

Consortium Initiative

Press Release

26th November 2008

NGOs ask for more transparency in the Karabakh Peace Process and for more contact between governments and non state actors working on this issue

The Consortium Initiative, a platform of non governmental organisations working in support of the Nagorno-Karabakh Peace process, has written to the three co-Chairmen of the OSCE Minsk Process, - Assistant Deputy Secretary of State Matt Bryza of the United States, Ambassador Yuri Merzlyakov of Russia and Ambassador Bernard Fassier of France with recommendations for the establishment of a mechanism for dialogue and exchange of views between the Nagorno Karabakh Peace process led by the OSCE Minsk Group co-Chair and non state actors working in support of the peace process, and on increasing the transparency of the peace process.

The Consortium Initiative is of the opinion that the Nagorno-Karabakh Peace Process led by the OSCE Minsk Group co-Chair will benefit from closer interaction with the processes and debates going on within the countries and communities concerned. This interaction will help address the lack of an overall proper contextual setting which the Consortium has identified as one of the obstacles for moving the peace process to the next step and will make an agreement within reach of the parties. The Consortium Initiative has in the second half of 2008 held a process of consultation that involved meetings with the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Armenia and Azerbaijan, senior officials from both countries, as well as the three OSCE Minsk process co-Chair. The Consortium Initiative intensified dialogue in this period with civil society in the conflict region. On the basis of these discussions and consultations the Consortium has presented to the co-Chair specific recommendations that it feels will help the peace process to be better understood and supported amongst Armenians and Azerbaijanis in the conflict region and beyond.

In its letter the Consortium Initiative also applauds the work done by the Presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan and their governments, over the years, in order to narrow the differences between them and help find a peaceful solution to the Karabakh conflict. The Consortium Initiative similarly appreciates the efforts exerted by the OSCE Minsk Group co-Chair in facilitating these negotiations. The Moscow Declaration on the Resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict signed on 2nd November 2008 by the Presidents of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Russia has given a new impetus to the peace negotiations. The Consortium members think that this declaration forms a good basis on which future action for the resolution of the conflict can be based. The Consortium thinks that now is the best time to move the peace process forward and that success can only be achieved if the governments concerned, their respective civil society and the international community work together in harmony for this purpose.

The Consortium Initiative members (International Alert, Conciliation Resources and LINKS) have since 2003 accompanied the peace process by engaging with non state actors in both Armenia and Azerbaijan, including with Armenians who currently live in Nagorno Karabakh and Azerbaijanis who have fled due to the conflict, as well as with wider IDP communities, refugees and other war affected groups. The activities of the Consortium Initiative have targeted a spectrum of different constituencies from grass roots organisations, to media, to political organisations and Members of Parliament. The Consortium has in tandem analysed the peace process and its various dynamics and compared it to similar situations in other world theatres in order to learn lessons.

A spokesperson for the Consortium Initiative speaking in London said that the Consortium partners declare their readiness to continue accompanying the peace process and to remain engaged with all the parties in order to contribute to a peaceful resolution of the conflict.

Background Notes

- (1) Fighting between Armenians and Azerbaijanis in the period immediately before and after the dissolution of the Soviet Union left more than 30,000 people dead and hundreds of thousands as refugees. A fragile cease-fire has been in place since 1994 but the process to find a peaceful solution to the conflict has so far led to few results. After the August war in Georgia there is now an increased sense of urgency to try to move the peace process forward.
- (2) International Alert, Conciliation Resources and LINKS are three London based non-governmental organisations with extensive experience of conflict resolution work in the Caucasus Region.

For more information on the Consortium Initiative please contact:

at International Alert: Dessislava Roussanova on +44 (0) 207 627 6812,

droussanova@international-alert.org

at Conciliation Resources: Laurence Broers on +44 (0) 207 3597728 ext 227, lbroers@c-r.org

at LINKS: Dennis Sammut on +44 (0) 207 5209308, dennis@links-london.org

Outside office hours: +44 (0)7530664334.