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Gender, Peacebuilding and Security

In January the European Peacebuilding Liaison Office (EPLO) set up a new working group that aims to promote and further the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325(2000) on women, peace and security. Particular attention will be paid to paragraph 1 which 'urges Member States to ensure increased representation of women at all decision-making levels in national, regional and international institutions and mechanisms for the prevention, management and resolution of conflict'.

The main aims of the Gender, Peacebuilding and Security (GPS) working group are: to raise awareness within the EU institutions of UN Resolution 1325 and a similar European Parliament Resolution on participation of women in peaceful conflict resolution (2000/2025(INI)); to carry out advocacy work at EU level and lobby for an EU Gender Task Force comprised of individuals and representatives from both EU institutions and NGOs; and to collect and share information on implementation of Resolution 1325.

One problem that needs particular attention is that women are vastly under-represented as track one mediators, that is to say those who seek to engage directly with the leadership of warring parties in an effort to open negotiations and broker a peace agreement. Although UN Resolution 1325 was signed in 2000, a recent paper by Antonia Potter[1] reveals that of all senior conflict mediators involved in today's peace processes, hardly any are women. This is reflected at both UN and EU levels; of the 61 staff at the UN who have critical roles in making and building peace only 4 are women and there is not a single woman among the current or former EU Special Representatives who are increasingly involved in peace-related work. Apart from the blatant imbalance this represents in terms of equal representation, women may bring positive qualities to conflict mediation simply by virtue of their gender.

Women are differentially and disproportionately affected by conflict and militarisation. Amnesty International has identified 22 gender-based forms of physical abuse suffered by women and girls in conflict situations (including rape and sexual abuse) and many ways in which women's economic, cultural and social rights are infringed. Women also shoulder a huge burden of responsibility in rebuilding infrastructure, restoring and developing traditions, laws and customs and repairing relationships in communities ravaged by war.

Because of their different experiences of conflict, women can bring to the negotiating table issues and perspectives that are all too often overlooked. These include important gender-related issues such as gender-based violence and different visions of how to share power. As Potter's report suggests 'women's perspective on conflict causes and solutions, their approaches to communication and problem solving and their presence as women both symbolically and literally all have significant benefits in the complex arena of conflict mediation'.

Hopefully the work of the GPS working group can build on the momentum and interest generated at a recent European Parliament hearing on 'Women in Armed Conflict and in Post-Conflict Processes' and can continue to raise awareness and support within the EU institutions for the crucial role that women can play in conflict mediation.

Joanna Sprackett

1. 'We the women: why conflict mediation is not just a job for men' by Antonia Potter, The Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, October 2005. www.hdcentre.org

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(Re)building trust in the EU

Recent surveys have shown that public trust in the EU has fallen from 50% in autumn 2004 to 44% in spring 2005.

This is why Margot Wallström, Vice President and EU Commissioner for Institutional Relations and Communications Strategy launched Plan D (for **D**emocracy, **D**ialogue and **D**ebate) in October 2005, and a white paper on a European Communication Policy published on 1 February 2006.

'Brussels', or what might be more accurately referred to as the European Commission, makes legislative proposals. These are publicly accessible. The discussions and decisions about these proposals – in so far as they take place in the European Parliament – are open to the public. But when the Council (i.e. the representatives of the governments of the Member States) debate and decide on these issues – and they decide on all of them – this happens behind closed doors. This allows Member States to hide behind 'Brussels' even if they agreed to decisions that are unpopular at home. Some of this has been opened up a little during the recent UK presidency, much more still needs to be done to ensure fair representation of EU decision-making in national media.

QCEA suggested in its publication 'Values Matter' (April 2003) one way of making Commission initiatives more transparent: a 'Citizens' Information File'. " Such a file would say why the initiative was being proposed at that time, what it was intended to achieve, would indicate possible problems and likely criticism, and would give a comprehensive list of everyone who had been consulted or who had lobbied in the course of preparation of the initiative."

The White Paper on the European Communication Policy talks about creating a European public sphere that should be citizen-centred. Apart from 5 very broad areas for action it identifies a number of specific proposals.

• One is a European Charter or Code of Conduct on Communication. A special web-based citizens' forum would seek citizens' views 'on the desirability, purpose and content of such a framework document' backed up by public meetings at the national level. Other ideas include bringing teachers together to exchange best practice and learn new skills, digitally connecting libraries, and having the Commission, Council and Parliament organise joint open debates with questions from journalists and the public.

• Another idea is to explore with pan-European, national and local media how to provide them with material relevant to their needs. The cultural and linguistic variety in the 25 Member States makes it clear that such material needs to be adapted for different audiences.

• Ideas on to how to gauge citizens' opinion include creating a network of national experts in public opinion research and an independent Observatory for European Public Opinion.

• Public and parliamentary discussion on the Commission's annual strategic priorities and face-to-face discussions between national ministers and European Commissioners broadcast in the national media are suggested.

Wallström also wants the Commission's EU representations in the Member States to play a much more active role in reconnecting the EU with its citizens. Reijo Kemppinen, the newly appointed head of the EU's representation in the UK, and former head of the Commission's press service under Romano Prodi, responded to the question 'What does the proactive work look like?': "We have already started building contacts with local and regional media instead of just London-based media. I do that partly by going to different parts of the UK and giving interviews to media on the basis of what this or that EU proposal or decision will mean to this or that region. … We are … offering the EU as a solution to some of the challenges that are now facing us."

UK MEP Graham Watson puts it well in an article in the European Voice (9-15 February 2006) "We cannot make people love the EU, but we can show them why they need it."

The EU institutions have failed to communicate their success stories both within the EU and in the world as a whole. What European citizens tend to hear about are the failures and the controversies. The recent White paper on a European Communication Policy aims to put this right. Can it succeed?

You are invited to respond by logging on to a specially created multilingual website http://europa.eu.int/comm/communicationwhitepaper or write to: White Paper Consultation, European Commission, Directorate General Communication, B-1049 Brussels, Belgium.

The consultation is open for 6 months from 1 February 2006. The Commission will then summarise the responses and propose plans of

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action. Many people will see the White Paper as just another 'whitewash' of the EU 's failure to communicate effectively with its 450 million citizens but the Commission really does seem to be in the mood to listen, so why not log on, get writing, take them at their word.

Liz Scurfield

Prevent, Protect, Pursue, Respond

These are the headline themes of the recently adopted new Anti-Terrorism Strategy of the EU. This was one of the items agreed at the December summit at the end of the UK presidency.

QCEA has been monitoring the EU's response to the threat of terrorism (see our briefing papers at http://www.quaker.org/qcea/briefings/terrorism/index.html and the article in the September 2005 edition of *Around Europe*).

It is clear that much of the EU's policy focus both in terms of external action/ Common Foreign and Security Policy and in terms of the justice and home affairs activities is focused firmly on the perceived threat of terrorism. This in itself is a fact that is worth reflecting on.

These important developments will translate into action on the part of Member States (i.e. our own national governments) and on the part of the European Union itself.

The most recent development is the agreement of the European Union Counter-Terrorism Strategy. The focus of this strategy is outlined under the 4 headline terms as follows[1]:

"**Prevent**: To prevent people turning to terrorism by tackling the factors or root causes which can lead to radicalisation and recruitment, in Europe and internationally.

Protect: To protect citizens and infrastructure and reduce our vulnerability to attack, including through improved security of borders, transport and critical infrastructure.

Pursue: To pursue and investigate terrorists across our borders and globally. To impede planning, travel and communications. To disrupt support networks. To cut off funding and access to attack materials. To bring terrorists to justice.

Respond: To prepare ourselves, in the spirit of solidarity, to manage and minimise the consequences of a terrorist attack, by improving capabilities to deal with: the aftermath; the co-ordination of the response; and the needs of the victims."

Beyond these headlines, there are the key priorities the EU has set for itself under each of them. They are a clearer indication of the thinking that is behind the broad approach. They include[2]

"• To spot and tackle problem behaviour, in particular the misuse of the internet

• Address incitement and recruitment in particular in key environments, for example prisons, places of religious training or worship…

• Develop a non-emotive lexicon for discussing the issues…

• Deliver improvements to the security of EU passports through the introduction of biometrics…

• Develop through Frontex[3] effective risk analysis of the EU's external border…

• Make full use of Europol and Eurojust[4] …

• Develop the principle of availability of law enforcement information…

• Tackle terrorist access to weapons and explosives, ranging from components for homemade explosives to CBRN[5] material…

• Agree EU Crisis Co-ordination Arrangements and support operational procedures for them…

• Share best practice and develop approaches for the provision of assistance to victims of terrorism and their families."

There is still no sign of understanding the root causes of terrorism. There is little evidence that resources will be put into identifying them. The approach still reflects a 'them and us' mentality that only tackles the symptoms.

Martina Weitsch

1. All text is quoted from: The European Union Counter-Terrorism Strategy, Document Number 14469/4/05, November 2005. It can be accessed at http://register.consilium.eu.int/pdf/en/05/st14/st14469-re04.en05.pdf.

2. All text in the bullet points is quoted from: The European Union Counter-Terrorism Strategy, Document Number 14469/4/05, November 2005.

3. Frontex is the newly established EU border control agency – no details of this organisation are available on the EU website yet. *Around Europe* will bring readers up-to-date on its structure and remit when it appears on the EU website.

4. For details of the role of these agencies, please see our briefing paper at http://www.quaker.org/qcea/briefings/terrorism/terrorismbp5.pdf

5. CBRN – Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear

News in Brief
Some good news from Denmark

This month the women in prison project had its third prison visit. After a successful trip to Latvia in the summer, I went to the other side of Europe to visit two prisons in Denmark. We chose Denmark because of its unique criminal justice philosophy and prison management and I wasn't disappointed. I visited the open Horeserød prison and the high security Ringe prison. Several times throughout the visit I was shocked by the 'laxness' of the regime. The open prison had no external security, any prisoner would be able to wander out. Prisoners are not locked in their cells but have free access to the grounds, gym and common rooms. The high security prison does not carry out internal body searches when searching for drugs as it's humiliating for prisoners and the prison believes any such treatment makes the security situation worse. These approaches seem to work, staff at Horeserød told us they had never been verbally or physically assaulted and Ringe reported no escapes and that the last suicide had been over 5 years ago, whereas in most prisons in Europe suicide, assault and self-harm are common-place problems. So what makes Denmark different? Denmark has short prison sentences even for quite serious crimes and rehabilitations starts from day one. Prisons have a policy of 'normalisation': prison life should resemble normal home life as much as possible; so prisoners shop at the prison supermarket and cook for themselves in a communal kitchen on the unit. This means the prison regime is less geared towards control, isolation and restriction and the atmosphere is less aggressive. Of course Danish prisons aren't perfect, drugs are common and educational provision could be better but if I had to choose where to serve my sentence it would be Denmark!

Charlotte Wetton

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