

23 May 2012



# General Assembly

## GA/11242

Department of Public Information • News and Media Division • New York

Sixty-sixth General Assembly  
Informal High-Level Meeting  
AM & PM Meetings

### **SAYING 'AN OUNCE OF PREVENTION IS WORTH A POUND OF REMEDY,' SECRETARY-GENERAL**

### **CALLS FOR STRENGTHENED CONFLICT MEDIATION EFFORTS AT HIGH-LEVEL MEETING**

#### **General Assembly President: Mediation Inclusive, Bolsters Democratic Processes; Panel: The Challenge of Coherence, Coordination, Complementarity during Mediation**

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon called on Member States to strengthen individual and collective conflict mediation efforts through better coordination, funding and sharing of best practices, as high-level officials, academics, civil society leaders and others convened in an informal high-level General Assembly meeting on the topic today.

"An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of remedy," Mr. Ban said at the opening of the meeting, entitled "The Role of Member States in Mediation". "The more we deal with conflict in a flexible, thoughtful and forward-looking way, the more we will learn to prevent it," he said. Governments were already, he noted, among the most active mediators in international affairs, with some of the States represented today playing an important mediation role on the international stage.

He particularly welcomed the "Friends of Mediation" initiative generated by Finland and Turkey in 2010, and the resolution promoting mediation adopted by the Assembly that same year, which called for the development of mediation guidance to which Governments could contribute by sharing experiences in boosting mediation processes in neighbouring countries, participating in contact groups and facilitating mediation in various ways, including funding.

Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, President of the Assembly, said that he selected the theme of the peaceful settlement of disputes as one of the pillars of his Presidency in the context of the transformation of States into new democracies, since mediation, being an inclusive activity, could bolster democratic processes.

During this Assembly session, he recalled, there had already been an interactive meeting in November on prevention, peacemaking and peacekeeping, and in January on mediation from the perspective of regional organizations. In February, he said, a meeting focused on mediation efforts of so-called "track II actors", including former high-level personalities and civil society organizations. He hoped that today's meeting would feed into an upcoming Assembly resolution by adding Member States' experiences.

He said that successful mediation endeavours required strong leadership and coordinated action. Addressing core issues and root causes was also essential for agreements to be viable, as was inclusiveness, particularly of women, and the use of traditional mediation mechanisms where they existed. The high failure rate of mediation processes should not discourage their use, but encourage improvement, he said, "Improving our response to, and prevention of, conflict through dialogue should remain our guiding light."

In his opening statement, Mr. Ban argued for strong political support and predictable funding for mediation and said that the United Nations mediation capacity was stronger than ever, and was increasing its partnerships with other major actors and strengthening its ability to respond to emerging needs. He was working to make the Organization's mediation services available to all States that needed them and urged States to take advantage of them. He added that he had personally been appointing as many qualified women mediators as he could find and was counting on States to support that effort, as well.

Following those opening remarks, foreign affairs officials and mediation experts of Member States agreed on the need to prioritize mediation and help it succeed, with most stressing the need for greater coherence and support in relation to Member States' mediation efforts. Turkey's Foreign Minister said that, at the time his country and Finland initiated the Friends of Mediation, the lack of a systemic framework and necessary resources for mediation was crippling its effectiveness. Finland's Foreign Minister said that mediation was central to his country's foreign policy, but Finland seldom acted as a mediator itself, supporting, rather, the activities of track II actors and other partners, often local.

Some speakers affirmed the central role of the United Nations in mediation, while also stressing the important of partnerships. Local partnerships and a will to compromise on the part of the parties involved were critical to the success of mediation, others stressed. A senior United States negotiator, who had participated in the crafting of the Dayton Agreement and other Balkan accords, said that an international mediator could make it clear to the parties the benefits of making the compromises necessary to reach an agreement. In any case, perfection in mediation should not be strived for, he stressed; the priority was stopping a war.

Also speaking this morning were the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs of Qatar, the Foreign Affairs Secretary of the Republic of the Philippines, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Italy, the Minister Delegate for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Morocco, the Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs of Spain, the State Secretary for Foreign Affairs of Austria, the Legal Advisor of the Office of the Presidency of Mexico and a Senior Mediator of Switzerland.

In the afternoon, a panel discussion was held under the title, "The challenge of coherence, coordination and complementarity among various actors in mediation processes", moderated by Edward C. Luck, Special Adviser to the Secretary-General. The Foreign Minister of Finland, Turkey and Morocco were joined by B. Lynn Pascoe, United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, on the Panel. Among the challenges noted, speakers said it was critical for States and the international community to be on the same page, with the Turkish Minister highlighting a Security Council resolution for sanctions on Iran that ran counter to mediation efforts his country had been engaged in. Several speakers addressed the nature of the leadership required for successful mediation efforts.

At the end of the day-long meeting, following closing remarks in which Assembly President Al-Nasser thanked the full range of participants and called the need for effective mediation "more urgent than ever", Mr. Al-Nasser was presented with the "Award for Global Mediation Diplomacy" by the Foundation for Subjective Experience and Research.

### Statements

AHMET DAVUTOĞLU, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkey, said his country had initiated the Mediation for Peace initiative with Finland a year and a half ago, when there was not much focused discussion on and appreciation of medication in the international arena. Actors involved in mediation had been on the rise, but lack of a systemic framework and necessary resources for mediation efforts had been crippling these endeavours' effectiveness. The adoption last June of the United Nations General Assembly resolution on mediation had been a "milestone achievement". Being the first-ever United Nations resolution on mediation, it indeed carried historic significance.

Turkey convened a conference on mediation in Istanbul with the participation of the United Nations, regional organizations, Member States and the civil society and intended to continue it in the coming years, he said. The most important operational aspect of the United Nations resolution adopted last June was its call to the Secretary-General to prepare guidance for effective mediation. The United

Nations, with its vast experience and legitimacy, was most well-placed to identify those guidelines. The work on the Guidance would soon be made available to Member States. There had also been promising progress in capacity-building, as well. Turkey was one of those countries actively pursuing peaceful settlement of conflicts through mediation. Within the last 10 years, Turkey had undertaken many mediation and facilitation efforts in a wide geographical area ranging from the Balkans to the Middle East, from Africa to Central Asia. The sole reason for that activism was the integral link between Turkey's own peace and security and those of the wider region.

Turkey was situated at the epicentre of a broad area hosting a great number of conflicts. And whatever transpires in that region had direct implications on its own stability and welfare. That had always been the case, but several events in the last 20 years — the end of the cold war, the 9/11 attacks and the Arab Spring — had changed the political landscape. As a result, Turkey felt a responsibility to take on a more active and effective role in steering events in the right direction.

"We are not a neutral outsider that has no special stakes involved in the resolution of the conflict," he said. "On the contrary, we are an interested insider guided by our own values, with an ability to build consensus on these values and interests." All that was easier said than done. "This is why mediation is both an art and science," he added. In his country's relatively short period of experience in mediation, whether intra-State conflicts, such as Iraq, Lebanon and Kyrgyzstan, or between two States, such as between Israel and Syria or between Bosnia and Serbia, Turkey had always been guided by those principles. In short, the quality of any peace agreement reached at the end of a mediation process depended on the fulfilment of those requirements, such as objectivity, ownership, inclusiveness and coherence. Establishment of United Nations mediation centres in places close to major conflict situations would be a step in the right direction. Turkey had already started the necessary process to establish such a centre in Istanbul.

ERKKI TUOMIOJA, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Finland, said over the decades, Finland had played various mediation roles, most notably high-level mediation assignments in conflict zones worldwide. In 2008, former Finnish President Martti Ahtisaari won the Nobel Peace Prize for his efforts to bring peace in Aceh, Kosovo, Namibia and elsewhere. The first Finn to serve as a United Nations mediator was appointed in the early 1960s. In recent years, Finland had actively supported peace in Northern Ireland, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan and the Horn of Africa.

Since those early days, mediation, particularly strengthening international mediation structures, had been an integral part of Finnish foreign policy. Finland's partnership with Turkey, which led to the creation of the Group of Friends on Mediation in 2010, had proven extremely fruitful. The subsequent resolution "strengthening the role of mediation in peaceful settlement of disputes, conflict prevention and resolution" had become a living document. The most tangible follow up was the preparation of the Guidance for more effective mediation and the way in which the Secretariat had been preparing the document was commendable.

Effective mediation required a multi-stakeholder approach at various levels, with each actor bringing specific expertise, he said. Through cooperation, every participant could focus on deepening his or her particular competencies, instead of trying to master all areas. That was why networking was a key element in Finland's mediation strategy. Finland seldom acted as a mediator itself. Rather, Finland supported the activities of track-two actors and other partners in reconciliation and peacemaking. It often supported efforts based on a partnership between a Finnish actor and a local one. For instance, Finland supported dialogue processes in South Sudan, Yemen, Palestine and Morocco, which were carried out by Crisis Management Initiative, an organization founded by Mr. Ahtisaari. Finland's role was as a facilitator for peace that supported local actors to build the necessary capacities or platforms to create it.

Finland was preparing ways to support local actor's capacity in Myanmar, he said. An international support group had been formed to coordinate efforts to engage various local actors in a genuine national political dialogue. Since 2008, Finland had supported the positive role of Somali religious and traditional mediation leaders in Somalia. Since 2010, Finland had supported the efforts of the United Nations Political Office in Somalia (UNPOS) to reach out and benefit from the views and grassroots legitimacy of Somali elders in peacebuilding and State-building. At the same time, Finland consistently supported the inclusion of women in decision-making and in the future democratic structures of Somalia.

He cited the merits of networking. At the beginning of the year, Finland had created a national Mediation Coordination Group comprising Government representatives, civil society organizations, research institutions, universities and others involved in mediation to share ideas and identify new areas of cooperation. In December 2011, an action plan for mediation was set up to develop areas in which Finland had expertise. Mediation was highly relevant throughout the conflict cycle and more attention must be paid to mediation's role in conflict prevention. Early identification of conflicts was crucial, and it should be followed by early action. As part of its contribution to the proposed Guidance, Finland had proposed creation of an authoritative mechanism to monitor implementation of peace agreements. Moreover, peace agreements should include an arrangement for settling disagreements on how to implement the agreements. The mediator could be called upon, but the dispute settlement mechanism should be able to function alone.

KHALID BIN MOHAMED AL-ATTIYAH, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Qatar, stressed the growing role of mediation as a tool for international conflict resolution and the growing interest in settling disputes through peaceful means. In that spirit, Qatar had joined the Friends of Mediation Group, set up in September 2011. Qatar's experiment, and its initiatives, views and solutions aimed at reducing global conflicts that threatened international peace and security had become a source of interest for many countries and international bodies. Through intensive diplomatic efforts, Qatar had managed to diffuse many tensions and solve several disputes within and outside its region. It was logical and necessary for international and regional organizations to settle disputes that might arise between Member States. Such organizations were the most knowledgeable about their respective regions' political, socio-economic and cultural aspects. Therefore, it was imperative to consolidate the partnerships and capabilities among the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations in support of mediation and peaceful dispute settlement.

Mediation provided an alternative to the coercion and violence that might arise between warring States and it was an alternative that allowed such States to avoid the complexities, procedures and burdensome financial costs of legal options, and the bickering that could arise in an international litigation setting, he said. Mediation also preserved the positive relationship between parties to a conflict, since any negotiated agreement would always take into account the interests of all parties. In that context, it was essential that the United Nations, regional and subregional organizations, and other actors play a more proactive role in preventive diplomacy and mediation to prevent conflicts. Good intentions among the parties to the conflict, neutrality among the mediators, respect for national sovereignty and the parties' willingness to cooperate with mediators was vital for mediation to achieve its intended goals. It was also critical for the mediator to remain engaged once a settlement or conciliation agreement was concluded, in order to ensure the agreement was implemented.

ALBERT F. DEL ROSARIO, Secretary of Foreign Affairs of the Philippines, said that settling disputes by peaceful means and not by armed force "is what united us to build our Organization over 60 years ago", and at the heart of the United Nations Charter was the obligation for Member States to work to solve disputes peacefully. The Charter also mandated the observance of the sovereign equality of States. "Yet, the sad reality is that the vast political and economic differences between States, including those in disputes, often render this doctrine dead letter law," he said, stressing that mediation, therefore, played an important role in breathing life into the aspirations outlined in the Charter.

He said that such differences in power often weighed against a fair, just and lasting resolution of a dispute, and mediation or other third party mechanisms could help level the playing field by ensuring that, though one party might lack power, it could close that gap by relying on the rule of law. Today's discussion was a reminder that there were peaceful options to resolving conflicts. The Philippines believed in such efforts in principle and practice, and was hoping to follow that path to resolve conflicting claims in the West Philippine Sea, as well as to resolve conflicts within the country. In other relevant efforts, the Government had launched an initiative to mark the thirtieth anniversary of the Manila Declaration on the peaceful settlement of disputes, which had been adopted by the Assembly in 1982. Though born of the cold war, that Declaration remained relevant, especially as it stressed a point that was often forgotten: that all States were under a legal obligation to settle disputes peacefully.

As for the role of Member States, he said that mediation began with the concerned parties'

openness to peaceful options. Indeed, since mediation was a voluntary process, requiring the consent of all parties, it was imperative for all involved to see the tool “as facilitating rather than threatening; as a means rather than an end”. All parties must understand and appreciate how mediation worked, and that was why promoting it was vital. To that end, while the United Nations had been involved in mediation activities for many years and nations had resorted to the Organization’s expertise to resolve conflicts and ease tensions, such activities had remained relatively low key compared to more high-profile peacekeeping operations.

“More must be done to bring mediation to the same level as peacekeeping,” he said, stressing that, just as countries developed pools of skilled and dedicated personnel to service peacekeeping operations, so too should they develop qualified and well-trained individuals to serve as mediators. “As in peacekeeping, States must realize that their contribution to mediation formed part of their commitment to helping foster international peace and security,” he said. Turning to the Philippines experience in the area, he said that in seeking to address the internal conflict in the island of Mindanao, it had established important partnerships with other Member States. Philippines had also learned, among others, that mediation policies must affirm gender equality, they must be supported by a third party or joint monitoring mechanism, and that confidentiality was essential. At the same time, successful mediation should be supported by the wider public, and continued monitoring from international groups promoted accountability among the concerned parties.

GIULIO TERZI DI SANT’AGATA, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Italy, said Assembly resolution 65/283 adopted on 22 June 2011 pointed the way forward. To meet the challenge of strengthening mediation’s role in peacefully settling disputes, it was necessary to build on existing provisions. Through that resolution, Member States expressed the universal conviction that recourse to mediation or other means of peaceful settlement must be encouraged as a general procedural obligation for all States. In other words, recourse to instruments of settlement must be the rule, not the exception. But, there were States that preferred to ignore their obligation under treaty law and refused to open other avenues to meaningful solutions. That was not in line with resolution 65/283 or the Charter. He called for development of a general rule of international law that provided recourse to mediation, whenever and wherever provided for by a treaty. In some cases where mediation was necessary, one party might refuse to use mandatory settlement instruments contained in a bilateral agreement. In others, the dispute itself might hinge on how to interpret and implement fundamental principles of international law or United Nations conventions.

In such situations, Member States should not be allowed to ignore the many options available to peacefully settle international disputes, he said. He also proposed strengthening the United Nations ability to intervene in disputes, making mediation mandatory in all circumstances. Mandatory mediation should take place every time a dispute arose from a denial of judicial cooperation or the emergence of a conflict of jurisdiction. In such cases, States would have to accept, in good faith, the mediation of the United Nations. Mediation was an important tool that could be used to prevent opposing views or opinions from escalating into more serious disputes. Openness to mediation had always been a hallmark of Italy’s national identity. Italy strove to find solutions to diverging bilateral and multilateral interests, as well as to promote dialogue between different cultures and communities. Dialogue was more productive than confrontation. Compromise did not mean giving up one’s rights; it meant creating a win-win situation that all parties could live with.

Clear rules should be set, he said. The parties to mediation should be required to not reject the neutral mediator that was chosen, nor obstruct each other, and they should be required to be supportive of the mediation and make a good faith effort to find a joint solution. In that context, it was necessary to find a new balance between the role of the United Nations and regional organizations in coordinating mediation activities; enhance the role of gender expertise in mediation, including through increased women’s participation in every stage of peace processes; support the network of mediators through information technology and new channels of communication with the academic world; increase mediation capacity, especially through the United Nations framework; and harness the potential of mediation in interreligious and cultural dialogue.

Italy had participated in the exchange of views that gave shape to the new Guidance on Effective Mediation, he said. Italy was also helping to draft the resolution pursuant to resolution 65/283 that will be submitted to the Assembly in September. He welcomed the Turkish decision to set up a United Nations regional mediation centre in Istanbul. The Centre would enable various stakeholders to

work together and bring their expertise to the table. Italy could offer its experience and lessons learned to that exercise.

YOUSSEF AMRANI, Minister Delegate for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Morocco, said security was indivisible, but the very concept of security needed a paradigm shift. A global issue could not be considered solely through the prism of its “hard security” dimension. An integrated approach was required, and the United Nations was the sole forum able to provide it. Morocco, as a co-sponsor of the first United Nations General Assembly resolution on mediation adopted on 22 June 2011, underlined the necessity to qualitatively reinforce mediation in the existing United Nations peace and security architecture. The success of the United Nations had often been related to its capacity to react to conflicts through unique tools, like peacekeeping and peacebuilding, leaving prevention in a secondary role. In view of the record of mass atrocities, the time had come to invest in conflict prevention.

Morocco, since its independence, had played a key mediating role in Africa, the Middle East and the Balkans, he said. The nation understood that three qualities were key to successful mediations: discretion, humility and impartiality. Turning to the future, collective efforts should aim to develop the next generation of United Nations mediators. The accent needed to be put on the advent of a culture of conflict prevention, and for that objective, there was no miracle recipe. Efforts should be redoubled to provide the United Nations with an early warning system to predict crisis emergence and prevent situations from deteriorating. All too often the risk of relapse into conflict was high. Therefore, the best guarantee for mediation to be sustainably successful was the promotion of a national capacity in conflict prevention and resolution. Morocco and Spain, two Mediterranean neighbours, had partnered to launch a joint initiative for the promotion of mediation at the regional, national and local levels in the region.

GONZALO DE BENITO SECADES, Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs of Spain, highlighted the importance of the General Assembly resolution adopted in June 2011 and said it brought mediation to the forefront of broader efforts. The role of the United Nations was vital and today’s debate on the role of Member States in mediation was appropriate. A focus on Member States was particularly important, because they provided the necessary resources. The United Nations resolution was a major step forward, with great progress having since been made, including increased training programmes and greater participation of women. Spain was a member of the Group of Friends and a co-sponsor of the June 2011 resolution, and he described a number of mediation efforts his country was involved in, such as the 1991 Madrid Conference for mediating an agreement between Israel and Palestine, and other roles it played in various Latin American mediation efforts involving, among others, Nicaragua, Guatemala, Argentina and Uruguay.

He made some proposals, such as the holding of a United Nations debate on mediation with a focus on new threats that could cause conflicts. For instance, the shortages of fresh drinking water and energy could give rise to conflicts, and climate change could cause a mass migration of people, which, in turn, could become a source of conflict. Another proposal was to discuss how Member States could internalize mediation in their respective nations through such measures as establishing schools of mediation and encouraging women to participate. Spain, for example, launched an initiative in that regard in partnership with its Mediterranean neighbour, Morocco. Today’s debate could help Member States exchange their best practices and lessons learned, and their making a contribution to the maintenance of peace and security — the primary goal of the United Nations.

WOLFGANG WALDNER, State Secretary for European and International Affairs of Austria, said his Government fully concurred with the Secretary-General’s assessment that prevention was better and cheaper than cure. Mediation was a key element of preventive diplomacy, as well as a valuable tool for managing and resolving conflicts. Recent developments had shown how successful sustainable mediation efforts could be, including in Sierra Leone, Kyrgyzstan, Nepal, and especially in Myanmar.

Though one might wonder what role small- or medium-sized countries could play in that arena, he said that Austria had made mediation one of its foreign policy priorities to support the United Nations peace and security efforts. Along with being a long-standing troop contributor, the country had always sought to support or undertake mediation initiatives. As a neutral country and honest broker, Austria had been providing good offices since the 1970s in a host of situations, from the Middle East to East

Timor and, more recently, in Sudan and South Sudan, where Austria had offered Khartoum and Juba an impartial platform to meet. Yet, the recent escalation between the two neighbours underlined the need to immediately continue and strengthen mediation efforts.

He went on to cite Austria's efforts to enhance mediation as a tool to address crisis situations during its most recent tenure as a non-permanent member of the Security Council. Continuing, he said that, as a member of the European Union, Austria believed that the High Representative and her team could play a prominent role in preventive diplomacy and mediation. The participation of the European Union in the diplomatic Quartet on the Middle East, as well as in the talks with Iran, had shown the added value of an institution that spoke on behalf of 27 member States. However, there were more regional efforts to be considered in that context, and Austria had, for example, provided premises in Vienna for the most recent round of the 5+2 talks on Transnistria.

Finally, he thanked the Finnish and Turkish delegations for leading the negotiations on the General Assembly resolution on strengthening the role of mediation in the peaceful settlement of disputes, conflict prevention and resolution. The encouragement to promote equal, full and effective participation of women at all levels of conflict prevention and resolution reflected an Austrian priority. In that regard, he commended the efforts of the Secretary-General and the Department of Political Affairs for their efforts to increase the number of women mediation experts and welcomed the appointment of the first senior female mediator in Malawi.

MIGUEL ALESSIO, Legal Advisor in the Office of the President of Mexico, said, on behalf of Felipe Calderón Hinojosa, that the people and Government of the country had acted as mediators in regional and international arenas. Mexico had honed its mediation skills during the cold war era and had continued to pursue the aims of preventive diplomacy through to today. He believed that such mediation was invaluable to conflict prevention efforts, for easing tensions, and ultimately, reducing human suffering. It also helped create a favourable environment for lasting peace and sustainable development. States providing assistance as "third party neutrals" could also present proposals that aimed to resolve a range of dispute-related issues.

"Mexico considers that the role of Member States in mediation must respond to new challenges posed by contemporary conflicts and controversies," he continued, stressing that beyond traditional field mediation, Member States must develop comprehensive, multi-dimensional and innovative approaches in order to create favourable conditions for lasting peace, as well as for peacebuilding processes. However, today as ever, key elements for effective mediation included the consent of the parties and maintaining an environment of confidentiality. In addition, mediators must maintain strict impartiality, and they must be creative and flexible to guide the process through the formulation of proposals that facilitated communication and dialogue between the concerned parties.

He went on to say that mediation had proved extremely effective in Latin America and the Caribbean, and in that regard, Mexico believed such efforts in the region had been instrumental in resolving conflicts — both political and ideological in nature — as well as in territorial and border disputes. By example, he cited the regional mechanism created by Mexico, Colombia, Panama and Venezuela (the Contadora Group), which aimed to defuse tension, facilitate political understanding and foster cooperation in Central America during the cold war. More recently, Mexico and other regional partners had promoted joint facilitation efforts to enhance political dialogue throughout Central America.

"We consider that mediation processes that involve third States should also be supported by institutional structures such as the United Nations or regional organizations," he continued, noting that the Organization of American States had provided such support in several instances, including by supporting mediation efforts conducted by one of its member States. During Mexico's Presidency of the Security Council in June 2010, it had used its good offices to negotiate a solution to a crisis in the Korean Peninsula. With interest in mediation continuing to grow, especially following the adoption by the Assembly of a relevant resolution last year, he said it was urgent to build capacity within the Organization. He recognized the lead role being played by the Mediation Unit in the Department of Political Affairs and hoped that its efforts would be strengthened, particularly towards helping States and other actors develop the sophisticated skills to participate effectively in mediation processes.

JAMES PARDEW, Senior Mediator, United States, said his country's Government believed

mediation was fundamental to the success of the United Nations and to world peace. He had participated in the United States negotiating teams that had helped craft the Dayton Agreement and had assisted on other such efforts in the Balkans during the 1990s. While the context of each situation had been unique, he believed that the most important factor for success had been — and was — the underlying will of the concerned parties to make the compromises necessary for a settlement. Often, an international mediator could make it clear to the parties the benefits of reaching an agreement. If mediators had incentives to offer the parties, his or her position could be enhanced significantly.

There was no universal formula for choosing a lead mediator in any specific dispute; what was important was unity of effort. The entire international community must stand united when mediation was under way, showing the concerned parties that the world was invested in, and pushing for, a peaceful solution. The parties must have trust in the mediators and those actors must always remain impartial. He said that renowned United States diplomat and former Assistant Secretary of State Richard Holbrooke had said that “diplomacy is like jazz, it’s a variation on a theme.” As such, mediators must be flexible enough to adjust their strategies to avoid obstacles, while maintaining forward momentum.

Finally, he said that bringing mediation to closure was the most risky step and often the most critical for mediators themselves. Generally, passions were running high and, in some cases, outside parties might be lobbying for different outcomes. At such times, the support of third party capitals and the wider international community was necessary. Throughout his career, he had learned that perhaps no mediation effort was perfect. But, he had also learned that if the first priority of a mediator was to prevent or end a war, perfection was a secondary consideration.

JULIAN HOTTINGER, Senior Mediator, Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, Switzerland, said that in the past, there had been a strong focus on security measures in conflict resolution. That remained indispensable, but today it was unusual for parties to conflict to be satisfied with a simple cessation of hostilities or ceasefire. Mediators now needed to tackle conflicts in a completely different way. In most cases the conflicting parties demanded guarantees about their future and they were not willing to lay down their arms until they had a clear vision of what that future would be. It was, thus, the role of the mediators to present a vision of how a society would be formed, how it would deal with its problems and everyone’s respective roles in it. Mediators must tackle political, social and often economic problems. It was extremely important to identify mechanisms that made possible the equitable sharing among groups, which would satisfy their respective future ambitions. If anyone was left out or marginalized, or if negotiations failed to cultivate an inclusive approach to the political process, spoilers would almost inevitably emerge.

Peace would only be possible if civil society was able to express demands and recommendations through parallel mechanisms, so that its voice was heard in the negotiation process, even if it did not directly participate in negotiations, he said. Without the involvement of civil society, there was no prospect for reconstructing society, and of finding reconciliation mechanisms that identified those who had committed crimes in the past. International law required holding to account the perpetrators of the most serious crimes. Mediators could not support amnesties in cases of genocide, war crimes or crimes against humanity. Mediation processes and efforts to resolve conflicts had become extremely complex, demanding the involvement of increasingly specialized teams in several areas. Teams must share a set of values and principles that enabled them to carry out their work.

It was increasingly clear in mediation that, given the complexity of the questions addressed, it was essential to build and consolidate knowledge before the parties could start negotiating, he said. In many processes today, capacity-building was an indispensable prerequisite to negotiations, and as examples, he pointed to processes in Northern Ireland, Burundi, between Sudan and South Sudan, and in Somalia. Also, guidance was needed for mediation to be effective. Each case was unique, but there were principles, nevertheless, that were valid for all mediations. It was important to take account of the development of mediation techniques, lessons learned in recent years and of the principles that applied to mediators. Cooperation and knowledge sharing was important. Swiss mediators tried to contribute to multinational processes under the auspices of the United Nations or a regional organization, without necessarily seeking to play a leading role. He stressed the importance of the Guidance for Effective Mediation. Its formation came at the appropriate time. Mediation was an important tool for Switzerland, but it could only be strengthened if such guidance was in place.



### Panel Discussion

The Assembly's informal meeting also included a high-level panel discussion on "The challenge of coherence, coordination and complementarity among various actors in mediation processes," moderated by Dr. Edward C. Luck, Special Adviser to the United Nations Secretary-General.

Panellists were: Erkki Tuomioja, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Finland; Ahmet Davutoğlu, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkey; Youssef Amrani, Minister Delegate for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Morocco; and B. Lynn Pascoe, United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs.

Mr. LUCK set the stage for the discussion by urging the panellists to share lessons learned, and to also consider the practicalities of maintaining a truly inclusive and broad-based mediation strategy. "Would a truly inclusive strategy, drawing in a broad cross-section of actors, generate some complications?" he asked, and also wondered what methods might be employed to choose a lead mediator or mediating body. "And who should make that choice?"

Responding, Mr. TUOMIOJA said that one challenge was that there was a surfeit of mediators and it was not unheard of to have two people competing to participate in a single process. In any case, most people might consider the United Nations a good forum for choosing a lead negotiator or negotiating body, which could also be a non-governmental organization in some cases. The Group of Friends of Mediation initiative [co-chaired by Turkey and Finland] could be a forum for sharing best practices, he added.

Mr. DAVUTOĞLU said that often opportunities were lost when mediators and the wider international community were not on the same page. In that regard, he recalled his Government's joint efforts in 2010 with Brazil and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) on a nuclear fuel swap deal with Iran. But, after about three weeks of tough negotiating, the Security Council, separately, approved a new round of sanctions against Iran.

"Now, not saying who's right or who's wrong, I wonder what would have happened if those sanctions had not been passed and the swap deal had been given a chance," he said, adding that Turkey and Brazil had felt they were very close to an agreement, but in the wake of the sanctions, "two years have been lost". That example showed how opportunities could be missed when all parties, including capitals and the Security Council, were not coordinating and consulting on their activities.

Speaking next, Mr. AMRANI said mediation should not only be based on governmental talks; it must involve civil society and academia. He supported the emerging consensus on the need for innovative approaches to conflict resolution, and said that the views of regional bodies, such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) should be sought in that regard. In all situations, understanding and acknowledging the root causes of conflict and tension must be given priority.

"Quite frankly, I wouldn't overplay who has to be in the lead," said Mr. PASCOE, who noted that the United Nations had had success in cases where it was playing a lead role, where it was assisting negotiations, as well as when "we weren't even on the books. I'm much more concerned with results," he said, adding that coordination was critical because conflict parties must be certain that the international community was solidly behind the mediation process.

Further, it was necessary to broaden the "circle around the table", he said, agreeing with the call for including civil society, particularly women, in mediation and peace negotiations. What often happened was that conflict parties "just sat down and decided how to cut the spoils among themselves and went back home to spend their money or live their new political reality", rather than incorporating those people in their societies who, while deeply affected by conflict, could actually make agreements stick.

He went on to note that, as head of the Department of Political Affairs, he was not necessarily concerned with having a huge cadre of mediators, rather what the United Nations needed was well-

trained, highly expert and politically savvy mediators that could do their jobs effectively and also bring in other good people. If the team was well trained, a “big name” mediator was not always a necessity. Yet, even with dynamic training, he said: “none of us should be under the illusion that this is a science; it’s an art.”

When Member States took the floor to comment, most shared their experiences with mediation, including the representative of Ireland who noted that people attending a recent seminar in her country examined the history of the situation in Northern Ireland and have shown a “huge appetite” to learn more about negotiating a path to a lasting political settlement. The representative from Guatemala stressed the need for mediators to find the balance between discretion and transparency. Other speakers noted that women remained the “absent actors” in conflict mediation and wondered what could be done to improve their presence and participation.

Bangladesh’s representative was among those who felt that the United Nations should be in the lead role coordinating mediation activities. A speaker from the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue said that the trick to getting mediation right was perhaps not who was in the lead, but identifying “a leader” so that those in mediation support could get behind the process. A lead negotiator must be a “conductor” who could manage the myriad of delicate parties and processes towards a sound conclusion. The representative of Egypt said that his country’s location, straddling both Africa and the Middle East, had led it to take on a mediation role in Israeli-Palestinian matters and a number of situations on the African continent, including most recently between Sudan and South Sudan. In all this, Egypt had learned that building trust was essential.

Responding, Mr. TUOMIOJA stressed that the Group of Friends was trying very hard not to set any hard and fast “rules for mediation”. There was no one recipe; but if anything was certain, it was that the mediators must be well trained and solutions must be based on on-the-ground realities. As for discretion and transparency, he said that the one thing everyone knew was that no political deal had ever been negotiated and agreed in front of television cameras. At the same time, “secret deals” were bound to fail, so there was a need to ensure that, once a deal was struck, the parties were open about the outcomes.

He also stressed that the resources devoted to mediation were very scarce, especially when balanced against what was devoted to peacekeeping and peacebuilding efforts. Currently, most mediation initiatives were funded through voluntary resources. While the actual salary of a mediator might be relatively small, their work might require the mobilization of other resources. The United Nations should look at ways to address that issue. [Later during the discussion, the representative of the Netherlands announced that his Government planned to provide \$1 million to bolster the mediation efforts of the Political Affairs Department.]

Mr. AMRANI agreed that mediation was a complicated and difficult process, and there were no hard and fast rules, but many sound principles, including impartiality, territorial integrity, discretion and transparency, among others. “Successful mediation needs time and it needs will,” he said, adding that another challenge was ensuring that the results of mediation processes stuck over time.

Responding to a question about treading the fine line between parties of vastly different political or economic power, Mr. DAVUTOĞLU said that, if those parties were both States, negotiators must carry out their duties as if they had equal power and status. If the negotiations were between a sovereign State and non-State actor, the main goal was to reach an agreement — or ceasefire — while making both parties feel that they were equal in status.

Wrapping up the days events, Assembly President NASSIR ABDULAZIZ AL-NASSER applauded the “lively and fruitful discussions” and expressed appreciation to all the participants. Throughout the day, delegations had shared their experiences and had highlighted common challenges, including the need to ensure inclusive mediation processes, improve transparency, promote capacity-building and enhance the role of women in mediation, among others.

With the rapid changes under way throughout the world, particularly in North Africa and the Middle East, the need for mediation and preventive diplomacy was more urgent than ever. Some good ideas and suggestions had been put forward during the day aimed at strengthening mediation efforts,

including establishing a United Nations mediation centre in Istanbul and establishing national coordinating groups that could bring together relevant actors in situations where mediation might be needed. Moreover, participants had made clear that it was necessary for different players to support and reinforce each others' efforts, instead of competing against each other. In that way, the entire international community could coordinate its activities. Finally, he noted that the key points raised during the discussions would be reflected in a President's Summary that would be issued in the coming weeks.

Also participating in the panel discussion were the representatives of China, El Salvador, Brazil, Cuba, Egypt, Argentina, Australia, Viet Nam, Netherlands, United Republic of Tanzania, Iran, Venezuela, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Cyprus, Philippines and the United Kingdom.

A representative of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) spoke, as did a representative of the delegation of the European Union.

The President of the Board of Mediators Beyond Borders also participated in the discussion.

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