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The Aceh Monitoring Mission Experience

1. Following operations in former Yugoslavia, the Caucasus and the Congo, the EU has embarked upon its first ever ESDP mission in Asia. The EU-led Aceh Monitoring Mission (AMM), which I am honoured to be heading, has now entered the final stages of its mandate to facilitate the implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Government of Indonesia and the Free Aceh Movement (Gerakan Aceh Merdeka, GAM).
2. This framework for peace, signed by the two parties in Helsinki, Finland on 15 August 2005, is designed to put an end to almost 30 years of vicious and bloody military confrontation in the province of Aceh, which has claimed over 12,000 lives and displaced thousands more. The economic and political impact of the conflict has been felt by the country as a whole.
3. Aceh has been the site of one of Asia’s longest-running internal conflicts and several peace attempts have been made between the Government of Indonesia and GAM throughout the years. This last round of peace negotiations was initiated in Helsinki between the Government of Indonesia and the GAM under the auspices of the Crisis Management Initiative (CMI), chaired by former Finnish President Martti Ahtisaari, right after the tsunami hit the region of Aceh on 26 December 2004. Five rounds of negotiations, financially supported by the EU, resulted in the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), signed on 15 August 2005. This framework for a peace agreement, covers governance, political participation, economy, rule of law, human rights, amnesty and reintegration of GAM members into society, security arrangements, monitoring and dispute resolution - and is the *raison d’être* for AMM in Aceh.

How we work

4. The Aceh Monitoring Mission (AMM) was established to monitor the implementation of various aspects of the peace agreement set out in the MoU, based on an official invitation from the Government of Indonesia and with the full support of the leadership of the Free Aceh Movement (GAM). AMM involves EU Member

States, as well as 5 ASEAN countries: Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia, Brunei Darussalam and the Philippines.

5. A crucial aspect of the successful start of the mission was that the parties asked the contributing countries to be present in Aceh from the day that the agreement was signed. This has proved to be very important. An initial monitoring presence (IMP) was deployed by 15 August consisting of about 80 personnel in five locations over Aceh - it was set up in only 12 days and prevented a potential vacuum that might have occurred before we could officially deploy the Aceh Monitoring Mission on 15 September 2005.
6. The AMM presence had an initial mandate of 6 months, from 15 September 2005 – 15 March 2006, but was extended for another 3 months until 15 June at the request of the two parties. We are now looking at a second extension until the local elections (Pilkada) in much the same way – but I will come back to that later on.
7. AMM is a civilian and not a military mission, with its headquarters in Banda Aceh and 11 District Offices geographically distributed throughout Aceh. Monitors conduct their monitoring tasks by patrolling and communicating with both parties, and by carrying out inspections and investigations as required. The objective of the AMM is very much to keep the momentum in the peace process, to act as a facilitator and to build confidence between the parties.
8. This we are doing through regular meetings of the Commission on Security Arrangements (COSA) encompassing representatives from both sides, chaired by AMM, and held at both central (headquarters) and local (district) levels. This way AMM has been able to steer and gauge progress on the various steps in the implementation of the MoU and to help facilitate solving any hiccups on the way.

The process

9. So what has been achieved so far? To date, the Aceh peace process is working remarkably well and probably beyond the expectations of many people. In accordance with the MoU, GAM handed over all of its 840 weapons to AMM and on 27 December 2005 it officially disbanded its military wing (TNA). In parallel, the Government relocated around 25,000 non-organic TNI personnel and 5,700 non-organic police forces, as stipulated in the Helsinki agreement – this was again confirmed in a verification process carried out by AMM in the beginning of this year.
10. Economic facilitation is foreseen in the MoU for former combatants, amnestied political prisoners and affected civilians. The Government of Indonesia has committed itself to economic facilitation measures for former combatants while GAM has undertaken to demobilise all its 3,000 combatants. A coordinating reintegration body – BRA - under the administration of the authorities of Aceh, has been established for this purpose and is now well on track to meet its commitments. The Government has further planned for education, vocational training and land

allocations for former GAM combatants. This is a very important step in order to prevent frustration and restlessness, which in turn can fuel violent or criminal activity.

11. In accordance with the MoU, since the signing a total of just under 1,800 GAM prisoners have been released. However, there are still some 65 unresolved cases that AMM is in the process of resolving with the help of an experienced international judge. We hope to have these remaining cases resolved by the end of June.
12. Under the terms of the MoU, AMM is tasked with monitoring the human rights situation, and to provide assistance in this field. Monitoring is limited to violations related to the provisions of the MoU, which have occurred after 15 August 2005. Monitoring is further focused on the reintegration of GAM and the general human rights atmosphere in Aceh. The implementation of civil and political rights and economic, social, and cultural rights are of particular concern, since they directly relate to the reintegration effort and the future of Aceh. According to World Bank assessments, the number of incidents and human rights violations has diminished significantly since the launch of the AMM mission.
13. As stipulated in the Helsinki MoU, a new Law on the Governing of Aceh (LoGA) will have to be promulgated. This would subsequently allow for local elections to be held as soon as possible. It is true that the timeline given in Helsinki – 31 March - has proved to be unrealistic and that the LoGA is already delayed, but I believe it is better to have a good law than to rush. This is now the responsibility of the Parliament (DPR) and AMM will neither interfere in the work nor publicly comment on any articles. This is how democracy works. An aspect which is often lost sight of is the fact that the process of the drafting of the LoGA has been very inclusive and transparent. The Acehnese have given their input, then the government and now the Parliament. The process has been truly democratic.

Why it will have to work this time

14. Although the memories of the failed CoHA (Cessation of Hostilities Agreement) of December 2002 are still fresh, the mood among the Acehnese is upbeat and there is a distinct optimism prevailing that this time peace has come for real and that the peace process is irreversible. I also want to underline that there are some important differences if we compare the COHA and AMM. With all due respect for the NGO, AMM is made up of EU and ASEAN and has the backing of the broader international community: there is simply more weight behind this mission. The MoU is a carefully crafted document, with a short and relatively easy text, including clear timelines. Also, the invaluable work of former President Ahtisaari can not be overestimated. In parallel, the effect of the devastating tsunami, as well as the new approach taken by Jakarta vis-à-vis Aceh, have both been essential to pushing the negotiations and later the implementation forward.
15. As we have entered the second year of post-tsunami reconstruction, it is important to remember the intimate link that exists between peace and development, which in the

case of Aceh translates into the interdependence between post-tsunami reconstruction and the peace process. It is often stated that without a peaceful settlement of the conflict, the rebuilding of Aceh after the tsunami will not be possible – an observation reiterated in the preamble to the MoU. After AMM leaves Aceh, the reintegration and reconstruction processes will have to be embedded in longer term programmes benefiting all affected citizens of Aceh.

16. The AMM is firmly committed to the process. Our aim, shared by the Government, is to be present until the local elections. This was also underlined by Javier Solana during his visit to Indonesia.

A new way of conducting peace missions

17. As the EU's first European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) mission in Asia, the AMM is an expression of the EU commitment not only to the peace process in Aceh, but also to peace and stability in the region as a whole. Our excellent cooperation with our Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) colleagues is a further step in the partnership that the EU is building with South-East Asian countries.
18. In every part of the mission, we have fully integrated teams of EU and ASEAN monitors. The ASEAN participation allows for a regional legitimacy of the mission and they also have a better understanding of the local culture and customs. On the other hand, we Europeans have a larger experience from previous missions and this mutually reinforcing cooperation has already proven its worth.
19. It has been said that no other mission has ever been deployed more quickly. During negotiations in Helsinki both the GoI and the GAM agreed that they would like to see a monitoring presence in Aceh immediately after the signing of the MoU. It was crucial to be able to deploy quickly. We were able to get our first monitors on the ground by 15 August. This could be the standard for future EU missions. It is definitely one of the lessons that we will take with us.
20. AMM is breaking new ground for future ESDP missions and we like to think it will change the way the EU conducts crisis management operations. The AMM has a unique mix of competencies, drawing on both civilian and military experience. The future of crisis management may require a broad range of instruments and expertise - something that the EU is increasingly showing that it is capable to provide - thereby implementing a coherent action across its institutional pillars.
21. The European Commission is supporting the Aceh peace process through support to re-integration of former GAM combatants, technical assistance and capacity-building in local governance and police training. In other words, it is a good example of how practical collaboration between the various EU institutions, in particular the European Commission and the Council, can ensure that the peace process can become fully self-sustainable.

Challenges ahead – but still cause for optimism

22. There are still some important challenges ahead. The Law on the Governing of Aceh has to be passed by the Parliament in Jakarta and a date for local elections has to be confirmed. GAM will have to transform into a political movement. This would be the logical culmination point in the reconciliation process. As stated by HR/SG Solana, somewhere between the adoption of the LoGA and the date set for the local elections, GAM should dissolve itself or change its name and mission. If it so wishes, it can transition into a political movement in accordance with the laws of the Republic of Indonesia. GAM would of course remain a stakeholder in the implementation process as a signatory of the Helsinki MoU. The reintegration of former GAM combatants must continue. The pending amnesty cases must also be settled.
23. Most important of course, is that the peace process is on track. The recent return of GAM leadership is another important milestone on the path towards reconciliation. Symbolically this return is a sign of growing confidence between the parties and gives further hope for the Acehnese people and for Indonesia as a whole.
24. Also, in the more formal meeting of the Commission on Security Arrangements (COSA), one can easily spot the commitment shown by both parties. This especially evident in the meeting two weeks ago when HR/SG Solana, Minister Djalil and Mr. Malik Mahmud were all present. This positive spirit is indeed rewarding for all AMM monitors and we really feel that we are making a difference and contributing to something meaningful.
25. There is a lot at stake for the people of Aceh and keeping the tsunami tragedy in mind, we in the AMM, together with our GoI and GAM partners, are doing our utmost to show that, after two disasters – the conflict and the tsunami, we are on an irreversible path for a sustainable peace in Aceh.