Political Leadership to prevent and end conflicts

NGO brief for the High Level Leaders’ Round Table

This brief is intended to inform discussions with stakeholders leading up to, and during the High Level Leaders’ Roundtable (HLRT) ‘Political Leadership to prevent and end conflicts’. Coordinated by ICVA with inputs from the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) and shared widely amongst ICVA’s membership this brief is based on a foundation of collective NGO experience and analysis.

Context

Today, some 60 million people have been forced to flee their homes due to conflict and violence, including 38 million displaced internally. The prevalence of national and international conflict has increased from four in 2007, to eleven in 2014. A third of ongoing civil wars have involvement of international actors supporting specific parties to the conflict, resulting in an increase in their severity and duration. As NGOs we welcome this HLRTs, affirming that political will is ultimately required in order to address the political impasse that we face in many conflicts today and which means emergencies increasingly stretch into protracted situations. Humanitarian action cannot replace urgently required political solutions to today’s conflicts.

World leaders must take up the challenge of recommitting to their responsibility to make early warning, prevention, mediation and conflict resolution a priority. This HLRT can contribute to addressing these issues by presenting policy and operational steps for States to take towards reinvigorating a culture of conflict prevention and resolution among political actors.

Key NGO messages for this High Level Leaders’ Roundtable

In relation to Core commitments listed below, NGOs stress the importance of the following key messages to Member States, the UN and all non-state actors engaged in humanitarian action in conflict, to take action.

Core Commitment 1: Commit to acting on early warning findings and shared conflict analysis in accordance with international law, in situations where there may be potential conflict.

1. States and armed groups must go beyond merely reaffirming the humanitarian principles. States respect International Humanitarian Law, and support the implementation of humanitarian principles.

2. Political actors must recognise that preparedness and response to natural disasters differs to conflict and protracted crises and adapt their responses must accordingly.

3. NGOs urge States to proactively react to early warning systems and emerging crises analysis (e.g. FEWS NET) rather than reacting to escalating crises.

Core Commitment 2: Commit to improving prevention and conflict resolution capacities at the national, regional and international level.

4. NGOs urge permanent members of the Security Council to suspend their veto in cases of mass atrocity and facilitate the international processes which are aimed at halting ongoing atrocities.

5. NGOs urge States to commit to the full scope of key treaties and essential covenants.

Core Commitment 3: Commit to long-term political leadership and engagement through all stages of a crisis to limit the risk of the emergence or relapse into conflict.

6. **NGOs urge states to ensure the separation of humanitarian aid from all other objectives**, including crisis management, stabilisation, countering violent extremism and other non-humanitarian strategies.

7. **NGOs urge states to refrain from politicising or instrumentalising humanitarian action.**

8. **NGOs call upon states, where necessary, to limit the impact of counter-terrorism measures on humanitarian action** and call for relevant exemptions for humanitarian actors.

Core Commitment 4: Commit to addressing structural root causes of conflict and reducing fragility by investing in the development of inclusive, peaceful societies.

9. **NGOs urge the Security Council members and all Member States** – who shape the UN system and fund humanitarian response - **to demonstrate political leadership in proactively addressing root causes of civil and international conflict.**

10. **NGOs support the SG’s proposal, which calls for Member States, the UN, International and Regional Organisations to develop cooperation and assistance frameworks over 10 to 15 years**, more accurately reflecting the time and investment needed in building peaceful and inclusive societies.