

1º CONFERENCIA INTERNACIONAL DE DIPLOMACIA PREVENTIVA EN EL MEDITERRÁNEO  
1ST INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON PREVENTIVE DIPLOMACY IN THE MEDITERRANEAN  
المؤتمر الدولي الأول للدبلوماسية الوقائية في حوض البحر الأبيض المتوسط

**1<sup>st</sup> INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON PREVENTIVE DIPLOMACY  
IN THE MEDITERRANEAN  
30 – 31 MAY 2016  
Casa Mediterráneo, Alicante**

This report does not necessarily represent the views of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and  
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## **Executive Summary**

For societies in transformation, tensions are, to some extent, inevitable local expressions of the times in which we live, to which we must find a way to respond rapidly. War, poverty, uncertainty and intolerance have become threats to our freedoms. Therefore, it is necessary to develop formulas that make it possible to address these challenges while strengthening economic and cultural ties. The Mediterranean has always been synonymous with interaction; this is why we have to work to make it stable strategic framework contributing to peace and progress, and to effectively combating poverty and inequality; for the Mediterranean to be, ultimately, a space of encounter, cooperation and stability.

On 30 and 31 May 2016, the 1<sup>st</sup> International Conference on Preventive Diplomacy in the Mediterranean was held in Alicante, organised by Spain's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation in collaboration with Casa Mediterráneo. The Conference brought together a large group of official representatives from the Foreign Ministries of different Mediterranean countries and from international organisations, as well as experts in preventive diplomacy and political dialogue, and representatives of civil society. Their main purpose was to examine to what extent diplomacy can be a means for conflict prevention—not only in our region, but also on a worldwide scale. The meeting enabled representatives from governments and civil society to reflect on the need to move from a culture of reaction to a culture of prevention when addressing different conflicts. This is especially necessary in the Mediterranean region, which is living through turbulent and dramatic times.

After words of welcome from Mayor of Alicante, Gabriel Echávarri; President of the Alicante Provincial Council, César Sánchez Pérez; and President of the Valencia Regional Government, Ximo Puig; the conference was inaugurated by Spain's Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, José Manuel García-Margallo.

The Conference's main conclusions are detailed below.

## **I. HOW TO STRENGTHEN PREVENTIVE DIPLOMACY IN THE MEDITERRANEAN**

Strengthening preventive diplomacy is not only necessary; it is also profitable in economic terms. Therefore, we should redouble our efforts in the areas of early warning and risk analysis as tools of prevention. Furthermore, we must link the Mediterranean agenda to the international agenda, since both share common challenges. Preventive diplomacy must be understood in a global, comprehensive manner, including different kinds of actions ranging from negotiations to peacekeeping and peacebuilding, and managing post-conflict situations. Ultimately, consensus-based policy solutions are the only ones able to prevail and have a lasting positive impact.

One of the key tools for strengthening preventive diplomacy is regional integration. There is a strong correlation between regional integration, peace and sustainability. Therefore, investing in regional integration means investing in peace and stability. Efforts should also be focused on job creation, since social justice is a key element for avoiding radicalisation, especially among the young, and ultimately for conflict prevention.

Moreover, it is essential to create nation-building processes, avoiding approaches imposed from the outside, recognising and respecting the particularities of each national situation, and therefore adopting a more human approach.

As to the scope of action, despite the fact that the regional level is considered the most effective, it is essential to connect specifically Mediterranean goals with goals and challenges on a worldwide scale. Here, although the United Nations is the only organisation with an explicit, legitimate mandate for prevention on an international level, it should work in collaboration with relevant local and regional organisations.

## **II. HUMAN RIGHTS AS A CONFLICT PREVENTION TOOL**

Preventive diplomacy should adopt a comprehensive strategy, based on the three pillars of the UN: peace and security, sustainable development and protection of human rights. The 2030 Agenda and the Human Rights Up Front initiative prioritise this third pillar for the first time, since human rights protection should also play a leading role in conflict prevention. To achieve this end, it is necessary for the international community to become involved and to mobilise effectively in the promotion and protection of human rights. Likewise, at the UN, dialogue needs to be intensified between the Security Council and the different sectoral committees devoted to human rights.

Violations of human rights are key early warning indicators of conflict; whether they are respected or threatened is intrinsically woven into security and conflict dynamics. It is also noteworthy that within the UN, there are different human rights institutions that can play a major role from the viewpoint of preventive diplomacy, such as the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva, the High Commissioner for Human Rights, and the sectoral committees and bodies stemming from specific treaties.

Therefore, it was emphasised that although the UN's institutional instruments and authority are already firmly established, there is a lack of political will to make them effective. As an example, even though the Secretary-General has the power, under Article 99 of the UN Charter, to put before the Security Council human rights issues that he considers important enough to deserve the Council's special consideration, it is very rare for that power to be used.

Ultimately, the existing instruments, together with greater political will, could make it possible for the international community to achieve the goal set forth decades ago, of moving from a culture of reaction to a culture of prevention.

## **III. WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY**

Within the framework of the United Nations, Resolution 1325, from 2000, marked a turning point in including women's rights on the UN's conflict prevention and security

agenda. Implementation of the Women, Peace and Security agenda has been a priority for Spain, which, during its presidency of the UN Security Council in October 2015 promoted Resolution 2242, together with the United Kingdom, focusing specifically on gender equality in conflict resolution and peace processes.

These Resolutions mark a paradigm shift at the UN Security Council. Nevertheless, the international community continues to face major challenges in different theatres of conflict: The agenda of women in peacebuilding in Mali is practically nonexistent; Syria is witnessing dramatic problems of sexual violence; in Libya, women barely have a role at the negotiating table. These recent examples show that there is still much left to do in the process of effectively implementing the Women, Peace and Security agenda.

During the session, some proposals were mentioned for translating Resolution 1325 into specific actions:

- Strengthening the mandate of the High Representative for sexual violence in conflict
- Strengthening the Spanish-Moroccan initiative on mediation in the Mediterranean
- Creating a network of women mediators similar to the one already established by the African Union
- Creating a network of focal points in the region, focusing on developing Resolution 1325
- Promoting social and workplace inclusion for women with community-based projects able to produce tangible, concrete long-term results

The inclusion of women on the conflict prevention and resolution agenda is not only a question of gender equality in an abstract sense, but also in a practical sense, since it is crucial to involve women in order to attain a solid and lasting peace.

Women also play a key role in rehumanising conflicts. Their inclusion should not be imposed from the outside, but rather promoted through bottom-up initiatives, giving a

higher profile to the many women's organisations already working on the ground in these countries, but who are almost invisible.

#### **IV. THE ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY IN CONFLICT PREVENTION**

Civil society can act as an element of change in the face of authoritarian regimes, and relations between governments and civil society can constitute an early-warning indicator.

Traditional diplomacy has in some cases proven to be ineffective in conflict prevention and management, in part due to the emergence of a large number of non-state powers. Private diplomacy efforts, promoted by civil society, can fill this vacuum where state diplomacy lacks easy access. Therefore, the role of hybrid actors in preventive diplomacy can be highly useful, as shown by the success story in Tunisia.

The media also plays an important role in conflict prevention and mitigation, since its presence can dissuade some actors from committing human rights violations or, if they are committed, journalists' investigations can lead to legal cases on an international level. Therefore, limits on the right to information can also serve as early-warning indicators.

Likewise, it is necessary for the press to focus on and disseminate news and actions related to conflict prevention at the socioeconomic level, not only publishing stories on open conflicts.

#### **V. POLITICAL DIALOGUE AND SUPPORT FOR DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE AS A CONFLICT PREVENTION MECHANISM**

Democracy and peace are inextricably tied together, since democracy is a precondition for lasting and effective peace, and vice versa. The great pending question in preventive diplomacy circles is how to combine, in practice, political dialogue with power elites and social dialogue with relevant civil society stakeholders.

In this regard, development cooperation policy cannot be separated from a rights-based focus and a political approach favouring better governance, since without it there can be no socioeconomic development. This approach, however, must be based on accompanying institutions and local civil society, and not on prescribing to them, since democracy can be supported, but never exported.

International support for better democratic governance, which should always be the preferred option ahead of military intervention, must take into account, however, that democratisation is neither a simple nor a linear process. It is, indeed, a long process filled with setbacks, especially when the aspiration is to attain a substantive democracy that goes beyond mere procedural standards and favours public participation and the social inclusion of all population strata.

Preventive diplomacy should be defined more precisely, getting away from speculation and interference with national sovereignty in the countries where actions are being carried out. Another major challenge of preventive diplomacy is to make a greater effort at social exploration and at involving often ignored sectors of the population. Along these same lines, preventive diplomacy should try to democratise political dialogue, going beyond a dialogue amongst elites, becoming modernised and making new uses of existing technology.

## **VI. INTERCULTURAL AND INTERFAITH DIALOGUE IN THE MEDITERRANEAN**

Dialogue among religions is crucial, not so much because they are the underlying causes of many conflicts—which is often the perception—but because they can be generators of peace.

In today's globalised world, interfaith dialogue is more necessary than ever, as a way of accepting the other and living together in peace. To achieve this goal, it is crucial to combat ignorance of the other and to promote cultural exchanges among

grassroots believers and religious leaders, as a means of promoting mutual understanding, as well as combating ignorance through education.

However, to approach interfaith dialogue it is necessary to define in advance who the true religious leaders are; these should be the ones who teach their communities to respect others. It is also important to point out that the goal of this kind of dialogue should not be multiculturalism—which could lead to the dissolution of people’s own identity—so much as cooperation. Therefore, it is clear that religion itself is not the problem, but rather the problem lies in radicalisation and extremism—which are not exclusively religious phenomena, also being found in secular circles.

Moreover, it is worth highlighting that religion has always played an important role in diplomatic circles, as made manifest by such examples as the Camp David Accords, or Pope John Paul II’s mediation in the Eastern European independence processes after the breakup of the USSR.

Finally, it is important to point out that true peace cannot be secular; therefore, it makes no sense to bar religion from having any role in public life--because even though religion should not govern, it should participate as one more aspect of public decisions.

## **VII. FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS**

Lastly, during the Conference, specific proposals were made to strengthen preventive diplomacy:

- Improve analysis, stepping up cooperation between international organisations and local actors. At the national level, strengthen preventive diplomacy units--for example, using embassies in at-risk countries as a kind of early-warning network.
- Strengthen the work of the Security Council, the UN’s most important body for peacekeeping and security, through the creation of a subsidiary body devoted to preventive diplomacy.

- Uphold the UN Secretary-General's initiative to create a Regional Office of the United Nations in North Africa.
- Listen to victims of violent extremism and strengthen legal cooperation, appointing a UN representative for the prevention of violent extremism. In this regard, Spain has already proposed the creation of an International Counter-Terrorism Court.
- Redouble efforts to protect cultural rights, as part of a broader effort to protect human rights, in conflict prevention. Spain has been promoting the creation of a cultural protection fund.
- Encourage the appointment of a high-level representative of the UN Secretary-General for the prevention of violent extremism.
- Spain has also proposed that the Secretary-General appoint a special representative for freedom of the press.