

Subject: Mainstreaming Conflict prevention and natural resources in the EU's external relations

- Over the past 10 year development actors are increasingly engaged in addressing the **issue of natural resources management and conflicts** around the world and this has become an important subject for the Commission as well. This issue moved even further up on the **agenda for the next five years** given the focus on Africa where most of the conflicts are centred on the exploitation of natural resources;
- Tackling this complex issue needs a good **understanding** on all links between the **environment and the dynamic of conflicts and peace** and it needs **considerable amounts of resources** to be deployed across a wide range of different sectors and tools. This is the only way for an international actor like the COM to help preventing conflict, building peace and fostering sustainable development efficiently;
- The complexity includes:
 - **Internationally valued natural resources** so called “**conflict resources**” such as diamond, gold, coltan, timber and oil which are mined or harvested in conflict areas to finance belligerent activities. However their presence does not always lead to conflict, instead it is the **process of controlling access** to this wealth that can build, positively or negatively either peace or conflict. Last but not least their **politicisation** is a key factor for triggering disputes and conflicts.
 - **Resource degradation and scarcity**, particularly with regards to resources like water and land, for which can have a profound **impact on livelihoods and societal relations** leading to increased social inequalities which fuel tension and instability and spill into violent conflicts. The impact of scarcity in vulnerable societies and

states and indigenous communities is very serious because of the **dependence of the local populations on these resources**. Their scarcity is most likely to generate violence at local level which could easily and rapidly escalate into wider conflict. In its turn **conflict aggravates scarcity as fighting** pollute water and decimate forests and land;

- Moreover we have the issue of **climate changes** over natural resources such as forest, water or land creating tensions that can erupt easily in violent conflicts in “**Fragile States**” where sound institutions are missing. And this can be further worsened by **natural disasters** when occurs because of this combination of events.
 - Last but not least phenomenon like **environmental migration** can have direct consequences for the security and is becoming a serious priority for the international community.
- **Environmental cooperation** can be used to build peace within and between nations. Environmental peace making and peace building activities build **trust and dialogue** among parties for co-management of common resources and spaces (ai creation of peace parks) and can help in **building mechanism and institutions to help to solve and prevent conflict**. This is an area that merit attention and consideration. Programmes can be put at any phase of the conflict cycle, is very much prevention driven and their approach is to **put together governments and communities**;

- The EU and more specifically the COM has been quite active in the past 5 years in trying to tackle the problem of natural resources and conflicts, and looking at all aspects we listed now we can say that COM is probably now doing more across a wide range of sectors than any other actors and partners. This of course has pros and cons to look at.
- Within the EU the COM in particular is in the lead on this issue of conflict resources, given that most obvious way to address the problem is through **development cooperation and trade** instruments, which are a clear EC comparative advantage and exclusive competence.
- Because of that **development and trade aspects** and their connection to environmental affaires are very important for the COM and have been outlined in several Commission documents and addressed through different programmes and projects, even if a lot still need to be done;

- **This issue has also become an important theme for the Commission** in its work on **conflict prevention and crisis management** and RELEX has recently set up a new working group on “natural resources” within the unit in charge of conflict prevention and crisis management that work directly with the new Instrument for Stability. I have the pleasure and challenge to coordinate and to be one of the planner for actions under the IfS;
- A recent study on "**Addressing the inter-linkages between natural resources management and conflict in the European Commission’s external relations**" shows clearly the importance the COM gives to this subject and outlines its commitment in doing better and more in the future. COM is fully aware that improving its capacity, coordination and coherence on the matter would allow working in a more integrated and effective way. The study provides useful recommendations on how existing and future COM policies and programmes can better address the links between NR mgt and conflicts.
- **Mainstreaming** is without doubt the best approach to tackle conflict prevention and natural resources management. But what does it means then? It means considering conflict prevention as a clear **cross cutting argument** and **unequivocal target**. Only in this way it can rightly be considered, reflected and captured in all existing policies, programmes and evaluations.
- And what the COM has done? The COM recognise that a lot remains to be done in term of mainstreaming but in term of specific CP the COM launched different key programmes, initiatives and policies addressing natural resources management and conflicts. From the **2001 Communication on CP** followed by the **EU Programme for the Prevention of Violent conflicts**, to the **European security Strategy adopted in 2003** to a series of **tools and indicators** (*checklist list on root causes* of conflicts; programming fiche on inter-service *Quality Support Group*) that try, in a way or another, to address the issue of scarcity and/or mismanagement of natural resources through the **lens of the conflict prevention**, as a cross cutting issue and potential root cause of conflict to be mainstreamed at policy and programmes levels.
- In addition to this the EU and COM in particular have a large spectrum of external relations policy instruments and ways to address root causes of conflicts such as FLEGT, the Kimberly Process Certification Scheme and others like the **Instrument for Stability** with its new **Peace Building Partnership** and new “**Conflicts Resources Facility**” that has been designed specifically to support initiatives in third countries directed at the natural resources sector, so as to ensure those resources are used and

managed in a conflict-sensitive, legal, transparent manner for the benefits of communities rather than contributing to tensions, fuelling instability or financing conflict.

- The COM is also working at blending European diplomacy and science to improve the way we use our international relations and diplomacy to advance our environmental objectives and to address rising tensions over natural resources. New environmental diplomacy actions will be implemented under the Instrument for Stability;
- The COM is aware that **its mainstreaming capacity** is to be developed further, despite the all work on CP COM has done so far, and that this will have a positive impact on the way COM address natural resources management and conflicts. This will require a series of actions in the next couple of years and some of them have been already planned. These will include updating and renewing policy documents, increasing coherence and complementarities between internal and external policies, building new capacities, improving institutional coordination, building partnerships with external initiatives and organisations and last but not least developing new procedures and methodologies for conflict sensitive programming.