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Centre for
Humanitarian
Dialogue



NORWEGIAN MINISTRY
OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Meeting report

Oslo forum 2009

Annual Mediators' Retreat

Reasserting diplomacy
and mediation in a
fragmented world

Oslo

16–18 June 2009

What is the Oslo forum network?

A global series of mediation retreats

The Oslo forum is widely acknowledged as the leading international network of conflict mediation practitioners.

Co-hosted by the Royal Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, the Oslo forum regularly convenes conflict mediators, high level decision makers and key peace process actors in a series of informal and discreet retreats.

The Oslo forum features an annual global event in Oslo and is complemented by regional retreats in Africa and Asia. The aim is to improve conflict mediation and enhance the status of the profession through the ongoing exchange of field experiences.

Sharing experiences and insights

Mediation is increasingly seen as a successful means of resolving armed conflicts and the growing number of actors involved testifies to its emergence as a distinct field of international diplomacy.

The pressured working environment of mediation rarely provides much opportunity for reflection. But given the complexity of today's world and the immense challenges in bringing about sustainable negotiated solutions to violent conflict, mediators benefit by looking beyond their own particular experiences for inspiration, lessons and support.

The uniquely informal and discrete retreats of the Oslo forum series facilitate a frank and open exchange of insights by those working at the highest level to bring warring parties together to find negotiated solutions. By bringing together key actors from the United Nations, regional organisations and governments, as well as private organisations and noteworthy individuals, the retreats also provide a unique networking opportunity.

Where politics meets practice

Participation is by invitation-only. All discussions are confidential and take place under the Chatham house rule. Sessions are designed to permit informed exchanges with provocative inputs from a range of different speakers, including conflict party representatives, war correspondents, outstanding analysts, thinkers and experts on specific issues.

The retreats refrain from making specific recommendations or conclusions, aiming instead to define and advance conflict mediation practice.

“hd Meeting report”

The Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (HD Centre) is an independent Swiss Foundation dedicated to helping improve the global response to armed conflict. It attempts to achieve this by mediating between warring parties and providing support to the broader mediation community

114, rue de lausanne
ch-1202
geneva
switzerland
info@hdcentre.org
t: + 41 22 908 11 30
f: +41 22 908 11 40
www.hdcentre.org

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Executive summary

The Oslo forum 2009 took place against the background of a new optimism, largely heralded by the new US administration and its emphasis on civility in international relations. After a period of confrontation marked by the ‘war on terror’ and weakening of mediation efforts, there is now a renewed demand in many areas for diplomacy and negotiation. Yet, recent developments in Sri Lanka, Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan demonstrate the concurrent strand of scepticism about the usefulness of dialogue in resolving some of today’s conflicts.

Some 90 participants gathered for a two-and-a-half day retreat just outside Oslo to discuss openly how mediation and diplomacy can adapt and respond to this changing environment. The meeting considered how to reassert diplomacy as the premier instrument for the resolution of armed conflict, and how to improve its effectiveness. All discussions took place in an informal and discreet setting, and were subject to Chatham House rules.

Those attending were senior mediators of armed conflict, representatives of governments and international organisations, and outstanding analysts and decision makers. They included eminent personalities such as **Jonas Gahr Støre**, Norwegian Minister of Foreign Affairs, President **Olusegun Obasanjo**, United Nations Special Envoy for the Democratic Republic of Congo Crisis, **Olubanke King-Akerele**, Liberian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador **Thomas Pickering**, former United States Under-Secretary of State for Political Affairs, Dr **Surin Pitsuwan**, Secretary-General, Association for South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), Ambassador **Salim Salim**, former Secretary-General, Organisation of African Unity, **Gareth Evans**, President, International Crisis Group (ICG), and many others.¹

After a welcome by Martin Griffiths, Director of the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, Jonas Gahr Støre opened the retreat by sharing some of the lessons Norway draws from its own practice of mediation. In particular, he focused on recent experiences in Sri Lanka and the consequences for Norway’s understanding of the relationship between diplomatic and military means in conflict resolution.

Liberian Foreign Minister, Olubanke King-Akerele then shared her reflections on the important role of dialogue, negotiation and diplomacy in bringing peace to Liberia and preserving the nation. Setting the scene for a high-level opening discussion examining further the relationship between diplomatic and military means, she also urged participants to acknowledge the important contributions of women in peace processes.

A special highlight of the event was the Mediators’ Studio, with **Jonathan Powell**, former Chief of Staff to British Prime Minister Tony Blair and chief negotiator for Northern Ireland, and **Alastair Crooke**, founder and Director of the Conflicts Forum. The BBC’s **Lyse Doucet** asked Mr Powell and Mr Crooke to reflect on their biggest personal challenges, miscalculations, insights and lessons learned when dealing with and mediating between conflict parties.

Other sessions included a discussion of the challenges of preparing conflict parties for negotiations, and a review of the roles and impact of regional mediators. There was a practical exchange on how mediators can work in military environments, and a discussion of the impact of international justice on peace processes.

¹ The full list of participants as well as background material generated for the Oslo forum 2009 can be viewed on the Oslo forum website, <http://www.osloforum.org>.

The motivations, key challenges and prospects for efforts to promote discreet dialogue between the US and Iran were debated, as were the implications of North Korea's recent demonstrations of its nuclear capability on the progress of the Six Party Talks. Participants also exchanged experiences on a number of specific conflict situations, including Sri Lanka, Nepal and the Philippines, and the forum included an assessment of the situation in Afghanistan and Pakistan and of the lessons from (not) dealing with Hamas and Hezbollah.

In addition, a group of participants discussed key issues relating to the challenge of addressing sexual violence in mediation.

The Oslo forum 2009 ended with a lively discussion summarising key issues and impressions of the debates. The final discussion also included comments on the prospects for resolving conflict peacefully, and on how initiatives such as the Oslo forum can contribute to improving the practice of mediation.

Reasserting diplomacy

The opening discussion examined the utility of force versus that of mediation in today's conflicts. This provided a powerful introduction for subsequent debates on whether and how to reassert diplomacy as the instrument of choice in dealing with armed conflict.

Participants debated the implications of recent events in Sri Lanka and elsewhere on the prospects and adequacy of the peaceful resolution of conflicts. In addition, the rules of the game were being questioned, and it was pointed out that the international community may have neglected the potential for conflict between states in focusing its attention and resources on developing capacity for dealing with internal conflict.

The shift in attitude under the Obama administration was widely welcomed by participants. It was generally agreed that immense opportunities had arisen, and should not be wasted. Many shared the view that the key challenge for Obama, but also peacemakers generally, will be to give credibility to mediation and the negotiated solutions to conflict. This is important because convincing sceptics depends very much on the credibility of mediation results.

Obama's determination to end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and convincing Netanyahu to accept a two-state solution, were significant in paving the way for negotiations to look at the details. Yet, it was stressed that a sense of urgency was needed to use the momentum created by reviving hopes that reconciliation was not impossible after all. Regarding Iran, Obama's policy of engagement was being questioned in the light of recent developments, but participants largely agreed that it was the effort rather than the intention that seemed doubtful.

One speaker poignantly remarked that Sri Lanka was not a victory of force, but a collective failure of diplomacy and mediation. Those involved in the developments in Sri Lanka will quickly find that there is more work to do. Others compared the events in Sri Lanka to the Democratic Republic of Congo where the situation had overall improved following cooperation with the government of Rwanda in launching a joint operation. Yet, the need

to go on to negotiate an agreement remains in order to find a solution to dealing with the numerous armed groups. The apparent military victory had created a new opportunity for doing what should have been done before the outbreak of the violence.

Military victory does not cancel out the role of mediators, although people tend to forget that the issues that caused the conflict will remain to be dealt with. Even once an agreement has been reached, mediation still has an important role to play in ensuring implementation and preventing setbacks from culminating in new violence.

Mediation is time-consuming, and, as one speaker admitted, often frustrating. But no matter how long it takes – weeks, months and often years – mediation is much cheaper and more efficient than military options of all sorts and durations. Ultimately, there is no substitute for dialogue, including with those considered beyond the pale if they are the ones who can make change happen.

Dialogue and mediation are the only means of dealing with the causes of conflict to prevent and find permanent and sustainable solutions to conflict.

Even if it takes time, negotiation should be preferred to the use of force, but some participants cautioned that a more nuanced approach is needed. Rather than signing up readily to the merits of mediation, peacemakers should engage in serious discussion and develop guidelines to specify under what circumstances force is called for or justified. For instance, there are times, especially when the sovereignty of a mission is at stake, when a credible force on the ground is needed to back up diplomatic missions.

Despite the widely proclaimed preference for mediation and dialogue, the perceived legitimacy of force differs if a (democratic) government or a rebel group uses it. Today's civilised international debate at times ignores the fact that the use of force is not a new or abandoned approach. Particularly in the context of the 'war' on terrorism, the use of force constitutes a dangerous paradigm. Most governments, but also non-state actors and international organisations, have accepted this paradigm, categorising conflicts and parties not by causes but by the instruments chosen. This has led to an asymmetric legitimisation of the use of force in favour of states – even oppressive regimes – by readily labelling armed opposition as terrorists. In other situations, the use of force by one side may help to validate the narrative of the conflict for the other side, by emphasising the first side's ill intent.

If mediation and dialogue are to succeed, mediators should resist adopting the same approach. Instead, they should counter with a more rational understanding of the problems, and differentiate between instruments, symptoms and causes to resolve conflicts permanently. It is not enough to acknowledge that the rules may be changing. Peacemakers should also ask who it is that wants the changes, to find ways of dealing with them.

In conclusion, one of the speakers reflected on the changing structural aspects of conflict. Perhaps, he reasoned, mediators have been placing too much emphasis on mediating between entities – two states in the case of inter-state conflict, and governments and/or armed groups in the case of intra-state conflict. In today's conflicts the real challenge is often in bridging divides within the leadership of a particular conflict party, and mediators may have to learn also to mediate within sovereign governments to promote the peaceful resolution of conflict.

The tribal areas and the challenges facing Afghanistan and Pakistan

Participants agreed during this session that we are facing a global problem, not just a ‘Pakistan problem’. The success or failure to transform the state of Pakistan will have far-reaching consequences beyond Pakistan’s boundaries.

It was suggested that what happens in Pakistan makes what we see in Afghanistan look simple. In Afghanistan, the conflict is a continuation of a seventeen-year-old conflict following the collapse of the Soviet government in 1992. There are also elements of a social movement and elements of a proxy war. It is also a grievance-based conflict. Finally, there is a well established space for anti-government armed action in the political ecology of Afghanistan. The Taliban occupy this space today – the same space previously occupied by some people in the government they are fighting.

The conflict in Northern Pakistan also has multiple elements, including a rebellion with tribal and religious sectarian characteristics against the state. The conflict was also described as a continuation of the pre-2001 Islamist revolutionary movements. It has elements of a proxy war out of control, includes armed groups patronised by other actors, and also contains elements of a social movement. Indeed, many Taliban in Pakistan have not come from the madrassahs; they identify with the movement rather than being part of it. It was stressed that the military in Pakistan has become stronger as the civilian government has become weaker. It was felt that all decisions regarding military operations in the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP) and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) are taken by the army.

The discussions highlighted the need for meaningful strategy to be based on an understanding of linkages. The cultural and economic space of the Pashtun tribe is in question. These networks or brotherhoods of people with shared experiences of jihad unite the two sides of the border. The Taliban in Pakistan have supplied fighters to the Afghan insurgency. This has not had significant impact in Afghanistan but has acted as a cover of legitimacy for Taliban action in Pakistan. The military option in Afghanistan was questioned: even if the Taliban activity is weakened it will not be defeated and will be reinforced from Pakistan and elsewhere. The presence of foreign troops was seen as fuelling the insurgency. Some participants examined the new developments and in particular the military campaign in South Waziristan. Baitullah Mehsud was described as the planner and commander of Pakistan’s militants, including those involved in the jihadist fighting in Kashmir and Afghanistan, and the attack on Mumbai.

It was noted that it is difficult to say whether the military operations will be decisive. The media have been largely excluded, and a big campaign is underway to influence public opinion in favour of the military operations. It seems that this conflict exemplifies the argument between the utility of force and dialogue, illustrating the balance between force and civilian actions in dealing with a conflict. The discussion emphasised that there has been a massive investment in the forceful response over the past few years, and that the civilian component of the response has been under-resourced.

It was further underlined that there is no completely peaceful solution and no completely military solution. Participants considered that movements on both sides have managed to maintain the military campaign but have not yet demonstrated their ability to develop a serious political campaign. The Taliban in Afghanistan have said they will improve relations with the international community and have learnt from past remarks. On the possibility of negotiations, the discussion indicated an important positive role for Pakistan in facilitating reconciliation. Pakistan could for example facilitate access to Taliban commanders in Pakistan. There is a clear interest in the region in avoiding instability spill-over.

Saudi Arabia has proved its willingness to work with the Afghan administration and had a degree of buy-in to the mediation efforts attempted so far. These efforts were described as serious in intention but limited in potential. It was suggested that Saudi Arabia will probably be involved again, as feedback from the insurgents shows that a good Islamic character is needed to sell a deal. Some participants felt that mediation efforts have not been seriously approached to date.

The session also addressed the question of the relationship with China. China is an example of a regional power which has a clear interest in stability in these countries, but there seems to be no commonality of interest in the presence of NATO. Some participants argued that it is difficult for China to be seen to be dealing with Pakistan, as Pakistan will complain about pressures and raise conspiracy theories potent in driving local actors and which serve as a distraction. It was also suggested that Afghan actors have a history of pitting one international player against another.

Participants then elaborated on the question of changing the status of the FATA. It was felt that the government will have to decide on the administrative status of the FATA and that this will not retain its present form.

The session concluded that there is very little immediate prospect of dialogue on Pakistan; even if conditions are already right for contact, there will be no quick progress to negotiation because of the focus on the military push. However, conditions are more advanced in Afghanistan now, and, when dialogue finally takes place, this will have positive effects on Pakistan.

Mediation and state-building in a collapsed state: Focus on Somalia

Participants in this session looked at the particular challenges of mediation in the context of a collapsed state, with special reference to Somalia. While the session was originally designed to look specifically at state-building aspects within mediation, the overall consensus was that there is currently no state-building in Somalia, despite the urgent need for it. It was argued that a state-building process would face unique challenges in Somalia, because of the multitude of external actors and the complete absence of a functioning state. This was presented in contrast to what one participant called the single successful state-building project in history – Germany after the Second World War.

A comparison with countries of the Great Lakes Region emphasised the unique nature of the Somali case. While Rwanda and Uganda are relatively solid states, Burundi and the DRC are much weaker. While Burundi cannot be seen as a failed state, the case of DRC is debatable. The International Conference on the Great Lakes Region was said to be a very important tool providing strong regional input to peace and security of the region – and which has no equivalent in the Somali context.

One participant argued that Somalia is in fact not a failed state, but has become an informal state with competition between government and the business community. The business community in Somalia is strong and functioning, despite the two decades of conflict. Somalia's GDP per capita was said to be higher than that of Ethiopia, Eritrea or Burundi. Private actors and members of the business community have until recently been maintaining private airports, which are now being closed to control the flow of arms. The key question in this respect is how to draw these different actors into the peace process and into a constructive state-building process.

Although the current government enjoys legitimacy and is thought to be representative, there was an overall concern that it also lacks capacity and competence including in creating a secure environment in which to govern. The question was raised of how far the existing regional administrations (Somaliland and Puntland) could contribute to an overall settlement. It was argued that the main problem is building a stable central government, as the regional administrations have been quite stable for some time.

The Somali diaspora

The role of the diaspora was a recurrent theme throughout the session. There is a huge Somali diaspora living in the USA, Canada, the UK, Sweden, Norway, Australia and the Middle East, as well as in African countries such as Kenya, South Africa and Nigeria. Everybody who can afford to is leaving Somalia, and almost 30 per cent of the total Somali population has migrated. Those left behind are a young generation of fighters who have never known peace. Consequently, there are those remaining who have the legitimacy to support a stable government but they lack the necessary competence and experience. While the diaspora provides significant financial support, and shows strong solidarity with the Somali population, it contributes at the same time to the increase of foreign fighters coming to Somalia from all over the world as jihadis.

External actors and the international community

While the international community is based in Nairobi and is unable to work in Somalia, participants noted, it is deprived of its legitimacy to act. Similarly, while the peace process in Djibouti brought the parties together, implementation on the ground in Somalia has proved difficult and will continue to be a challenge without capacity of the new government to establish basic security and begin governing, even in a small area. In addition, a critical challenge has been the delays and inability to deliver on assistance after the agreement was signed. This assistance is critical in order to cement the legitimacy of the new government.

One participant felt that the international community has – consciously or not – missed (or failed to address) the two organic, local state-building processes that have existed in Somalia: the administration under the Islamic Courts Union in 2006, and the Benadir administrations. Although very different processes, both of these were functional, non-international initiatives on which something could have been built.

There were also arguments that the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) should play a more prominent role in supporting state-building in support of the peace process. IGAD has increased its capacity to support the peace process recently with the appointment of a Special Envoy on Somalia, but the mandate of this office and the focus of IGAD should be strengthened in this respect. The issue of state-building cannot be the burden of the mediator alone, but requires a regional approach.

Action points

The session concluded with some consideration of next steps. Asked to identify three immediate action points, a participant summarised as follows.

1. More troops and a stronger international force are needed to provide the necessary security and to create space for the government to function. As a starting point, the number of AMISOM troops should be increased to the 8000 promised.
2. There is a need to start active governance and institution-building and create space and security conditions on the ground that will allow the local population as well as aid and development agencies to work. It was argued that no matter how much money is raised for Somalia, it will not reach Somalia if the international community cannot work there.
3. The new government should provide support and peace dividends to the communities fighting the extremists on their own territories, both to support these efforts and to demonstrate the benefits of a state structure.

Coordination and cooperation in mediation processes

Given the crowded field of mediation, what is the role of coordination in mediation processes? How can coordination be achieved in a complicated environment with increasingly diverse actors? These actors range from the UN and its various sub-organisations, core and contact groups, regional organisations, and individual state actors like Norway, Switzerland, South Africa, Libya and others, to private peacemakers (e.g. the Crisis Management Initiative, the HD Centre, the Carter Center, and St Egidio) and prominent individuals (e.g. Kofi Annan and Martti Ahtisaari).

This session began with an introduction to Teresa Whitfield's work on groups of Friends (groups of states created to support UN peacemaking and peace operations and related mechanisms) and the types of groups and coalitions that have been actively engaged in issues of peace and security within the UN sphere. In her work, Whitfield looked at questions such as whetherto form a group of Friends or another more informal coalition, and how and in

what circumstances the UN Secretary-General and secretariat can work productively with groups of states in the resolution of conflict.

The Kenya process of 2008 was discussed as an example of good practice around coordination in a mediation process. Two main reasons for the success of this process were identified: the clear leadership of Kofi Annan, and the pressure of the international community acting rapidly and with common objectives in resolving the conflict. The Kenya process demonstrated unique international cohesion and strong coordination by the AU and UN, from the most senior to working levels. The key question arising from the Kenya experience is whether there are models or mechanisms that could be used in different contexts or whether that process was too particular to draw lessons from. The participants highlighted that Kenya was an exceptional case, but also that it serves to underscore the importance of coordination in mediation. Finally, it was noted that even a best-case scenario for mediation does not mean that implementation will be similarly smooth.

One participant shared experiences of mediating in various peace processes, stressing the differences between confidential and public processes, and what this means for the mediators. Mediating in a confidential process, it was argued, was much easier because there was no competition with other mediators. In public processes, a mediator has to cope with multiple actors, commentators, regional actors and others who – in most cases – all act without any coordination or information-sharing, which makes the work far more difficult.

A recurrent theme throughout this session was the importance of a clear lead mediator. An active, well-recognised mediator with leverage, it was argued, makes the work of facilitators and mediation support teams considerably simpler. However, where there is no acknowledged lead mediator, it is crucial to create a network with a single focal point which can register the interest of organisations in the particular conflict. It was further mentioned that the lack of a prominent lead mediator makes it essential to establish other mechanisms that can assert the necessary leverage – such as the panel of eminent personalities in Kenya, or the group of wise men in Aceh.

The focus of the second half of the session was on mechanisms for learning, documenting and sharing lessons. Participants agreed that ideas arising during the exchange of experiences at conferences and events such as the Oslo forum tend to be lost and do not feed into a process. Key questions included the following.

- How can information be shared more effectively?
- How can we (different actors in the peacemaking environment) best complement each other?
- How should we manage networks (such as the informal Oslo forum network), and use them to engage in practical applications?
- Is there a need for mediation guidelines or the establishment of a body of norms and if so, who would be best placed to create it?
- How can modern technology be used to make such an approach as participatory as possible?

There was a consensus that having a common approach to a process might be positive and necessary but would be possible on only a conceptual basis. In reality, this concept would

be undermined by the politics of a given situation and complicated by other factors such as the potentially confidential nature of a process. Some participants also argued that flexibility and creativity are more important than a rigid body of tools or terms of engagement. Any coordination mechanism or process, it was suggested, would lead to a loss of innovation. It was stressed that multiple actors in a conflict have different kinds of engagement. While the positive aspects of the ability to pick and choose between actors might not be realised in all conflicts, the extreme diversity of groups and their needs in some situations might benefit from diversity of engagement.

Focus discussion on Sri Lanka

In Sri Lanka, a conventional war has just been won by the government against the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) movement. Participants in this session pointed out that a quiet diplomacy had been set in motion to convince the parties to end the war, but that the government preferred the option of a full defeat of forces. It was noted that the President is not disputed and had strong support from the population for these operations

One participant elaborated on the history of the recent ceasefire agreements, arguing that these were superficial and that there is now an urgent need to address seriously the possibilities of reconciliation. The session then touched on the issue of the current need to look for political options and to achieve a separation of political from armed actors. The discussion underlined the complete transformation of how peace is approached in Sri Lanka after the conflict. It was argued that there has been a change in the strategy of LTTE, with a move towards options of diplomacy. Some participants feared however that the vacuum left by the disappearance of the LTTE leadership could be used by more extremist factions.

Concerns were also voiced about the issue of the Tamil minority after the defeat of the LTTE. Until the war, there were prospects of negotiations, including talks about regional autonomy. It was felt that this was now out of the question and that it is not clear how the Tamil minority will be addressed. The President has said that he will pursue a political solution but some participants wondered what kind of incentives now remain for looking at the causes of the conflict after such a total military victory. A change in terminology had already been noticed: the government is now talking about individual rights and no longer talking about minorities.

Participants also generally agreed that, even though the international community is pushing for a legitimate political process, there are huge constraints on any possible leverage attempts. The Sri Lankan government is expected to resist and will most likely approach Iran and China if it wants to avoid having to deal with demanding Western donors. It was felt that Sri Lanka has always been successful in isolating itself from external pressure.

The failures of past agreements were perceived to be elements which led to the current situation. The discussion reflected on how legitimate political representation could emerge after the war. Some participants emphasised that the LTTE was never the only legitimate representative of the Tamil people. Other participants cautioned that one should not regard diaspora views as representative of all local Tamil claims.

Finally, participants examined how to draw and use lessons from the Sri Lankan case to advise other groups in similar situations. The consequences for options for engagement of characterising the LTTE as a terrorist movement were also briefly mentioned.

The utility of force

Does the number of cases in which states have chosen military force over mediation constitute a worrying trend? The overall consensus was, in this session and throughout the forum, that there are some situations in which the use of force is advisable, others in which pure diplomacy is more accurate, but that, in many if not most cases, a mixture of both approaches seems to be the best possible option. There was overall agreement that use of force alone does not solve or address social problems and other root causes of a conflict, and we therefore cannot speak of 'military solutions'. Participants identified the need to combine the use of force with political and diplomatic efforts, agreeing that this would require far more complex, sophisticated and long-term operations.

This session began by looking at two specific cases: Sri Lanka and Colombia. It was argued that in Sri Lanka the fact of the recent military victory does not make the use of force credible, especially given the tactics used by the Sri Lankan government. The government, it was said, basically suspended democracy and used methods not available to most democratic governments. For example, by controlling the media the government mobilised huge public support for winning the war through military victory. The LTTE or Tamil Tigers on the other hand, it was suggested, were incapable of winning the war with their chosen tactics. Organising themselves and fighting like a conventional army, rather than using guerrilla methods, provided them with no strategic advantage. It was argued that the military victory by government forces was partly due to the unwillingness of the Tigers to engage in diplomacy and politics.

In Colombia, it was argued, the initial peace process failed because FARC did not have honest intentions of ending the war. Instead, FARC used the duration of the peace process to gain strength. The argument was made that, when there is no legitimate intention of using dialogue, the use of force should always be considered. In the case of Colombia it was felt that the use of force would be effective only if the justice system works and if it is complemented with social investment to create social cohesion to address the underlying grievances. This might take years and, even if force is used, the key strategy should be to remain flexible and open to the option of dialogue.

On a more abstract level, one participant explained the need to separate the battle from the war. In a battle, the parties are in a bilateral relationship with a unilateral outcome. A war by contrast is conducted for political purposes and must have a political result, a bilateral outcome in which parties make unilateral decisions. While the rationale of the battle is to kill and destroy, the rationale of a war is to fight and talk. Players in a war have to transition from one rationale to the other. The question of the utility of force is what to do in the fighting to be of advantage for the talks. What means should be used in which way and to which end? Iraq was cited as an example of the particularly unsuccessful use of force, where the war has progressed as if the battle was the issue, resulting in an Iraq of battles without a concept of war.

Another participant stressed the importance of looking also at the perspective of resistance movements and their view of the utility of force. Uncompromising use of force by governments will have to be met by equally uncompromising use of force by resistance movements.

It was repeatedly mentioned that the main utility of force is or should be to provide security. International intervention through force – or, more specifically, having troops on the ground to provide security – can open a window of change for people to talk and re-start the economy. It was stressed that the military does not bring about this change; it is the civilians who know how to promote civil society, create a free press, build political parties, hold elections and re-start the economy. However, the military component is in many cases necessary to enable other changes, which will not happen in a situation of insecurity.

Considering the use of force in terms of containment, participants in this session discussed using the physical presence of troops to contain an insurgency while providing some opportunity for development work. One participant cautioned that ‘containment’ can be far from positive in a military context, citing the example of the Balkans (1992–95) where the military ended up containing a political vacuum. This participant argued that a policy of containment can result in containing but not addressing a problem. Containment by military force can very quickly result in the military becoming part of the problem, particularly if it is containing a political void. However, it was felt that managing a conflict without high-level violence is very important. Because there is no immediate or rapid solution in many conflicts, maintaining a reduced level of violence at least results in fewer people killed.

As one participant observed, talking is not the same as conceding – and a major task for mediators is to raise public awareness that talk is not appeasement. Sometimes, talks cannot be open and can take place only in secret while the killing continues, as it was the case in Northern Ireland.

It was agreed in conclusion that, among the seemingly growing sense of enthusiasm for the use of force, there is a need to recapture the ground of diplomacy. A more nuanced approach would be to return to the debate about the legitimate use of force: not only whether but *how* force is used.

Preparing conflict parties for negotiations

This session explored the asymmetry of skills and means between parties to a conflict negotiation. The choice of actors in a negotiation depends on the leaders of each conflict party; the mediators do not have a say in this and can help only in giving advice. Discussants emphasised that capacity building with parties before starting talks can help to avoid delays and stalemates during the negotiation process.

In the case of the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA), the leaders had selected negotiators with little experience of negotiation procedures and skills, which made capacity-building activities all the more relevant. The question of timing is especially important here, the point being not to organise academic training but to bring in the right experts at the right time to overcome

a stalemate and regain momentum. The value of a capacity-building workshop is that it is part of a process. It was argued that such undertakings also enable a reduced role for emotion by trying to focus instead on technical considerations.

One participant examined the case of the Philippines, where the peace process broke down and the parties were advised to deal with the issues leading to the collapse of the process. The mediator here played a role in planning the resulting workshop, the idea being to keep the parties engaged and move forward. Constitutional issues and aspects of disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) were the controversial points in these talks. A key part of the initiative was to help conflict parties learn from experiences in other processes. Participants emphasised the need to tailor capacity building to the needs of the moment: having actors from Sudan was very important for the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) for example. It was also considered useful for the government to see examples of actors who took the risk of having secret talks with groups in Northern Ireland. This supported the understanding that it is useful to avoid pre-conditions. It was further stressed that who talks as an expert is as important as what is being said, as the speaker can give legitimacy to the message.

Another participant addressed the issue of helping parties to access the negotiation table on more equal terms. Some parties are severely disadvantaged in comparison to others, and this imbalance contributes to bad outcomes in negotiations. The disadvantaged parties feel that they are not understood, and will feel less committed to an agreement if they did not take a full part in it. It was emphasised that this imbalance is commonly acute between state and non-state actors, where the solution will require more than capacity building alone.

Five areas were identified for the pursuit of equality between parties.

1. The quality of technical expertise, as actors have to deal with complex issues (e.g. border demarcation).
2. Access to information (e.g. cartographic information records, diplomatic developments).
3. The right of participation, in terms of access to the negotiation table.
4. Access to forums where the negotiations are being discussed – presented as the idea of a universal right of address at the UN Security Council.
5. Equal treatment and respect – if parties feel fairly treated, they are more likely to accept the outcome of the negotiation.

It was observed that public-information processes are also necessary for non-state actors. Access to media is usually the prerogative of the state, but is also key for non-state groups to convey messages, clarify their positions and dissipate rumours.

The session then turned to the issue of who is best placed to help and advise parties. Some participants argued that support must come from a disinterested party, indicating scepticism that mediators would be a good support, as the required impartiality of a mediator seems incompatible with supporting any one particular side. Participants also debated the difficult cases of confidential processes, in which it was felt that the mediator is forced to engage with the weaker party. This again raises issues of neutrality for the mediator but there is no opportunity to bring in a disinterested party if the government does not want the process

to be open. The mediator has to step in, usually to the detriment of his or her relationship with the government.

It was generally agreed that it is in principle not the role of the mediator to train the parties but that mediators should ensure that the parties get proper services with advice. When bringing in an outside provider of mediation support in a confidential project, participants emphasised the need to differentiate between the mediator and the ‘supporter’, with the option of simply resorting to different staff members of the same organisation or of another trusted organisation, which may maintain the confidentiality of the process. There is room for creativity in bringing in trusted outside actors, even in confidential processes. It is for example possible to get the green light from the mediator for such involvement and an informal agreement from the state party.

Some participants questioned the idea of granting equality to non-state conflict parties. Giving access and recognition was felt to be a political statement. Other participants argued that there are ways around conferring status while still hearing views informally. It was strongly argued that groups should be heard by the Security Council, but also that it is important to create opportunities for the Security Council to put its views to the non-state groups. Some groups may have no understanding of statements that are addressed to them but received as unintelligible.

Participants further discussed the dichotomy between what parties really want and the depiction of their views and interests by mediators and others. The session also addressed questions of inclusiveness, emphasising how providing capacity support to some of the non-state parties can alter the dynamics between groups by empowering the negotiators who are trained and disempowering those who are not. Concerns were also voiced about the risk of ‘rebel-shopping’. Indeed, some capacity-building initiatives can hinder peace processes when many organisations set up various workshops, occupying crucial actors in the peace talks.

It was also briefly mentioned that the asymmetry of preparedness can be either way. In El Salvador for example, opposition movements had greater capacity to negotiate. The session concluded with the observation that it is often very difficult to assess the impact of capacity-building exercises. However, in the case of the Philippines, capacity building has been seen as successful, as the government, after talking to experts, is no longer insisting on DDR as a pre-condition.

Chances of a rapprochement between Iran and the West

At the outset of this session, it was asserted that the international community has to deal with Iran, regardless of the outcome of the political turmoil following the presidential elections of 12 June. Participants agreed to focus the session on what is most likely to happen regarding efforts on engagement for negotiations.

Participants suggested that the recent elections are highly pertinent in tactical diplomatic terms for President Obama. It was felt that the Obama administration is clearly interested but treading very carefully in this process. The post-election situation might make it harder for Obama to include those within the US who oppose dialogue. Some participants pointed out that bigger problems in Iran will cause correspondingly bigger problems for Obama.

Considering the position from the Iranian side in the engagement process, one participant commented that Iranian politicians will look at the 'P5+1' group on Iran's nuclear programme for signs of new thinking and approach. Discussants further underlined that the appointment of Dennis Ross reflected a desire by the US administration to have full transparency to Tel Aviv, and that his role would be crucial. It was emphasised that Iranians would scrutinise the bilateral Iran-US talks being held on Afghanistan by the embassies in Kabul, to see if they will develop into something more substantive. Concern was voiced about the fact that, from an Iranian perspective, it seems that America has not yet decided if it really wants to engage.

The current limbo situation could last for months before both sides come to understand each other and decide if they are ready to engage. Participants elaborated on what would constitute a first step, stressing that Iran understands that it is difficult to have broad discussions to start with. A starting point could be the issue of Afghanistan. It was felt that the P5+1 process offers the opportunity for bilateral discussions in the midst of the process, and some participants questioned the monopoly of the US in the dialogue process. Some commented that the US believes that there are already enough people interposed. In contrast, some participants considered that intermediaries could be helpful, in terms of process rather than content. Some participants noted that, on the Iranian side, it has been a mistake to send too many messages which have been modified due to too many intermediaries.

The debate also elaborated on the danger for both sides of being seen to fail, and discussed the use of back channels. It was noted that time is not necessarily against a process, as people are getting invested and building personal relationships. Discussions should be formatted in a multilateral way, as for instance on Afghanistan, but should preserve space for bilateral contacts about the talks. The discussants also touched on the problem implied by the American position that opening a dialogue is in itself a reward to the other side.

Participants observed that, while it might not be possible to create a grand bargain, it should be possible to create a grand agenda. There should be a way to open many issues that could be addressed in many forums. The benefit of talks without preconditions is that this allows for an open agenda for each side. The problem otherwise is that each side will find it difficult to agree precisely how and when to address particular issues.

Turning to concerns for non-proliferation, it was agreed that beginning with the nuclear issue would be very difficult as this topic is the most problematic. The session explored the need to exploit common interests in peace in the region, looking at the example of the Vietnamese peace. One option suggested was to accept some Uranium enrichment in Iran, which is permitted under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), but to use a multinational envelope as guarantee against military abuse, associated with a very strong inspection programme.

Finally, some participants suggested that the process is far from being promising, especially in light of the current post-election conflicts in Iran. It is not easy to set an agenda for talks, and there will be a point at which both sides have to decide to sit together. Due to the very high expectations created by such a step, parties will be reluctant to proceed without being sure of further progress. There will also be a point when it will be necessary to discuss the three core issues – Israel, sanctions and nuclear questions – and it is very difficult to imagine this being possible at present.

The discussion concluded by noting that there are two visions of two truths. When the two sides do finally sit together, there will be a crucial need to accept that the other side has a different view and a different position on the conflict. Each side must accept the legitimacy of the different view, even if it does not share it. One discussant reminded the audience that it took three years in Northern Ireland to reach this point.

Mediation and the military

The UN is sending military peacekeepers into contexts where they are asked to perform increasingly complex tasks. Military peacekeeping operations are expected to cover a wide array of work, including on gender, civilian protection, monitoring and surveillance. This array keeps broadening while the military's primary mission – providing security – may not be fulfilled. In addition, the military is often not equipped with the political mandate or the resources to engage, proactively separate combatants, protect civilians or even to protect itself. This session looked at how mediation and military initiatives can interrelate, and discussed the challenges faced by civilian heads of mission and military commanders in combined civil-political-military operations in terms of coordination and cooperation.

Within blue-helmeted UN operations the civil-military relationship is in principle very clear. The commanding general is subordinate to the political representative, with a hierarchical single chain of command, which makes these operations organisationally more unified than others. In hybrid missions however, the UN operates alongside other operations not under UN command, although they are supporting the same objectives, and so civil-military cooperation here is more complicated. Participants argued that, while the US and the NATO systems separate the commands of military and civilian components of a mission, the UN system is conceptually better precisely because it subordinates the military to the civilian. Examples of such operations are the UN and the British in Sierra Leone, the UN and the French in Côte d'Ivoire, and NATO and the UN in Kosovo.

Throughout this session, the main focus was on Afghanistan. Here, in a complicated initiative, the UN operates in a largely political but also economic, humanitarian and social role, and NATO works in security. There is also a completely separate US-run operation not under the NATO or the UN command but which is also authorised by a Security Council resolution.

In the Afghanistan of the 'old era' (before September 11), there were no major problems of civil and military interaction. The UN civilian presence had well-established networks and relationships with all actors on the ground. With the build-up to the US military intervention after September 11, the first event was that the UN was pulled out. As UN

civilian capacity disappeared, the UN remained merely a spectator, unable to influence anything on the ground, despite the assurance that the UN would be a significant actor in the intervention.

Once the civilian personnel could move back into the country, there was a rapid development of working relations among the actors on the ground. The gradual maturing of the military infrastructure resulted in a range of processes with detailed operational engagement between the military and civilian sides, and military–civilian components were introduced around the country (such as the Provincial Reconstruction Teams, or PRTs). In Afghanistan, it was argued, the light application of military deterrence ensured rapid compliance of local actors, and a series of local conflicts were de-escalated with civilian UN presence and one or two members of any of the present military forces ‘looking towards the sky’.

It was pointed out that the case of Afghanistan is exceptional because it is a combat operation in which the international community has huge military resources at its disposal. This is in contrast to peacekeeping environments. The biggest challenge to establishing effective working relationships between the UN civilian staff and international military forces, whether in Afghanistan or any other context, was said to be the differences in length of stay. By building up networks over time, the UN develops both the ability to interact effectively with Afghan society and a capacity for institutional learning. The US personnel by contrast are replaced after six months of service, which makes cooperation and building relationships difficult.

Another challenge identified was the emerging issue of civilian casualties. This creates tensions between the international community and the local population, and also between the international civilian and military personnel. The international civilian tasks include dealing with and reporting on civilian casualties, the conduct of searches and detention policies. In this work, the civilian presence encounters considerable grievance from local society against the military. One participant suggested that military staff should be better briefed on the protection of women and girls and on issues of sexual violence. Furthermore, women need to be more actively included within the military staff, as male peacekeepers have no access to female society in some countries.

Situation report on Nepal

Despite the general view that the Nepal peace process has been a great success, the seeds of the present crisis have been very clear throughout the process which included a number of weaknesses. The 2008 elections seem to have gone well, but a number of participants in this session were unsurprised that the peace process had broken down. Some argued that difficulties were inevitable given that the whole project was based on the Maoists having to give up ten years of insurgency and their ideal of setting up a Maoist state in Nepal. Concern was voiced that, in this situation, there was a need for a stronger third-party role than India has ever allowed the UN to play in Nepal.

The discussion centred on the current deep crisis in Nepal, resulting from disagreements among the internally divided parties forming the government. Their divisions have been exacerbated by the current arguments about who gets what in the government. The

presidency is also seriously compromised politically by the actions of the President in what most people regard as going beyond his constitutional powers.

The breakdown of the government coalition is sometimes described as being the consequence of a failure to govern by consensus, of the suspicion that the Maoists would take control of key state institutions and of the replacement the Chief of Army Staff with a more pliant substitute. However, participants underlined that these explanations are not enough to understand the deep-rooted problems of the peace process. The failure to negotiate the future of the two armies at the end of the armed conflict was presented as a key factor. In the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, the parties had merely agreed on some very general process and committed to establish a special committee, with no real agreement on how many Maoist combatants would be integrated. There has always been profound difference between the Maoist view, which in its extreme form was that a completely new army should be formed out of the two armies, and the view from the Nepal army itself and many of the parliamentary parties that the state army was the legitimate one.

Informal understanding at the time of the peace process was that a few thousand from the Maoist army would be integrated, but this has never been formalised. It was felt that the integration is being resisted by the Nepal army itself and by the Chief of Army Staff. In this context, there was no desire to address the issue of integration before the constituent assembly elections. The extensive Maoist strengths in these elections led to a breakdown of consensus among the political parties. Participants also noted a general failure of implementation of the agreement, and deep suspicion within both parties, which contributed to the breakdown of the political process.

The discussion also briefly explored the possibility of the emergence of a new Maoist-led government of national unity. It was felt that the recent example of Sri Lanka might appear attractive to some in Nepal. If indeed the Maoists strengthen locally, a deeper confrontation with the army could be expected.

The best scenario for the next months would include restoring unity among the political parties, while retaining their differences. The discussion emphasised the need to reach a common sense of purpose and maintain a uniting agenda for the remaining period of the transition. A suggested high-level political mechanism would bring together the main political leaders and would be the locus for resolving crisis and differences. In the short term, participants agreed on the need to find solutions to get Nepal through the elections and constitution-drafting period. The biggest challenge is now the constitution-making process, in particular the idea of an ethnic federal constitution. This is a concession by the Maoists and the traditional parties to the Madheshi and the indigenous communities. Achieving this will be difficult and may be the cause of new tensions. Madheshi leaders are demanding a single state for themselves, while there are other ethnic groups who are completely opposed to such a concept.

The likelihood of reverting to armed conflict was assessed as low; none of the Maoist leaders talks about using weapons again. However, if their isolation continues, renewed conflict is not impossible in the long term. A likely scenario could be a compromise situation: there will be some form of unity government but some problems will remain. The Maoists will have huge difficulties returning the land and property they seized during the conflict and

the traditional parties will have huge difficulties accepting the kind of fundamental change that the Maoists argue for. Some level of stability can be hoped for, but it will be very difficult to make progress without some resolution of the issue of the integration of the Maoist army.

The session also briefly noted that the parties fear that Nepal will attain the status of failed state. It was felt that they did not want the case of Nepal to be discussed at the Security Council and were not in favour of a peace mission because they did not want to be seen as being in receipt of aid. It was argued that the UN should adapt to this and invent a hybrid of civilian monitors.

The discussion finally turned to India's position in the current situation. It was emphasised that India has supported and helped the peace process from the beginning and would like to see unity of the parties. India is however very critical of the Maoists and believes that they failed to honour the commitment to govern by consensus. India's major concerns are that the Maoists want to change the unequal relationship between Nepal and India, including through the revision of the 1950 treaty between the two countries, and the improved relations between the Maoists and China. Nonetheless, participants suggested that positions are evolving in India, indicated by some criticism internally in the Indian press about how India sided with the army. This was presented as an opportunity for the international community to engage more actively with India on the issue of Nepal.

Situation report on the Philippines

The first of two different issues covered in this session was the peace process with the Communist Party (CPP) and its armed wing, the NPA (National People's Army). The second issue was the recent developments in the peace process with the MILF (Moro Islamic Liberation Front), and particularly what happened after the Memorandum of Agreement of 2008 was challenged by local government officials and taken to the Supreme Court.

The 'CNN' (Communist Party of the Philippines, National Democratic Front and New People's Army) process

The New People's Army (NPA) has been waging its so-called 'revolutionary war' against the government in Manila since 1969, and the conflict persists 40 years after the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) was founded. Peace negotiations facilitated by Norway were stalled in 2004 when the National Democratic Front (NDF), the umbrella movement representing the armed movement and its political supporters, insisted that President Gloria Arroyo's government exert an effort to remove the 'terrorist' label imposed on them by the United States and the European Community. The NDF also rejected a 'prolonged ceasefire' as a precondition to the resumption of the peace negotiations.

Despite an earlier statement by President Arroyo, ordering the military to put an end to the insurgency, serious efforts continue to re-start formal talks, with confidence-building

measures on the ground and informal meetings to encourage further dialogue. These efforts were said to be continuously hampered by the persisting extrajudicial killings. Although not officially on the road map, the parties agreed that the two main items on the agenda for talks are political and constitutional reforms and reaching an end of hostilities.

Following reforms and a restructuring of the peace processes by President Ramos, there have been a total of ten different agreements on the CNN process alone. One of the biggest weaknesses in the process, it was argued, is that every change of president leads to a change of focus in the peace process. Under President Arroyo, civil society started to play a bigger role in the process, especially when she appointed Teresita Quintos Deles, a civil society expert, as Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process (now replaced by Avelino Razon).

The MILF process

On 14 October 2008 the Supreme Court of the Philippines declared unconstitutional a draft agreement between the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and the Philippines government. The Memorandum of Agreement on Ancestral Domain (MOA-AD or MOA), the culmination of eleven years' negotiation, was originally scheduled to have been signed in Kuala Lumpur on 5 August. At the last minute, in response to petitions from local officials who said they had not been consulted about the contents, the court issued a temporary restraining order, preventing the signing.

The MOA was a document intended as a roadmap for a so-called Comprehensive Compact or final peace treaty. It acknowledged the Muslims of Mindanao, the Bangsamoro, as a First Nation and laid the groundwork for establishing a Bangsamoro Juridical Entity (BJE) as their homeland. The BJE's relationship with the central government was defined as 'associative', suggesting almost-equals. This, and the definition of ancestral domain, the territory to be included in the BJE, were the most controversial parts of the agreement. The revelation of the planned geographic scope led outraged local politicians, whose land would be affected and who had not been consulted during the negotiations, to demand an injunction. President Arroyo's opponents and potential successors after the 2010 elections also saw political advantage to be gained from condemning the MOA.

The decision of the court was said to have reinforced the people's perception that no one is above the constitution. Following the decision, the forces on the ground reacted and road commanders of the MILF started killing some of the non-Muslim settlers. This strengthened the opposition, who then argued that the commanders do not respect the rule of law and for that reason alone would have no right to the territory they were claiming. It was suggested that the government had publicised the MOA prematurely and without much preparation but too much focus on a grand signing in Malaysia. In the past, when talks broke down, negotiations picked up from where they left off, partly because the subjects being discussed were not particularly controversial or because critical details were not spelled out. This time, participants agreed, the collapse will be much harder to reverse.

Testing times for global nuclear disarmament: North Korea

This session aimed to assess the implications of North Korea's recent demonstrations of its nuclear capability on the progress of the Six-Party Talks, and on the current international efforts to strengthen the nuclear non-proliferation regime. Discussants debated the effectiveness of mediation and negotiations in such a case. It was underlined from the start that it is difficult to engage with a state which is afraid of the world and of which the world is afraid. There is no need for more engagement – as there is no lack of it here – and the general consensus was that the challenge lies rather in finding ways to get more influence.

The intentions of North Korea are opaque to outsiders, and five suggested interpretations of its recent activity were presented during this session.

1. North Korea is absolutely determined to become a nuclear-armed state.
2. National pride is the central issue, and North Korea aspires to lead the Korean peninsula.
3. Pyongyang sees a lucrative international market for its fissile material, and bomb and missile technology and hardware.
4. North Korea's weapons programme has always been primarily a means of negotiating for assured physical and economic security. (This view was held more widely.)
5. The most recent actions have been designed essentially for domestic consumption, to encourage hard-line military support for Kim Jong-Il's chosen family successor.

It is unclear how far North Korea wants to go in the militarisation process but it is presently considered to have the capability and enough plutonium to make at least six bombs.

Given the difficulty of knowing and understanding the mindset of North Korea's leaders, there is considerable speculation on many points. A combination was presented of four available options for policy response: a Security Council capable of achieving unity, a containment strategy through the existing proliferation security initiative (PSI), maintaining deterrence against any military activity, and finally, and crucially, keeping the door open for diplomacy. Some participants shared their doubts about the effectiveness of engaging with North Korea and sending envoys. Others asserted that the international community should signal readiness to negotiate whenever North Korea decides, and be better prepared when the moment arrives.

The discussion then turned to the use of smart sanctions, observing that sanctions on luxury goods were never properly enforced. More coordination on incentives and disincentives was felt to be required. Some participants further cautioned that North Korea is an excessively proud country, which compels the use of soft pressure. The discussion also elaborated on the need to keep the door open for humanitarian and food assistance. It was felt that it would be counterproductive to discontinue aid, as the regime could use this to support its argument that the rest of the world is against North Korea. Some participants further stressed that it is difficult to understand the cost to North Korea of giving up its nuclear deterrent, especially when dealing with a conflict with causes deeply rooted in a profound sense of insecurity (real or perceived). Some participants felt that the US approach to the process should focus more on crafting

negotiation strategies and packages. Other participants further underlined that what goes wrong with the process is not always because of North Korea. Participants debated the counterproductive focus on the abduction issues but also stressed the importance of including Japan, which will ultimately become a strong financial contributor. Participants further explored the role played by China. It was pointed out that it was a political decision from the Chinese leadership to get involved because of a sense of urgency and sense that there was no alternative. It was also emphasised that China wants to be careful when using its leverage so that it remains credible. Participants suggested that the first negotiation that has to take place is between the US and China. Some considered the need for a comprehensive plan on what China would be prepared to do and what the US would put on the table. Some suggested a permanent US–China strategy to find a common way of dealing with North Korea.

Participants asserted that the Six-Party Talks (SPT) helped the stakeholders to coordinate their policies and mobilise efforts. The SPT framework was presented as the best environment for resolving difficult issues in North East Asia more widely, potentially even on matters with only indirect linkages to the issue of North Korea. Even if other regional or larger architectures were to evolve, and provide an important back-up dynamic, the true core of the very complex interrelated issues in North East Asia is probably going to demand the involvement of the players in the Six-Party Talks in any case. Participants largely agreed that the key is to keep bilateral efforts under the umbrella of the SPT.

Finally, the session considered the impact of these developments on the global nuclear disarmament agenda. Participants suggested that the implications are probably less severe than generally assumed, as North Korea is very much one of a kind. The main challenge in terms of non-proliferation is to get the three nuclear powers outside the regime into some kind of framework. The likelihood of North Korea passing on knowledge and material was also debated, but it was mentioned that the forensic and scientific methods of tracing the origins of nuclear material make it unlikely that North Korea would expect to be able to do this. North Korea seems to understand the limits of the game well enough to stick to a money-making agenda, at least for the moment.

The role and impact of regional mediators

With the UN calling increasingly for regional solutions, and the major change in global power dynamics to the so-called post-American world order, emphasis has shifted from international to regional mediation. This session looked at the rising trend of regional mediation, and considered its advantages and disadvantages. While the overall consensus was that regional hegemonies have become more influential, one participant felt that this shift has yet to occur in practice. For example, it was said that, whatever South Africa decided to do in its regional mediation work, it could be sure of receiving a call from senior officials of either the US or the British administration to check on its action.

In the Middle East, regional dynamics are no longer driven by the traditional capitals or outside forces but rather by forces within the region. The three traditional and competing centres of power in the Middle East were Baghdad, Cairo and Damascus, with Riyadh joining in the 1970s as a fourth centre. In recent years, only Riyadh and a newly emerged

Tehran are significant centres of power. Israel, it was argued, although it is the militarily dominant force, is politically, economically and culturally not part of the region. It must act through the US in an odd proxy relationship. In terms of regional mediation, Turkey and Qatar have emerged as important players. Turkey is a central yet much-neglected power in a large number of conflicts, not only in the Middle East. It was pointed out however that the Caucasus for example does not perceive Turkey as a mediator but as asserting its influence. Qatar has stepped forward to mediate in situations where Tehran and Riyadh are at a loss, for example in Lebanon.

Some participants favoured regional mediation and stressed that countries within a region have a greater immediate stake than any outside actor, and that regional efforts should be supported. A regional mediator was said to be better placed for understanding the culture and history of a particular conflict. Speaking or at least understanding the same language was also said to be of enormous advantage because it is important to understand the details and subtleties of a conversation. Facilitation and mediation can be expensive, both financially and politically. It was argued that regional actors might not have the necessary resources to mediate successfully. It was also argued that the international community should give greater responsibilities to the regions, even if this includes funding the decentralisation.

While regional mediators tend to be seen as honest brokers trying to bring peace, there are also those who clearly have an agenda and are mainly trying to assert their sphere of influence. Participants regretted that there is hardly any critical reflection on this kind of mediator and that there should also be a way to control such efforts, just as it would be appropriate to support honest intentions of regional mediation. Concerns were voiced that regional actors are almost never seen as neutral in a conflict, and that regional mediation efforts often fail because they tend to get caught up in their interests and constantly shifting alliances. One participant stressed that it is more important to look at the role that regional states can play in terms of providing advice and facilitation rather mediation.

The session concluded by noting that a mediator's self-interest in a conflict can be a positive force but can easily become a problem as well. Mediating states in general need to find a balance between values and interests. If a state has no interests in a conflict, it is less likely to develop the resources and staying power essential for a sustainable process. On the other hand, excessive interests pose a problem and result in the mediator no longer being seen as impartial. It was suggested that any regional mediator's particular interest should be acknowledged and channelled. The challenge in any conflict is first to identify and agree on what is in the best interest of the country concerned, and then to decide who is best placed to mediate.

Indicting for peace, negotiating for justice

During this session the panellists examined the challenges of addressing justice during negotiation processes. Participants highlighted that there is a general consensus on the need for peace and reconciliation but stressed that there is now some controversy about the timing of indictments, as in the specific case of Darfur. It was argued that mediators cannot control and can only minimally influence the International Criminal Court (ICC). It was strongly underlined that mediators should understand the role of the ICC but

should not focus on finding ways to go around it.

A general concern was that an arrest warrant targeting an actor in peace talks is a great complication of the peace process. However, participants also debated the assumption that the indictment against El-Bashir had affected the talks in the case of Darfur, mentioning that the peace process was already barely progressing beforehand. The panellists explored the primary reasons for the strong reaction to the ICC, noting the discomfort that a current head of state is being prosecuted. It was stressed that, while there were concerns over the El-Bashir indictment, this did not mean that the African community was not committed to addressing impunity.

The issue of the use of amnesty measures in peace agreements was raised briefly in the session, and it was noted that it is now widely accepted that war crimes, crimes against humanity or genocide cannot be covered by amnesty laws, as per the prevailing international law. The discussion clarified that other forms of amnesties can be acceptable. Other tools, such as truth commissions, monitoring and vetting of human rights abusers from the armed forces, reconciliation and reparations for victims, were also discussed. Participants debated justice clauses and the appropriate level of detail in peace agreements, reflecting the need to balance the advantage of leaving options open against the advantage of setting up the institutions in advance.

The discussion then turned to the case of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). The ICC arrest warrants against the leadership of the LRA, unsealed in 2005, presented a particular challenge to the peace negotiations for Northern Uganda. When Southern Sudan decided it wanted the LRA out of its territory, it started mediation efforts and looked for political measures. Some participants suggested that it is not illegal to engage with people subjected to an arrest warrant if it is in the interest of peace. They pointed out that Southern Sudan was supported in the process by other countries and the controversy reduced, especially after Jan Egeland said he was prepared to take the risk of going to meet with the LRA leadership.

Some of the African misgivings about the ICC stem from the widely held view that African problems should be solved by Africans themselves, and that they cannot rely entirely on external interventions to produce lasting solutions. It was strongly felt that mediators have to focus on unlocking the stalemate. The question is not whether or not to support justice; it is rather about bringing a different vision of the appropriate venues and forums. Some participants shared the view that the ICC was not the only viable approach here. It was very strongly thought that any negotiation processes should achieve greater clarity on how the complementarity principle can be applied.

The need to engage with the Court on mechanisms for considering complementarity, to give mediators tools and predictability, was identified as key to achieving both peace and justice. It was argued that there should be room for the judiciary in Sudan to be asked to amend the penal codes and laws, and room for traditional judiciary to play its role. However, the credibility of a national mechanism in this case was also questioned. Some participants raised the idea of a hybrid court as Sudan already has a hybrid force. The African Union panel on Darfur, led by former President Mbeki, for example, is an important process and could be a way for the AU to find space to promote accountability. The panel aims to determine how best to expedite the peace process to create conditions conducive to promoting peace, justice and reconciliation in Darfur.

Some participants questioned the assumption that international justice has nothing to do

with political and contextual considerations, and that the impact of dismantling fragile arrangements is irrelevant to the prosecutor. What is contested now in Africa is that justice interventions do not appear to grasp the political and social complexity of conflict situations. Some participants cautioned that the ICC has a responsibility to understand the political and security impact of its actions. In Kenya for example, if the ICC decided to become involved, indictments could return the country to violence and destabilisation, if not carefully handled. There was also general concern that the prosecutor was perceived as politicising the issue in the case of El-Bashir.

Participants also debated the use of Article 16 of the Rome Statute, which many felt should have been evoked by the Security Council to ensure that the pursuit of justice does not hinder the pursuit of peace. The use of the deferral system was included in the African Union's plan, but the AU did not manage to convince Security Council members. Other participants noted that the deferral would be for only 12 months, and would not take the indictment completely away from the table. It was however seen as creating an opportunity for developing a stronger national system in the meantime.

A recurrent concern was the battle of information about the level of the various conflicts under scrutiny. A clear concern about relations with the ICC was the lack of capacity to verify information. Some participants also considered that the key to credibility for the Court is to be consistent.

Lessons from (not) dealing with Hamas and Hezbollah

Reviewing recent attempts at engaging with Hamas and Hezbollah, this session explored possibilities for more fruitful engagement. The discussion touched upon identity and land, highlighting the difficult question of restoring the rights of the population concerned, and acknowledged the difficulty for both parties in meeting on an acceptable solution. How can this be mediated?

Previous mediation attempts, mainly centred on the liberation of Gilad Shalit (the Israeli soldier captured by Hamas) and ceasefires, have highlighted considerable challenges for the mediator. Hamas, as a party, perceives Egypt as a dishonest broker. From Hamas' point of view, Egypt is self-interested, biased in favour of Fatah and considers Hamas a liability, because of the links with Egypt's Muslim brothers (Hamas and the brotherhood belong to the same school of thought). Egypt doesn't want Hamas to achieve success, as any Hamas success would be interpreted as a loss on the side of Fatah, which Egypt supports.

Other than Egypt, a number of states have engaged with Hamas, including European countries until Hamas was placed on the terrorist list in 2002/03. Although Hamas is a major party, which won democratic elections, it is one with which Western countries and the United Nations can engage² only on the basis of the three Quartet conditions for resumption of aid and diplomatic contact: the new government must abide by past Israeli-Palestinian accords, recognise Israel's right to exist and renounce violence. In the face of Hamas' refusal

² Participants noted that the United Nations keeps engaging with Hamas at the 'working level', which in fact does not preclude meeting with the movement's senior representatives.

to accept pre-conditions to any form of dialogue, the international community is restricted by conditions it imposed upon itself, which it cannot remove. The original intention of the Quartet and Israel to resort to sanctions and boycott for Hamas to change (and abide by the three conditions), or be removed by its constituency, has not yielded results.

If Hamas considers that Egypt spoiled the mediation, Israel has not asked for another third party to be involved and Egypt has objected to the involvement of any other third party. Egypt's perceived partiality towards Fatah over Hamas affects the thinking of the international community. Even in the face of the new administration, the US is unlikely to accept a national unity government that does not recognise the right of the state of Israel to exist. On the other hand, if Hamas is willing to engage with the West and the US, it has reaffirmed that this should be unconditional. Participants discussed the possibility indicated by Hamas that, should pre-conditions be dropped, it would accept the possibility of a long truce arrangement with Israel, which may amount to a *de facto* recognition (not a *de jure* one). This is one possible entry point for exploring solutions to the conflict.

Integrating Hamas into a process has proved challenging so far. There were strong arguments for not engaging with Hamas before the 2006 elections, in the absence of a process outlining key issues. After the elections, this rationale no longer stood, and the West's reluctance to engage with Hamas rather sent the message that democracy was not for everyone. After Hamas' election in 2006, Egypt and Saudi Arabia tried to get Hamas to accept or endorse the 'Arab peace initiative'. This failed in the face of different nuances within the Hamas leadership, wherein some strictly adhered to historic grievances and offered little space for a constructive political engagement, while others indicated that their acceptance was contingent on Israel's agreement to be part of such a process first.

In terms of broader process, engagement with groups like Hamas and Hezbollah requires a clear agenda for the movements to outline a clear position, and for their general political line to become something 'businesslike' for negotiators to work on. Only then would the movements have a process on which to embark, and possibly a cost of missing out through which they might fear eroding public support. This would be especially so in the case of Palestinians who would seek compromises and support a two-state solution in preference to war.

In Lebanon, Hezbollah represents the Shiites who form the most numerous community. The choice made by major actors - including both the EU and the US - for a certain period not to deal with the representatives of the biggest community in the country has proved problematic. Participants touched upon previous attempts at negotiating with Hezbollah over the main issue of control of weapons, as well as keeping calm in the south of the country. They emphasised the need to put such discussions back into a Lebanese setting, returning responsibility for peace and war to the state. Given that a settlement on this issue remains linked to regional developments, mainly in Syria and Iran, it is nonetheless possible to engage and produce results, and this was accepted in principle in the national dialogue begun in the spring of 2006. In this respect, the UN mediation at the time was deemed useful by Hezbollah and led them to accept the terms of UN resolution 1701.

The regional dimension remains key in working towards a peaceful settlement. A number of Sunni Arab states do not want Hamas to succeed, because it is seen as a model for a

number of Muslim brotherhoods elsewhere in the region. Should Hamas succeed in Gaza, this poses a threat to neighbouring states and increases the risk of Muslim brotherhoods coming to power. The Arab peace initiative could be seen as a test for Egypt and Saudi Arabia to check whether Hamas would transform and change its stance. Whether regional Sunni Arab states are more comfortable with an extremist Hamas that will not succeed on its own terms remains an open question. A similar consideration applies to Hezbollah, with which a number of key Arab Sunni states appear reluctant to engage, as they see it as a proxy for Iran.

Participants emphasised the impossibility of positive results as long as the international community does not engage with a main conflict stakeholder (whether Hamas or Hezbollah). Further, the international community has to come to terms with the idea that the outcome of an inter-Palestinian effort, including Hamas as part of the process, is legitimate and should be supported. Such a shift in perception would be key for the UN to get back to a position of impartiality; for very practical and non-ideological reasons, the UN needs to be able to talk to everybody.

In the light of the movement's reluctance to any pre-condition and the principle of 'right to resistance', a 'Hudna' (truce or armistice) seems the best guarantee of peace from Hamas' point of view. It would be religiously binding and, if the Hudna holds for long enough, it offers a chance for Israel and Palestinians to raise a new generation at a time of peace and for a generational shift in leadership. Meanwhile, a Hudna would not preclude strong diplomatic engagement to lay out a realistic timeframe for implementation.

Conclusions: Challenges and opportunities for mediation

The closing session of this year's Oslo forum was devoted to assessing trends, risks and opportunities for conflict mediation in the near future. Speakers summarised the key issues and impressions of the retreat's debates, and commented on the prospects of progress in addressing the challenges facing mediation.

Dealing with conflict is challenging, and much of the discourse among practitioners paints a dire picture of the state of the world. Yet, there are some positive trends. Most importantly, there has been a dramatic decline in the number of conflicts in recent years. In particular in Africa, a continent still ravaged by conflict and a plethora of related problems, the situation is improving overall. On civilian protection, latest developments indicate the emergence of a remarkable consensus on when the international community has the responsibility to engage. International legal accountability mechanisms, for all the problems they may be generating, have long been fought for and will expand opportunities for advancing the peaceful resolution of conflict. Above all, it was felt that the general ambience for peacemaking by diplomatic means has improved, given expectations of the new US administration under President Obama towards a restoration of civility in the conduct of international relations.

While there is much cause for optimism, there is little cause for complacency. Peacemakers may have won the moral debate, but the reality on the ground looks

different – as seen recently in Sri Lanka and elsewhere. There are legitimate questions about what the policy shift towards engagement under US President Obama will really achieve in 2010, and how it will affect peacemakers and mediators in particular. Will the recent shift towards re-engagement be strong enough to resist setbacks? The terminology of the ‘war on terror’ may have been replaced, but the situations it was meant to cover are still very much a reality. Mediators may have to accept that a strict ‘no violence’ doctrine is not always useful.

Increasing the impact of initiatives will require a revision of global decision-making architecture and a strengthening of policy-making structures. This will require better coordination, capacity building and exchange of experiences across a range of policy instruments. More specifically, some serious debate is needed to establish basic criteria on when it is appropriate to use which tools, including when it is legitimate to use force. First and foremost, however, the difficulty of generating political will has to be addressed. In order to create, mobilise and sustain political will, a coordinated strategy is needed to provide arguments and information for decision makers.

One participant argued that, despite the considerable intervention in Africa and elsewhere, the real challenge of peaceful conflict resolution still lies ahead. Africa in particular has made much progress in setting up the relevant institutional architecture for resolving conflict peacefully. It has a pool of credible talent and experience to draw from, and a long history of involvement in peacemaking. However, these assets have yet to be translated into useful action. Another speaker pointed out that the asymmetry often found in the capacity of conflict parties is an equally serious challenge for mediators and others involved in peace processes, and that there is no adequate process for or consensus on how to improve capacity.

While there has been significant improvement in coordination in other fields, the record among mediators is comparatively poor. Consequently, time, energy and other resources are being spent while key issues for resolving conflict are at times neglected. Especially in conflicts well attended to by a variety of actors, the effort to ‘de-conflict’ at times takes resources away from the main tasks at hand. Many participants agreed that there is a need for a qualitative shift to harmonise acquired knowledge. Sufficient coherence should be created in the policy community to articulate the lessons learned into something that guides and influences the practice of conflict mediation.

These perspectives very much accord with the rationale for the Oslo forum network of mediators: the value of and need for sharing experiences across institutional divides and conflicts. The Oslo forum and related gatherings, which are annually co-hosted by the Royal Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, are rare opportunities for senior mediators of armed conflict to interact and discuss challenges as well as solutions with their peers and other relevant actors.

More than in previous years, this year’s discussions provided many useful suggestions for taking the profession forward, but also for maintaining the Oslo forum as a relevant and stimulating mechanism in this difficult process.

The next annual gathering of conflict mediators and key peace-process actors will take place in June 2010. We look forward to your feedback and ideas throughout the year, to include in the development process.

Oslo forum 2009 Agenda

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Tuesday
June 2009

13.00–13.30

Welcome and introduction

Co-hosts, Martin Griffiths and Jonas Gahr Støre, followed by an opening statement by Liberian Foreign Minister, Olubanke King Akerele

13.30–15.00

Reasserting diplomacy

Opening panel with Jonas Gahr Støre, Olubanke King Akerele, Olusegun Obasanjo, Martin Indyk and Surin Pitsuwan, moderated by Kieran Prendergast

15.30–17.30

Two focus discussions for participants to choose from

The tribal areas and the challenges facing Afghanistan and Pakistan

Mediation and state-building in a collapsed state: Focus on Somalia

19.30

Reception and formal opening dinner

17

Wednesday
June 2009

9.00–10.30

A choice between a focus discussion and a situation report

Coordination and cooperation in mediation processes

Sri Lanka

11.00–13.00

Two focus discussions for participants to choose from

The utility of force

Preparing conflict parties for negotiations

13.00–15.00

Informal buffet lunch

15.00–17.00

Two focus discussions for participants to choose from

Chances of a rapprochement between Iran and the West

Mediation and the military

18.00–19.00

Mediators' Studio

Lyse Doucet interviews top mediators, reflecting on their biggest personal challenges and insights.

19.30

Informal dinner

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Thursday
June 2009

8.00–9.00

A choice of situation reports

Nepal

The Philippines

9.30–11.00

Two focus discussions for participants to choose from

The role and impact of regional mediators

Testing times for global nuclear disarmament: North Korea

11.30 – 13.00

Two focus discussions for participants to choose from

Lessons from (not) dealing with Hamas and Hezbollah

Indicting for peace, negotiating for justice

13.30–15.00

Informal buffet lunch

15.00 – 16.30

Closing plenary

Challenges and opportunities for mediation

19.00

Boat excursion with dinner

List of participants

Mr Ahmed Abdisalam Adan

Former Deputy Prime Minister of Somalia

Mr Ziad Abu Amr

Member of the Palestinian Legislative Council

Mr Barney Afako

Legal Adviser to the Ugandan Peace Negotiations in Juba

Ambassador Yasushi Akashi

Representative of the Government of Japan on Peace-Building, Rehabilitation, and Reconstruction in Sri Lanka

Ambassador Abdulla F A Al-Dosari

Permanent Representative of the State of Qatar to the United Nations Office in Geneva

Ambassador Hiruy Amanuel

Head, IGAD Capacity Building Program against Terrorism

Ms Francesca Bomboko

Member of the Steering Committee, World Movement for Democracy; founder of the Bureau d'Etudes, de Recherche et de Consulting International (BERCI)

Ambassador Merete Brattested

Ambassador of Norway to the Kingdom of Thailand

Mr Sedfrey M Candelaria

Government of the Republic of the Philippines Panel Member, Peace Negotiating Panel for Talks with the CPP-NPA-NDF

Mr John Carlin

Senior International Writer, El Pais

Mr Luc Chounet-Cambas

Project Manager, Mediation Support Programme, Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue

Sir Robin Christopher

Secretary-General, GLF Global Leadership Foundation

Mr Christopher Coleman

Chief, United Nations Policy Planning and Mediation Support Unit, Department of Political Affairs

Ms Nieves Confessor

Panel Chairperson, Government of the Republic of the Philippines – Peace Negotiating Panel for Talks with the CPP-NPA-NDF

Professor Chester Crocker

Professor of Strategic Studies, Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service, Georgetown University

Mr Alastair Crooke

Co-Director and Founder, Conflicts Forum

Ambassador James Dobbins

Director, International Security and Defense Policy Center, RAND

Ms Lyse Doucet

Presenter, BBC World

Mr Vegard Ellefsen

Political Director, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Norway

Ambassador Anne Karin Enström

Special Envoy for Afghanistan and Pakistan, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Sweden

Honourable Gareth Evans

President, International Crisis Group

Professor Ezzedine Choukri Fishere

Distinguished Visiting Lecturer, Political Science Department, American University, Cairo

Ambassador Charles W Freeman

Former President, Middle East Policy Council

Mr Hans Jacob Frydenlund

Deputy Director General and Head of the Africa II-section, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Norway

Mr Jonas Gahr Støre

Minister of Foreign Affairs, Norway

Mr David Gardner

Chief Leader Writer and Associate Editor, Financial Times

Mr David Gorman

Mediation Adviser, Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue

Mr Kenny Gluck

Senior Adviser, African Union/United Nations Joint Mediation Support Team

Mr Vasu Gounden

Founder and Executive Director, African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes

Ambassador Thomas Greminger

Head, Political Affairs Division IV/ Human Security, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Switzerland

Mr Martin Griffiths

Director, Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue

Ambassador Tim Guldemann

Senior Adviser, Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue

Advocate Mojanku Gumbi

Legal Adviser, South African Presidency

Ambassador Jon Hanssen-Bauer

Special Envoy for the Peace Process in Sri Lanka, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Norway

Ambassador Tore Hattrem

Ambassador of Norway to Sri Lanka

Ms Priscilla Hayner

Director, International Center for Transitional Justice, Geneva Office

Professor Nicholas Haysom

Director, Political and Peacekeeping Unit, Office of the United Nations Secretary-General

Mr Konrad Huber

Director of Strategy, International Sustainable Systems

Ambassador Martin S Indyk

Former United States Ambassador to Israel

Ambassador Mona Juul

Deputy Permanent Representative, Norwegian Mission to the United Nations in New York

Ambassador Bjørn Janis Kanavin

Head, Afghanistan/Pakistan Section, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Norway

Ambassador Denis Keefe

Ambassador of the United Kingdom to Georgia

Minister Olubanke King-Akerele

Minister of Foreign Affairs, Government of Liberia

Professor Radha Kumar

Director, Nelson Mandela Centre for Peace and Conflict Resolution, Jamia Millia University, New Delhi

Ambassador Ramtane Lamamra

Peace and Security Commissioner, African Union

Ms Stine Lehmann-Larsen

Project Manager, Mediation Support Programme, Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue

Ambassador Sadie Massaquoi-Bangura

Ambassador of Liberia to Norway with residence in Berlin

Mr James LeMoyne

Senior Adviser, Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue; former Special Adviser to the UN Secretary-General for Colombia

Mr Isaac Maposa

Director, The Zimbabwe Institute

Mr C Andrew Marshall

Deputy Director, Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue

Mr Ian Martin

Head, United Nations Board of Inquiry into incidents in Gaza

Mr Chris Neyor

Energy Adviser to the President of Liberia

President Olusegun Obasanjo

United Nations Secretary-General Special Envoy for Democratic Republic of Congo Crisis

Honourable Santa Okot

Member of the Lord Resistance Army Delegation; former Member of Parliament in Uganda

Ambassador Ahmedou Ould-Abdallah

Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Somalia

Honourable Ramasamy Palanisamy

Deputy Chief Minister of Penang, Malaysia

Mr Frank Pearl

High Commissioner for Peace, Colombia

Mr Geir Pedersen

Director General, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Norway

Ambassador Thomas Pickering

Former United States Under-Secretary of State for Political Affairs

Dr Surin Pitsuwan

Secretary-General, Association of Southeast Asian Nations

Mr Jonathan Powell

Senior Adviser, Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue; former Chief of Staff to Prime Minister Tony Blair

Sir Kieran Prendergast

Senior Adviser, Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue; former United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs

Ms Meredith Preston-McGhie

Acting Regional Director for the Africa office, Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue

Ms Juita Puthucheary

Project Manager, Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue

Ms Elisabeth Rehn

Independent Expert, Crisis Management and Gender; former Minister of Defence, Finland

Mr Ying Rong

Vice President and Director of the South Asian Studies Center, China Institute of International Studies (CIIS)

Mr Carne Ross

Executive Director, Independent Diplomat

Ambassador Salim Ahmed Salim

Former Special Envoy on the Darfur Conflict, African Union; former Secretary-General of the Organisation of African Unity

Mr Tamrat Samuel

Director, Asia and the Pacific Division, United Nations Department of Political Affairs

Dr Johannes Schachinger

Mediation Focal Point, General Secretariat of the Council of the European Union

Dr Jennifer Schirmer

Senior Researcher and Director, Program on Armed Actors and Peace Dialogues, University of Oslo

Mr Michael Semple

Independent Analyst; former Deputy European Union Special Representative for Afghanistan

Ambassador Svein Sevje

Ambassador of Norway to Sudan

General Sir Rupert Smith

Former Deputy Supreme Commander Allied Powers Europe; former Deputy Supreme Commander, British Armed Forces

Mr Erik Solheim

Minister of the Environment and International Development, Norway

Mr Tomas Stangeland

Acting Deputy, Section for Peace and Reconciliation, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Norway

Mr Stephen J Stedman

Professor of Political Science and Senior Fellow, Center for International Security and Cooperation, Stanford University

Dr Azzam Tamimi

Director, Institute of Islamic Political Thought

Ambassador Roeland van de Geer

European Union Special Representative for the African Great Lakes Region

Dr Michael Vatikiotis

Asia Regional Director, Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue

Ambassador Francesc Vendrell

Diplomat in residence; visiting professor, Woodrow Wilson School, Princeton University; former European Union Special Representative for Afghanistan

Mr Johan Christopher Vibe

Deputy Director General and Head of the Section for Peace and Reconciliation, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Norway

Ms Teresa Whitfield

Senior Fellow and Director of UN Strategy, Centre on International Cooperation (CIC), New York University

Mr Rahimullah Khan Yusufzai

Editor, The News International, Peshawar

Mr Andrew Andrea

Director of Communications, Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue

Ms Susanne Gentz

Project Manager, Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue

Ms Caroline Johnigk

Project Officer, Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue

Ms Pascale Raval

Logistics Officer, Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue

Ms Claire Salignat

Project Assistant, Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue

Ms Aina Holm

Adviser, Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Ms Ida Marstein

Executive Officer, Section for Peace and Reconciliation, Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Mr Kristian Netland

Adviser, Section for Peace and Reconciliation, Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

