

**Speech for the panel on regional cooperation at the IFDT meeting in
Boston, September 2011 by Ron Ton, Director of Diplomatic Training
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(Opening statement)

Allow me at the outset to extend my warmest thanks to the esteemed organizers of this year's IFDT conference for hosting such an important event in sharing ideas, thoughts and practices in diplomatic training. It is really great to see so many friends from all over the globe gathered here. One of the main purposes of our IFDT meeting is to share experiences and to learn from it; and that is precisely what I would like to do in this short contribution to the panel on regional cooperation in diplomatic training.

First, I would like to touch upon some remarks relating to the context and trends in regional cooperation in diplomatic training, to explore some so called "drivers" behind the need for regional cooperation, to share some examples of regional training at the Clingendael institute and to wrap up with some concluding remarks. And all of this of course in just 7-8 minutes as the chairperson asked us to do so.

(observation)

We immediately can draw two obvious observations tackling the topic of Regional cooperation in diplomatic training:

1) It is not a new phenomena; in particular since the early nineties of the last century, after the collapse of the Berlin wall regional cooperation in diplomatic training has become a common good in Europe; inter regional, for example in the case of eastern European diplomats who received their training in western Europe, but also intra regional later on among Balkan countries. The challenging question of our panel today is how to assess new demands in regional diplomatic training because of globalization, regional institutionalization and specialization in diplomacy.

2) We clearly have to distinguish different levels of regional cooperation in the context of diplomatic training; is it to promote the common understanding of being a member of a multilateral organization, is it to promote the dialogue among a specific group of countries or is just to share resources and to work on a model of benefit sharing?

(context)

As diplomatic trainers we are all facing challenges and important choices in how to design the best curricula in diplomatic training possible; for example searching for the right balance between

- In-house training versus outsourcing
- life long career training versus short time specific training
- training on the job versus full time training
- diplomatic versus technical training; and also our topic of this panel is part of this overall picture of challenges and choices we have to make in organizing diplomatic training, namely
- national versus regionalized or multilateral training

(trends/examples)

In my view there are important new motivations and drivers to strategize on a regional or multilateral level in diplomatic training on top of national diplomatic training:

1) Of course no one disputes the impact of international politics becoming deeply involved in the solution of domestic problems whose effects have spilled over borders and demanding regional, if not global solutions. I am referring for example to environmental threats, the depletion of natural resources, fight against crime, food security and migration; these examples not only call for new and more effective forms of regional and global cooperation: they also illustrate the need for a variety of new insights and skills that the work of diplomats entail today.

One hears more and more about specialized forms of diplomacy (I should say besides the already ongoing debate on public and economic diplomacy): climate diplomats, environmental diplomats, energy diplomats or water diplomats. This kind of specialization in diplomacy could be seen as an important motivation to regionalize diplomatic training; as I have experienced myself in the Arab region in organizing a course in water diplomacy for 16 different Arab countries through the Arab Water Academy in Abu Dhabi. Each country was represented by a diplomat and a water manager. This was done not only to discuss the benefits of sharing water, but also to exchange diplomatic skills by diplomats to people from the water sector in their negotiations on water disputes. For our discussion, it also raises the question to what extent regional, thematic driven training should be open to other ministries or non diplomats.

2) In the case of training programmes based on sharing memberships of a regional organization, the goal is to provide participants with the opportunity to understand better the role of the specific regional organization at stake, to understand each national positions towards the organization and to improve synergies to better implement the various programmes of the organization, for example in the case of ASEAN, Mercosur, SADC and the EU. The example of the EU is quite interesting for the intra-regional character:

1. In the already more than 10 years existing European Diplomatic Programme to share insights in the EU external relations among young diplomats of the 27 member states; and in

2) diplomatic training for the newly established European External Action Service which predominantly is mentioned to promote a common diplomatic culture among officials of EU institutions and national diplomats who now have to work together in one single EU diplomatic service.

3) Another logic behind regional diplomatic trainings is the creation of a culture of trust and better understanding among the neighbors: the principle of 'cooperative security' finds here a perfect application: peace can derive from a better knowledge of your neighbors and understanding of their foreign policies dilemmas and challenges and the way they tackle them.

Those programmes are particularly suited for regions with inter-states tensions, either because of past or current conflicts between the members or because of shared natural resources dilemmas, territorial disputes or population overlaps and minority issues. In that regard, they contribute highly to post-conflict reconstruction and reconciliation and/or (further) conflict prevention.

In this respect the Clingendael regional diplomatic training programmes for the Great Lakes Region in Africa can be seen as an interesting example, which is offered through the support of the NL development cooperation.

The GLR programme is organized yearly for diplomats of the 11 core member states to the international conference of the GLR and representatives of the secretariat which is based in Bujumbura in Burundi. Next year we expect the newly established state of South Sudan to join the programme as the 12th member state. Trainings are provided on the four major themes of the international conference (Peace and security, democracy and good governance, economic development and regional integration and humanitarian, social and environmental issues). But, most importantly, we focus our efforts on diplomatic skills trainings to promote the peaceful dialogue and regional cooperation. So far the programmes brought amazing results regarding participant's synergies, overcoming language (francophone versus English speaking countries), cultural and even development differences.

4) A fourth motivation could just be a division of labor or creating added educational or didactical value: specialized knowledge or specific interactive diplomatic training exercises like negotiations simulations or case studies. For example our regional programmes for the Balkans, Eastern Europe, Northern Africa, Central Asia or the ASEAN countries are focusing on the relationship with Europe and the European Union and contain a very in depth diplomatic skills programme. For example, by organizing role plays in international negotiations or policy coordination techniques. In doing so, substantial added value can be created in comparison to national diplomatic training programmes.

5) And finally, regional cooperation provides an excellent channel for dialogue, networking and cultural awareness. In my view, the importance of regional diplomatic training and diplomatic training institutions as a tool in foreign policy has been increased and almost all of us have their examples of opening diplomatic training programmes to third countries.

In conclusion,

1) The path of regionalization of diplomatic training programmes requires a clearly defined strategy to create an optimal added value to national diplomatic trainings.

2) Regional diplomatic training can only be successful if the organizers have a clear eye and competence for the didactical approach in providing feedback, reflection and coaching. It goes without saying that the management of different perspectives, views and experiences and maybe even a history of conflict makes it vital to invest in these kinds of educational techniques.

3) In order to strengthen the sustainability of regional diplomatic trainings I would like to advocate a parallel effort to cooperate in capacity building programmes for diplomatic academies or institutions, for example in curricula development, train-the-trainer programmes, strategy planning or the design of interactive diplomatic training exercises.

Thank you