

DISCUSSION PAPER No. 286

**Scoping private sector engagement in
conflict prevention and peacebuilding:
LESSONS FROM THE LITERATURE**

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There is growing interest in the role of the private sector's contribution to conflict prevention and peacebuilding (CPPB). Though the private sector's contributions to economic development, infrastructure development, innovation, and the supply of goods and services are well recognised, there are critical questions around the 'privatisation' of development and peacebuilding while the government is the primary duty-bearer for development and security.

This paper analyses the literature on private sector engagement in conflict prevention and peacebuilding to identify when and how the private sector can engage with the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA). The study finds that the private sector can contribute to CPBB in three ways: i) ensuring that it is not doing harm or exacerbating conflict; ii) enabling an environment for peace through, for instance, economic and social development, and iii) engaging directly with processes such as mediation and reconciliation. There are, however, questions around whether and how much the private sector should engage in the latter activities.

When considered a legitimate actor, the private sector's networks, convening power and detachment from diplomatic decorum place it at a unique position to contribute to mediation, reconciliation and similar processes. However, in what ways, when and whether the private sector should be involved in these political processes should be assessed on a case-by-case basis, according to its legitimacy, value added, and the nature of the conflict at hand. The AU is currently working to engage the private sector in APSA operations, most notably to mobilise funds for the African Peace Fund. This study finds that conflict early warning and response and (post-)conflict recovery and development could also be potential entry points for the private sector to engage in the APSA.

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Acronyms

3TG	Conflict minerals (tin, tantalum, tungsten and gold)
AfCFTA	African Continental Free Trade Area
AFP	Alliance for Peacebuilding
ANC	African National Congress (in South Africa)
APSA	African Peace and Security Architecture
AU	African Union
CDA	Collaborative Learning Projects
CPPB	Conflict prevention and peacebuilding
CSVMS	Country Structural Vulnerability Mitigation Strategies
CSVRA	Country Structural Vulnerability and Resilience Assessment
EC	European Commission
ECDPM	European Centre for Development Policy Management
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
ECPF	ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework
EU	European Union
FARC	Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia
FFP	Fund for Peace
IFC	International Finance Corporation
IFP	Inkatha Freedom Party
IGAD	Intergovernmental Authority on Development
MSMEs	Medium and small enterprises
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PCRD	Post Conflict Reconstruction and Development
PSO	Peace support operation
REC	Regional Economic Community
RM	Regional Mechanisms
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SME	Small medium enterprise
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNPBA	United Nations Peacebuilding Architecture
WB	World Bank
WEF	World Economic Forum

Foreword

The GIZ APSA project supports the African Union (AU) and regional organisations (RECs/RMs) to strengthen and effectively utilise instruments of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA), which include the Panel of the Wise, the Continental Early Warning Systems (CEWS), the African Standby Force (ASF) and the Peace Fund. Over the past few years, GIZ APSA has worked alongside the African Union to further develop and pilot the use of the APSA instruments, including in the areas of structural conflict prevention and post-conflict reconstruction and development. ECDPM works on regional integration in Africa and is following the implementation of the APSA closely to inform policy makers in Europe and Africa about this unique framework.

With increased attention on conflict prevention globally, it is important to understand and draw on all potential stakeholders, including the private sector. However, far too little is known about the impact of and role played by the private sector in fragile and conflict-affected areas. One of the most fundamental questions itself has not yet been answered decisively: Would an effort to increase the private sector's participation in peace and security pose a challenge or an opportunity – or both? In a first step towards answering this question, GIZ APSA and ECDPM worked together to conduct an introductory study on the role of the private sector in conflict prevention and peacebuilding with a focus on the APSA.

While the study is limited to a review of the literature at this stage, it serves as a good starting point with interesting results: The study looks at potential ways the private sector can contribute to conflict prevention, mediation and dialogue as well as post-conflict reconstruction and other stabilisation efforts of the APSA.

The study led to an online discussion between representatives from the Conflict Prevention and Early Warning Division (CPEWD) of the African Union, GIZ AU and ECDPM in October 2020. The participants recognised that the topic is of great relevance to the African Union, as the private sector is often left out of discussions on conflict prevention and peacebuilding. Participants also acknowledged the great work of Ms Lidet Tadesse (ECDPM) who collaborated with Ms Jeske van Seters (ECDPM) in compiling the study and recognised the effective coordination of Ms Joana Clemens (GIZ) that led to the virtual exchange.

We hope that this introductory study will be a first step to initiate critical discussions amongst stakeholders in peace and security, including the African Union and regional organisations, about the role of the private sector at all stages of the conflict cycle and look forward to remaining engaged on this topic.

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1. Introduction

There has been a growing interest in the role of the private sector in development and peacebuilding in the past years. In the global policy setting, the United Nations (UN) in particular has had a notable role in calling for greater participation of the private sector in the global poverty reduction, development, human rights and peacebuilding discourse, while also setting certain normative standards for private sector involvement in fragile and conflict contexts. The establishment of the UN Global Compact in 2004, brought together leading private sector actors and civil society to set universal standards for socially and environmentally conscious business practices. Subsequent documents such as the Guidance on Responsible Business in Conflict-Affected and High-Risk Areas (UN Global Compact, PRI, 2010) and the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UN 2011) are also examples of UN-led, global initiatives covering private sector involvement in peace.

In addition to the UN, other global multilateral organisations such as the OECD as well as financial institutions like the World Bank (WB) have carried the conversation forward. The UN/WB report 'Pathways for Peace' for example notes that the private sector, like civil society such as youth and women groups, can play a role in sustaining peace. The African Union (AU) and the European Union (EU) have not been systematic in their engagement of the private sector in peacebuilding processes. However, the AU is increasingly looking into mobilising the private sector to finance peace and post conflict recovery while the EU is exploring private sector investment as a development cooperation tool, particularly in fragile and conflict affected countries.

This enthusiasm, however, should be contrasted with the observation that "the empirical evidence of how businesses have influenced state- and peacebuilding processes remains marginal and at best anecdotal" (Hoffman 2014). There has also been criticism of the increasing focus on private sector investment (as opposed to public investment) as a mechanism for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (Abshagen et al. 2018 & McCandless 2019).

In light of these developments, this paper provides a literature review of private sector engagement in conflict prevention and peacebuilding (CPPB) in fragile and conflict affected contexts. The literature review is guided by the following questions:

- i. How has the conceptual and policy discourse on private sector engagement in conflict prevention and peacebuilding evolved over time?
- ii. What are the arguments for and against private sector engagement in CPPB?
- iii. What are the ways in which the private sector has contributed to CPPB?

Based on findings around these three questions, the paper draws out some lessons learnt on good practices of private sector contribution to CPBB mostly at the structural conflict prevention levels, and offers preliminary insights on enhancing the contribution of the private sector in African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA). The APSA is the AU's 'blueprint' for preventing and managing conflicts in Africa and building peace¹. By synthesising and analysing private sector engagement in CPPB and drawing implications for APSA, the paper prepares the ground for future, detailed studies on engaging the private sector in the context of APSA.

¹ For more on this see the information sheet by AU: <http://www.peaceau.org/uploads/african-peace-and-security-architecture-apsa-final.pdf>.

This introductory section is followed by a section on the overarching methodological framework of the study and lays out its scope, limitations and analytical focus. This is then followed by an overview of conceptual and policy trends and developments around the topic of private sector engagement in CPPB in section three. The fourth section looks at the rationales and caveats around why and how the private sector should contribute to CPPB. In the fifth section, the paper presents findings on how the private sector can contribute to conflict prevention and peacebuilding. The paper then draws implications for engaging the private sector in APSA and concludes with the main lessons learnt and key takeaways from the study.

2. Methodology

Scope

This paper is based on a literature review of secondary sources on private sector engagement in conflict prevention and peacebuilding (CPPB). The limited scope of this work did not allow the author to conduct expert interviews in relation to the study and hence the paper entirely relies on published resources.

This body of literature is largely focused on documented cases of private sector contribution to peace at the national level, and much of the literature is based on cases from the 1990s to early 2000s in terms of timeline. This could be partly attributed to the post-Cold War period and the political turbulence and subsequent interstate and intrastate conflicts that took place in some parts of the world, particularly in Africa.

In terms of case studies, the most documented and analysed cases are from Sri Lanka, Colombia, Ireland, South Africa and Kenya in terms of geographical focus. As a result, an exclusive geographical focus on the African continent could not be maintained.

Definitions

The definition of the 'private sector' in this paper is kept wide to mean for profit businesses that are owned by private, non-governmental actors. The private sector can range from micro-enterprises to multinationals that work across multiple countries. It can also mean informal one-person businesses or small enterprises. The discussion of the private sector in this paper is however, rather general. It doesn't differentiate between different types of private sector actors while in reality, businesses would have differentiated capacities, interests and roles in CPPB based on their size, scale, origin or even their sector. This is because the literature, which is also the basis for this study, lacks a comprehensive and nuanced take on private sector engagement in CPPB.

Similarly, it is difficult to pin down a clear definition of CPPB. There is no universal definition of conflict prevention or peacebuilding. The definition of peacebuilding in particular is wide ranging (AFP 2013). The reference to CPPB in this paper includes activities ranging from early warning, conflict prevention, crisis response, peace-making, peacekeeping, recovery from conflict and development that occur at different (and sometimes overlapping) stages of the conflict continuum.

The paper understands peace in two folds: (i) negative peace (absence of active violence) and also (ii) positive peace (absence of structural violence or promotion of greater social good)², as those aspects of peace are well recognised in peacebuilding scholarship and practice. The paper takes on a broader understanding of peace in which the end goal is not only to end violent conflict but to also foster human development and social harmony. As a result, the private sector creating employment opportunities in a country emerging out of conflict would qualify as private sector engagement in CPPB, as does private sector facilitating negotiation with armed insurgencies.

Conceptual framing

In this paper, the reference to 'private sector engagement' in CPBB pertains to how businesses have contributed to conflict prevention and peacebuilding. As mentioned earlier, the private sector can have a direct and proactive contribution to specific peace processes or it can contribute to broader socio-economic objectives that help sustain peace. This is largely due to the fact that literature on private sector engagement in CPBB was pioneered by peacebuilding actors and social scientists. At that time (1990s and early 2000s) the interest was in understanding the role of private sector actors in the conflict settings and how they can be 'engaged' to contribute to ongoing peacebuilding processes.

Of late, particularly since 2010, this framing is changing. There is a growing focus on 'private sector engagement' in least developed, conflict-affected or fragile contexts in order to address state fragility and development needs. As a result, a reference to 'private sector engagement' in peace could be interpreted as the ways in which governments and multilateral organisations incentivise the private sector to invest and increase its productivity in fragile or conflict affected contexts. Understanding the legal and technical environments that need to be established to attract or incentivise the private sector to deliver on macroeconomic and social goals is important. But it is matter that merits its own study and is not covered in this paper.

3. The policy discourse on private sector engagement in CPPB

The earlier literature, from the 1990s and early 2000s, on private sector engagement in conflict and peace reflects on the diverse roles of private sector actors operating in conflicts affected corners of the world. The analyses seem to have been written with three objectives in mind:

- i. Exposing and curtailing the roles of private actors as profiteers of conflict
- ii. Strengthening the accountability of businesses in conflict or fragile contexts, and
- iii. Enhancing the role of business as peace actors.

As a result, the literature is anchored on 'national' or 'local' levels of analysis and is written largely for a civil society or peacebuilding audience. What this means is that the documented cases show how the private sector got involved in national or local peace processes. The primary objective of these analyses was to offer insights, guidelines and recommendations for civil society actors or peacebuilders on how to engage the private sector in CPPB activities. There is very little written on the experiences of the private sector itself on how it sees its role in CPPB, or its experiences of working in fragile and conflict affected settings.

² Structural violence refers to deep rooted systemic realities such as extreme poverty, extreme inequality, systematic discrimination, social injustice etc. that are often sustained by policies, laws or informal social codes and cultures - and which affect segments of a society or otherwise undermine social harmony between people and communities in a society. For more on positive and negative peace, see Galtung 1996.

This is, however, changing and the literature on private sector engagement in CPPB is increasingly being framed in terms of attracting private sector investment in fragile states. One of the leading documents charting this change was the 2011 World Development report, which drew attention to the link between economic development and stability and underscored the centrality of state legitimacy, employment and justice provision in sustaining security (WB 2011). This linkage facilitated a framing that sees the private sector not only as a contributor to economic development and employment but also a stakeholder/ally in addressing state fragility. This has encouraged a growing literature on how to leverage the private sector to address state fragility (at least the economic causes of state fragility), extreme poverty and how to make businesses key partners in achieving the SDGs.

This conceptual development also overlaps with the call for more trade and investment in lieu of aid - as a standard avenue for development in the global south in general and in conflict-affected countries in particular. The 4th High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in 2011 (or Busan partnership), a multi-stakeholder forum on development cooperation, for example, recognised the central role of the private sector in development and promoted 'aid for trade' (OECD 2011). This has resulted in various governments, multilateral institutions and also major global civil society organisations looking into ways of encouraging private sector investment and engagement in fragile states. The World Bank Group is increasingly looking into mechanisms for supporting private sector investment in fragile and conflict affected countries (IFC 2019). The European Union seeks to boost investments in Africa and beyond and its 'External Investment Plan' focuses on fragile, conflict and violence-affected countries, landlocked countries and the least developed countries that are in greatest need (EU N.d.).

In the African continental policy space, the AU's Agenda 2063 links economic prosperity and peace. The private sector also features in the AU's policy on Post Conflict Reconstruction and Development (PCRD) as a potential source of technical (AU 2006) and financial resources (AU 2016). However, beyond these broad associations, the AU lacks concrete initiatives or strategies for engaging the private sector towards the continent's peace and security goals. This is different from the AU's take on private sector engagement in the continent's economic development and continental integration where the private sector is considered a catalyst for continental integration and the realisation of the AU's flagship project that is the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) (AU N.d. and AU 2019).

4. Engaging the private sector in CPPB: debates and incentives

As mentioned earlier, the private sector's engagement in CPPB could be understood in terms of how it can contribute to broader social goals which sustain peace (usually through its regular operations), as well as how it can proactively venture into specific CPPB activities and support ongoing peacebuilding processes. The private sector's broader contribution to structural CPPB through economic development, employment, infrastructure development, or supply of goods and services through commerce and innovation are rarely contested. But there is a debate on whether the private sector should go beyond that and get involved in direct CPPB activities or processes. This section lays out the arguments given in favour of private sector engagement in CPPB, contrasts it with some of the debates and caveats around private sector engagement in CPPB and highlights some of the incentives guiding private sector actors' contribution to CPPB.

4.1. Arguments for private sector engagement in CPPB

In general, the overarching rationale for the private sector's direct contribution to CPPB processes can be summarised along four arguments. **The first argument is based on the observation that the private sector occupies an indispensable role in economic value creation for individuals and governments in most economies through job creation and domestic resource mobilisation, i.e. tax revenue (Peschka 2011).** Economic activity, livelihoods, government revenue and government spending on services can contribute to the consolidation of peace. The private

sector also has much to lose in cases of political instability or violent conflict. The argument, therefore, goes that this should make the private sector a major stakeholder not just in economic development but also in pursuit for durable peace, stability and security of a country as guarantee for sustainable development.

Second, in some fragile contexts, the private sector - formal or informal - is not only the economic engine, but also the primary service provider including in services like education, health, security and utilities which are traditionally public services provided by governments (Peschka 2011). This is particularly true in fragile or conflict affected areas, where the private sector may enjoy more presence on the ground and 'access' to conflict affected areas than the government. A noteworthy example in this regard is the private sector in Somalia which is widely recognised for its wide-ranging service provision across sectors from education to health to security and utilities (Nenova and Harford 2005). In such contexts, the private sector provides some of the core functions of the state. Hence the argument goes, it should have a role in the security/peace discourse.

The third rationale has to do with the observation that the private sector - though differentiated based on its formality (formal or informal) and also ownership (national/international) - remains in place even at times of deep political turmoil and violence, often by negotiating its presence with various conflicting parties. The call for private sector involvement in peace processes is therefore driven by a pragmatic take on the reckoning that in some contexts, the private sector is not only an important stakeholder but also a key player in the political economy of conflict and peace.

The fourth rationale follows from the previous observations and is an extension of the 'inclusivity' or 'inclusive peacebuilding' discourse which asserts that major stakeholders in society should be included in peacebuilding. If the private sector is recognised as a key stakeholder in society by the virtue of playing various roles in the day-to-day lives of people, then the concept of inclusivity should apply not only to civil society, women's groups, youth groups or faith-based organisations, but also to the private sector (Ford 2015: 138). The rationale for private sector engagement in CPPB as a subset of 'inclusive peacebuilding' is also reflected in the UN/World Bank flagship report Pathways for Peace. The report notes that the inclusion of non-state actors such as civil society, women and youth groups is key to sustaining peace and that the private sector can contribute to conflict prevention (UN and WB 2018).

4.2. Debates on private sector engagement in CPPB processes

These rationales discussed above make the conceptual and pragmatic case for private sector engagement in CPPB. However, private sector engagement in conflict prevention or peace processes is not to be taken for granted and the prudence of engaging the private sector, as well as how to go about it should be carefully examined. This is primarily because conflict prevention, mediation, post conflict reconstruction and other aspects of CPPB processes are highly political matters within the purview of the state or perhaps civil society. **The profit-drive of the private sector on the other hand, raises questions about the compatibility of the private sector's profit motive with the broader social goals of conflict resolution or peacebuilding processes.**

To add to this, there are a good number of documented cases - and possibly several undocumented instances - where private sector actors benefited from, were complicit in, or instigated conflict (Nelson 2000: 79-83). A very well-known scandal in this regard is of Shell in Nigeria and its alleged complicity with government crackdowns in oil-producing Ogoniland in the 1990s (Boele, Fabig & Wheeler 2001). At that time, Shell was the single most important company in Nigeria and had operations in Ogoniland, in the South-south region. There were large protests by people of the area against oil spills and environmental pollution resulting from Shell's operations. The government allegedly responded to these protests violently, detaining and killing journalists and activists and several cases of rape and torching of houses are also documented. According to Amnesty International, Shell lobbied government officials for more military action and provided logistical and financial assistance to the Nigerian military in the area knowing well

enough that the army was engaged in severe human rights violations. And Amnesty's report concludes that "Shell and the Nigerian government operated as business partners and had regular meetings to discuss the protection of their interests" (Amnesty International 2017).

Therefore, from a peacebuilding or peacebuilders' point of view, there is a normative debate on whether to involve the private sector in CPPB. There is also a technical question, i.e. at what point in the conflict or peace continuum the private sector should be involved, the roles it should take on, and in which types of conflict settings/contexts it should be involved. These observations lead to the following caveats that add complexity to the topic of private sector engagement in CPPB both from a normative and effectiveness point of view.

The first caveat is that the private sector should not automatically be assumed to have a vested interest in peace. While some private sector actors have much to lose from conflict, others can benefit from it. Some businesses can also insulate themselves from the conflict and continue their business operation by striking an agreement with the government or other conflict parties, or mobilising private security companies (Rettberg 201). This would reduce their stake in the resolution of a conflict.

Similarly, even if the private sector doesn't actively take a political role to guard its interests, the mere fact that it operates in highly political contexts means it can easily be embedded in a conflict system (CDA 2003). This means that the private sector shouldn't be automatically regarded as a neutral actor. For example, when the conflict involves a changing of the power structure and economic status quo in a particular context, the private sector might have narrow interests to protect. Its involvement in peace processes therefore, might undermine the legitimacy of the outcome (Tripathi and Gündüz 2008). Hence governments, civil society, development partners and others should be careful about which businesses are involved in political processes such as mediation.

Moreover, in cases where the private sector's engagement in direct CPPB processes might be welcome and effective, it should not obfuscate the fact that the government is the primary duty bearer when it comes to delivering peace (Hoffman 2014). Further, businesses should be understood as one component of peace processes but not "the sole agents of peace" (Tripathi and Gündüz 2008). They also shouldn't be expected to deliver beyond their areas of competence or comparative advantage which varies across contexts and cases (Berman 2000, Tripathi and Gündüz 2008 and Rettberg 2010).

4.3. Private sector incentives to engage in CPPB

The debate on whether or not the private sector should at all directly contribute to CPPB processes withstanding, it cannot be assumed that the private sector would naturally opt to engage in CPPB if given the opportunity. Engaging in CPPB proactively might have direct and indirect costs for the private sector. The fact that peace is a public good that anyone can benefit from once it is there, while the costs of working for peace are not equally distributed across all actors, might also disincentive the private sector from actively taking part in peacebuilding (Rettberg 2010). Generally speaking, the cost of conflict on a business, the philanthropic traditions of the company, certification schemes and national or international regulations can incentivise private sector actors to conduct due-diligence at the minimum and contribute to CPPB positively.

The few studies that look into motives of private businesses that do engage in CPPB directly find that **private sector actors engage when their operations are threatened** and they regard their engagement as "solving a problem that is more important to their business than peacebuilding per se" (Miller et al. 2019: 6). Rettenberg adds to this observation and notes that the businesses that get involved in CPPB actively tend to be i) those that are large in size and have the capacity to engage; ii) those that have high stakes if violence persists and iii) those that have philanthropic traditions and a commitment to 'giving back' (Rettberg 2010).

Businesses, therefore, see both **economic and philanthropic cases for engaging in CPPB**. Few businesses profit from conflict. For most, conflict entails direct (security, risk, material cost and capital costs, personnel and reputation cost) and indirect costs (breakdown of law, trust, political uncertainty) they would rather avoid (Nelson 2000). Furthermore, businesses could also feel a social responsibility to contribute to CPPB and initiatives such as the Global Compact and the Voluntary Principles for Security and Human Rights (2004) help reinforce this notion and provide more guidance on how businesses can live up to their social and moral responsibilities.

Relatedly, **certification schemes** such as the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme³ (Haufler 2009: 403-416) or the Fair-Trade movement and associated global consumer awareness and commitment to human rights and socially responsible business practices could offer incentives for businesses to get on board with active CPPB (Rettberg 2010). In an increasingly globalised world with growing internet connectivity, consumer demand and action have significant economic and reputational implications. Hence, the risk of facing legal or public backlash for their actions can incentivise businesses to subscribe to responsible business practices at the minimum. This doesn't, however mean that they will go beyond responsible business practices to directly engage or support CPPB processes.

Complementing these reinforcements is a growing field of international **and human rights law as well as national or transnational legal frameworks** which set standards for companies and allow litigation on those that are accused of contributing to conflict or human rights abuses (Nelson 2000). National and transnational legal frameworks addressing due diligence in mining and conflict are particularly well developed. A well-known example is the 'conflict minerals' provision of the Dodd Frank Act in the United States. Adopted in 2010, it requires U.S. publicly-listed companies to check their supply chains for the origins of tin, tungsten, tantalum and gold (3TG), if they might originate in the Democratic Republic of Congo or neighbouring countries. They also have to take steps to address any risks they find, and report annually on their efforts. A more recent example is the EU Regulation on Conflict Minerals, which will enter into force in 2021. It requires companies importing 3TG in the EU to also comply with, and report on, supply chain due diligence obligations if the minerals originate from conflict-affected and high-risk areas. Contrary to the Dodd Frank Act, the EU regulation is not limited to the Great Lakes region (EC 2020). At the national level, DRC and Rwanda have similar laws to regulate companies operating in their 3TG sectors (Global Witness 2017).

5. Private sector contributions to CPPB objectives

The literature on private sector engagement lacks solid conceptual frameworks for analysing in what ways, when and how the private sector can engage in CPPB (Ford 2015). **This is partly due to lack of conceptual clarity around what constitutes the private sector or CPPB activity. The other challenge is lack of a comprehensive understanding of the different decision-making processes of the private sector.** This challenge is somehow attributable to the fact that the pioneers of research on private sector engagement in peacebuilding were peacebuilders and researchers in peace and conflict studies rather than business actors themselves. As a result, the literature on the topic is rich in documenting what the private sector has done in support of CPPB and recommending what the private sector should do to avoid exacerbating conflict. But it leaves much to be desired when it comes to analysis and drawing up recommendations that are cognisant of the private sector's needs and capabilities.

³ The Kimberley Process Certification Scheme is an initiative launched in 2003 by a coalition of governments, the diamond industry and civil society organisations to stop trade in so called 'conflict diamonds' i.e. diamonds that are sourced from conflict-affected regions by illegitimate means or actors such as insurgents. An illicit trade in conflict diamonds is often a contributing factor to conflict and the revenue from this trade also prolongs conflict as conflicting actors, particularly rebels, use revenue from conflict diamonds to sustain themselves and continue to engage in violence. The scheme imposes minimum requirements on its members to enable them to certify shipments of rough diamonds as 'conflict-free' and prevent conflict diamonds from entering the legitimate trade.

Nelson (2000) offers by far the most detailed analysis on private sector engagement in CPPB activities and constructs a tri-dimensional framework. He looks at the nature of conflict, the type of company and the diversity of conflicting actors to analyse the roles of business in conflict. Based on that, he suggests potential pathways for private sector contribution to peace (Nelson 2000). Andersson and Sjöstedt (2011) have also devised an analytical lens to identify private sector activities that can be linked to peacebuilding and applied it to five cases.⁴ However, the context specificity of (successful) private sector engagement in CPPB makes it difficult to construct an all-encompassing analytical framework which can map private sector activities and the factors behind their success in contributing to CPPB - a task the UN, based on its access to information and overview of conflicts globally - would be best suited to undertake (Rettberg 2010).

In the absence of such a comprehensive overview that lays out the nature of the conflict setting, the types of private sector actors, and how they contributed positively, the following section tries to provide a summary of how the private sector can or is known to have contributed to CPPB. It covers how the private sector can:

- i. At a minimum ensure that it is not doing harm or exacerbating conflict;
- ii. Use its operations to contribute to broader CPPB goals and nurture 'enabling conditions for peace' through economic development and service delivery; and
- iii. Proactively engage in specific CPPB processes or activities.

5.1. Not causing harm

One of the primary and most recognised ways in which businesses can support peace is by applying the 'do no harm' principle and ensuring they do not exacerbate the drivers of conflict. Popularised in the early 2000s, particularly among development and humanitarian actors working in conflict-affected countries, the concepts of 'do no harm' and conflict sensitivity have gained traction. These principles are taken as fundamental tenets of engaging in conflict-affected settings, be it for development, humanitarian or business actors. Perhaps because of their minimalist approaches where businesses are expected to not cause or exacerbate conflict (rather than actively build peace), the principles are easy to accept.

There is a wealth of literature on this conflict sensitivity and do-no harm for businesses. Civil society organisations, peacebuilding organisations and even multilateral institutions such as the UN have produced manuals, guidelines and encouraged the establishment of business networks to promote the do-no harm principle and conflict sensitive business practices in conflict affected contexts. The main reference documents and initiatives in this regard include the above-mentioned UN Global Compact - "the world's largest voluntary corporate social responsibility initiative" (UN Global Compact, n.d.) which outlines guidelines for responsible and human-rights sensitive business practices, as well as the UN Guidelines on Business and Peace (2011). A key guiding document is the OECD Due Diligence Guidance for Responsible Business Conduct adopted in 2018 (OECD 2018). It provides guidance to companies on the different steps of a human rights and environmental due diligence process, which includes the identification and mitigation of risks, such as conflict. There are also plenty of sector-specific resources, an outstanding number of which try to address the intersection of mining, human rights and conflict. The OECD Due Diligence Guidance for Responsible Supply Chains of Minerals from Conflict-Affected and High-Risk Areas, the third edition of which was published in April 2016, is well recognised (OECD 2016).

⁴ Their working definition of peacebuilding includes the following activities: economic growth (as 'positive peace'), dialogue, implementation of peace agreement, political integration, political reform, reconciliation, redistribution of resources, stability change, transformation of security/safety.

The UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights give all companies the responsibility to carry out thorough due diligence, independent of their size and other characteristics. In that spirit, the OECD conflict mineral-specific and general responsible business conduct guidelines indicate that while all companies should conduct due diligence, the specific measures should be tailored to particular company activities and relationships, such as their position in the supply chain. As it can be more challenging for small companies, support can be provided to help small and medium enterprises (SMEs) ensure conflict-sensitive approaches, or human rights and environmental due diligence more generally. The European Commission has for example set up an online portal called 'Due diligence ready!' to help SMEs perform due diligence effectively and ensure responsible sourcing, particularly in 3TG supply chains that will be governed as of January 2021 by the earlier mentioned EU Conflict Minerals regulation (EC, n.d.).

Despite the popularity of the concept, Hoffman (2014, p.4), notes 'the extent to which companies' long-term investments in conflict-sensitive business strategies will yield higher returns remains unclear.'; hence not every business actor will be compelled to 'rethink their core business strategies'. For businesses, rethinking one's operations - be it to integrate the do-no harm principle or to actively and positively contribute to society broadly speaking - needs to be guided by a business case and not altruism alone (WEF 2016: 8).

Businesses should look into their investment, philanthropy, procurement, recruitment, as well as the structure, management and oversight of their supply chain when conducting their due diligence, to ensure they are not doing harm. Businesses can also use these aspects of their operations to go one step further from 'do no harm' and to 'do more peace' or to actively contribute to CPPB goals (Seyle and Wang 2019, and Andersson et al. 2011). The following two subsections discuss additional ways in which businesses can contribute to peace beyond not doing harm.

5.2. Setting enabling conditions for sustained peace and post conflict recovery

There is a body of literature on the private sector's **broader contribution to peace and stability** in fragile countries (Gerson 2001; Killick et al. 2005; Perks 2012, Ganson and Wennman 2015 and more). The most obvious and widely recognised role of the private sector in this regard is in employment creation. This role is particularly emphasised in the post-conflict reconstruction phase where there is a risk for conflict relapse if economic and political conditions are not addressed well. In this phase, the private sector could play a positive role in 'jumpstarting the economy' (Nelson 2000) boosting the economy and creating employment opportunities which in turn contribute to the sustainability of peace and help avoid a conflict relapse.

The job creation potential of the private sector can be seen from both the macro and micro levels. **At the macro level, the private sector and the employment it creates can help generate state revenue through tax.** This can have a knock-on effect in government legitimacy, as taxes and resources mobilised domestically can then be used to provide services to citizens and finance reconstruction efforts (Muia 2002, Ford 2014, Peschka 2011 and Andersson et al. 2011). Employment creation and tax revenue generation are challenging tasks in post-conflict or fragile contexts where getting the economy (back) on track is key to speeding up economic and political recovery. Though the mushrooming of small and informal businesses is typical of post-conflict economies and might reduce government revenue, the job-creation value of such businesses in the short term should not be overlooked. Formalising the informal economy needs to be carefully considered and not be an end goal in itself (Schoofs 2015).

At the micro level, employment means not only income - hence an important aspect of human security for an individual and his/her dependants - but it can also create a sense of belonging (Hoffman 2014) which in turn is key to social cohesion, restoring social fabric and amplifying individual investment in peace.

Beyond its ability to contribute to stability and economic development in fragile or post conflict settings, **the private sector's potential to employ could be harnessed in specific CPPB activities amplifying the private sector's direct involvement in CPPB interventions.** For example, in the 1990s and early 2000s, there was an emphasis on the private sector's ability to employ former combatants as a demobilisation and reintegration intervention. But turning former combatants into employees proved difficult for the businesses as former combatants couldn't automatically transition from combat and integrate into organised, civilian work pace and discipline (Rettberg 2010). Later, the approach shifted to attracting private sector investment in demobilisation projects that promote productivity of former combatants (The private sector, for example consulting firms, could also be used in security sector programmes to provide services such as policy analysis and advice, training, and management support in DDR programmes (Mancini 2005).

But promoting entrepreneurship and attracting new investment or incentivising businesses to resume operations in fragile contexts to achieve these micro level goals in human security and macroeconomics targets is not easy. Insights from the literature on how to harness the private sector's contribution to peace and stability in fragile countries has revealed the following lessons:

- i. Laying the foundations for restoring the private sector should begin early rather than waiting for political stabilisation (Dudwick and Srinivasan 2014);
- ii. Value chain development tends to focus on international markets, but it is also highly important to target shorter value chains for local and regional markets, as conditions in conflict-affected areas may not be in place to participate in global value chains (Hiller et al. 2014); and
- iii. An enabling environment should be created by strengthening formal institutions and regulations, while also being sensitive to informal power structures within specific sectors. Informal institutions are prominent in conditions of fragility due to weak formal institutional capacities and this should be taken into account in value chain development efforts (Peschka 2011).

Today, **livelihood creation is also used as a tool to prevent and counter violent extremism**, i.e. to provide employment to youth who might be at risk of voluntarily or involuntarily joining armed groups or violent extremist groups out of lack of economic opportunities. Such livelihood creation interventions as part of a peacebuilding approach are prevalent in contexts like Somalia and the Lake Chad Basin where a lack of economic opportunities is one reason why some young men join Al Shabaab or Boko Haram respectively (Gjelsvik 2019, Zyl and Mahdi 2019, UNDP 2015 and Salifu and Ewi 2019).

Though the private sector's ability to create jobs should be harnessed in and of itself and for its contribution to human security at least, analysts point out that the link between economic stabilisation, livelihood and peace is not straightforward (Surke and Buckmaster 2006: and Miller et al. 2019). Economic growth and development do not guarantee peace and neither does the 'employment for peace' approach always achieve its purpose (Izzi 2013). Therefore, employment should be seen as one - and not the main - component of sustaining peace. It certainly should not be seen as a replacement for dialogue and negotiation which are fundamental components of conflict resolution and sustaining peace (Miller et al. 2019).

5.3. Engaging in mediation, backdoor diplomacy and advocacy

Private sector involvement in active conflict management (mediation and backdoor diplomacy) is perhaps the more complex and least documented aspect of private sector engagement in peace. It is more complex for two reasons. **First, there is a normative debate on whether or not the private sector should engage in conflict management activities such as mediation. Secondly, how and in what way it may engage in these activities is context specific and hard to generalise or build a framework around.**

Nonetheless, private sector actors can and have played various roles in conflict management, mediation and backdoor diplomacy in contexts where they are perceived as 'neutral' or legitimate actors (Seyle and Wang 2019). Insights on how they can actively support specific CPPB processes come from documented experiences in Colombia, Mozambique, South Africa, Northern Ireland, Cyprus, Nepal and Sri Lanka in the 1990s and early 2000s and Kenya in 2007.

In these cases, the private sector contributed to CPPB processes by financing the travel costs of conflicting parties (Mozambique in the 90s), holding 'off the record' meetings with civil society groups and insurgents (Colombia) or politicians (Kenya), sponsoring trust building retreats and exercises as well as facilitating dialogues (South Africa) are documented (Tripathi and Gündüz 2008).

Analysis of these cases offer insights into the factors that make businesses effective in conflict mediation, dialogue and reconciliation. **The first factor pertains to the private sector's networks and its ability to access and draw to the table key individuals or stakeholders who are otherwise inaccessible to official mediators** (Miller et al. 2019). This was demonstrated in South Africa in the 1990s where the private sector (the Consultative Business Movement – CBM) together with churches approached the ANC. The ANC at that time was a designated terrorist organisation. By approaching the ANC, the CBM legitimised the ANC and facilitated dialogue between the ANC and the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) and others. Although much of the private sector had indeed benefited from the apartheid system, some private sector actors through the CBM are credited for facilitating dialogues between the regime, the ANC and other stakeholders (Tripathi and Gündüz 2008)). In doing so, the private sector stepped into a role, other actors couldn't take on, although the private sector didn't shy away from using the process to "convince the ANC of the benefits of a market system" (Nelson 2000: 111).

The second comparative advantage of the private sector in mediation, conflict resolution or reconciliation is its flexibility and ability to engage with diverse actors in different formats with less decorum. Official mediators or renowned personalities might be unable to reach out to all parties due to bureaucratic or political decorum. Private sector actors, however, often have the flexibility to engage in dialogue with conflict actors in a less bureaucratic and formal or diplomatic manner and can use traditional and alternative means to bring parties to an agreement (Lehti and Lepomäki 2017: 11-12). For example, in Colombia the private sector was a forerunner in holding off the record meetings with civil society groups and insurgents or designated terrorist groups like the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) (Tripathi and Gündüz 2008). In Kenya, the private sector, organised through the Kenya Private Sector Alliance (KEPSA) was instrumental in lobbying politicians to de-escalate election related violence in 2007-2008 (Austin and Wennman 2017).

The third factor that makes private sector engagement in conflict resolution or mediation effective in these documented cases is its ability to make an economic case for peace. The economic cost of conflict constitutes one of the main incentives for the private sector to engage in CPPB (Tripathi and Gündüz 2008, Miller et al. 2019 and Seyle and Wang 2019). For example, in the case of Sri Lanka (early 2000s) and Northern Ireland (end of 1990s), the private sector was able to establish the economic consequences of the conflict and explain the benefits of peace (the 'peace dividend') to persuade the negotiating parties to come to an agreement.

Clearly, private sector engagement in conflict management (mediation, conflict resolution and reconciliation) is more complex, political and riddled with more caveats than private sector engagement in conflict prevention or post conflict recovery. This is because, as discussed in section 4.2, some businesses could be part of a conflict web and could struggle to balance their drive for profit with broader social interests. Therefore, in cases where the private sector has (or is perceived to have) biased or narrow interests in a peace process, e.g. a preference for one conflicting party over another, its direct participation in mediation processes could undermine the legitimacy of the process itself.

The normative debate on whether or not they should be involved in such processes withstanding, **various analysts agree that private sector engagement in these processes works if business actors have legitimacy and act collectively in associations** – even if individual business leaders can assume key roles (Tripathi and Gündüz 2008 and Andersson et al. 2011). The legitimacy and suitability of the private sector to be involved in conflict management is however, context specific and cannot be generalised. There is also the understanding that while private sector actors should be one component of peace processes, they 'cannot be the sole agents of peace' (Tripathi and Gündüz 2008). They also should not be expected to deliver beyond their areas of competence and should not be expected to address structural issues such as governance or justice provision (Tripathi 2008 & Nelson 2000: 29). And more importantly, it should not be forgotten that the primary responsibility to deliver peace rests in the government (Hoffman 2014: 4).

6. Implications for APSA

As mentioned in earlier sections, existing analysis on private sector engagement in CPPB is highly reliant on (few) documented cases which cannot be generalised. Further, many of the documented cases are somewhat outdated and do not directly resonate with current conflict trends in the world (and in Africa specifically) which are regionalised or internationalised (e.g. Libya), with non-state actors that combine ideological but also criminal ends (e.g. Boko Haram) and/or pervasive, localised conflicts involving communities (e.g., farmer-cattle herder conflicts in Nigeria or clan conflicts in south central Somalia).

Moreover, all of the cases covered in the underlying literature review are at the national level. In Africa, the private sector at the continental level are contributing to structural efforts to promote peace and silence the guns by creating conducive conditions for Africa's development through economic development and continental integration, e.g. through the African Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). The private sector will take centre-stage in intra-African trade, investment and labour mobility which the AfCFTA will facilitate in the service of continental integration.

There are also recent examples of the AU mobilising the private sector to respond to continental health concerns such as the Ebola outbreak in 2014 and the recent COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. The AU set up the Africa Against Ebola Solidarity Trust (AAEST) which brought together international partners and the private sector to respond to Ebola (AUDA-NEPAD 2016) and has now launched a COVID-19 Response Fund, to mobilise resources, including from the private sector, to respond to COVID-19 (African Business, n.d.). Yet so far there is little research done on private sector engagement in continental or regional CPPB approaches, which makes drawing recommendations for APSA challenging. This is in fact a topic that merits further research based on which strategic insights on how to engage the private sector in APSA could be uncovered. However, efforts are underway to mobilise the private sector's support for APSA through contributions to the Peace Fund.

Nonetheless, having looked at the general ways in which the private sector is known to have contributed to peace in the previous sections, the study offers the following ideas for how the private sector could be engaged in support of APSA especially in view of ongoing efforts. These recommendations are however based on the author's knowledge of APSA⁵ and general observations on how the different components of APSA operate. Hence it's not based on a thorough investigation on how the different components of APSA are already engaging with the private sector. Rather, it is an identification of opportunities or modalities for engaging the private sector in different aspects of APSA. Hence the suggestions herein should be taken as preliminary insights, the viability of which should be explored further through research.

⁵ To find out more about ECDPM's work on APSA see here: <https://ecdpm.org/african-peace-security-architecture/>.

Fundraising for the African Peace Fund

In the past five years, the AU has deployed a significant amount of effort in securing sufficient and predictable funding for African peace and security efforts. From trying to raise consistent funding from member states through the 0.2% levy imposed on selected imports to negotiating UN contributions to peace support operations (Apiko and Agad, 2018) - the issue of funding for African peace and security has been high on the agenda. The AU has revived the African Peace Fund (APF) and has managed to raise about \$164 million from member states, although this falls short of the \$400 million it had planned to raise by this time (Paravicini 2020). No legal provisions stand in the way of private sector contributions, as the Protocol on the Establishment of the Peace and Security Council stipulates that private sector contributions to the fund are allowed (AU Peace Fund 2016). The AU is in the process of developing its strategy to mobilise private finance for the Peace Fund (AU 2020). While this is laudable and should be expedited, the AU should undertake this with full transparency whereby the AU discloses which private sector actors made contributions, and for which programmes or initiatives their contributions will be used. It should also specify for what kinds of activities within the different phases of conflict prevention and peacebuilding, private funding could be. This would be necessary so as to avoid businesses becoming involved in political processes that are better left to governments to manage, given their responsibility to provide security and safeguard state sovereignty, including policy sovereignty.

Engaging the private sector in post conflict reconciliation and development (PCRD)

The AU recognises that the deployment of peace support operations (PSOs) alone cannot respond to the realities of complex pockets of conflicts in the continent such as the one in the Lake Chad Basin. The AU's regional stabilisation strategy for the Lake Chad Basin areas recognises the need to mobilise the private sector for stability and recovery, particularly in suggesting vocational training curricula as well as providing apprenticeships and work placements (LCBC, 2018). It also invites the private sector to assist in public financing of value chain development and proposes an annual "Lake Chad Investment Forum" to drive interest from major private sector actors in the sub-region and on the continent.

Broadly speaking in PCRD, private sector engagement should extend beyond mobilising national and regional level private sector actors, and pay attention to SMEs. The informal sector too could potentially offer broader social engagement and contribute to the human security of people living in the region.

Utilising regional private sector platforms linked to Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and Regional Mechanisms on Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution (RMs)

RECs/RMs acknowledge the indispensable role the private sector can play in driving regional integration but whether or not or how they plan to mobilise them in peace and security is not clear. Regional private sector platforms exist alongside RECs/RMs, but the key objective of these platforms is to galvanise the private sector in regional integration and economic development rather than involve them in peace and security. And even then, the RECs/RMs appear to engage the private sector at varying degrees in regional integration. The Southern African Development Council (SADC) and the East African Community (EAC) have forums (SADC Business Forum and East African Business Council) through which they interface with the private sector to ensure that the interests of the private sector are reflected in the regional integration agendas of the respective regions. But overall, the extent to which the private sector is engaged to push the peace and security objectives of the RECs/RMs or the AU is not clear.

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) on the other hand has taken some initial steps to convene private sector actors to explore ways of involving the private sector in peacebuilding, namely in operationalising its regional Conflict Prevention Framework (ECPF) (ECOWAS, n.d.). Similarly, IGAD had also conducted an initial consultation with the private sector in 2015, on possible roles of the private sector in IGAD's early warning mechanisms and conflict prevention in the region (IGAD, 2015).

However, given the lack of published material to consult, it was not possible to follow up on the latest developments on private sector engagement in conflict prevention and recovery goals of ECOWAS and early warning mechanisms of IGAD in this study. Nonetheless, these two examples demonstrate that conflict prevention, early warning and post conflict recovery seem to be the primary entry points for enhancing the private sector's role in regional peace and security through the RECs/RMs.

Private sector engagement in PSOs

There are various ways private companies can support PSOs. Private companies can be brought in to provide services towards supporting the core and auxiliary operations of PSOs. In **the core operation**, private security companies can provide training to troops, logistical support, specialised services such as in demining, or they could be deployed to protect certain facilities. There are examples of such services being provided by private companies in UN missions in Liberia and Sudan (Gumedze et al. 2011). However, the privatisation of security provision, be it within states or within PSOs is a rather controversial way of engaging the private sector, as security provision is one of the core mandates of government and public actors. The participation of security companies in active combat, in particular, has problematic implications for accountability and state sovereignty (Gumedze et al. 2011; see also Power et al. 2019 and Al Jazeera 2020 for recent cases of private military companies deployed in combat in specific contexts in Africa).

In terms of goods and services the private sector can provide **support to auxiliary operations** of PSOs, companies can provide services from logistics and procurement to ICT in order to support administrative aspects of running PSOs. There is an example from AMISOM where private firms provide support in strategic communication (Williams 2019). Specialised consulting firms can also provide technical advisory services and analysis in support of strategic leadership and management of PSOs (Mancini 2005).

Of late, the private sector has also initiated innovative ways of working with PSOs. One example is Energy Peace Partners which aim to provide green energy to UN peacekeeping missions in order to limit the carbon footprint of PSOs stationed in various locations (see Energy Peace Partners and Holt et al. 2019). Private sector actors in Africa could be incentivised to contribute to such efforts to minimise the environmental cost of running PSOs.

Private sector in Conflict Early Warning System (CEWS)

The most straightforward private sector contribution to the AU's CEWS would be in providing the IT infrastructure to document peace and security events across the continent, analyse the data, and disseminate early warning information when certain indicators are met and when there is a cause for concern. CEWS on the other hand could also provide risk analysis in conflict and post-conflict situations to private sector to inform their investments.

Another potential area of collaboration between the AU and the private sector could be in developing the AU's efforts in operationalising its continental structural conflict prevention framework (CSCPF) especially at Member States level through the Country Structural Vulnerability and Resilience Assessment (CSVRA) as well as Mitigation Strategies (CSVMS) tools. To complement the existing CEWS monitoring system which mostly detects and analyses immediate triggers of violence, the AU has developed a tool that supports Member States in the identification of structural vulnerabilities across seven broad markers, resilience as well as development of medium to long term strategies to address the vulnerabilities. In many countries, the private sector has wide ranging networks within the countries it operates in, and is often well informed on socio-economic developments in a given country since these factors affect its business operations. The AU could therefore consult with the private sector along with civil society and knowledge institutions in i) conducting the CSVRA and ii) when implementing the mitigation strategies to address the vulnerabilities and strengthen resilience.

The merger between the AU Peace and Security Department (PSD) and the AU Department of Political Affairs (DPA) also creates an opportunity in this regard, because structural conflict prevention is at the interface of what the two departments were working on. With the merger, there is a need to review and expand indicators and frameworks for identifying structural vulnerabilities and immediate triggers of violent conflict.

Contextualising responsible business standards and accountability mechanisms

As discussed in earlier section of this paper, there are various international standards documents that outline broader or sector specific codes and guidelines on responsible business behaviour. While the enforcement of these guidelines is challenging in many contexts in Africa - particularly in contexts of state fragility – contextualising them to specific contexts in Africa might improve the relevance and responsiveness of these guidelines to businesses and consumers in Africa. In relation to this, an idea would be to put in place new or upscale existing local, national or regional certification schemes that could complement the international ones). This is potentially a role the EcoMark Africa label managed by the African Organisation for Standardisation (ARSO 2020) could play.

International certification programmes matter more to businesses whose consumer base is international. This is because the overarching rationale of certification programmes is to encourage good business practices while also building businesses' accountability vis-a-vis consumers. Hence, for businesses whose consumer base is within the country of operation or within Africa, national, regional or continental certification programmes that are based on social values of the region - might resonate more with African consumers. This could in turn build an informal accountability system where African consumers too have a role to play. Strengthening national, regional and continental legislation is also key to reinforcing positive business practices. While the right policies need to be put in place to encourage entrepreneurship, attract investment and support existing businesses in conflict settings, their essential contribution for the economy should not be an excuse to not demand accountability from them.

7. General observations and lessons learnt

The focus of the literature on private sector engagement for peace has shifted from one that is motivated by ensuring accountability of businesses in conflict settings, and amplifying their contribution to specific peacebuilding processes, to now also more actively looking at attracting private sector's engagement in fragile and conflict affected contexts, in order to promote economic development, and partially address fragility. In this renewed framing of private sector engagement in conflict affected and fragile contexts, it is governments, multilateral entities, and economists that drive the policy discourse. This contrasts with the prominence of peacebuilding organisations and researchers in peace and security which played a leading role in framing the debate in the early days (1990s) of CPPB discourse.

Engaging the private sector in CPPB processes is, however, as much a normative debate as it is a technical one. The many rationales for why peace cannot be achieved without the private sector or why it should be actively engaged in support of peacebuilding, are met with a few contending normative and empirical questions on the private sector's engagement in peacebuilding. Some of these questions are on the compatibility of the private sector's profit drive with peacebuilding goals, its accountability, and also on the limited evidence base demonstrating the effectiveness of engaging the private sector in CPPB.

This then begs the question on the main lessons learnt on engaging businesses in CPPB - with all the caveats and limitations discussed in the literature - what are the main lessons learnt? The following summarises some key takeaways:

There is no best way to engage the private sector in CPPB, whether and how to do so is context specific. The documentation and empirical evidence on successful (but also failed) private sector engagement in CPPB is highly context specific and anecdotal at best. As a result, it is difficult to construct an all-encompassing analytical framework which maps and analyses private sector contributions to peace processes and the factors therein, that can provide guidance on which private sector actors can be engaged, in what manner, in which context, and at what moments in the conflict cycle. This means that the decision on whether and how to engage the private sector in CPPB should take context specificities into account.

That said, the private sector can contribute to CPPB in a minimalist manner by doing the least that is expected of it (e.g. do-no harm only, even if due diligence and integrating do-no harm in one's operations may not come easily). Its contribution can also be broad-based in that it adds to the general well-being of society through employment creation for example. The private sector can also get directly involved in peacebuilding processes through track II backdoor diplomacy or peace campaigns for instance. Their participation in track II peace processes should be context-specific and premised on their legitimacy, acceptability due to direct or indirect influence to parties to the conflict and the conflict situation generally.

At the minimum, the private sector can contribute to CPPB by not doing harm. The 'do no harm' principle is one that has been popularised over the years for all actors - humanitarian, development, peacebuilding actors included - working in conflict affected contexts. Not exacerbating existing conflict systems, being conscious of the conflict drivers and actors and managing business operations in a way that - at least - does not make the situation worse is one contribution business can make to CPPB. This contribution cannot be taken for granted because a thorough approach to 'do no harm' requires extensive due diligence along the value chain. It might also demand that a business alter its operations even if the business case for doing so may not always be clear.

In general terms, the private sector can make broader socio-economic contributions. One of the widely recognised private sector contributions to peacebuilding is its contribution to the economy. There, the private sector can help create conducive conditions for socio-economic development in relative peaceful setting but also 'restart' the economy in conflict or post conflict setting respectively. This generally provides employment opportunities for people and helps generate tax revenue that can then be used by governments to provide services which in turn contribute to state legitimacy. This generic contribution to the social wellbeing of society has positive add-on effects in conflict prevention and post conflict reconstruction. But it can also be used in a targeted manner, for example by employing former combatants, or socially marginalised groups. However, the scope for the private sector's contribution to economic recovery and state legitimacy should be seen with caveats, as the profit-making drive is not always aligned with broader societal sustainable development goals. This also applies to a growing interest in attracting private sector investment to fragile and conflict affected settings in order to address fragility and as a mechanism for achieving the SDGs.

Under certain conditions, the private sector could be directly involved in peacebuilding processes. It can contribute to mediation, diplomacy and reconciliation processes by harnessing its extensive social capital and convening diverse stakeholders, accessing and legitimising conflict parties that are otherwise excluded from former political negotiations, sponsoring peace dialogues and lobbying and advocating for peace by demonstrating the economic cost of conflict. These mechanisms speak to the private sector's specific value added in CPPB processes. Namely, these include its extensive networks and social capital, ability to reach out to 'hard to reach' conflict actors, flexibility in approach without being tied to official mediation norms and decorum. The private sector can also of course support peacebuilding directly through its financial contributions, by financing mediation or reconciliation processes

In all of the cases covered the private sector's legitimacy and its collective mobilisation through private sector associations were key factors that contribute to success. These peacebuilding processes, e.g. mediation, are highly political and the case for private sector's involvement in them should be carefully weighed, based on the context. And here, the private sector should have real or perceived legitimacy to engage in these processes directly, for its involvement to be constructive. Similarly, all of the case documentations and analysis covered mention that the private sector worked in a collective mode, i.e. through business associations, rather than single businesses driving and participating in CPPB processes, even if specific individuals in these businesses or associations could have leading roles.

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