

STRENGTHENING CO-OPERATIVE APPROACHES TO CONFLICT PREVENTION

The Role of Regional Organizations and the United Nations

Rapporteur's Report

The Challenge of Conflict Prevention

There are different kinds of challenges and obstacles to conflict prevention. Some pertain to the potential intervening actor(s). Some pertain to the regional environment and to regional actors. Others involve the target of the intervention itself: states in conflict, or at risk of conflict and different factions within the state, each with its own agenda and interests. Various international and regional organizations also have their own unique institutional obstacles to playing a more effective conflict prevention role. Many of these derive from the mandates of the organizations and the limitations of those mandates in addressing intrastate conflict. Of the many challenges to creating and strengthening political will for conflict prevention that were identified at this conference, the following received considerable attention:

Organizational Problems

- Lack of analytical knowledge about potential for conflict in a given country and the lack of clear indicators which can serve as early warning triggers for action.
- Institutional competition and rivalries within and between international and regional organizations that stifle initiative, erode political responsibility and accountability, and thwart preventive action.
- Consultation processes that stymie rather than lead to action, erode authority, and prevent a clear delegation of responsibility for preventive action.
- Lack of institutional capacity, trained personnel, and adequate resources to engage in various kinds of conflict prevention such as fact finding, the provision of "good offices," mediation, peacekeeping, etc.
- Lack of clear conflict prevention strategies within organizations because of organizational mandates; lack of proper focal points within the bureaucracy; and members of the organization who are worried about intrusions into their sovereignty.

Entry and Engagement Problems

- Resistance to external intervention from the parties to the conflict, especially in the case of failing but not completely failed states; these derive from concerns about a