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**Contribution by Mr. Anthonius W. de Vries (European Commission) to Session VII of Berlin Conference**

Thanks to the German government for showing once again, by organizing this conference, its desire to strengthen the European Union's capacity to have an effective external relations policy.

The European Union itself has been the result of the vision and desire of the founding fathers to prevent further violent conflicts in Europe through integrating the economies of the member states. The first and major instrument for attaining this integration has been and still is the creation of a common market. But the need for corrective policies was and is still recognized. Nowadays environmental, regional and structural policies, among others, reinforce the coherence of the European Union. Consequently the threshold for solving any conflicts between the member states by violent means seems nowadays insurmountable.

To a large extent the external relations of the European Union have followed the same recipe: by promoting strongly the creation of an international free market the European Union has been and still is seeking to enhance the general economic welfare of all countries. By doing so it endeavours creating a world-wide interest in maintaining stable and peaceful relations among states. At the same time the European Union recognizes, like it does internally, that economic and financial markets, need to be corrected in order to prevent gross social inequities and/or serious damage to the environment which could give rise to violence, within or between states.

By exercising in this way its "soft power" the European Union is playing already its part in attaining and maintaining a peaceful and prosperous global society.

This conference may have helped to identify some means to prevent intra- and interstate conflicts through external environmental and development policies and actions, in a more or less integrated manner.

There is certainly a task for the European Union and the governments of the member states as well as for the private sector to critically assess the likelihood of their policies and activities leading to the outbreak or prolongation of violent conflicts, and to identify ways and means to address that risk. Non-governmental organisations can often play a valuable role in this assessment. However, the institutional set-up of our societies at large as well as at the level of governments and of big private companies, does not facilitate

this mainstreaming of conflict prevention. Within the European Commission we are trying to come up with some solutions for this problem.

The hand of man in the present climate change is now clearly recognized. The likelihood of conflicts caused directly or indirectly by this change has, however, more clearly to be established. This conference has given some input for this effort to be undertaken.

The concept of environmental peacemaking has been discussed during these two days. It seems that serious doubts still persist about the validity of this concept. Also the role of natural resources as source for conflicts or for the prolongation thereof needs further elaboration. The Kimberly Process, how unique it may be, might offer some guidance for finding appropriate actions in this field.

The European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) is just another example of the longstanding policy of the European Union to integrate economic, social, environmental and human rights issues in its concept of international security. It offers choices for bilateral, regional or wider multilateral cooperation. Considerations of effectiveness determine mainly the format chosen for the implementation of the action plans established under the ENP.

Because the private sector plays such an important role in the activities we have been discussing, it may be worthwhile to invite representatives of the business community to the follow-up conference.

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