



# The Roles and Contributions of Multilateral and Non-State Actors in Peace Mediation

Fact Sheet Series: Peace Mediation and Mediation Support

## Different third parties – different roles

Not only states but also other third parties are active in peace mediation. Over the past ten years, international organisations and non-governmental organisations in particular have assumed an increasingly important role in the field of peace mediation, stepping up their cooperation with states. This fact sheet provides an overview of the characteristics and strengths of these actors.

## International organisations

The majority of international organisations are active at the international level in the field of peace mediation and mediation support (see also Fact Sheet: Basics of Mediation: Concepts and Definitions).<sup>1</sup> The main global actor is the United Nations (UN), but regional multilateral organisations such as the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), the European Union (EU), the African Union (AU), the Organization of American States (OAS) and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), as well as sub-regional organisations like the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the East African Community (EAC) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC), have taken on a greater role in peace mediation over the past few years. These regional and international organisations provide the added value of a multilateral approach to peace mediation by wielding potentially larger political clout in complex or regionalised conflicts where states are often not accepted as mediators.

This fact sheet is part of a series of fact sheets on peace mediation. It provides a structured overview of methods, actors, challenges and options in the field of peace mediation.

This fact sheet examines the different roles that non-state actors can play in the field of peace mediation as well as the contributions they can make.

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Many of these organisations have set up special units and structures for peace mediation.

- The UN has a Mediation Support Unit (MSU) within the Department of Political Affairs. The MSU provides specialist expertise for peace processes, develops the UN's mediation capacities and supports UN Special Envoys. In 2012, the MSU issued the United Nations Guidance for Effective Mediation.<sup>2</sup> Since 2008, there has also been a Standby Team of Mediation Experts with particular expertise in a wide range of issues and regions who can be deployed at very short notice to provide technical advice to mediators or conflict parties. The team is on permanent standby. Germany supports this instrument, Frank-Walter Steinmeier, at the time Federal Foreign Minister, emphasised in October 2015: "Another example is mediation, an area where we will be enhancing the UN's capacities. We want to establish a sort of rapid response unit – not a military force but a rapid-response team for the negotiating table!"<sup>3</sup>.
- The EU is active politically in peace processes as well as a major funder of others' peace mediation work, from grassroots mediation initiatives to international NGOs, regional organisations and the United Nations. The EU's own diplomatic mediation work is led by the European External Action Service (EEAS), and can involve its Senior Management, EU Heads of Delegations, as well as a number of EU Special Representatives and Special Envoys. Inside the EEAS, technical support is provided by a Mediation Support Team that is integrated into the Division for Prevention of Conflicts, Rule of Law and SSR, Integrated Approach, Stabilisation and Mediation (PRISM). Its work includes advice on EU involvement in peace processes; deployment of experts; and institutional capacity building. The EU system has put in place a number of instruments to rapidly support peace mediation efforts, for instance through logistically supporting the holding of talks.
- The Mediation Support Team (MST) within the OSCE Conflict Prevention Centre/ Operations Service (CPC/OS), consisting of three seconded Mediation Support Officers has been established in 2011 based on a Ministerial Council Decision by its 57 participating States. It serves as the main resource for mediation support within the OSCE. The MST offers methodological support to OSCE's peace processes, in particular to the Chairmanship's Special Representatives, Head of Missions, institutions, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, and other executive structures. The mediation support provided by the MST is request-based and includes conflict analysis and advice on process design, strategy planning workshops, tailor-made coachings, and operational guidance on specific thematic issues of dialogue facilitation or mediation processes.
- At the AU, the Peace and Security Department of the African Union Commission is responsible for handling conflict interventions, including mediation projects. The ECOWAS Mediation and Security Council mandates the organisation's activities in the field of peace and security, including mediation. Both organisations are currently in the process of forming pools of experts.

## Non-governmental organisations

Besides multilateral organisations, various non-state organisations are active in international peace mediation. A large number of them have many years of experience in specific countries, regions and conflict contexts and thereby combine mediation and process skills with regional expertise and specialist knowledge, e.g. on how to integrate women into peace processes, strengthen local mediators' competences or approach conflicts over resources. Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) can often react quickly and with a minimum of red tape. In addition, in many cases they have different, easier, access to civil-society, regional and local actors (tracks 2 and 3). This enables NGOs to work with stakeholders

who are excluded from official processes or whose involvement could lead to diplomatic disruptions, e.g. armed rebel groups. In some cases, however, even government parties to a conflict prefer support from an NGO in an intra-state conflict, rejecting intervention by another government in its domestic affairs. This was the case, for instance, in the peace negotiations in 2015 between the Indonesian Government and the Free Aceh Movement (GAM), which received substantial support from the NGO Crisis Management Initiative.<sup>4</sup> For these reasons, NGOs can be important cooperation partners for Embassies.

The most renowned NGOs active internationally and working in the field of peace mediation include: ACCORD (South Africa), Berghof Foundation (Germany), Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (Switzerland), Conciliation Resources (UK), Crisis Management Initiative (Finland), Muhammadiyah (Indonesia), Serapaz (Mexico), swisspeace (Switzerland), the Asia Foundation (USA), the Carter Center (USA), US Institute of Peace (USA) and West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (Ghana). Religious non-governmental organisations like the Community of Sant'Egidio or religious leaders can also play an important role in mediation processes.

## Insider mediators

Insider mediators<sup>5</sup> differ from regional or international third parties in a number of ways which enable them to make a major contribution to unofficial negotiating processes. In general, insider mediators can be defined as “trusted and respected insiders at all levels of a conflicted society who have a deep knowledge of the dynamics and context of the conflict and a sensitivity in their contribution to finding solutions that are recognized and valued by all parties”<sup>6</sup>.

Unlike external mediators, insider mediators are personally rooted in the conflict context and have a vested interest in ending it. For this reason, they usually bring long-term commitment to the mediation process. Having deep roots in the society, insider mediators enjoy the respect, legitimation and trust of the population and the conflict parties, but they need to be particularly careful to maintain their impartiality and to ensure that third parties perceive them as impartial, by working with networks and by being transparent about their goals and interests.<sup>7</sup> As part of the society in conflict, they also have a profound knowledge of cultural norms, of the country’s history and political landscape, and of the conflict, as well as of the interests and strategies being pursued by the conflict parties. This often gives them easier access to relevant stakeholders, allowing them to play an important role in building up trust and confidence. In addition, insider mediators have a number of resources which can motivate them to keep up their commitment: support from the society which is giving them an informal mandate; teamwork with and in networks which provides a way to counter any (perceived) bias on the part of the local mediator; religion and cultural practices, communication methods and interpretations can provide local mediators with inspiration and orientation as well as personal experience and recognition.

### Insider mediators are important actors in negotiating processes for the following reasons:<sup>\*</sup>

→ **Insider mediators** can act where external mediators cannot: in situations where external third parties are not wanted, or cannot be involved for other reasons, insider mediators can play a key role towards resolving the conflict.

→ **Insider mediators** complement external mediators: in particular, they are able to move between the various stakeholder levels and to facilitate interaction between processes on tracks 1, 2 and 3 (insider mediators are themselves usually on track 1.5 or track 2).

→ **Insider mediators** are particularly relevant during transformation processes and in fragile contexts often characterised by the lack of any conflict management approach by a formal government structure. So insider mediators can act as facilitators at official level and play an important part in preventing and containing conflicts.

\* Gourlay, Catriona and Ropers, Norbert (2012). Support for ‘Insider’ Mediators: A Gap in EU Ambitions for Mediation? In: Strengthening the EU’s Peace Mediation Capacities: Leveraging for Peace through New Ideas and Thinking, edited by Tanja Tamminen, Finnish Institute of International Affairs (FIIA), pp. 93-97.

## Coordination and cooperation of third parties

The number of different actors in the field of mediation brings many opportunities for a mediation process if good use is made of their various potentials, opportunities for access and networks. At the same time, the large number of actors means that coherence, coordination and complementarity are indispensable. However, coordinated cooperation between organisations with differing financial resources, ideas on standards, administrative rules and political decision-making cultures also brings many challenges. It is important to ensure a clear division of responsibilities in line with the comparative strengths of the individual stakeholders. A joint management of mediation interventions affords one possibility for coordination between regional and international organisations. However, practice has shown that it is preferable to have one organisation leading the process and coordinating the cooperation with other organisations in a strategic way rather than a joint leadership by several organisations.<sup>8</sup> At best, cooperation between the organisations is based on a joint mediation strategy and agreements on transparency and information-sharing.<sup>9</sup> Coordinated support for local mediators from international organisations and a coordinated approach to dealing with the parties to a conflict can also ensure a coherent mediation process. One innovative model for cooperation is the International Contact Group for the Mindanao peace process, which was set up in 2009 and comprises the UK, Japan, Turkey and Saudi Arabia as well as four international NGOs (Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, Conciliation Resources, Muhammadiyah and the Asia Foundation). The Contact Group helped broker a comprehensive peace agreement between the Philippine Government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) in 2014.

### References

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- 2 United Nations (2012). *UN Guidance for Effective Mediation*. New York: United Nations.
- 3 Speech by Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier to the German Bundestag on the 70th anniversary of the United Nations, 14 October 2015
- 4 Mason, Simon and Sguaitamatti, Damiano (2011). *Mapping Mediators. A comparison of third parties and implications for Switzerland*. Zurich: Center for Security Studies (CSS), ETH Zurich, p. 22 et seq.
- 5 In a 2009 study entitled "Insider Mediators – Exploring Their Key Role in Informal Peace Processes" (Berlin: Berghof Foundation for Peace Support), the Berghof Foundation was one of the first organisations to coin and explore the term "insider mediators".
- 6 Hilaire, Peter and Smith, Richard and Wachira, George (2011). *Insider Mediators in Africa. Understanding and enhancing the contribution of Insider Mediators to the peaceful resolution of conflicts in Africa*. Prangins: PeaceNexus Foundation, p. 2.
- 7 Gourlay, Catriona and Ropers, Norbert (2012). Support for 'Insider' Mediators: A Gap in EU Ambitions for Mediation? In: *Strengthening the EU's Peace Mediation Capacities: Leveraging for Peace through New Ideas and Thinking*, edited by Tanja Tamminen, Finnish Institute of International Affairs (FIIA), pp. 90-102.
- 8 United Nations (2012). *UN Guidance for Effective Mediation*. New York: United Nations, p. 18.
- 9 Alvarez, Miguel et al. (2012). *Translating Mediation Guidance into Practice: Commentary on the UN Guidance for Effective Mediation by the Mediation Support Network*.

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