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**Key note speech at Closing Ceremony on 5<sup>th</sup> of August in Stadtschlaining (ASPR)**

Dear honourable Arno Truger, Dear friend Elias Bierdel, Dear honourable Mr. Goodfield,  
Dear honourable Mr. Levy, Dear Course Participants,

Thank you very much for inviting me to join your today's Ceremony. It is a great pleasure for me to meet and to talk to all of you.

You, as the participants of the last two weeks Specialisation Course on Conflict Transformation, you are those experts, which have now the knowledge and the background to be successful in the field. You are now enabled to tackle effectively transforming conflicts on all levels.

The word "conflict prevention" is often used in political discussions on different stages and levels. But there is a lack of understanding, what it means in reality. And there is a lack of readiness to spend more money to prevent conflicts. Politicians are often speaking about "early warning and early action". Nobody would criticise that – but too often we are missing that what we are calling "lessons learned".

Having said this, please allow me to introduce the "Parliamentarians Network for Conflict Prevention" which I have the honour to chair since we were founded in 2008 in the European Parliament. Our Network was established by the EastWest Institute's international Task Force on Preventive Diplomacy. We are an international, non-partisan initiative that brings together parliamentarians from across the globe to direct political will and resources to prevent conflicts before – YES – before they begin. It is our shared responsibility to reach beyond our borders, and to do what we can to achieve peace, security, and the non-violent resolution of conflicts. This challenge is a moral imperative, an economic necessity, a humanitarian must, and a political obligation for us all.

[www.parliamentariansforconflictprevention.net](http://www.parliamentariansforconflictprevention.net)



We have illusions, but of course we are not dreaming. We have to recognize that yet the response of the global community is often inadequate, too late, and as a result, too costly. You are sent into conflict and post conflict settings but without a mandate to directly intervene in a conflict situation. You are trained and you are experts – and you are so important – because non-governmental, but also governmental and inter-governmental organizations need you to be successful in conflict transformation missions. You have the Inter cultural competence that is a main cornerstone to identify major political, economic and cultural reasons for violent conflicts and how to deal within them under the principal of “do no harm”.

Let me give you an example: Starting in 2001 after the end of the armed hostilities and until now one should never use the UN term “FYROM” in Macedonia. You know that communication – verbal and nonverbal – is the first step forward. But the use of that term will end all efforts immediately. The people are Macedonians not “Fyromians”.

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen, dear friends,

As a former member of the German Bundestag and the European Parliament, specialized to foreign security and disarmament policies, I think I have enough experience to say, that if political decision makers would have the same knowledge and understanding of conflict situations - as you have now, due to this excellent course - our world would be more peacefully, humanitarian tragedies would not be as numerous as they are.

In a globalized world, no country is isolated from the after-effects of a violent conflict in another part of the world. Today, we cannot close our eyes and we cannot ignore what happens in Pakistan. The current water flood which wounded and killed thousands and thousands, this flood which is destroying the livelihood of whole areas, this flood which has the power to influence further destabilisation in Pakistan as well as in Afghanistan – This flood is only one example, that there is more than one way for evaluation as well as for support.

My résumé is, that we need you as specialists in the field, but I wonder if it is not overdue, to start to establish training courses on conflict prevention and conflict transformation for politicians. This is one of the agenda items, which our Parliamentarians Network wants to realize in 2011. We need parliamentarians world-wide, who are capable to read the signs before the situation is out of control. We need parliamentarians who are willing to raise their voice in time before a catastrophe occurs and again: We need people like you, people with empathy and understanding for reasons and developments of conflicts as well as ways out of conflicts. Conflict transformation is a lengthy process and usually takes a lot more time than the road into a conflict. But you will never be alone if you stand for the principles: Replace a conflict with insight, understanding and sustainable action.

I wish you all the best in your work in the field and be reminded: Our world surely needs help to come through Conflict Transformation and conflict prevention to sustainable and lasting peace.

Thanks again for the friendly invitation and the chance to speak to the trainees and the trainers now, as the speaker, but as well later today in a relaxed atmosphere.

