

Strengthening the FUNDAMENTAL CONDITIONS OF GOOD GOVERNANCE – NATIONAL & INTERNATIONAL



In many countries, effective governance is under serious strain. What strategies could strengthen the rule of law and encourage transparency?

Paul van Tongeren Netherlands, Secretary-General, Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict

Human security is not well addressed at the global level. We have many UN agencies – UNDP on development, the WHO on health, the FAO on food – which have the mandate to enhance those fields through international cooperation. In the last five or ten years we have also seen the establishment of networks of UN agencies working with civil society. Civil society is now more included in those processes with like-minded governments and think tanks. Yesterday we mentioned the IPCC. That is led by governments, but with the cooperation of UN agencies, civil society and think tanks. However, at the global level there is no cooperation in the field of peace building. This is an urgent global issue.

It is urgent because many experts expect that there will be more conflicts in the future. There are already conflicts in many countries arising out of ethnic differences, struggles over resources and other reasons. Yesterday we talked of climate change migration. I think we can expect more conflict. But at the international level, global and national, we have no appropriate structures to deal with that.

We also need to build infrastructures for peace at the national level. I agree with the former speaker that we shouldn't focus on democracy and elected parliaments alone. There are some governments like Ghana which have heeded the conflicts in their country or in the neighbourhood, and have decided to build an infrastructure for peace. The main components are a national peace council, district

peace councils and local peace councils. They address at different levels the key conflicts or sources of conflicts and work out how to address them. Their staff are trained in negotiating and mediating skills. People of recognized integrity, well respected in the community, are key to these councils. They fulfil a bridge building function, and help to prevent the polarization which often leads to conflict.

That is crucial. A year ago, few people expected the post-election conflict which we saw in Kenya. If this can happen in Kenya, it can happen in many other African countries. In the next two years there will be some 20 elections in Africa. We need to build more structures like this in many countries which help to facilitate dialogue and deal faster with escalation of violence. My organisation is working with UNDP to arrange a conference at the end of this year to address these issues.

Paul van Tongeren

Paul van Tongeren is the Secretary General of the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict, which aims to develop a common platform for effective action in conflict prevention. Regional consultations of civil society organizations offer opportunity to influence thinking on conflict prevention, clarify relations with the United Nations, consolidate networks and set regional agendas on conflict prevention, thus forming the basis for the global agenda. Mr. van Tongeren recently briefed the UN General Assembly on the Partnership's program.