

IS PEACEMAKING TOO IMPORTANT TO BE LEFT IN THE HANDS OF PEACEMAKERS?

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OVERVIEW

Peace and security are traditionally the purview of states and international organizations, but in recent years the results are discouraging. Meanwhile, the private sector is often sidelined, despite the important role it plays in creating alternative livelihoods for potential fighters, providing basic services and in the implementation of peace agreements. At the same time, the private sector can also act as spoilers if they benefit more from continued instability than from peace. In Europe, solving and preventing conflict is a core ideal of the European Union (EU) as a political project. Some of the most notable strengths of the EU—the four freedoms, the world’s largest market—were created in an effort to ensure peace and prosperity for a battle-weary part of the world. The benefits to Europe have been immense and, accordingly, it is high time to look at how these strengths can be built on to support peacemaking worldwide. This session explored how peacemakers can constructively work with both local and international private sector actors to support their work and contribute to reaching sustainable peace.

FOCUS AND OBJECTIVES

The session addressed three questions: How does the private sector see its role in the area of conflict resolution and conflict prevention? Are there ways in which the public sector can work with the private sector and create synergies and contribute to sustainability? What practical ideas can be suggested?

KEY TAKEAWAYS

The private sector represents much more than just financial support. Large companies play an important role, but using big financial mechanisms is not the only option: it is important to find ways to support local and regional small and medium-sized businesses. Peacemakers must recognize the fundamental role the private sector plays, both economically and societally. Private investments lead to concrete peace dividends and are a key part of reaching a sustainable peace but such investments are inherently risky. These investments can be supported through, for example investment guarantees, security, and showing the value to the private sector of a functioning state. Somaliland was brought up as an example where the private sector came together to invest in a state apparatus – this did not happen in Mogadishu and is part of the answer to why Somaliland has remained relatively stable compared to the rest of the country.

In the transition from peacekeeping to peacebuilding, it is fundamental to make a conscious effort from the start to bring in and strengthen local entrepreneurs, because of their crucial role in society. Especially by the time foreign interference leaves, the private and public sector must be able to sustain peace by themselves. This makes it even more important to have a long-term perspective and understand that long-term peace and stability cannot be sacrificed for short-term change by engaging with illicit economic actors.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Increase the involvement of the private sector in conflict analysis.
- Paying taxes is fundamental, but it requires a functioning state.
- Keep the sustainability perspective in mind when working with peace agreements.
- Train regional companies in sustaining peace.
- Involve women in the peace process.



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