and CRIES, addresses the issue of peacebuilding and conflict prevention as one of the main themes of the CSO agenda. The academic sector constitutes a special case, where concerns over security issues have remained current, particularly after the events of 9/11, as demonstrated by its active participation in a number of conferences on security.

A third element to be considered is the weakness and limited capacities of many civil society organizations and networks, often weighed down by personality-centred, corporatist and clientelist political cultures (Serbin 2004a and b).

Intergovernmental bodies: spaces for CSO participation

The international community is beginning to show signs of a political will to allow for CSO participation in debates on security, particularly on the prevention and/or resolution of armed conflicts.

Within the UN framework (Barnes, 2004) relationships and alliances with CSOs are still rather weak. Unlike some areas, like those concerned with economic and social issues where CSO participation has become a matter of routine, the areas of security and conflict-resolution have remained the exclusive realm of states and official international institutions. So far, CSO involvement has been limited to channelling humanitarian assistance or conducting other kinds of operational activities, although there is increasing acknowledgment of their potential role in conflict prevention initiatives. Consequently, a debate has been developing on the role of CSOs whose main references include:

CSO involvement has been limited to channelling humanitarian assistance or conducting other kinds of operational activities

- **Prevention of Armed Conflict: Report of the Secretary-General (A/55/985 – S/2001/574)**, in which the potential role of CSOs and the need to move from a culture of reaction to one of prevention are explicitly acknowledged. The Secretary-General will submit a new report in 2005.
- **The Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations–Civil Society Relations**, known as the Cardoso Panel, chaired by former Brazilian President Fernando Henrique Cardoso, presented its final report in June 2004. One of its main recommendations was the creation of civil society advisory groups as a pilot project in a range of countries to guide UN strategy.
- **High Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change**, established in September 2003 by the UN Secretary-General. In December 2004 it delivered the report “A more secure world: Our shared responsibility”.

A more specific experience is that of the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean (UN-LiREC) that was established within the framework of the UN Department for Disarmament Affairs. Its mandate was to provide support for peace and sustainable development. UN-LiREC programs cover areas such as Confidence and Security-Building; Disarmament and Development; Peace

and Disarmament Education; as well as the Regional Clearing-house on Firearms, Ammunition and Explosives. UN-LiREC invites CSO participation in its analysis of diverse issues as well as in capacity-building programs aimed at strengthening institutions.

Within the OAS (Milet, 2004), CSO participation, as per the *Guidelines for Civil Society Participation in the Activities of the OAS* approved in 1999 by its Permanent Council, may take place as follows:

- Applying for observer status at General Assembly sessions. Should the application be approved by the Permanent Council, the applicant organization will be considered a special guest.

- Applying for observer status at the Inter-American Council for Integral Development (CIDI) sessions. Should the application be approved by the CIDI Special Committee, the applicant organization will be considered a special guest.
- Entering cooperation agreements with the General Secretariat.
- Entering cooperation agreements with specific OAS bodies, like the Inter-American Telecommunications Commission (CITEL), the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), and the Inter-American Children's Institute (IIN).
- Participating in specialized conferences within the OAS framework.

With regards to conflict prevention and resolution, the OAS has chosen to focus its efforts on two main areas: democracy support and consolidation, and hemispheric security.⁴ The UPD is currently advancing the Special Program for the Promotion of Dialogue and Conflict Resolution, which in some areas has allowed for CSO participation. These areas include, CSO capacity building, the promotion of dialogue between governments and CSOs, as well as the strengthening of civil participation in the development of public policies on these issues. In addition, within the framework of the agencies and institutions involved with the UPD in conflict prevention and resolution, 154 CSOs participate in different activities such as:

Civil Society Organizations Collaborating with the UPD

| Fields of action | |
|--|-----|
| Electoral Technical Assistance | 61 |
| Political Database of the Americas | 4 |
| Constitutional Reform in the Caribbean Forum | 1 |
| Strengthening of Legislative Institutions | 33 |
| Electoral Observation Mission to Nicaragua | 1 |
| Integrated Landmine Action | 22 |
| Decentralization | 11 |
| Democratic Values and Practices | 13 |
| PROPAZ | 8 |
| TOTAL | 154 |

Source: UPD, Paz Milet (2004)

Also within the framework of the OAS, the Committee on Hemispheric Security has designed and set in motion a peace education program and promotes discussion on the concept of security among the countries of the hemisphere. The program is aimed at the general population, with special emphasis on youth, women, and disadvantaged groups. It covers three areas, including education for the promotion of peace among states; education for peaceful conflict solution; and education for the advancement of democratic values and practices (OAS, 2000). From the perspective of hemispheric security, the focus is primarily on interstate conflict and, at this particular level, the OAS has implemented three types of mechanisms, namely hemispheric legal instruments, regional instruments and ad hoc mechanisms (Committee on Hemispheric Security, 2003).

Likewise, it is important to note that at the last OAS General Assembly held in June 2004 in Quito, CSOs submitted their demands on the topic of security. In fact, a key proposal was:

"Express a need for specific recognition of the contributions and role of CSOs in preventing conflicts in the Americas. The most diverse organizations have demonstrated their capacity to prevent and defuse conflicts. In this regard governments are urged to support the establishment of early-warning mechanisms and CSOs are called upon to improve their impact capability with regard to these mechanisms. The capacity of civil society to improve its contributions should be strengthened. It is important to voice the concern of CSOs that the solution to the Haitian problem will require support involving governments, aid agencies, and civil society." (Civil Society Hemispheric Forum, 2004)

Similarly, a major achievement of the Special Conference on Security, held in Mexico in October 2003, was the recognition of civil society contributions. It was recommended that the Committee on Hemispheric Security give consideration, when appropriate, to the analysis and recommendations of CSOs on the topic of security (articles 33 and 47 of the *Declaration on Security in the Americas*).

The main conflict resolution and prevention mechanisms developed by the UN and the OAS vis-à-vis both states and CSOs are:

| Mechanisms | UN | OAS |
|------------|---|--|
| States | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Observation of demobilization and repatriation of combatants and their families. ▪ Deployment of peacekeeping force (“blue helmets”). ▪ Electoral technical assistance and observation. ▪ Supervision and verification of negotiation processes between parties concerned. ▪ Supervision and verification of compliance with agreements. ▪ Assistance for police and judicial reform. ▪ Verification of observance of human rights. ▪ Institutional support. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Assistance in demobilization, repatriation and resettlement of combatants and their families. ▪ Mediation between governments and insurgent groups. ▪ Advisory support on legal civilian and military frameworks. ▪ Verification of observance of human rights. ▪ Assistance in border dispute resolution. ▪ Strengthening of institutions. ▪ Disarmament control. ▪ Electoral technical assistance and observation. ▪ Mine-action programs. ▪ Observation and facilitation of negotiation processes. ▪ Assistance for reforms in the administration of justice and electoral systems. |
| CSOs | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Support for human rights organizations. ▪ Liaising and lending support during negotiations between CSOs and governments. ▪ Training programs on conflict prevention and democratic governance. ▪ Capacity building for analysis and diagnosis of potential conflict. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Strengthening of local organizations. ▪ Creating spaces for dialogue between governments and civil society. ▪ Lending support for negotiations between governments and social groups. ▪ Training programs on conflict prevention and resolution. |

Therefore, it can be said that the initiatives of these international organizations have primarily been aimed toward the states. There are few programs that include CSOs in conflict prevention and resolution activities.

When looking at subregional security frameworks, spaces for CSO participation are even fewer. A formal mechanism that allows for CSO participation is only provided by the TMSDCA in Central America through the Consultative Committee of the SICA (CC-SICA), though it has never been implemented in regards to security or conflict prevention issues either by governments or by CSOs (Jácome, 2004). In the Andes, Decision 587 of the Andean Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs includes a proposal for the creation of an Andean Security Network made up of political, business, academic, and other civil society organizations, together with the governmental and intergovernmental organizations of the subregion. This Network would be part of the institutional mechanisms established through the “Guidelines for the External Security Policy of the Andean Community” which was recently approved in July 2004. However, to date no specific steps have been undertaken to implement this decision.

Therefore, it can be concluded that progress, even if limited, has been made within the framework of international organizations with regards to CSO participation on issues of security and conflict prevention, reduction and resolution. Proposals have been made for greater civil society incorporation and some spaces have been created for dialogue, particularly within the UN and OAS frameworks. However, these efforts are still hampered by significant limitations, among them:

- The mechanisms and spaces created are *ad hoc*. Thus far, few or no formal, permanent instruments have been established. Therefore, there is no stability and continuity in the mechanisms for CSO inclusion, particularly regarding issues of peacebuilding and conflict prevention.
- These inter-governmental instruments have restricted CSO activity to observation, consultation, participation in capacity building programs and the implementation of certain programs. CSOs do not participate in the formulation or development of strategies and programs.
- The main spheres of action for the few CSOs involved in security issues include primarily

proposal formulation and, to a lesser extent, their participation in consultation processes and/or the execution of programs they had no part in designing.

- Instances of CSOs assuming leadership in the design or implementation of conflict prevention, reduction or resolution mechanisms remain few and far between.

CONCLUSIONS

There is a deficit of CSO participation within the general framework of the security debate which, despite the introduction of new actors and topics, continues to be dominated primarily by state-centred perspectives. LAC governments tend to be reluctant to include CSOs in the debate on regional security and in the process of formulating and implementing conflict prevention policies. This is due partially to the fact that most states and international organizations do not see conflict prevention and peacebuilding as priority issues for their agendas, and thus tend to react in an ad hoc manner to emerging conflicts. As a result, civil society participation remains a rhetorical statement that is yet to be translated into the institutionalization of mechanisms that allow for effective CSO participation in democratic consolidation processes, and in the formulation of public policies that advance security as a public good. Current trends toward a more restrictive perspective on the issue of security would most likely expand this deficit.

On the other hand, CSOs tend to accept passively the agendas imposed by governments and international organizations (similarly to how they accept the new conceptual approaches to regional and hemispheric security). Thus, they fail to address, through adequate and proactive policies, the root causes of conflicts, and to implement initiatives that could go beyond ad hoc reactions to maturing conflict situations. In this regard, there is still a long way to go for CSO involvement in LAC in order to move from a culture of reaction to a culture of prevention, and to develop adequate skills, conceptual frameworks and capabilities, to effectively contribute to the prevention of war and armed conflict in the region.

Nevertheless, this weakness among CSOs is directly linked to their dynamics in Latin America and the Caribbean, as their agendas and strategies for action have serious limitations in addressing the issues of security as well as conflict prevention and resolution.

At the same time, the role that international organizations reserve for CSOs is basically confined to observation and consultation. They are also perceived as implementers of programs designed by these international organizations, based on their own analysis and priorities. Consequently, the recommendation of the Cardoso Panel with regards to the creation of civil society advisory groups should not go unheeded within the UN framework. Likewise, at the OAS, it is in the best interest of civil society to request action on its recommendation to the Committee on Hemispheric Security, that spaces be created where CSO analysis and proposals can be heard.

Further, there is a tendency among CSOs to accept this role and concentrate their efforts on the formulation of proposals. Therefore, it would be important for them to take a more proactive approach that allows them to develop public policy follow-up and assessment programs and increase their involvement in early-warning and confidence-building initiatives, as well as in efforts to maintain and uphold democratic governance. In summary, CSOs should regard security, conflict prevention and resolution, and peacebuilding as public goods and develop agendas and strategies consistent with the challenges before them.

To that end, preliminary proposals could include:

For the strengthening of CSOs:

- The design of community based conflict prevention programs that include:
 - Early-warning/diagnostic capabilities, emphasizing not just the symptoms but the causes of the conflict as well.
 - Implementing preventive mechanisms, such as dialogue, negotiation, as well as consensus- and confidence-building initiatives.
 - Monitoring likely hotbeds of (local, national or regional) conflict.
 - Dissemination to other actors, particularly international actors, of gathered data on hotbeds of conflict, through a regional observatory which links community based initiatives with regional network lobbying and advocacy capacity.
- The development of a follow-up methodology, on a participatory basis, for these issues.

- The design and implementation of capacity building and data-dissemination programs, profiting from the knowledge and the previous experience of academic centres and networks.




For the strengthening of relations between CSOs and other actors:

- The creation of spaces for dialogue between governmental representatives, sectors of the armed forces, political parties and CSOs on a national level.
- The formulation of proposals for deepening and broadening CSO participation mechanisms in hemispheric, subregional, national and local fora, on the basis of consultative research and networking.
- The linking of CSO initiatives with the policies of international organizations to strengthen the regional capacity to prevent armed conflict and build peace.
- The development of strategies within the framework of international cooperation agencies, aimed at the inclusion of this topic in their agendas and obtaining support for CSO efforts in the areas of peacebuilding, conflict prevention and security.

Appendix 1

Political-institutional crises in LAC 1990-2004

| Country/ Year | 90 | 91 | 92 | 93 | 94 | 95 | 96 | 97 | 98 | 99 | 00 | 01 | 02 | 03 | 04 |
|------------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| Argentina | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Belize | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Bolivia | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Brazil | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Chile | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Colombia | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Costa Rica | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Cuba | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Ecuador | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| El Salvador | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Guatemala | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Haiti | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Honduras | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Mexico | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Nicaragua | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Panama | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Paraguay | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Peru | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Suriname | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Uruguay | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Venezuela | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

| | |
|--|---|
|  | Coups d'état |
|  | Military tensions or uprisings |
|  | Presidential impeachment or resignation |

Source: FLACSO-Chile, Paz Milet (2004).

ENDNOTES

¹ See the results of the special regional studies commissioned by the Forum for Citizen Diplomacy and conducted by CRIES in the 20th. Anniversary Issue of *Pensamiento Propio*, No. 17 (January-June 2003).

² The Central American security perspective differs from the strategy currently advanced by President Álvaro Uribe's government in Colombia, which favours the traditional use of military action. According to his critics, it has curtailed democratic rights.

³ Not included are the mediation initiatives undertaken by groups of countries –friends– as in the cases of the conflict between Ecuador and Peru, in Venezuela, Colombia and other such cases. However, it is worth mentioning that some of the tensions and arising interstate and intrastate conflicts in previous years had been solved through the intervention and mediation of other LAC countries. Likewise, different initiatives developed by national governments have not been analyzed. Information regarding these can be found in: OAS (2004): *El diálogo y la gobernabilidad democrática en las Américas*, Washington, UPD Working Paper No.4, August.

⁴ For more in-depth information and analyses regarding the OAS processes and mechanisms see: Stephen Baranyi, "Inter-American Institutions and Conflict Prevention in the Americas", *FOCAL Policy Papers*, March 2005 (Forthcoming).

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