

**Conclusions**  
**Matching Words and Deeds**  
**Enhancing the role of civil society in building Black Sea regional security**  
**11<sup>th</sup> July 2007**

On the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> of July 2007 ---- representatives of selected civil society dealing with and working in the Black Sea Region met in Bucharest under the auspices of the Black Sea Forum. The meeting was organized by the Romanian government and the Crisis Management Initiative and represented the first of its kind in an effort to engage civil society organization from the region and to provide for opportunities for joint discussion and elaboration with national and regional actors and donors.

Civil Society representatives recognized the importance and value added of the meeting, offering an important venue to discuss in a constructive, open and frank manner issues of concern that relate to civil society and to cooperation between civil society and governments.

1. There is not *one* Civil society identity in the Black Sea Region, nor can they be simply be equated with NGO's. Civil society in each of the countries in the Black Sea Region responds to the challenges on the ground and reflects the societal state of an individual country. A strong, independent civil society in the Black Sea Region has yet to develop.
2. If the overall aim is to build regional security, conflict resolution in the region must be tackled with priority. Obviously there is not one formula for conflict resolution. The development of a peaceful region is a primary objective for civil society and it should be the same for donors.
3. Regional cooperation of civil society is integral to building regional security. Regional networks and solidarity will allow for sharing perspectives on issues regarding democratic development and societal security. The main themes of interest identified by local CSOs in order to forge greater security and a common identity are the following:
  - a. building capacity for civil society;
  - b. facilitating leadership development and good governance;
  - c. encouraging public understanding and ownership of EU issues, democratic reform processes;
  - d. conflict resolution;
  - e. promotion of public - private partnerships;
4. In order to build more societal security, donors and governments need to listen effectively to the voices on the ground. Building a bottom up dialogue and communication process with civil society on the ground is one way of dealing with this.
5. Civil society in the field will benefit of creative, flexible funding mechanisms to support their work in building democracy, rule of law and dialogue processes.

This is especially pertinent in regards to EU funding. Mechanisms for funding could be outsourced, and/or managed by foundations that have the capacity to respond to challenges in real time, in an accountable yet unbureaucratic manner. This said, there is no 'quick fix' for sustaining the civil society sector or building regional security in the Black Sea Region. The engagement and support for civil society should be done within a long term vision for the Black Sea area that see it strongly connected (included) into the European and Euro-Atlantic community.

6. The implementation of the European Neighbourhood Policy Action Plans is often executed with a view of increasing regional linkages and interdependencies. Black Sea civil society could benefit from a transfer of experiences (of funding in particular) from the Balkans and Central Europe. At the same time, it might be useful if civil society/NGOs from the region will have greater access (membership) to policy mechanisms/existing platforms at European level (Brussels).
7. Civil Society can play a constructive role in the monitoring of ENP Action Plans etc. Dialogue with civil society should be more than a lip service but a genuine source of policy outreach. Additional structured support both from the political and funding community in organizing civil society input into policy is to be welcomed. At the same time a structured, regular interaction with relevant civil society would be beneficial for effective communication and outreach. The setting up of expert councils discussing issues relevant to ENP as well as conflict resolution in Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan and the Republic of Moldova is an effective model that could be replicated on the regional level.
8. It is recognized that there is additional need for exchange of information, both between civil society by itself, and between governments, the EU and civil society. Effective mechanisms still has to be put in place. A Black Sea civil society Forum website and other forms of information exchange could be useful.
9. The organization of follow up meetings of civil society organizations/NGO's /experts to exchange information with governmental actors would strengthen regional networks and could allow for the joint elaboration of self sustainable regional mechanisms. More human and financial investment is needed to increase the impact of existing regional initiatives and to support result-oriented networks and partnerships.
10. It is recognized that a Black Sea dimension of the EU is clearly emerging. The regional civil society should be the backbone of the Black Sea synergy and should be better included in regional cooperation of the Black Sea governments. The Black Sea Forum and the Community of Democratic Choice have been the main two regional initiatives in the Black Sea area that targeted directly civil society.