

Mr Jaakko Laajava, Under-Secretary of State
Ministry for Foreign Affairs

Seminar on Crisis Management and Information Technology
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I am very pleased to have this opportunity to address your seminar this morning.

As you could conclude from Minister Enestam's remarks last night, crisis management ranks very high on the list of priorities of Finnish foreign policy.

Finland is able to benefit from the long experience it has gained in peacekeeping operations and crisis management: as you heard, Finland took part in a UN peacekeeping operation for the first time in 1956. A small nation of ours has so far deployed a total of over 40,000 peacekeepers in various operations, as Mr. Enestam pointed out.

In order to introduce the audience into the vast theme of crisis management, let me walk you through some of the basic concepts in this field.

Conflict prevention and crisis management are crucial elements in enhancing international security - I believe all nations agree on this fundamental approach.

Successful conflict prevention is naturally the preferred avenue. Again, no disagreement.

The main thrust of our activities should therefore be to prevent crises before they actually erupt. This can be achieved by promoting democracy and human rights, especially the rights of minorities, by strengthening the basis for a civil society and by supporting stable economic development. This is where many divergent views occur. How should we define the relevant tasks? Who does what?

Conflict prevention therefore is an immensely complicated task. It requires, at least, an effective early warning system with the necessary criteria for warning lights, sufficient means, political, economic, military and others, to deal with a multitude of problems of a very different character, it requires a common assessment of the need for intervention, the justification for doing so including an appropriate legal framework to act and the political will to do so in time.

Conflict prevention is the fundamental policy goal of the European Union. The Union aims at promoting stability and cooperation both in Europe and

worldwide. Conflict prevention also plays an important role within the Council of Europe's support projects as well as in the field activities of the OSCE and in NATO's Partnership for Peace programme.

However, in spite of all preventive efforts, some crises will always occur. The crisis management capability of the international community must be of such quality and effectiveness that evolving crises can be resolved quickly and prevented from spreading. The aim must be to minimize human suffering and economic loss.

In crisis situations, there is no time to lose. In order to be effective, crisis management requires quick decisions and coherent action at all levels. The situations on the ground are often extremely complex and volatile; they can change rapidly without warning. A coherent and co-ordinated reaction can only be based on accurate information that must be produced and transmitted with speed and precision. Innovative ways and means to respond to crisis situations as well as appropriate technological tools are truly essential.

Furthermore, experience from recent crisis situations dictates the need to adopt a fairly broad overall concept when preparing for crisis prevention and management. Crises occur not only between but also within individual countries, often involving an ethnic dimension. A wide range of means must be available to put an end to hostilities and restore conditions of peace, but also to create trust between parties and to begin the rebuilding of a functioning society. Often crises also cause sudden and large migrations of people. Rapid and targeted action is therefore vital.

As to methodology, crisis management can include both military and civilian tasks and the corresponding actors. Often two or more fundamentally different operations must be carried out in parallel.

Military crisis management is usually necessary in order to end hostilities and to restore peace and security on the ground. The primary aim of peacekeeping operations is to prevent violence and to create basic conditions for communities to function properly again. In recent crises, peacekeeping operations have focused particularly on the protection of civilians. They are also often designed to ensure that humanitarian aid intended for civilians reaches its target.

At the same time, the demand for civilian crisis management has increased as well. A central task there is to support democracy and strengthen the rule of law. In many cases, this involves down-to-earth practical work on the ground. For instance, a stable society needs a well-functioning local police force. Without the concrete help of international civilian police officers this is often impossible.

A solid local government is essential for the society to recover. There again, help is often desperately needed.

In reality, nothing of this can happen without a good cooperation between local authorities and experts through international organizations, governmental and non-governmental.

While the military tasks may include preventive troop deployments, the supervision of agreements and the restoration of peace, civilian crisis management includes policing, reinstatement of judicial and administrative systems, election monitoring and other support for democracy and human rights, and possibly search and rescue activities and disaster relief.

One of the means to try to achieve greater coherence in crisis situations is the so-called CIMIC, civil-military cooperation. Its aim is to coordinate better military and civilian crisis management actions and to ensure the attainment of common objectives. CIMIC activities are based on direct contacts between military and civilian authorities, between soldiers, the local population and NGOs, and between military authorities and international aid organizations on different levels.

All of the above things, civilian and military, preventive as well as conflict and post-conflict crisis management become a very complicated, multifaceted and complex task. One of the notorious challenges on the field is the fact that so many different players are necessarily involved - the UN, its specialized agencies, regional organizations, NGOs and so forth. The imperative of coherent action in the civilian world is often much more difficult to achieve than that in peacekeeping operations which operate under a unified command. Modern information technology, common standards and interoperability could usefully be applied here in order to facilitate communication and co-ordination for best possible results.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Crises and their effective management will unfortunately remain high on the international agenda for many decades to come. There is a long way to go. I am pleased that we now embark upon a project that aims at bringing the information technology and the relevant experts into the picture in a much more concrete way than what has been the case so far. Hopefully we can, at this seminar and through your active participation, establish new links and partnerships between governmental actors and the private sector.

On behalf of the Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs I would like to thank the organizers and sponsors of the seminar and above all thank you as participants for your interest in this important topic. I wish your seminar the very best of success.