



European Union



United Nations

Meeting of Mediation Support Entities of International, Regional and Subregional Organisations

Brussels, 1-2 March 2023

Summary Note

Background

The European Union and the United Nations co-chaired the 7th Meeting of Mediation Support Entities of International, Regional and Subregional Organisations on 1-2 March 2023 in Brussels. These biennial meetings are meant to bring together experts to deepen partnerships between participating organisations, as well as to identify gaps, best practices and promote mutual learning in the field of mediation. The agenda reflected some of the current issues facing mediation practitioners and focused on: (i) Managing Pools of Mediation Experts; (ii) Facilitating National Dialogue Processes; (iii) Negotiating Ceasefires; (iv) Climate, Security and Mediation; and (v) the Challenges of Inclusive and Multi-track Peace Processes.

A total of 12 organisations participated in the event: Association of Southeast Asian Nations – Institute for Peace & Reconciliation (ASEAN-IPR), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), Intergovernmental Authority for Development (IGAD), League of Arab States (LAS), Organisation of American States (OAS), Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), International Organisation of the Francophonie, United Nations (UN) and the European Union (EU).

Managing Pools of Mediation Experts

The participants discussed the broad political and organisational contexts in which they operate, as well as the mechanisms that have been put in place to ensure **the rapid deployment of qualified mediators and experts to support peace processes**. It was widely recognised that when an Organisation lacked easily deployable in-house expertise, it needed to be able to draw from a pool of qualified external experts. These pools can come in various forms, including rosters, expert groups and Panels of the Wise. The United Nations Mediation Support Unit (MSU) delivered a presentation on its Standby Team of Mediation Advisors and other possible mechanisms to ensure that mediators receive timely and effective support.

The participants acknowledged that managing pools of mediation experts require **considerable time and resources**. The challenge is finding experts with the right balance of **mediation expertise and technical knowledge** (i.e., in certain mediation thematic areas such as on security arrangements, process design, gender and inclusivity, and constitutional issues, etc.), as well **soft skills** such as a firm understanding of the importance of impartiality and cultural sensitivities. Managing a pool of mediation experts also involves putting in place the necessary logistical, financial and operational mechanisms, potentially requiring reliable **implementing partners**, to be able to respond in a rapid and flexible manner to urgent and ongoing requests for support from mediators in the field.

Facilitating National Dialogue Processes

The participants discussed how, over the past decade, national dialogues have come to be seen as a critical tool for the **prevention of violent conflict and for managing political crises and transitions**. A presentation was delivered by the OAS. While the need for national dialogue processes is widely discussed in many conflict and post-conflict settings, conceptually there is no **common understanding on how they should be designed and implemented**. The participants recognised that based on past practice, the aim, structure, size and scope of such processes can vary widely. It was agreed that to ensure the success of a national dialogue process, careful consideration should be given to the **design of process** and ways to **garner a sense of national ownership**.

The participants recognised that the principle of **inclusion** is crucial when designing such processes. If all major political groups, ethnic communities and social groups (including women and youth) across the country are well-represented, it could help enable a more **meaningful dialogue** and ensure that **its outcomes are more widely accepted**. **New technologies, including social media platforms**, now offer useful tools to not only communicate the goals of a national dialogue process, but also to solicit the views and concerns of the wider population, which could then feed into the deliberations. During the design phase, International and Regional Organisations can play an important role to advise national stakeholders on best practices and lessons learned from other dialogue processes.

Negotiating Ceasefires

During this session, participants discussed the challenges of negotiating and monitoring ceasefires in the context of today's increasingly complex conflicts. The United Nations MSU presented its recently released Guidance on Mediation of Ceasefires. While acknowledging that each conflict has its own unique characteristics and complexities, the Guidance provides a baseline of technical knowledge on ceasefires and security arrangements. It was stressed that any ceasefire agreement **should not be considered as a standalone arrangement**, but be part of a **broader process to address the root causes of the conflict**. A ceasefire agreement should not only aim to cease hostilities, but also to help lay the foundations for an inclusive and comprehensive peace process. Robust planning, technical expertise and knowledge are also key to ensuring the viability of a ceasefire. The **monitoring and verification of ceasefires were identified as the most cost-intensive components of peace processes**; mediators must therefore be cognizant of the importance of **ensuring adequate funding and availability of resources** throughout the process. In this context, the use of technologies in a ceasefire should be carefully considered.

The participants also reflected on the **increasing internationalisation** and **regionalisation** of conflicts and the important role third party mediators could play to mitigate the problem. Proxy wars tend to prolong and escalate conflicts. With the increased engagement of foreign forces in civil wars, **the**

withdrawal of foreign forces could become an increasingly important component of ceasefire agreements in the future.

Climate, Security and Mediation

The participants recognised the growing **importance of addressing the linkages between climate change, environment and peace and security**. Although the climate and security nexus is still being debated at the United Nations and within some Regional Organisations, there was a broad consensus that integrating climate considerations into **early warning systems** and **peace processes** can open new entry points for mediators. IGAD delivered a presentation on how climate change has become a driver of conflict in South Sudan and innovative ways diplomats and mediators in the Horn of Africa have leveraged the climate security agenda in their prevention and conflict resolution work.

Discussions further emphasised the importance of engaging on the Climate Security and Mediation Agenda **with climate experts, as well as with CSOs and community level leaders**. They can assist mediator in identify potential entry points and developing long-term inclusive approaches to climate resilience. A number of participants called for **reinforced partnerships and dialogues** to enhance their own capacities to address environmental issues that is leading to greater conflict fragility in their respective regions.

The challenge of inclusive and multi-track peace processes

In the final session, following a presentation by the EU, participants discussed how mediation efforts at the highest political levels (Track 1) must often be **complemented** with initiatives to promote dialogue and confidence building between senior officials, civil society leaders and local communities (Tracks 2 and 3). They recognised that such a multi-track approach could create a **more inclusive and thus more resilient pathway to peace**. Other tracks could come to the forefront when Track 1 processes have stagnated, thus helping to move the overall process forward. At the same time, it was noted that these tracks are sometimes **intertwined**, thereby making it challenging to distinguish between them. This led some participants to call for a mediation approach that goes “beyond the (concept of) tracks.” As some mediation practitioners have suggested, the **terminology** of “tracks” may also merit revision.

It was noted that mediators are faced with many challenges in operationalising comprehensive peace processes and building trust among different parties. International and Regional Organisations could play an important support role in this regard, **acting as connectors and coordinators, as well as complementing** the work of other mediation actors. In this role, International and Regional Organisations have a wide range of mediation tools at their disposal, whether it be through financing, direct mediation support or assistance to other actors. In some contexts, it was recognised that working in partnership with local and sub-regional bodies might be advisable to enable better and more credible engagement in the process.
