



World Federalist Movement – Institute for Global Policy

To: WFM Council
From: WFM International Secretariat
Date: October 23-24, 2004
Re: The Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict and the steering group of the NGO-UN Conflict Prevention Working Group

Armed conflict destroys communities, cripples economies, destabilises democratic institutions, and denies human rights. Only a fundamental conceptual and cultural shift towards a “prevention posture” can overcome the persistent culture of reaction. This requires emphasis both on operational prevention, which refers to the measures available to respond to a crisis, and structural prevention, which refers to measures to ensure that crises do not arise in the first instance or recur.

As part of WFM-IGP’s *Preventing Conflicts-Protecting Civilians* program, we have joined in the formation of an international network of civil society organizations dedicated to achieving this shift to a culture of prevention, the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC) and the New York-based subset of GPPAC, the Conflict Prevention Working Group (CPWG).

In the same way that advocates for human rights, environmental, disarmament, gender and development rely on sophisticated and substantive international coordination networks, the GPPAC has organised national and regional consultations around the world. GPPAC is open to all civil society organizations involved in conflict prevention and peace building. It is intended to further integrate civil society organizations (nationally, regionally and globally) and with other prevention actors, particularly states and multilateral organisations.

GPPAC lists its goals as follows:

- To explore fully the role of civil society in conflict prevention and peace-building
- To improve interaction between civil society groups, the UN, regional organisations, and governments.
- To strengthen regional and international networking between conflict prevention actors.
- To promote the development of conflict-prevention theory and practice.
- To integrate regional experience into an International Agenda for conflict prevention.

The backbone of GPPAC is the organization of 15 regional processes representing each major region of the world. Each regional process is developing “action agendas” to feed into an international agenda (the “global action agenda”) for civil society roles in conflict prevention. Regional meetings will lead up to an international conference, held July 19-21 2005.

The 2005 New York Conference

The idea of convening a global conference on the role of civil society in conflict prevention is largely attributable to the Secretary-General, who recommended such a conference in his 2001 *Report on the Prevention of Armed Conflict*. Recommendation 27 states: “*I urge NGOs with an interest in conflict prevention to organise an international conference of local, national and international NGOs on their role in conflict prevention and future interaction with the United Nations in this field.*”

The July 2005 conference will serve as a launching point for a Global Action Agenda of conflict prevention principles and practices proposed by civil society for the UN, its constituent governments and civil society. Summary publications will document lessons learned, best practices and opportunities for improvement for civil society organisations, multilateral organisations and governments working in conflict prevention. This may also involve

concrete commitments from member states and UN bodies to realign existing conflict management mechanisms toward prevention.

It bears emphasis that the 2005 conference is not the end point for GPPAC. Rather, the real work for GPPAC is to use the July '05 conference to develop lasting networks across regions and create a strategy to implement the Global Action Agenda.

The New York-based Conflict Prevention Working Group

The CPWG is made up of New York-based NGOs seeking to advance the work of GPPAC at the UN headquarters. Members of the NGO-UN Conflict Prevention Working Group commit themselves to two key goals to be accomplished by 2005: an enhanced international network of conflict prevention actors and an international policy agenda supporting prevention. With a grant from the German government, the CPWG hired two full-time staff to prepare for the July 2005 conference.

The Working Group is already making significant contributions to advancing relationships at the United Nations. A full-time officer from the Department of Political Affairs has been appointed to work with the NGO-UN Conflict Prevention Working Group to consolidate UN support for the 2005 conference. UN-Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and UN-Department of Economic and Social Affairs have formally agreed, through memoranda of understanding, to cooperate with the GPPAC, and designate representatives to attend regional meetings. The UN Development Program is also deepening its interactions with the group.

The CPWG has engaged member states with over a dozen visits to UN missions, and has had several high-profile meetings at the UN. The CPWG was invited by the 57th General Assembly President to present its work at an event in September 2003, attended by 88 member states. On October 19, 2004, the Under-Secretary-General/Special Advisor on Africa Ibrahim Gambari is scheduled to host a panel on the role of conflict prevention in Africa that the CPWG is helping to organize.

WFM's role in the GPPAC process

The development of an NGO network relating to the prevention of armed conflict is central to WFM's Responsibility to Protect-Engaging Civil Society project. The principles of the "Responsibility to Protect" dictate that the responsibility to prevent must be given priority, and WFM is dedicated to advancing these principles throughout civil society. The network presents WFM with excellent outreach opportunities to organizations that are working in related issues throughout the world. Moreover, WFM expects that the Responsibility to Protect will be considered in discussion and debates leading to the Global Action Agenda. "The responsibility to protect and prevent" has already been included as "guiding principle" in the regional action agenda of the Western Europe region, endorsed by over 130 European NGOs.

WFM is a member of the steering committee of the CPWG, in which it acts as a liaison to the broader UN-NGO community, and also contributes to strategy discussions.