

: Programme

The Berlin Summer Dialogue – Online Edition 2020

**Crisis Prevention: From Ambition to Action
New Pathways for the UN**

Online/worldwide

Weekly from 2 June – 23 June 2020
– each Tuesday from 15:00-16:30 hrs (CEST) –

Conference language

English

Cooperating Partners



BACKGROUND

The founding members of the United Nations (UN) had one great ambition: to avoid future wars. And indeed, the number of inter-state conflicts has clearly decreased. Yet the world is far from being a place of peace. Violent intra-state conflicts in particular often have spill-over effects on neighbouring countries or involve other states; they are also often protracted, have a very high casualty rate and destroy the fabric of society, the economy and infrastructure. The United Nations has deployed multi-annual peacekeeping operations in many of these conflicts; however, this type of engagement is more about crisis response than prevention. Although the latter should be one of the UN's core functions, the political will to take action often seems to emerge only after an armed conflict has broken out.

Nevertheless, there have been signs of change in the United Nations in recent years, with a clear ambition to strengthen its crisis prevention capabilities. UN Secretary-General António Guterres has embraced the concept of “sustaining peace”, which is intended not only to restore peace but to create the conditions for it to endure in the long term. And in the Pathways for Peace report, the UN and the World Bank prioritise conflict prevention as a shared goal. The OECD and the African Union also have an interest in the further expansion of early warning systems as a means of facilitating timely action to prevent crises and conflicts.

New technologies could offer great potential for conflict early warning. The use of artificial intelligence, for example, may well create scope for more effective analysis of data and information in future. This will become even more important with the surge in data availability (“big data”). What opportunities do new analytical capabilities afford, and where do their limits lie?

It is also important to give some thought to how the findings can be processed and who should be involved in decision-making on preventive action, based on the evaluated data. What role does networking by international organisations, regional organisations and individual countries play in ensuring rapid and timely action before crises erupt?

And lastly, there is the question of how the political will can be generated in all member states in order to re-establish crisis prevention as one of the United Nations' core functions. With that in mind, how much pressure is needed from civil society organisations or campaigns, for example? How can Germany and the European Union contribute to building the UN's crisis prevention capabilities, not least out of enlightened self-interest?

Due to the current coronavirus pandemic, this year's Berlin Summer Dialogue will, for the first time, be an online event, with presentations and discussions of the various issues taking place in a series of online dialogues.

• Week 1: 2 June 2020 – 15:00-16:30 hrs (CEST)

ONLINE DIALOGUE

CRISIS PREVENTION AND THE UN – WHERE ARE WE NOW?

There have been signs of change in the United Nations in recent years, with a clear ambition to strengthen its crisis prevention capabilities. UN Secretary-General António Guterres has embraced the concept of “sustaining peace”, which is intended not only to restore peace but to create the conditions for it to endure in the long term. And in the Pathways for Peace report, the UN and the World Bank prioritise conflict prevention as a shared goal. Given the large number of conflicts where “fire-fighting” appears to be the only possible response, where does the UN stand today? Which changes have been implemented in recent years with a focus on crisis prevention?

Chair

Ute Lange

Moderator and Communication Coach
i3kommunikation, Bonn

Discussion

Dr Adriana Abdenur

Coordinator of the Peace and Security Division
Instituto Igarapé, Rio de Janeiro

Teresa Whitfield

Director of Policy and Mediation
Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA)
United Nations, New York

• Week 2: 9 June 2020 – 15:00-16:30 hrs (CEST)

ONLINE DIALOGUE

CRISIS AND CONFLICT EARLY WARNING – FROM BIG DATA TO AI – NEW ANALYTICAL TOOLS?

Wars within, rather than between, states are the most common form of conflict today. This often makes forecasting more difficult. In recent years, the United Nations has been working on innovative techniques to re-evaluate and collate data. Other tools are being developed to generate usable data on the basis of future technologies, potentially offering various benefits for the assessment of crises and conflicts.

What kind of tools already exist or are being developed? How are they deployed to provide earlier warning of crises? Is there a role for artificial intelligence in this context? What can it contribute, and what are the possible future risks? How useful is it to apply analyses that are based on existing data on the genesis of conflicts to the new types of conflict that may arise in future?

Chair

Ute Lange

Moderator and Communication Coach
i3kommunikation, Bonn

Inputs

Professor Weisi Guo

Centre for Autonomous and Cyberphysical Systems
Cranfield University, University of Warwick, and Alan Turing Institute

Dr Paula Hidalgo-Sanchis

Innovations Advisor
UN Global Pulse, New York

• Week 3: 16 June 2020 – 15:00-16:30 hrs (CEST)

ONLINE DIALOGUE

FACILITATING A FASTER RESPONSE BY INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS IN CRISES AND CONFLICTS

Opportunities for conflict early warning are available and are continuously evolving. But what happens to this information? How are the analyses used by international organisations? What form must cooperation take in future in order to build capacity to act and prevent crises at an earlier stage?

Chair

Ute Lange

Moderator and Communication Coach
i3kommunikation, Bonn

Discussion

Donata Garrasi

Director for Political Affairs
Office of the UN Special Envoy for the Great Lakes

Sarah Bressan

Research Associate
Global Public Policy Institute (GPPI), Berlin

• Week 4: 23 June 2020 – 15:00-16:30 hrs (CEST)

ONLINE DIALOGUE

BUILDING A POLITICAL COMMITMENT TO CRISIS PREVENTION – STRENGTHENING DELIVERY

In order to sharpen the focus on conflict prevention as one of the United Nations' core functions, there is a need not only for new (technology-based) early warning mechanisms but also for different forms of inter-agency cooperation.

Within the United Nations itself, it is apparent that member states often lack the political will to take early action to manage crises. However, studies have shown that a stronger crisis prevention mandate has the potential not only to avoid human suffering but also to remove the need for more costly military interventions and reconstruction later on.

Building on our existing knowledge, what can be done to put pressure on policy-makers and generate momentum towards this political will? What role can individual countries or regions such as Germany and the EU play in this context? And what opportunities are available for civil society organisations to influence policy-making?

Chair

Ute Lange

Moderator and Communication Coach
i3kommunikation, Bonn

Discussion

Dr Hannah Neumann, MEP

European Parliament, Brussels

Darynell Rodriguez Torres

Executive Director
Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC), The Hague