

Chair's Conclusions of the Venice Conference on Justice Rapid Response

(15-17 June 2006)

Adopted by consensus on 17 June 2006

In accordance with a prior understanding, the outcome and recommended practical steps from this Conference, the fifth meeting on Justice Rapid Response, is contained in the following Chair's Conclusions. Documents on guidelines were distributed but not discussed.

The value added of JRR as an international cooperative mechanism

The development and reinforcement of international justice principles and transitional justice methods since the early 1990s has not been accompanied in equal measure by practical assistance to States or international organizations to meet their responsibilities. In post-conflict situations, there may be political and security windows of opportunity conducive to the commencement of an accountability process that is not matched by available expertise or resources. Moreover, the sooner information regarding war crimes, crimes against humanity or genocide during that conflict is identified, collected and preserved, the more likely it is that such information will be accurate and adequate for the appropriate accountability mechanisms. The international community is not now equipped to move quickly when such windows of opportunity appear. Thus crucial evidence may be lost and opportunities missed to have justice play a positive role in securing lasting peace in the post-conflict society. The JRR mechanism aims to remedy this deficiency in the context of a wide range of investigative assistance to States and international institutions.

JRR is intended to be an international cooperative mechanism for the supply of voluntary assistance at the request of a State or international institution, where the identification, collection and preservation of information would assist at any stage a wide range of international and transitional justice options. The specific functions most likely to be carried out by the JRR mechanism in this respect are, *inter alia*: pattern of violence investigation; forensic mapping; documentary evidence investigation; visual image collection; identification of potential witnesses; identification of massacre sites. JRR was identified as providing an improvement on the status quo by being a cooperative mechanism that does not need to be created anew each time there is a request for assistance. In this way, it can significantly reduce response times in providing assistance that is both impartial and which meets international standards; it shares the burden of assistance through coordination of the resources of States, international organizations and civil society; and, as a global effort, provides capacity-building by involving all States in the mechanism, irrespective of resources.

Broadening the base

Conference participants were of the view that their respective governments and organisations should continue preparations for the deployment of missions implementing the JRR mechanism, especially with regard to future mission arrangements and any other necessary agreements. They also invite their governments and organizations to use all opportunities to promote participation in JRR mechanism by States, international organisations and NGOs.

Practical considerations

Focal points: It was the understanding of conference participants that parties interested in participating in JRR nominate a focal point for contacts in external relations in the JRR mechanism; as well as identify their resources to enable them to participate in the mechanism with the necessary expertise and/or resources.

Rosters and training: Conference participants identified the need to ask experts and existing institutions to give advice on generic expert profiles, the criteria for selection of experts for rosters, possible standards for roster administration and pre-mission training of experts. They were of the opinion that rosters of experts ought to be available as soon as possible.

Future cooperation: Conference participants felt that partners in the JRR mechanism should continue their inter-governmental cooperation while at the same time working with relevant international organizations, of which some may be in a position to take over the coordination and implementation of the JRR mechanism.

In addition, they discussed issues related to future cooperation within the JRR mechanism and for the deployment of missions implementing this mechanism, on the continued understanding that decision-making on contribution of personnel or resources shall remain with individual States, international organisations and NGOs.

Continuing the process: Conference participants encouraged a JRR partner to assume the role of overall coordination and other JRR partners to coordinate on specific issues of cooperation. In order to

facilitate cooperation of partners in the JRR mechanism, secretarial functions will be performed by No Peace Without Justice until modalities for coordination are further developed among JRR participants or an international organization may be in a position to take over the coordination and implementation of the JRR mechanism.

Practical Steps

1. *Focal Points*

- participants in the JRR mechanism will designate an external focal point for contacts with the JRR mechanism;
- each participant will survey their available resources, expertise and mechanisms for their deployment, including gender requirements related to rosters, training and ultimately, deployment in missions implementing the JRR mechanism.

2. *Rosters*

- designate one participant (Jens Behrendt, ad ref) to coordinate development of generic expert profiles, the criteria for selection of experts for rosters and possible standards for roster administration;
- hold meeting of experts on rosters to develop common criteria for rosters;

3. *Training*

- designate one participant (Alexander McLachlan, ad ref) to coordinate development of common training syllabus for international deployment of experts in the framework of the JRR mechanism;
- hold meeting of experts and international training institutions to develop common training syllabus for international deployment of experts in the framework of the JRR mechanism.

4. *Standard operating procedures*

- designate a participant (Helen Ahrens, ad ref) to coordinate the development of standard operating procedures, including gender requirements;
- appropriate institutions or organisations (GTZ, ad ref) are to identify logistical requirements for a mission.

5. *Cooperation among interested parties*

- designate a participant (Pål Wrange, ad ref) to coordinate discussion on vehicles for cooperation among interested parties;
- No Peace Without Justice will establish an electronic discussion vehicle for information to be circulated among focal points and participants in the JRR mechanism, provide secretarial support to the thematic coordinators; and perform other secretarial and research functions at the request of participants and coordinators.

6. *Ultimate coordination of JRR*

- designate a participant (Eileen Olexiuk, ad ref) to coordinate work with relevant international organizations that may be in a position to take over the coordination and implementation of the JRR mechanism.

7. *Promoting participation*

- use all opportunities to promote participation in the JRR mechanism by States, IGOs and NGOs, including translation of relevant documents