



AFRICA BRIEFING

Diaspora groups in peace processes: lessons learned and potential for engagement by the EU

Brussels, 29 May 2012

Venue:

Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik (SWP)
Brussels Office
Boulevard Saint-Michel 80
B-1040 Brussels

BACKGROUND

Over the last decade, researchers and policy-makers have paid increasing attention to diasporas, viewing them not only as a challenge, but also seeing their largely untapped potential. Their transnational nature and unique position as non-state groups linking host and home countries has been identified as an important basis for engagement.

In Sub-Saharan Africa many governments have set up specific institutions to facilitate ties with 'their' diasporas and the African Union has declared the diaspora the continent's 'sixth region'. Diaspora groups from Sub-Saharan Africa in Europe comprising of between 3.5 and 8 million people are not only a relevant political force, but often come from homelands that have experienced or are still facing armed conflict.

What contribution can diasporas make to promoting peace in their countries of origin to which they often maintain intensive ties? And how can the European Union engage with African diasporas as part of its efforts in the field of peace and security?

This Africa Briefing seeks to provide a platform to discuss these important questions relating to a field that is still emerging. There is still a certain tendency amongst experts to interpret the role of diasporas in conflicts affecting their homeland as rather negative. In addition, up until now, the more extensive experiences with diaspora engagement have largely been confined to the development-migration nexus. At an EU level specifically, there are a number of concerns with regard to the suitability of diasporas as partners, the ability of the EU to engage with them and/or the sensitive nature of the field of peace and security.

This event will open by addressing these concerns based on an EUISS Occasional Paper by Judith Vorrath that assesses insights from academic studies as well as concrete policies and programmes. The paper does not present diaspora engagement as a panacea in conflict situations nor as merely an instrument to achieve foreign policy goals. It instead seeks to raise the awareness of diasporas as important actors, show their potential and limitations in contributing to peace and discuss options for the EU to engage diasporas. A presentation of the paper and its core findings will be followed by a panel discussion including contributions from three different institutional and thematic angles.

PROCESS AND PRACTICAL INFORMATION

In the framework of the *Observatoire de l’Afrique*, the EUISS, in collaboration with the *Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik (SWP)*, have organised this Africa Briefing on 29 May 2012 to debate the involvement of African diaspora in peace processes and the prospects of a clear agenda emerging on this topic within the EU.

Gathering experts, policy makers, researchers and representatives from civil society this policy briefing will discuss the different dimensions of African diasporas in peace processes, while providing insights for a potential engagement by the European Union and challenges ahead.

The event will take place in Brussels on Tuesday 29th of May. Participation is on invitation basis. We would be delighted if you could attend, and kindly ask you to register with us by e-mail to Brussels@swp-berlin.org by the 24th of May at the latest.

Date: 29 May 2012, 9h30 – 13h00

Venue: SWP Brussels Office, Boulevard Saint-Michel 80, B-1040

Lunch will be provided

The working language will be English. The briefing will be held under the Chatham House rule.

PROGRAMME

Interventions are limited to 15 minutes. The seminar is held under the Chatham House rule

- 09:30 – 09:45 *Arrival & coffee*
- 09:45 – 10:00 **Welcoming Remarks**
Dr. Roderick Parkes, Head of Office, Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik (SWP) (Brussels)
Dr. Damien Helly, Senior Research Fellow, European Union Institute for Security Studies (EUISS) (Paris)
- 10:00 – 10:15 **Introductory presentation: Engaging African Diasporas for Peace – Corner stones for an emerging EU agenda**
Dr. Judith Vorrath, TAPIR Fellow, SWP (Berlin)
- 10:15 – 10:45 **Discussion**
- 10:45 – 11:00 *Coffee Break*
- 11:00 – 11:45 **Panel Presentations**
Moderation:
Dr. Judith Vorrath, TAPIR Fellow, SWP (Berlin)
- Experiences with engaging African diasporas for peace(building)***
Dr. Awil Mohamoud, Director, African Diaspora Policy Centre (ADPC) (The Hague)
- How can the EU deal with diasporas from crisis regions? The case of the Horn of Africa***
Jeremy Lester, Head of Division, Horn of Africa, East and Southern Africa, Indian Ocean, EEAS (Brussels)
- Potentials and obstacles in diaspora engagements for peace***
Norunn Grande, Special Advisor, Nansen Center for Peace and Dialogue (NCPD) (Lillehammer)
- 11:45 – 12:30 **General Discussion**
- 12:30 – 12:45 **Concluding Remarks & Outlook**
Dr. Damien Helly, Senior Research Fellow, EUISS (Paris)
- 12:45 *End of event & lunch*