



Joint letter to the European Union Foreign Affairs Council

Brussels, 13 May 2019

Ms Federica Mogherini
High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy
Vice-President of the European Commission

Dear European Union Foreign Ministers,
Dear Ms Mogherini,

As a coalition of 14 organisations, we are writing to express our deep concern about the proposal for a European Peace Facility (EPF) and specifically a component within it to train and equip third-country militaries, as well as regional and international organisations, including with the provision of weaponry. It is not clear to us how the EPF will support peace and human security on the ground. While we recognise the need to strengthen the EU's ability to exert a positive influence in the world to prevent and end conflicts, we do not agree that granting weapons and ammunition as currently planned under the proposal, funding soldiers' salaries, or strengthening the combat capabilities of third-country militaries, is the most effective way to do this. From our experience, the risks associated with this approach are high.

Thus, we urge foreign ministers to take a step back first to discuss in-depth the political parameters and added value of the EPF proposal – particularly its 'train and equip' component – before the legal text is considered further at the working level.

During its session on 14 May 2019, we recommend the Foreign Affairs Council to:

- Request the Political and Security Committee to prepare a new timeline to allow rigorous consultation and set out key questions to be considered by relevant thematic and geographic Council working groups with expertise on, among other things, conflict-affected countries, civil-military issues, human rights, and disarmament;
- Ask for the outcome of these discussions to be directed to the Foreign Affairs Council for an informed decision on the next steps for the EPF;
- Involve civil society organisations at all significant points of discussion as they have relevant expertise about the ground impact of train and equip initiatives in conflict-affected countries.

Many among us support security sector reform processes in different conflict-affected countries and engage with military actors to help increase their accountability towards populations. However, we have

seen little evidence that military-focused 'train and equip' efforts can lead to improved peace, justice, and development outcomes. On the contrary, it is well demonstrated that this type of military assistance can harm peace and development and rarely provides its intended leverage. It often fails to address the underlying drivers of conflict and can instead be counterproductive, leading to unintended consequences, such as the violent repression of peaceful civil society actions, furthering the impunity of military forces, fomenting military-backed violence and conflict, and corruption.

Even with mitigation measures in place, there is a high risk that EU-funded weapons and support would be used in fragile countries to commit atrocities and fuel violent conflicts. Moreover, if such EU support were used not for peace but for instigating further violence, this would hamper the EU's broader political strategy for long-term peace and development, resulting in significant damage to the EU's global reputation and influence.

We strongly believe there is a need to slow down the entire EPF process and begin by asking what the EU, as a global peace actor, aims to achieve in its engagement in conflict-affected countries. If the EPF seeks to strengthen the EU's role in the world as a peace actor, then the EU should reflect on the evidence of how it can support peaceful changes to occur and avoid investing in militarised approaches that are prone to failure and risk. It is our view that the EU has no shortage of tools and leverage to address the world's serious conflicts. Rather than create new ones, the EU must endeavour to enhance the effectiveness of the tools it already has and increase investment in conflict prevention and peacebuilding at national and local levels.

Going forward, we strongly urge the EU and its member states to decelerate discussions on the EPF to allow for an inclusive reflection on its political aims, a conflict-sensitive plan of action with clear parameters and outcomes, how risk assessments would be done, and how to implement mitigation, accountability, and transparency measures.

Signed:

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. Care International | 7. Oxfam |
| 2. Christian Aid Ireland | 8. PAX |
| 3. Conciliation Resources | 9. Pax Christi Flanders |
| 4. Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect | 10. Peace Direct |
| 5. Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict | 11. Quaker Council for European Affairs |
| 6. International Alert | 12. Saferworld |
| | 13. Search For Common Ground |
| | 14. World Vision EU Representation |