VOICE Round Tables
Topic 1:
Civil military relation and civil protection: the shifting landscape for NGOs and the EU
Topic 2:
Conclusions from the UK Presidency of the EU and the future Peace and Security Agenda

3rd February 2006
Save the Children, UK Office, London

Summary notes of main points presented
(Note: the full length speeches of Ms. Bookstein and Mr. Lucht are available upon request)

Topic 1:
Civil military relation and civil protection: the shifting landscape for NGOs and the EU
(h.: 11.00 – 12.30)

Cornelis Wittebrood (Head of Unit, EC DG ECHO 1)

In 2003, it was stated that British troops joined the invasion of Iraq also in order to facilitate humanitarian assistance operations in this country. One of their first actions was the distribution of bags of flour to Iraqi people. This mission had a clear underlying message: UK military forces were in Iraq not only for purely military purposes but also to support the humanitarian aid operations. The problem was that Iraqi people did not need bags of flour. Health was the primary concern; water and medicines were required. This showed a lack of professionalism in the military's approach: there was a complete absence of monitoring; no needs assessment and finally no impact assessment were realized.

The humanitarian context has changed and military and security forces have become an unavoidable fact. It becomes increasingly difficult to identify differences between security forces and humanitarian workers. One of the consequences is that the security of humanitarian staff is in danger. Military staff is not trained in humanitarian law. These issues demonstrate the ever-increasing need to protect humanitarian space.

ECHO can react quickly thanks to its partners. For ECHO, the basic starting point is the respect of humanitarian principles. This is not easy. Within the European Union there is a general determination to incorporate humanitarian assistance and military cooperation. Mr. Solana is seeking to bring all these different instruments together under one umbrella.

So far civil protection is mobilised only in the case of natural disasters but without the typical assessment done by humanitarian actors in the field.
Looking into the future, these tendencies will persist and, as a consequence, we have to accept that military involvement is a fact of the matter.
As far as the NGOs are concerned, they too have to cooperate with the military forces as well as with Civil protection. Civil protection and the military can be useful and provide support to humanitarian aid, but the different roles and principles must be respected.

Paul Grossrieder (President of VOICE)

The evolution in civil-military relations is helpful in order to understand where we, the humanitarian actors, are standing today. During the Cold War, NGOs were working in a sort of 'splendid isolation'. This period is now over. There are numerous episodes illustrating this evolution.

The example of the wars in former Yugoslavia is extremely illustrative. Maybe for the first time, NGOs and other humanitarian actors had to face a new situation: working together with the military.

Somalia - The US administration and the UN Security Council decided to operate through an integrated intervention. It was very difficult for Somali people to trust NGOs, because of their close relationship with the military forces. The initial purpose of military intervention was to protect the delivery of humanitarian aid. But something went wrong in the articulation between humanitarian assistance and military presence. Only 10% of 2 million dollar allocated for humanitarian assistance was actually used to aid Somali people.

Iraq and Afghanistan - concerning these two countries, the evolution has developed even further. NGOs seem to be substituted by the UN, which has the total control of the humanitarian intervention.

International Humanitarian Law should be the frame for action and dialogue. The US seems to consider these rules as obsolete. Even if nowadays the international situation looks different and more complicated, nobody should avoid these rules. Guantanamo is a clear example of non-respect of the Geneva Conventions. This development should not be considered as a consequence of the NGOs' inability to deal with humanitarian assistance but it is more linked to the willingness to transform NGOs into mere subcontractors.

Amelia Bookstein (Head of Humanitarian Policy, Save the Children UK)

As humanitarians, we must wizen to the trends shaping the humanitarian landscape. We must increase our capacity to analyse and remain agile and useful in the face of these trends. Otherwise, we face obsolescence and risk being of little use to the populations we aim to help.

According to the Feinstein Centre, the hazards that humanitarians will face fall into four categories:

1) Environmental hazards – Experts predict an increase in the number and severity of natural disasters. Natural disasters always target the poorest and those who live in the most marginal areas. If we, as humanitarians, are committed to saving lives, what is our role? Do we get in the way of local capacity, or can we enhance it? What more can we do to help people's resilience in the face of disaster? Do we need to link more directly with local governments? Do we need to make stronger links with meteorologists and telecommunications to establish early warning systems?

2) Urbanisation – According to UN HABITAT, in 2030, about 60% of the world's population will live in cities, with one million people a week migrating to urban areas. A third of the world's urban population already lives in the slums, in areas without regular access to basic services. What can we do to be better prepared for urban environments?

How would we need to adjust an emergency health programme for an urban ghetto? Are we analysing the increased gang-violence in cities?

The UN High Level Panel pointed out that, due to a surging youth population, poverty and unemployment – sometimes together with an incomplete demobilisation of ex-child soldiers – some cities have reached near-conflict levels of violence. Coupled with the widespread availability of cheap weapons, the next humanitarian response may take the forms of a kind of urban siege.

3) Migration and increasing mobility – Asylum seekers, IDPs, migrant workers, trafficked people. What are the implications for humanitarians? More focus on livelihoods is required, even in the emergency phase. We need to better assess where free food aid is likely to be successful, and where we need more creative approaches. We may need programmes that reach out to women and we need to learn how to better help people trafficked from conflicts and natural disasters.

4) HIV/AIDS – Humanitarians have already learned about the links between HIV/Aids, tuberculosis and nutrition, but perhaps we need to further adjust our approaches. We need to better understand the links between HIV/AIDS and protection, and we need to make sure our interventions are not blind to new but perhaps more invisible groups. Governments are responsible for protection. In disparate cases, are humanitarians trying to replace the State? Should we? In situations where states are unable or unwilling to provide basic services and protection, who is responsible for mortality rates?

Strategic planning for the future will require new partnerships such as better co-ordination with other NGOs and the UN, collaboration with academics, with the private sector, possibly with local leaders, etc.

The debate about the role of the military in delivering humanitarian assistance and about the importance of humanitarian space is a critical issue. We have not won important battles, such as the decision that integrated missions under the UN are the mandatory way of the future, or the fact that humanitarian aid is considered just one tool amongst many in the EU's "Toolbox" of foreign policy.

The next struggles will be establishing ways of working with the UN integrated missions. At an advocacy level, we must continue to ensure that donor governments are aware of the risks posed by their integrated approaches, such as the EC's civil protection forces.

Debate and main conclusions

The debate was led by **Mr. James Darcy**, Research Fellow at ODI (Overseas Development Institute).

➢ Concerning the link between humanitarian response and LRRD, Mr. Wittebrood stated that LRRD – as an instrument for the application of long term development programmes - is a relevant "Commission issue". Angola and Tajikistan are positive examples regarding its application.

➢ Concerning humanitarian principles, it was pointed out that, at the moment, there is a risk for NGOs of losing humanitarian space. One of the main tasks for NGOs should be a strengthened dialogue with politicians and the military, in order to convince them of applying humanitarian principles. The debate should concentrate on what each actor should do.

➢ Politicians and politics play a big role in relation to the allocations in the EU budget. Some countries are not considered interesting from a geo-political point, while others (e.g. Kosovo) are regarded as politically important noteworthy and consequently are soundly financially supported.

➢ Concerning the remark that the EC does not seem concerned about the role of Civil protection in humanitarian aid, Mr. Wittebrood replied that at the moment there is an increasing interest from Member States in the funds managed by DG ECHO. A memorandum of understanding between DG ECHO and DG Environment (where Civil protection is located) has been agreed. Currently, DG ECHO and the Civil Protection Unit are in dialogue in order to better define the complementarities of their roles.

Topic 2:
Conclusions from the UK Presidency of the EU and the future Peace and Security Agenda (h.: 13.30 – 15.00)

Jennifer Townson (Foreign and Commonwealth Office)

2005 was the UK Government's "Year of Africa". A significant element of the commitments UK sought from international partners in the G8 and EU focussed on peace and security.

The "Commission for Africa Report" is an example of discussions with NGOs about how to tackle issues collectively, rather than just responding to 'hot' conflicts. The focus is now increasingly on prevention and post-conflict issues rather than just on reaction. The intent in negotiating G8 and EU commitments was to maintain and reinforce African ownership of the process and responses, and support mechanisms that now exist within the African Union..

The Peace and Security Chapter of the Gleneagles Agreement is important in that it offers specific commitments – the international community has pledged to give technical and financial support to an African stand-by force. Considerable attention is now being given to stabilisation measures such as DDR (Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration) and the wider security sector reform.

There has been significant progress on ensuring humanitarian assistance in the stabilisation phase following conflicts.

Issues in relation to the Gleneagles Agreement were the focus of the first half of the year, while in the second half of the year, the FCO sought to ensure that the commitments made, were then followed up on during the UK's turn as the EU Presidency.

Commitments on conflict prevention, management and post conflict reconstruction include support for African mediation, development of early warning systems, financial support for post conflict countries, work on the flow of small arms and international co-operation in counter terrorism. The FCO is aware that Africa is not a priority for the new G8 Presidency (Russia), and this is something that the FCO will work on.

However, at the European level, the Austrians have agreed to take forward measures to build on the work done by the UK. The focus must be on joint planning between Europe and Africa.

The Africa Partners Forum has a key role to play in ensuring that all parties honour the commitments that they have made. The main challenges are maintaining and increasing EU - Africa Peace Fund Facility and preserving the Arms Trade Treaty.

Michael Mosselmans (Head of Conflict, Humanitarian and Security Department, DFID)

Concerning DfID's (Department for International Development) leadership in the EU's review of the tsunami response, its position is that the EU should support the UN as the co-ordinator of emergency responses and avoid the establishment of parallel structures.

Civil agencies – rather than military ones – should take the lead in managing/coordinating responses, while accepting that military assets may be used on a limited basis and when based on identified needs.

Mr. Baroso's review of coherence in EU responses is to be welcomed if it does not result in the undermining of humanitarian principles.

There has been considerable Member States dialogue in relation to the reform of the humanitarian sector, particularly with the new member states, and there is a feeling of increasing coherence of opinion.

The EU voluntary force/corps may have "fallen away".

DfID is anxious about the EU's drive for increased visibility, and feels that while increasing ECHO's presence on the ground may be positive, DfID believes that it is more important to strengthen the capacity of implementing partners than the capacity of donors.

DfID has contributed to the CERF (Central Emergency Response Fund) and would like to see the EU do the same, although they recognise that ECHO has some legal limitations – and perhaps philosophical reservations – about this flexible form of funding.

There remains an overall question as to the size of the humanitarian component of the overall aid budget and a continued feeling that this needs to be addressed.

At present, DfID is working on promoting:
- Awareness and application of Humanitarian Principles;
- The need for reform of the humanitarian sector;
- The need for greater accountability;
- DRR – Gleneagles endorsed the Hyogo Declaration – we need better early warning systems and early response mechanisms;
- The role and quality of Humanitarian Co-ordinators as a means of ensuring better co-ordination on the ground;
- Support for the CERF.

Moving forwards, DfID is:
- Looking for more effective UN Flash Appeals;
- Looking for more effective work and relations with the military;
- Looking for improved accountability systems;
- Taking the view that prevention is more cost-effective than reaction/response;
- Looking at the responsibility to protect;
- Engaging on the whole coherence debate and linkages between humanitarian responses and the FCO's agenda;
- Working on the Arms Trade.

A new White Paper is being developed and input is possible on the DfID Internet site.

Rainer Lucht (Senior Policy and Strategy Advisor, Diakonie-Germany/VOICE Board Member)

Developments in Iraq brought most of us to the conclusion that the UN and Western policies were not such a success story concerning peace and security. They even made things worse. Our experiences show that if western NGOs get too involved in such a kind of agenda, this does not only compromise our humanitarian impartiality, but also our political credibility abroad, not to speak about the increasing security risks to aid workers in the field.

As humanitarian aid organisations, being active in many conflict zones, we are in an even more delicate position when confronted and affected by insecurity or even being forced to take position. While rooted in the North and active in the South, we are of course exposed to both realities and influences. The pressure from governments and public opinion in donor countries is often greater and very difficult to resist to.

The increasing number of violent conflicts in countries in the South, the acceleration of terrorist acts after 9.11, and the trend of Northern governments towards more security thinking and use of military force, is having an impact on our own organisations. In the case of Germany, our experiences started with the Balkans, where the government tried to integrate NGOs into their policies and the army offered its support and security umbrella. It is happening today in Afghanistan, where the number of German PRTs (Provincial Reconstruction Teams) is increasing. PRTs are presented as a politically forward-looking joint project involving four ministries aiming at the promotion of protection, cooperation and joint action between the military and civilian actors under the "no development without security" heading. The concept has not met a lot of enthusiasm among German NGOs and none of the bigger organisations has joined in so far.

Credibility of an impartial humanitarian organisation trying to assist affected populations in areas of conflict is compromised if it is directly identified with or protected by one party involved. Even a UN-mandate does not help, if intervening UN politics and the military have a partisan agenda and are perceived accordingly. When aid organisations are perceived as coming from the same 'western camp' as the intervening parties or the military, they are looked at with particular suspicion by 'non-western' adversary parties.

These concerns are the background for why, in Germany, NGOs have insisted on the importance of humanitarian principles and the commitment of NGOs to poverty eradication when debating with the government and the military.

At EU level, Diakonie Germany fully supports ECHO's work based on humanitarian principles and focused on needs only. They also support Commissioner Michel's view that EU humanitarian and development aid should be guided by their objectives and principles – and not mixed with or subdued to EU foreign and security policy.

Mr Lucht's position is that, as aid organisations, NGOs have to join the ongoing debate in the political environments and make our point heard.

The joint basic assessment of the UN High Level Panel Report on Threats, Challenges and Change 2004 made some good points. It states that "Difference of wealth, power and geography do determine what we perceive as the gravest of all threats to our survival and well-being" and that "Many people believe that what passes for collective security today is simply a system to protect the rich and powerful." And the report concludes: "What is needed is a new consensus between (…) wealthy nations and poor and among people mired in mistrust across an apparently widening cultural abyss".

This analysis of global human threats is rather different from the EU security approach. Instead of addressing the root causes of global insecurity, Mr. Solana's EU Security Doctrine 2003 rather prefers to stay on the surface, describing effects and consequences and fighting them. Addressing these causes would mean to think beyond narrow national or EU security interests and the defence of economic leadership, political dominance or military superiority. Moreover, we are witnessing a trend inside the EU to use or mix these limited funds to co-finance military activities using the "development requires security" argument. Mr. Lucht fears this could further erode the credibility of EU aid that should be based on the principles of solidarity.

Finally, Mr. Lucht touched upon security policy in Africa, which is a rather new issue for Germany, while already a long story for UN, US, France and UK. With all its needs and conflicts, Africa has become the training field for a coherent security policy, also for the EU. A lot has been tried out, but so far results go from mixed to bad. It may be also time for Europe to step down from its altruistic or "white man's burden" attitude.

As a conclusion, from the viewpoint of many European humanitarian and development NGOs, a coherent security policy sounds nice but remains an ambivalent tool to bring about security and stability in the world. So far sustainable effects have not been proven and getting too involved at this stage would compromise our credibility, especially if a political approach is too centred on northern interests, security and predominance.
On the other hand, should a security policy really become broadminded, focusing on global and comprehensive human security and providing according means and acceptable instruments, then, we should participate in a constructive and balanced dialogue between North and South, if possible at UN level, and take this coherence as an opportunity.

Debate and main conclusions

The debate was led by **Mr. James Darcy**, Research Fellow at ODI.

➢ The newly established Post-conflict Reconstruction Unit is consisting experts from five different governmental bodies, since specific expertise is required in order to deal with reconstruction and post conflict situations.

- The main system of accountability for the participating countries in the EU - Africa Peace Fund Facility is the Africa Forum. Two meetings will be organised in the next months and a list of tasks is in the process of being developed.

- Concerning the EC engagement in the DRC, conflict prevention and management could be perceived as very ambitious. The whole structure of a military stand-by-force in the DRC should be in place by the end of the year.

- Concerning Zimbabwe, the present situation represents a challenge to African nations as it will allow them to assess their readiness and capability to tackle truly difficult situations.

- Commenting on the feasibility of the UN Flash appeals, Mr. Mosselmans stated that it is not based on a clear assessment of needs of affected populations; hence there is no real support from donors. What is needed is an adequate humanitarian donorship process, and a standardization of humanitarian actions.

- On the question of responsibility and accountability of the British inter-ministerial Committee that came together before the Iraqi war, Mr. Mosselmans commented that the hierarchy within this Committee is clearly established. As the Committee is constituted of different "conflict prevention pools", each headed by a different minister, it is these ministers that would ultimately take the blame for any big mistakes.