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XXI OAS Policy Roundtable

Regional Peace, Development and Security: the Role of Regional Organizations and Civil Society

Coordinadora Regional de Investigaciones Económicas y Sociales

La Coordinadora Regional de Investigaciones Económicas y Sociales (CRIES) fue establecida en Managua en 1982. CRIES es una red de centros de investigación, think tanks, ONGs, fundaciones y asociaciones profesionales de América Latina y del Caribe cuyo objetivo principal es promover la participación de la sociedad civil y la investigación económica y social vinculada a esta participación. CRIES publica regularmente la revista académica trilingüe *Pensamiento Propio*, un Anuario de Integración Regional, y una serie de documentos, conjuntamente con una colección de volúmenes colectivos sobre diferentes temas regionales.



Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC)



Organization of American States



Coordinadora Regional de Investigaciones Económicas y Sociales



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Regional Peace, Development and Security: the Role of Regional Organizations and Civil Society

Organization of American States
Hall of the Americas
Washington, D.C. November 23, 2009

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Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC)

The Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC) is a global civil society-led network which seeks to build an international consensus on peacebuilding and the prevention of violent conflict. It was established in 2003 in response to the call made by UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan for an international conference of civil society organisations working in the field of conflict prevention in his 2001 report *Prevention of Armed Conflict*. Since holding its Global Conference in 2005, GPPAC has worked to strengthen civil society networks for peace and security by linking local, national, regional, and global levels of action; to establish effective engagement with governments, the UN system and regional organisations; and to carry out projects within the five main programme areas identified in its Global Work Plan (2007-2010).

The Global Partnership consists of fifteen regional networks, each of which has its own Regional Action Agenda and Work Plan and participates in activities at the global level. The Regional Action Agendas feed into *People Building Peace: A Global Action Agenda for the Prevention of Violent Conflict* - which incorporated input from more than one thousand organisations around the world and outlines key priorities for change. The final document was presented to the UN in July 2005 during the Global Conference *From Reaction to Prevention: Civil Society Forging Partnerships to Prevent Violent Conflict and Build Peace*, which was held at UN Headquarters and organised by GPPAC in partnership with the UNDP. Since then, GPPAC has implemented work plans based on the Action Agendas.

GPPAC is governed by an International Steering Group which consists of representatives from all regions and a number of international NGOs. Its five main programmes are developed and run by member-driven Working Groups that are coordinated by the Global Secretariat, which is held by the European Centre for Conflict Prevention (ECCP) in The Hague, The Netherlands.

The GPPAC process in Latin America and the Caribbean is coordinated by Regional Secretariats: the Regional Coordination for Economic and Social Research (CRIES).

About the Organization of American States (OAS)

The Organization of American States (OAS) brings together the nations of the Western hemisphere to promote democracy, strengthen human rights, foster peace and security, and address the shared complex problems caused by poverty, terrorism, drugs and corruption. The OAS is the region's principal multilateral forum for political dialogue and collective action.

In 1948, 21 nations of the hemisphere signed the OAS Charter, affirming their commitment to common goals and their respect for each nation's sovereignty. They also adopted the American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man, the first international statement of its kind. But the idea of inter-American cooperation dates back much further. In the 1820s, Simón Bolívar envisioned a region "united in heart." In 1890, nations of the region formed the Commercial Bureau of American Republics, which evolved into the Pan American Union and later into the OAS. Since 1948, the Organization of American States has expanded to include the nations of the English-speaking Caribbean and Canada, giving the OAS a broader perspective that encompasses the entire hemisphere.

With four official languages — English, Spanish, Portuguese and French — the OAS reflects the rich diversity of the hemisphere's peoples and cultures. It is made up of 35⁺ member States: the independent nations of North, Central and South America and the Caribbean. Nations from other parts of the world participate as Permanent Observers, which allows them to closely follow the issues that are critical to the Americas.

The member countries set major policies and goals through the General Assembly, which gathers the hemisphere's ministers of foreign affairs once a year in regular session. Ongoing actions are guided by the Permanent Council, made up of ambassadors appointed by the member States.

To carry out the programs and policies set by the political bodies, six specialized secretariats coordinate OAS efforts in several broad areas; the Secretariat for Multidimensional Security, the Secretariat for Political Affairs, the Executive Secretariat for Integral Development, the Secretariat for External Relations, the Secretariat for Legal Affairs, and the Secretariat for Administration and Finance.

Also under the OAS umbrella are several offices and specialized agencies that have considerable autonomy including the Inter-American human rights bodies, the Inter-American Children's Institute, the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture, the Inter-American Commission of Women, the Inter-American Committee on Ports and the Inter-American Telecommunication Commission.

About the Coordinadora Regional de Investigaciones Económicas y Sociales (CRIES)

The Coordinadora Regional de Investigaciones Económicas y Sociales (CRIES) was founded in 1982 in the City of Managua, Nicaragua. It is a regional network of more than 70 research centres, NGOs, academic institutions and foundations. It promotes social and economic research based on participation of civil society organizations, and upon the principle that democratic and institutional consolidation in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) requires active civil society involvement and monitoring.

Amongst its goals, it currently promotes and coordinates research, networking, advocacy, awareness raising and capacity building programs at regional and sub-regional levels and it is active on integration, security, peacebuilding and conflict prevention issues, responsibility to protect, citizens' diplomacy; global warming and environmental risk management; social cohesion, democratic governance and institution-building; always from a pro-active civil society perspective.

CRIES bases its regional projects on a participative methodology, starting with consultation and research on a grass-root level, and building-up from this level to the national and regional ones. Most of this work has been done in a process of interlocution with the different communities of experts (including academic communities and networks); with key government actors and with regional and sub regional inter-governmental organizations.

CRIES' experience shows a significant record in influencing regional and inter-governmental agendas. As a "social partner"

in the Association of Caribbean States (ACS), CRIES cooperated with the Commission on Environmental Risks and Vulnerabilities in the Caribbean; as a past member of the Civil Society Consultative Council of the Central American Integration System (SICA) CRIES influenced the Central American agenda both in environmental issues (with a special report on civil society role in the aftermath of the Mitch Hurricane) and in security issues; as a member of the Civil Society Council of MERCOSUR and as a civil society actor with observer status at the Organization of American States, on different issues related to the Summits of the Americas, particularly regarding the role of civil society in peacebuilding, conflict prevention and regional security. Also, CRIES introduced the subject of the role of civil society in conflict prevention to the Conference on Hemispheric Security held in Mexico City in October 2003. Likewise, CRIES has coordinated the peace building dimension of a virtual consultation process promoted by Partners of the Americas and several other organizations aimed towards developing a series of recommendations for the Summit of the Americas held in Argentina in November 2005, and is an active participant of the Hemispheric Civil Society Forum which interacts with the OAS member states.

CRIES is not only a regional player, but also works in partnership and belongs to larger global networks to achieve its goals. In 2003, CRIES became a member of the International Steering Group of the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC). In its role as Regional Initiator for LAC, it has been developing initiatives oriented towards mainstreaming the issues of conflict prevention and peace building in the agendas of civil society organizations and networks, governments, sub-regional and regional intergovernmental institutions.

For more information on the organization's activities and publications, please visit www.cries.org

* On June 3, 2009, the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Americas adopted Resolution AG/RES.2438 (XXXIX-O/09) which resolves that the 1962 Resolution that excluded the Government of Cuba from its participation in the Inter-American system, ceases to have effect in the Organization of American States (OAS). The 2009 resolution states that the participation of the Republic of Cuba in the OAS will be the result of a process of dialogue initiated at the request of the Government of Cuba, and in accordance with the practices, purposes, and principles of the OAS.

1. On July 5, 2009, the Organization of American States (OAS) invoked Article 21 of the Inter-American Democratic Charter, suspending Honduras from active participation in the hemispheric body. The unanimous decision was adopted as a result of the June 28 coup d'état that expelled President José Manuel Zelaya from office. Diplomatic initiatives are ongoing to foster the restoration of democracy to Honduras.

Program

XXI OAS Policy Roundtable
*“Regional Peace, Development and Security:
the Role of Regional Organizations
and Civil Society”*

Co-organized with CRIES*

November 23rd 2009, 10:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.
Organization of American States-Washington D.C.

*CRIES, Regional Coordination for Economic and Social Research

10:00 – 10:10 am	Opening Session: Welcoming remarks by José Miguel Insulza , Secretary General of the Organization of American States (OAS)
10:10 –11:10 pm	First Panel: “Perspectives of Regional Organizations in Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding and the Role of Civil Society” , moderated by Victor Rico , Secretary, Secretariat for Political Affairs, OAS: Edward Greene , Assistant Secretary-General, Human and Social Development of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) James Lambert , Director General for Latin America and the Caribbean, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Canada Genaro Baldeón , Director, Office of Juridical Affairs of the Andean Community Craig Kelly , Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs, USA (TBC) Erick Vilchez , Director of Juridical and Political Affairs, General Secretariat of Central America Integration System (SICA)
11:10-12:00pm	Second Panel: “Perspectives of Civil Society Organizations in Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding” , moderated by Andrés Serbin , Executive President of the Regional Coordination for Economic and Social Research (CRIES) and Secretary General of the Latin American and Caribbean Platform for Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding (PLACPaz): Gilberto Rodrigues , UNISANTOS/GAPCon, São Paulo, Brazil John Siebert , Executive Director, Project Ploughshares, Canada Daniel Matul Romero , University of Costa Rica
12:00- 12:30 pm	Dialogue between Member States & Civil Society representatives , moderated by Irene Klinger , Director of the Department of International Affairs, OAS
12:30 pm	Closing Remarks by Ambassador Albert Ramdin , OAS Assistant Secretary General

Introduction

The Organization of American States (OAS), in coordination with the *Coordinadora Regional de Investigaciones Económicas y Sociales* (CRIES), a twenty year-old civil society network, carried out on November 23, 2009, the Policy Round Table “Regional Peace, Development and Security: the Role of Regional Organizations and Civil Society.” This Round Table presented a unique opportunity for representatives from a regional organization (OAS), sub regional organizations, national governments and civil society to come together and engage in an important dialogue and share their perspectives of the challenges, priorities and each actor’s role in preventing potential sources of conflict that could lead to local, national or regional instability.

OAS Secretary General José Miguel Insulza initiated this meeting by thanking the OAS Department of International Affairs (DIA) and CRIES for organizing the round table as part of an ongoing series of meetings organized by DIA to create a space for debate among leaders from government, civil society, academia, the private sector, and other sectors of society about topics of interest in the hemisphere. The Secretary General explained that the session would consist of two panels that would allow for a unique dialogue between the different stakeholders, with the objective of contributing with recommendations to strengthen the peace process in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Secretary General Insulza commented as well that, following the end of the Cold War, regional organizations emerged as important actors in the process of strengthening and maintaining peace. The OAS Charter and the Inter-American Democratic Charter have been the principal tools of the Inter-American System for managing and resolving conflict in the hemisphere. These agreements have proven an effective tool of the OAS to manage, prevent and resolve conflicts in the region, highlighting their effective implementation most recently in Nicaragua in 1990, Suriname in 1992, Haiti in 1994 and 2005, Guatemala in 1996, Peru in 2000, and Colombia from 2004 to the present. The OAS has also played a crucial role in

facilitating the peaceful dialogue and resolution of conflicts between Belize and Guatemala, and between Ecuador and Colombia.

“The OAS has assumed a leadership role recognized by all, accompanying peace processes and supporting pacific solution of interstate and intrastate conflicts.” – José Miguel Insulza, OAS Secretary General

Moreover, civil society organizations (CSOs) facilitate peacebuilding by offering creative and sustainable compromises. The leadership of governments, accompanied by an active civil society will contribute to strengthening democratic governance and promote non-violent solutions to problems that we face in our countries.

“Perspectives of Regional Organizations in Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding and the Role of Civil Society”

The first panel of the Policy Round Table consisted of five high-level representatives of regional organizations and national governments to present their perspectives on the role of regional organizations and civil society in conflict prevention and peacebuilding. This session was moderated by Victor Rico, OAS Secretary for Political Affairs.

Edward Greene, Assistant Secretary-General, Human and Social Development of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), was the first panelist and began his presentation by offering some general perspectives on regional organizations in conflict prevention and peacebuilding. He focused on the different stages of conflict, such as conflict formation, conflict prevention and conflict resolution. He observed that conflict prevention means controlling the situation where clashing goals exist in order to avoid the escalation of violence. The challenge, however, is that there is little recognition of early warning indicators or capabilities that would call for preventive diplomacy.

“For regional and national systems to reflect peace, there must be institutional changes and different perspectives of how there are harmonious relationships.” - Edward Greene, Assistant Secretary-General, Human and Social Development of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM)

Regional organizations are critical players in preventive diplomacy and the provision of peace and security because they bring together governments based on established protocols, treaties or procedures that are aimed at fostering higher levels of integration.

Mr. Greene underlined that there are several examples of conflict resolution activities currently underway in the Americas, especially in the areas of trafficking of small arms, drugs and humans, which all contribute to increased internal violence that could spill over across borders. The United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) is an example of successful collaboration between governments in the hemisphere, the OAS, the United Nations and civil society organizations. For conflict resolution, multilateral approaches are more sustainable than bilateral approaches, and the OAS has been consistently and actively involved in this arena. In this sense, Mr. Greene commented that the OAS bases its engagement on the principles of democratization and human rights, rather than peace and security, and noted that for this reason, when we look at the language of most declarations, prevention and peacekeeping are more implicit and nuanced than they ought to be.

Focusing on the Caribbean Community's activities in peacebuilding, Mr. Green shared some experiences of CARICOM in problem solving, mediation and prevention. He emphasized that the fourth pillar of work of CARICOM is security, along with economic integration, foreign policy integration and human and social development. In 2006, CARICOM approved a new architecture for regional security development with the establishment of the Council for National Security and Enforcement, the Security Policy Executive Committee and the Implementation Agency for Crime and Security. Referring to the arguments of some

commentators that subregional organizations have the potential to erode regionalism and hurt peacekeeping and peacebuilding activities, Mr. Greene countered that by permitting concentric activities to reinforce each other between regional institutions, one has an ability to create synergies across the region in a way that may not be possible in other situations.

The third topic the representative from CARICOM discussed was the linkages that can be fostered between regional organizations and civil society. In this field, the Caribbean Community developed a CARICOM Charter in 1998 that integrates civil society in community building and peacekeeping. Another idea that has emerged is the creation of the CARICOM Council on Civil Society that has a variety of objectives, principal among those is conflict resolution.

To conclude, Mr. Greene emphasized the need for regional organizations, governments and civil society working together to confront emerging security threats and harmonize the threat perceptions of different regional actors, stressing that regional organizations must assume responsibility for coordinating and improving actions of different regional actors and creating a systematic regional approach to preventive action.

Following the representative from the Caribbean Community, Erick Vilchez, Director of Juridical and Political Affairs at the General Secretariat of the Central America Integration System (SICA), presented his view on the role of SICA in peacebuilding. Amb. Vilchez explained that SICA was established to make Central America a region of peace, democracy, freedom and development. Achieving these goals is a difficult task due to the region's geographic vulnerability to hurricanes, earthquakes, floods, and its position as the path between the greatest drug traffickers and drug consumers in the world.

Amb. Vilchez offered a brief history of the formation of SICA in 1991, during a period characterized by armed conflict, civil wars and political instability in Central America. The organization's purpose was the prevention of conflicts and the promotion

of peace, based on a new model of regional security outlined in the Treaty on Democratic Security in Central America (*Tratado Marco de Seguridad Democrática en Centroamérica*), sustainable with a reasonable balance of force, strengthening civil society, overcoming extreme poverty and an emphasis on security of persons and their goods.

Following these principles and the recognition of respect for and promotion of human rights within SICA, Central America experienced the longest period of political peace in its history, which was only broken by the recent events in Honduras. This event, Amb. Vilchez commented, was caused because there was insufficient work by governments to continue strengthening democratic institutions and they failed to develop early warning and preventive diplomacy systems to deal with threats to democracy. The situation in Honduras offered a lesson that presidential elections alone are not sufficient to ensure democracy in the sub-region, and that regional organizations and civil society have a role to play in conflict resolution and promoting peace.

The Protocol of Tegucigalpa created a permanent organ within the Central America Integration System called the Consultative Committee of SICA, an independent and autonomous body with the mission to promote the active participation of civil society so that the process of integration in Central America effectively responds to the reality, needs and interests of Central Americans. This body advises the General Secretariat of SICA, formulates recommendations and proposes initiatives, maintains permanent contact with the diverse organs of the System and contributes to the prevention of conflicts that may affect the process of integration.

Amb. Vilchez closed his presentation by presenting his view on the urgency to create early warning systems that include operational and structural prevention mechanisms, confidence building, and institutional capacity building to analyze social and political intelligence and identify situations that may endanger peace and security. He acknowledged that in Honduras, SICA was aware that there was an explosive problem arising, but there was no early warning

system or existing mechanisms in place to prevent the situation from escalating. In this respect, he underlined the importance of civil society contributions and cooperation between regional and subregional organizations.

The third panelist was Adolfo López, Coordinator of Political Affairs of the Andean Community (CAN). Mr. López explained that the Andean Community was conceived under the premise by governments that in order to contribute to the development of their people, it was necessary to open their markets in such a way that the sector that produces goods has greater prospects and possibilities to be globally competitive.

Although the Andean Community was founded on the principle of economic integration, in 1989, the Andean Presidential Council tried to redirect its activities to a political focus. The Andean Commitment on Peace, Security and Cooperation was the organization's first step toward jointly managing the topics of peace, security and development. This new focus was later reaffirmed in 2002 with the Commitment of Lima on Peace and Security, and in 2004 with the Declaration of the Andean Zone of Peace by the United Nations.

"Putting limits on military spending was a substantial element that made the Andean Community propose a new task in the process of integration." – Adolfo López, Coordinator of Political Affairs of the Andean Community

As a free-trade area, the Andean Community continues to work on cross-border security issues, such as light and small arms, the fight against drugs, anticorruption, and its policies on external security. Mr. López expressed that civil society participation was of vital importance during the formation of these new norms and prevention activities, although their attempts to establish a security network of CSOs has not yet come to fruition.

Regarding civil society participation, Mr. López commented that the challenges with which governments are grappling is defining the scope of civil society participation in regional integration systems like the Andean Community, identifying what their focus should be and when

civil society should be invited to participate. To answer these questions, Mr. López suggested that it will either need to come through national legislation or through ongoing consultation with civil society participation to define the basis of such participation that will eventually become an accepted norm among the countries.

Craig Kelly, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Western Hemisphere Affairs of the U.S. Department of State, was the fourth panelist to share his perspectives on the role of regional organizations and civil society in conflict prevention and peacebuilding. Mr. Kelly commented that the U.S. Government seeks to take advantage of the growing role of regional organizations and civil society organizations for addressing conditions that foster peace at the base level before they become security problems. Mr. Kelly stated that to achieve this, the United States takes a “whole of government” approach to work not only with foreign ministries of other countries, but to create linkages with many other agencies of government to connect the bilateral approaches with multilateral organizations.

He referred to this approach as working with “plurilateral organizations,” the combination of bilateral and multilateral arrangements to address particular challenges and leverage specific opportunities. With the OAS, Mr. Kelly drew attention to the Inter-American Social Protection Network, the Environment and Climate Partnership of the Americas and Pathways to Prosperity in the Americas as important programs to the U.S. Government to connect the broader issues of social inclusion, environment and climate, and social safety nets to the issue of peacebuilding.

“Our challenge is to figure out more regularized ways to match up what governments do, what subregional organizations do, and what civil society can accomplish.” - Craig Kelly, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Western Hemisphere Affairs of the U.S. Department of State

He highlighted the example of the Pathways to Prosperity in the Americas program to illustrate this. In the deliberations of this

program, the United States actively consulted with civil society, workers unions, small farmers, women’s groups, and other sectors of society to draw them into this network in order to identify the most appropriate and effective ways to bring together all countries that have free trade agreements among themselves and make the agreements work more effectively for more people.

To close, Mr. Kelly observed that the challenge lies in that with so many moving parts, how do we do this in the most effective way possible and keep track of what everyone is doing without stunting innovation? He shared that U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton has challenged the staff of the U.S. Department of State to look at how it does diplomacy in this variable geometry world, and recognized that how to work with governments and civil society will be an important part of this.

The final panelist of the first session was James Lambert, Director General for Latin America and the Caribbean, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Canada. Mr. Lambert said that the priorities of the Canadian Government focus on three inter-related pillars: economic prosperity, democratic governance and security. He stated that Canada has factored in a strategy built on partnerships at the bilateral level, multilateral level, with subregional entities, and with non-governmental actors, including the private sector, academia and civil society organizations.

Canada’s approach to security is in line with the definition of multidimensional security as identified by the OAS and embodied in the Declaration on Security in the Americas. This agenda has broad implications for good governance in the region and that insecurity has the potential to erode the hard-earned democratic gains in the region. Similarly, Canada believes that civil society participation has to continue to be a cornerstone of our efforts to strengthen democracy in the region, and Mr. Lambert underscored that this belief was reiterated recently by Heads of State and Government in the Declaration of Port of Spain of the Fifth Summit of the Americas and in the Inter-American Democratic Charter.

The representative from Canada said that his country's security engagement with the OAS and the inter-American System is based on four main areas of activity: 1) Commitment to play an active role within the OAS committee structures; 2) Targeted voluntary contributions to specialized OAS security bodies; 3) Active participation in security-related ministerial meetings; and 4) Support to special OAS missions in support of peace and security. He emphasized that civil society has a role to play in each of these areas.

In the field of special missions to support peace and security, Mr. Lambert remarked that in 2005, Canada established a Stabilization and Reconstruction Task Force to consolidate its response. It also manages a Global Peace and Security Fund that has provided Canada with a rapid reaction mechanism to support the work of regional organizations in promoting peace and security, especially in the Mission to Support the Peace Process in Colombia.

In reference to civil society's participation, Canada attaches particular importance to the role of the OAS and the role of civil society; the OAS provides significant opportunities for civil society to engage and contribute to the discussions in an ongoing fashion within the inter-American ministerial processes. Civil society also contributes to helping implement the work of special missions in promoting peace, stability and reconstruction, and provides an important additional research and network of knowledge that States can draw upon to understand the important issues in the policy-making process.

Victor Rico, OAS Secretary for Political Affairs and moderator of this panel, closed the session with some final reflections on the expositions of each panelist and underscored three specific ideas that emerged during the presentations. First, he referred to the variable geometry of conflict prevention and resolution, which has four principal actors: regional organizations, subregional organizations, governments and civil society organizations. In this regard, Mr. Rico commented that at the global level the synergies and coordination that exist between each of these stakeholders are still being refined.

Second, he made reference to the relationship between multilateral and regional organizations. He commented that the multilateral organization establishes the principles and legal framework for preventive action, but it could be stronger if the bilateral actions matched the frameworks and legal norms established at the multilateral level. This is particularly important in the case of Honduras, in which Mr. Rico suggested that if there had been better coordination between the OAS and SICA, there could have been a more effective way of handling the situation or with an early warning action.

Third, he touched upon the role of civil society organizations, acknowledging that civil society maintains a greater presence on the ground than multilateral organizations and that presence should be taken advantage of as part of conflict prevention strategies.

“Perspectives of Civil Society Organizations in Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding”

The second panel of the Policy Round Table brought together three civil society participants to present their perspectives on the role of civil society in conflict prevention and peacebuilding. This session was moderated by Dr. Andrés Serbin, Executive President of CRIES and Secretary General of the Latin American and Caribbean Platform for Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding (PLACPaz).

Dr. Serbin introduced the panel by discussing the growing cooperation between regional organizations and civil society networks and organizations in developing diverse initiatives related to the establishment of peace, regional security and conflict resolution, especially in the areas of dialogue and consultation. Nevertheless, on-the-ground cooperation between these two actors, there is still much to be done.

“It is important to not forget that in many of the documents and declarations that have come out of the different meetings held by the

Organization of American States, there are specific references to modes of coordination and cooperation between civil society and regional organizations.” - Andrés Serbin, Executive President of CRIES and Secretary General of the Latin American and Caribbean Platform for Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding (PLACPaz).

In this context, Dr. Serbin cited the Declaration on Security in the Americas that calls for the creation of a civil society liaison office for this purpose.

This Policy Round Table was an opportunity to begin to design new instruments to bridge the gaps that sometimes exist between regional organizations and civil society. He observed that there are currently three areas in which we see specific forms of collaboration: 1) analysis, monitoring and identification of potential conflicts in the region; 2) Training and capacity building; and 3) Stimulating dialogues and cooperation at different levels.

The moderator then introduced the first panelist, Gilberto Rodrigues, Professor at the Universidade Católica de Santos (UNISANTOS) in São Paulo, Brazil. Dr. Rodrigues focused on regional integration in the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR). UNASUR was formally created in 2008 and works on a series of issues, but above all on building peace and security. The statutes of UNASUR create the organization as a political project more than an economic, cultural or social project. Dr. Rodrigues compared this to the concurrent proposal in Brazil to establish a Council on Defense, which reflects a new dynamic in South America of the possibility of having collective and individual security agendas.

In regards to civil society participation in UNASUR, Dr. Rodrigues observed that the organization’s statutes use the term “citizen participation,” but we do not see the term “civil society.” He commented that this may be an insignificant detail, but there is no existing mechanism in UNASUR’s statutes for citizen or civil society participation in the organization’s discussions. The same is true for Brazil’s Council on Defense.

The new agenda of security and peace, conflict prevention, preventive action and peacebuilding urgently needs civil society participation because these are topics that affect more than just governments. Along this premise, he asked:

“How can we develop early warning mechanisms? How do we develop citizen diplomacy mechanisms that depend on civil society if civil society does not have formal channels for dialogue and interaction with the international organizations, intergovernmental organizations and governments themselves?”

It is a great challenge to incorporate civil society not only in the dialogue and interaction with international organizations, but also, in the case of UNASUR, to integrate civil society in public policy discussions. Creating these channels of communication between civil society and international organizations is vital to discuss such complex topics as defense, peace and security.

Daniel Matul Romero, Professor of the University of Costa Rica, followed Dr. Rodrigues. In his presentation, he described three milestones which he considered to be defining moments in the conduct of civil society in the Central American integration process.

The first milestone was the Peace Process of Esquipulas in 1987. Mr. Matul Romero suggested that following the Peace Process of Esquipulas, citizen participation was transformed from the use of weapons, intolerance and violence to the use of votes, mutual recognition and peace. Through this process, democracy and the peace plan offered spaces for enlightened relations between civil society and the State. Mr. Matul Romero posits that citizen participation was vital in building the three generations of the peace agreements, in concluding the cease fire and transitioning to democracy, and in the creation of the Civil Society Consultative Committee of the SICA.

The second milestone was Hurricane Mitch that caused massive destruction to Central America in 1998. This event, according to the speaker, broke the agenda of SICA from one of economic reform to one of reconstruction

where the role of civil society was crucial, causing civil society to shift around national movements of reconstruction. The reconstruction efforts after Hurricane Mitch led to a new way for civil society to relate to each other because much of the aid went directly to civil society organizations, instead of governments. The funds that went to the State served as a supervisory and monitoring mechanism of the State for civil society, which changed the context of relations between civil society and the government.

The third milestone was the initiation of free trade agreement negotiations in 2003 with the European Union. Mr. Matul Romero suggested that these negotiations, for the first time in Central America, generated a discussion based on knowledge in the public debate without violence.

Finally, Mr. Matul Romero proposed a fourth milestone that he saw as an emerging threat to peace and stability in the region, which includes weak rule of law and democracy, crime, and factors related to environment and climate change. He cited Honduras as an example of weak rule of law and democracy. To combat these threats, he recommended three areas for future study in which civil society could contribute: 1) Specialization and presence on the ground to monitor and share knowledge with the State about potential sources of conflict; 2) Political action on the domestic, regional and hemispheric levels; and 3) Recognition of the legitimacy of civil society participation in political, administrative and financial arenas.

The final panelist was John Siebert, Executive Director of Project Ploughshares in Canada. Mr. Siebert explained that Project Ploughshares is a civil society organization that focuses primarily on disarmament and peacebuilding, and actively engages with governments to do research, propose policy alternatives, and contribute to the shared goal of constructively building peace.

Mr. Siebert expressed that there are particular places and times when the research and policy engagement role of non-governmental organizations can fill gaps in knowledge and understanding and set the table for multi-stakeholder dialogues. For example, Project

Ploughshares catalogues reports from States on their actions with respect to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, makes this “report on reporting” available to NPT meetings, and posts this report on its website (www.ploughshares.ca).

Similarly, Project Ploughshares works to promote dialogue among States, government officials and civil society organizations, and has facilitated round tables with the Inter-Governmental Agency on Development (IGAD) for governments to share information about research and dialogue processes in security challenges in the Horn of Africa. This advances longer-term discussions on the structural problems that lead to violence in that area.

“Conflict isn’t actually the problem. Conflict is endemic to human relationships and states. It’s violence in response to conflicts which is the problem.” - John Siebert, Executive Director, Project Ploughshares

Mr. Siebert shared that Project Ploughshares has more recently worked with CARICOM, and in particular CARICOM’s Implementation Agency for Crime and Security (IMPACS) on issues related to small arms and light weapons (SALW). Increasingly this requires addressing the demand side of SALW—why do people believe they require guns—through development responses such as programs for unemployed male youth who are the primary perpetrators and victims of gun misuse.

Dialogue between Member States and Civil Society Representatives

At the conclusion of the second panel, the Round Table was open for comments and dialogue with the Member States and civil society representatives in attendance. This session was moderated by Dr. Irene Klinger, Director of the OAS Department of International Affairs. Dr. Klinger began by thanking the panelists for sharing their visions and perspectives of the

promotion of peace and conflict resolution in the region, which requires a concerted action by civil society and governmental actors.

“The tasks of conflict prevention or promotion of peace...require a shared vision of society, international relations, and therefore, working together is fundamental.” - Irene Klinger, Director of the OAS Department of International Affairs

There appears to be a general consensus in regional agreements that civil society plays a significant role in promoting democracy, peace and security, particularly in the Inter-American Democratic Charter. Dr. Klinger noted, however, that there is a need to design stronger mechanisms of participation to integrate civil society into this process and to expand the existing participation mechanisms into concrete and permanent spaces. She, then, opened the floor to the audience for questions to the panelists.

The first comment was posed by Darynell Rodríguez Torres, a representative from the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC). He touched upon the issues of how to link the work of civil society organizations with the work of regional organizations, especially in conflict prevention, security, and coordination of efforts between CSOs and regional organizations. On the first topic, the representative commented that civil society can offer information and advice to regional organizations to support conflict prevention efforts. In regards to security, he stated that civil society has much to contribute, particularly in development, diplomacy and defense.

Next, Michel Arslanian Neto, Alternate Representative of Brazil to the OAS, stated that when we discuss the issue of security and development, it is important to create initiatives that balance both aspects, and civil society's contributions are important in this field to help develop effective and concrete actions on the subregional and regional levels. It is also important to address security without causing a securitization of development. To address multidimensional security in the OAS, it is essential to combine the efforts of the Committee on Hemispheric Security and the Inter-American Committee on Integral Development of the OAS.

The Moderator, Dr. Irene Klinger, summarized that the exchange of policies and experiences in conflict prevention on the regional and subregional level is an area that could be explored further. She also commented that in regards to civil society participation, there are elements of the Inter-American Democratic Charter that discuss the role of civil society participation, and the actions the OAS can take when there is a rupture in the democratic governance, but there needs to be a discussion of how civil society can contribute to this.

Dr. Andrés Serbin addressed the comments by the Alternate Representative of Brazil regarding finding a balance between security and development. In this regard, he stated that CSOs generally tend to focus on security or on development. Development is a long-term activity while security is generally short-term. In relation to the mandates in the Inter-American Democratic Charter and other OAS declarations about civil society participation, one lingering question is how to develop a civil society liaison office to better address specific topics.

The Moderator continued by referring to civil society participation in the OAS, in cooperation with Member States, and highlighted that CSOs have played a fundamental role particularly in the Inter-American Human Rights Commission and Court. She added that spaces do exist in the preparatory meetings of ministerial meetings, General Assembly, Summits of the Americas, Committees of the Permanent Council, and other meetings and in virtual forums. Dr. Klinger also discussed the Draft Strategy for Strengthening Civil Society Participation in the Activities of the Organization Of American States (OAS), which proposes to provide feedback to civil society regarding the implementation of its contributions to the final resolutions, declarations and other agreements of the OAS.

Closing Remarks by Ambassador Albert Ramdin, OAS Assistant Secretary General

At the conclusion of the XXI OAS Policy Roundtable “Regional Peace, Development and Security: the Role of Regional Organizations and Civil Society,” OAS Assistant Secretary General Albert Ramdin offered some closing remarks and insights about the major issues addressed during the discussions regarding cooperation between regional organizations, subregional organizations, governments and civil society to confront the potential causes of conflict and its pacific solution.

There are several political, social, economic and legal phenomena that can create tensions and conflict in our communities and can sometimes negatively affect subregional stability and security. He recognized that the diversity in the hemisphere presents different challenges in each region, and that a one-size-fits-all approach is not an adequate response to conflict or tension. Without creating the conditions of peace and stability in our societies, social and economic progress cannot be achieved.

“Creating peace and stability is a responsibility for all in society. It’s a collective responsibility. It’s a shared responsibility.” - Albert Ramdin, OAS Assistant Secretary General

To do so, we must start to foster partnerships in and between societies that create ownership and “buy in,” acknowledging that no solution which is imposed is going to be effective.

He challenged the participants to find ways to work together and create concrete mechanisms for cooperation within societies and between countries and subregions with civil society engagement. As topics of future discussion, Assistant Secretary General Ramdin asked the questions: How do we promote

regular, structured and meaningful dialogue in societies, especially at the community level? How do we promote social cohesion, peaceful coexistence, and consensus through public policy making? And how do we strengthen existing regional mechanisms and instruments to mitigate tension proactively and build capacity in our own institutions to make effective use of citizen diplomacy and quiet diplomacy?

Ambassador Ramdin recalled that the OAS and Member States have mandates to carry out these activities in documents adopted by the leaders in the Summits of the Americas and General Assemblies. The challenge is to translate these mandates into a working manner. He tasked all actors to create a timeline to talk about and deliver on these issues, and expressed that such actions must be seen as long-term and structural ways to build peace and security that will, in turn, attract investment and create wealth in our society.

Conclusion

It is apparent that promoting regional peace, security and development in the region is a lofty task that will require a concerted effort by all levels of government and society. Through the various ideas presented by the panelists and participants in the Policy Round Table, we can conclude that there is a general consensus that regional organizations, subregional organizations, governments and civil society all mutually reinforce each other’s actions and depend on coordinated efforts to identify early warning indicators for potential sources of conflict, engage in preventive diplomacy and actions, and collaborate in the peaceful resolution of local conflicts before they spill over into neighboring communities, countries or regions. The synergies for cooperation and coordination that exist between each of these stakeholders are still being refined.

We have also observed that although there are some common existing mechanisms throughout the region for the prevention and resolution of conflicts, such as the Inter-American Democratic Charter, each subregion faces unique circumstances that require different responses. Nevertheless, the underlying

themes that appear over and over are evidence that promoting peace and security in the region is inextricably linked to social and economic development and strong democratic institutions in government.

“The new threats, concerns, and other challenges are cross-cutting problems that require multifaceted responses by different national organizations and in some cases partnerships between governments, the private sector, and civil society all acting appropriately in accordance with democratic norms and principles, and constitutional provisions of each state. Many of the new threats, concerns, and other challenges to hemispheric security are transnational in nature and may require appropriate hemispheric cooperation.”
– Declaration on Security in the Americas

Addressing the root causes of violence must be a top-down and a bottom-up effort. Regional and subregional organizations have

the capacity to establish norms and values that prioritize civil society engagement in the policy-making process, but the mechanisms to foster such participation are sometimes weak or non-existent at the regional and national levels. In order for governments to benefit from the wealth of knowledge, experience and support they could gain from civil society, they must open permanent spaces that allow for an active, real exchange of information that will facilitate the development of coordinated strategies to address threats to peace and security early on.

The mandates to carry out this form of citizen participation in national governments and regional organizations already exist, now it is the responsibility of all stakeholders to take ownership and commit to finding the most effective ways to put these mandates into action for the benefit of all the peoples throughout the Americas.



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