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Date:	12.07.2017
For:	NRA
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Management Response

External Evaluation of the Senior Level Course on Peacebuilding, Enhancing Leadership

Reference: K 113.450.4-31-1/08/FAD-RIZ

Introduction / The Process

- In 2016 the Swiss Expert Pool for Civilian Peacebuilding (SEP) decided to carry out an external evaluation of the *Senior Level Course on Peacebuilding, Enhancing Leadership (SLCP)*. The course has been organized annually since 2009. It was therefore time to assess the relevance and impact of the course and to seek recommendations for improvements.
- After a careful analysis of applications of evaluators received, the mandate was given to Ms Gudrun Van Pottelbergh, External Evaluator and Independent Analyst on Security Policy and Crisis Management.
- The two main evaluation objectives were the following:
 1. *Accountability*: Is the Course effective and cost-efficient in terms of content of the course, learning goals and coordination between partners and in consultation with the Human Security Division (HSD)?
 2. *Learning*: What might be the future needs of the participants in terms of the specific competency 'Leadership' and how can/should the different partners improve their own contribution?
- The Methodology used: → Course Observation of the 8th Course 2016 (November 2016); → Desk Review (November 2016); → Interviews with Organizers (December 2016); → Interviews with HSD (December 2016); → Interviews with Resource personnel (January 2017); → Online Survey with former participants (January 2017); → Presentation and discussion of results with HSD (February 2017); → Learning event with partners (March 2017).
- The evaluation report was first submitted to SEP then sent to all partners, namely the Geneva Center for Security Policy (GCSP), Interpeace and UNITAR), in preparation of a partners meeting to discuss the evaluator's findings.¹ All present partners unanimously welcomed the content of the

¹ The meeting took place in Geneva on 7 March 2017 between all Partners (except UNITAR). See Minutes of Meeting annexed.

Participants:

- **FDFA Human Security Division**: Daniel Fasnacht, Head of Section Swiss Expert Pool for Civilian Peacebuilding; Claudia Rizzo, Desk Training & Capacity Development; Adina Segura Loza, Intern;
- **Interpeace**: Scott Weber, Director-General; Renee Lariviere, Deputy Director-General; Almudena Bartayrés Arcas, Chief Financial Officer;
- **GCSP**: Carl Ungerer, Head of the Leadership, Crisis and Conflict Management Programme; Carlotta Ferrero, SLCP Course Director; Silvia Metzler, (incoming) SLCP Course Coordinator;
- **External Evaluator**: Gudrun Van Pottelbergh (note-taker and presenter).

report, expressed their appreciation and thanked for the excellent work done by Ms Van Pottelbergh.

- Despite repeated calls and emails by the evaluator, UNITAR was neither available for an interview during the evaluation process nor present at the partners meeting to discuss the evaluation it had received beforehand. However, after the meeting, the UNITAR-representative explained in a phone call that he could not participate at the meeting on 7 March for urgent matters but promised to provide written comments soon. He confirmed that he agrees with the recommendations with regards to UNITAR's collaboration.

Main findings and recommendations by the evaluator

Relevance	The course contents and the different modules are relevant with regards to the overall objective of the training. It is a unique course since it is liaising leadership to peacebuilding; it would however benefit from a clearer and explicit module about the concepts of leadership and peacebuilding that should be exposed in the beginning of the course. The course would also benefit from a slight change in the title and a more inclusive focus on peacebuilding by including, for example, non-UN peacebuilding actors. The learning objectives are realistic but not SMART and thus difficult to measure. Finally a choice has to be made on the type of leadership the course will train.
Effectiveness	The course scored highly on overall effectiveness mainly thanks to the methodology (modular approach, peer to peer) adapted to the requirements of the course objectives and the interests of the participants. The course content remains a constant challenge to the latest situation and lessons learnt in the field and the latest developments. Speakers should refer to the learning goals when introducing their session. The most important challenge remained the linkage between <i>leadership</i> and <i>peacebuilding</i> that should be made clearer to participants, mentors and speakers in order to optimize the development of competence.
Quality	The quality of the course was assured by attracting experienced resource personnel and an interest for continuous improvement of the course. There are too many feedback and evaluation processes (5). They should be streamlined and reduced. Course reports did not properly reflect the feedback of the participants. SMART learning objectives would allow an improved impact measurement in the post-course evaluations. Partners should share evaluations before drafting the report together.
Impact	Three quarters of participants interviewed confirmed that the course was useful for their professional development. Quantitative research demonstrated that participants indeed learned from the course at professional and personal level. Networking proved to be another positive outcome of the course. Post-mentoring activities would strengthen the impact of the course.
Appropriateness	The extension of the course length seemed to have resulted in a decreased attractiveness of the course for senior experts. The SLCP was opened to mid-level participants in the conviction that life experience and opportunity for impact were key assets to be included in the course. Achieving the right mix of participants remained a crucial but challenging undertaking that required a tailored and well-planned promotion of the course. An incentive to avoid last-minute cancellation could be considered.
(Cost) Efficiency	The difference between the funds that HSD makes available for the course and the actual expenditure by GCSP was remarkable. In previous years, the course was not budget-friendly and offered expensive meals and extras. However, the current practice of cutting as much costs as possible, including payments and reimbursements to resource personnel, is not sustainable and beneficial for the course quality in the long run.

Overall appreciation of the evaluation report by partners (GCSP and Interpeace)²

- It was particularly appreciated by the partners that the evaluation report touched all important aspects and in details and that the analysis started from the first course in 2009 and underlined the progress made since. The six pillars of analysis (Relevance, Effectiveness, etc.) offered a clear understanding of the findings. The evaluation of the partnership, the course and

² Based on the joint partners meeting (except UNITAR) on 7 March 2017 in Geneva.

organisational matters were considered as a good basis for further discussions and arrangements between the partners.

- All partners present agreed that the evaluation report clearly underlined strengths and weaknesses, providing clear recommendations in ten distinct categories, including levels of decision-making. The methodology used to collect inputs from different sources and to cross-check them was appreciated. It was taken note that the participants' evaluations from past years were – according to the outgoing course director – not available anymore, since they reportedly had been destroyed despite the legal duty to keep them. This was an obstacle for the evaluator that could partly be overcome by using other sources to crosscheck information.
- All partners present agreed with the main conclusions of the report that the course had increasingly met its objectives from year to year and that the course was considered very good and unique with regards to its methodology (peer-to-peer). Partners share the evaluation's view that there is a need and niche for such a course considering the "current training market", since there are few courses that connect leadership and peacebuilding. It was taken note with satisfaction that the course was appreciated by almost all participants. For a very high number of participants that had provided feedback to the questions of the evaluator, the course had had an impact on their professional life, a fact that was in addition of importance all partners present.
- Finally, all partners present agreed that there was room for improvement and that the external evaluation's recommendations provided the opportunity to optimize the course. There was a shared willingness to consider and tackle the findings and recommendations even though there were several constraints already identified that had to be overcome. There was further agreement that some of the recommendations could not be applied immediately and that they would take time to become effective. In order to deepen the discussion on how to implement the recommendation the partners agreed to meet for a retreat before starting the organisation of the next course.

Positioning by the Human Security Division

The report provides 60 recommendations under 10 different categories, including different levels of decision-making. Some are institutional and focus on the improvement of the quality of the partnership; others are technical and focus on the impact of the course itself, such as the methodology, the sessions, the choice of the speakers, mentors and participants, the organisation and the course evaluation. Here under the main issues to be addressed and the HSD's position on the recommendations. The details for each recommendation are listed in the annex with the respective follow up to be suggested to the partners:

On the partnership (see detailed recommendations and proposed follow up in the annex)

- The course contributes to one of the priorities of Switzerland in the human security domain, including gender mainstreaming. **For institutional reasons, the main contractual partner for the HSD will have to remain one partner only (the GCSP).** Partners have to conclude bilateral agreements, if needed. The HSD will contribute to solutions for strengthening the collaboration between all partners. GCSP has to improve the information sharing with the HSD and the other partners while preparing the course. At least one retreat with all partners involved has to be organised when starting preparation for the course as well as a deadline planning which indicates the partners' responsibilities.
- The **partnership between GCSP and Interpeace offers comparative advantages** for this specific course. Both partners have to agree on means to strengthen their collaboration and to improve the exchange of information, the marketing of the course and the transparency on budget matters. It has to be discussed on whether UNITAR remains a partner and an added value for the course.
- **Visibility of all partners:** Visibility interests of all partners involved have to be respected and logos to appear equally on all public documents. The role of the HSD respectively the Federal Department of Foreign affairs has to be better explained orally while introducing the course and in written documents where appropriate.

On the course (see detailed recommendations and proposed follow up in the annexe)

- Significant improvements are necessary in the **preparatory phase of the course** in order to better and earlier brief and prepare participants, speakers, mentors and resource persons on the objectives of the course. With regards to the planning of the course partners have to improve their collaboration and agree on decision-making division of responsibilities and the timing and deadlines.
- **The content of the course brochure** should reflect several agreements between the partners that have to be reached before the course starts. (i.e. on the SMART objectives of the course, on the leadership style which will be taught, on the profile of participants, etc.). Preparations of the course have to start with a common understanding on e.g. the type of leadership that will be trained and the link with peacebuilding, on the methodology, etc. The title of the course has to be reviewed in order to achieve the right mix of participants.
- **The content and the methodology** will not need specific changes except that *peacebuilding* and *leadership* have to be introduced theoretically in the beginning of the course. Speakers have to be chosen according to the focus of the course and specifically be briefed about the importance of the link between peacebuilding and collaborative leadership.
- The **evaluations of the course by participants** will have to be entirely reviewed in terms of scope and content. Questions have to focus on the course only. The synthesis of the participants' evaluation made in the final course report will have to be improved and fully reflect the participants' opinion.
- **The selection of participants** has to be much more focused: The main targeted audience are experts working in or collaborating with international and regional peace operations. The participants' profile has to remain middle-senior, potential senior and senior leaders. The call for applications will have to be improved in order to attract more militaries and policemen/women in order to be really an "integrated" course that is to say a course for civilian and uniformed personnel all together.

Conclusion and Follow up

All partners agreed to continue and improve their collaboration for this course, taking into consideration the recommendations of the evaluation.

The HSD's Management Response will be shared with the partners, inviting them to formally comment on the HSD's position.

A preparatory meeting is planned with all partners at least 10 months before the start date of the next course. A post-external evaluation meeting will have to be organised at the latest after the 2019 edition of the course to measure the progress made after two years.

Bern, (date), 2017

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Annexes: Evaluation Report,
Minutes of March 7, 2017 Partners' meeting
PPT presentation by the Evaluator on March 7, 2017