


A unique
organisation

Making Peace

Mediating between conflict parties and fostering the right conditions for sustainable peace is an intensive process. There are many conflict zones around the globe and, as an independent mediation organisation, the HD Centre has to focus its energies where its greatest strengths (independence, impartiality and flexibility) can have the greatest impact.

The HD Centre is currently involved in many conflicts around the world and maintains a watching brief in other areas. Once the HD Centre has identified a conflict where it believes its involvement could increase the potential for sustainable peace, it may carry out a thorough assessment. This may involve a team visiting the area to gather information about the scope of the conflict, the potential for establishing high-level contacts with the conflict parties and a possible focus for the HD Centre's future engagement.

If the assessment indicates that the HD Centre could have a positive impact on the situation, it is approved and a project is established. Depending on the conflict location, the people working on the project may be based in its Geneva headquarters or at one of the HD Centre's regional offices in Africa or Asia. These offices may be closer to the conflict zone and provide a useful place to hold meetings. The project staff work rapidly to develop contacts with the conflict parties and encourage them to engage in dialogue.

Depending on the conflict location, the people working on the project may be based in its Geneva headquarters or at one of the HD Centre's regional offices in Africa and Asia.

Where a peace process is already in place, the HD Centre will often work to support this (sometimes at the request of the Head of State or the peace process mediator). Where there is no formal peace process, the HD Centre will work to develop the right environment for establishing a peaceful resolution to the conflict, either through mediation or through wider peacebuilding activities such as helping to ensure peaceful elections.

The HD Centre project staff may shuttle between the conflict parties for some time before a formal, mediated peace process begins. The HD Centre's Humanitarian Mediation Programme may also be involved in trying to secure humanitarian access and reducing the levels of violence during the conflict and in developing agreements between the parties which address humanitarian concerns before, during and after any political settlement is agreed.

Where appropriate, the HD Centre project team may ultimately become the mediators for the final peace process, brokering a sustainable settlement to stop the conflict and restore peace to a region. Formal talks may be held in the conflict region, the wider continent or at the HD Centre's headquarters on the banks of Lake Geneva.

The signing of a formal peace agreement may not signal the end of the HD Centre's involvement in a

conflict area or be the ultimate objective. Since the HD Centre's ultimate definition of success is sustainable peace, it may stay involved in the implementation of peace agreements in order to ensure that lasting peace is achieved. It will also share the lessons it has learned during the mediation experience with the wider mediation profession in order to inform other peace processes around the world.

*The HD Centre's
ultimate definition
of success is
sustainable peace.*

The work of the HD Centre



As a result of its first big success as an independent mediator in the conflict between the Indonesian Government and the Free Aceh Movement, the HD Centre is probably best known for its work as a mediator, at senior levels, of internal armed conflicts. Some of its work in this field, in the Philippines, Nepal and Kenya, is well-documented but many of the national processes the HD Centre is involved in remain sensitive and, therefore, discreet.

The HD Centre also works in conflict-affected areas where there are no peace processes in place to develop the potential for mediation. It does this by:

- Fostering, often confidential, contacts between those in conflict which may ultimately lead to talks – for example, in Nepal.
- Supporting national and regional public dialogue processes – for example, in the Sudanese Blue Nile and Southern Kordofan States.
- Offering expertise on the peaceful resolution of electoral disputes – for example, in Somaliland.

The HD Centre also mediates around humanitarian concerns between those in conflict. Ideally it does this as part of a formal, political peace process. However, where that process does not exist (or has broken down, such as in Darfur) humanitarian mediation may be the only available route for alleviating human suffering and keeping the two sides engaged in dialogue.



In working across conflicts, countries and continents, the HD Centre can also take a global perspective on some of the recurrent issues in conflict prevention and resolution – and work to address them. It has, for example, identified the slow implementation of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (which encourages the inclusion of women and gender issues in peace processes) as a stumbling block to achieving sustainable and inclusive peace. As a result it has created a “Women at the Peace Table” programme, with projects in Africa and Asia, which is working to redress this imbalance.

The HD Centre also shares its experience and insights into the recurrent issues in conflict prevention and resolution with the wider mediation profession in order to improve the global response to armed conflict. The HD Centre has a dedicated Mediation Support programme which fosters collaborative links with others across the profession and works with international organisations like the African Union to support their role as institutional mediators. In partnership with the Norwegian Government, the HD Centre has also established the international Oslo forum series of retreats for mediators. With high-level representatives from around the globe, these retreats offer a unique opportunity for international mediators, including those from the HD Centre, to learn from each other.

Working in Geneva

Stine Lehmann-Larsen

What is your nationality?

Danish.

Which languages do you speak?

English, Danish, and currently learning French and Arabic.

Why did you join the HD Centre?

The HD Centre gave me the opportunity to combine my two areas of interest, peacemaking and capacity-building.

What do you do for the HD Centre?

I work in the Mediation Support Programme, assisting regional organisations and African governments strengthen their capacity to manage and support mediation and peacemaking processes. Furthermore, I provide process support and advice to our partners in relation to their mediation efforts.

Which geographic regions does your work cover?

Mainly Africa but also South East Asia and Europe.

The HD Centre's raison d'être

The HD Centre's mission reflects its humanitarian motivation; to protect people from the suffering caused by armed conflict. The HD Centre believes conflict, and the suffering it causes, can be prevented, reduced and ultimately stopped by political and humanitarian dialogue. Dialogue literally humanises conflict.

It encourages people to engage as human beings, not as factions, organisations, rebels or governments. Dialogue is the basis for mediation and mediation is potentially the basis for peace.



Centre for
Humanitarian
Dialogue

The HD Centre puts this belief in dialogue into practice in four main ways:

Preventing tensions escalating into armed conflict by developing national and regional dialogue processes and resolving electoral disputes.

Reducing the human consequences of armed conflict by addressing humanitarian concerns with those in conflict.

Reducing the number of armed conflicts by establishing formal political dialogue between those in conflict.

Nurturing dialogue between mediators and mediation supporters including through the Oslo forum series and by contributing to the international debate on mediation practice.



Produced by the HD Centre Podcast

“We are all in this business because we see a political solution often pursued in parallel or in tandem to military pressure – but we see a political solution as the preferred way to bring conflict to an end. And we’re also working from the basic humanitarian imperative to try to stop violence and protect local populations from ongoing violence as much as possible. If it’s possible to do so and to contribute to doing that through engagement with armed groups to help channel their struggle by political rather than military means, then I think we feel it’s been worth it. And that’s the contribution we can try to make.”

Teresa Whitfield, a Senior Adviser at the HD Centre, reflects on what makes the difficult process of engaging with armed groups worthwhile during the HD Centre’s first podcast.

Mediation

Sir Kieran Prendergast

Sir Kieran Prendergast is a Senior Adviser at the HD Centre.

How would you describe the process of mediation?

Mediation is a flexible concept. It can range from facilitation in which you are expected to help the parties negotiate but not make proposals, to something akin to arbitration. What is common is the starting point: a situation in which two parties are not able to settle a conflict without outside help. What is also common is that when they get stuck they need external help to discourage them from thinking that nothing can be done.

What are the biggest challenges associated with mediating between parties in conflict?

The biggest single obstacle is national sovereignty – unwillingness to have outsiders interfering in the internal affairs of a country, unwillingness to accept that external help is needed, sometimes unwillingness to accept there's a serious problem that needs treating if violent conflict is not to erupt. The second major problem

is resources; often funds can be found once an issue has erupted into armed conflict; but it is very hard to raise funds to prevent a problem from erupting in the first place. As Kofi Annan used to say, it's easier to raise funds for a coffin than for medicine. This factor is compounded by the fact that it's difficult to prove a negative – if prevention is successful then conflict by definition doesn't erupt, and you can't show what would have happened but for the successful effort.

How does a mediator move from dialogue to ensuring sustainable peace?

Moving from discussion to negotiation is the essential first step. The aim of those negotiations must be to create an end to conflict – a settlement that's irreversible. It's tragic when “peace settlements” slide back into conflict soon after they've been agreed. Often, that's because negotiators and major powers think they have done enough and lose interest and

impetus once a peace agreement has been signed, whereas the underlying causes of conflict have not been adequately addressed.

What are the most significant factors which determine whether a mediation process is successful?

You have to look at the outcome and the prospects. Is a resumption of conflict unthinkable, or have you just papered over the cracks? Have the underlying causes of the conflict been eradicated, or even been addressed, or is there ‘unfinished business’? I think we should be paying much more attention to the idea of transformative settlements. Transforming society is of course much more challenging a task. It may be something that in a country like Guatemala may take a generation or even several generations. But that should be the ultimate objective – too often we end up negotiating to exchange one elite for another. I think we should be more ambitious than having a revolving door as our objective.



What do you think are the HD Centre's strengths in terms of mediation?

What I like most about the HD Centre is that we are willing to take risks for peace. Very largely thanks to Martin Griffiths, the HD Centre has always been entrepreneurial, quick, nimble and adaptable. Also, because we are a small NGO, we can be sacked easily; paradoxically this can make governments more willing to use our services. They feel less threatened than by powerful mediators such as regional or global powers. The HD Centre understands very well that it is the PARTIES, not outsiders, who make the peace.

What makes a good mediator?

There are a number of requirements: respect is the most important. The ability to build a relationship of

“... mediation is always about individuals, not institutions.”

confidence with the parties – mediation is always about individuals, not institutions. Curiosity is essential, so is a non-judgmental attitude. However, the requirement is to be impartial, not neutral. No equidistance.

How do your previous experiences at the UN and with the British Foreign Office inform your work with the HD Centre?

I am primarily a product of the Foreign Office, and I was formed by the values I was taught there. I enjoyed my 33 years in the Diplomatic Service and I would do it again if I could roll the clock back. I found the UN a more challenging environment. Fascination and frustration are the twin DNA strands of anyone working in the UN Secretariat. I must say that it is enormously liberating at the HD Centre to be free of instructions – whether from a government or from the Security Council or General Assembly. It leaves you free just to try to do the

right thing. The foreign policy of any government is bound to be influenced by domestic considerations. We don't have that constraint at the HD Centre. It can be quite exhilarating to ignore no doubt well intended advice not to engage with groups who are, for one reason or another, considered 'beyond the Pale'.

What do you consider your greatest public success in the field of mediation to date?

I personally was involved in the transition from Rhodesia to Zimbabwe and in the independence process for Namibia. At the UN we worked wonders to administer the referendum that brought East Timor to independence in an impossibly short timescale. Most of the rest have been honourable failures; Cyprus, Israel/Palestine etc. Most of the work of the HD Centre is and must remain confidential. But without the HD Centre's efforts in Aceh over a prolonged period the settlement there simply would not have

happened. Kofi Annan's work in Kenya was strongly supported by the HD Centre. And the Oslo forum that the HD Centre organises jointly with the Norwegian Government (who deserve the world's thanks for their tireless efforts for conflict prevention) is, I believe, the premier annual retreat for international mediators.



Produced by the HD Centre Podcast

“... most mediators I know have learned to be patient, and they’ve learned to be flexible, and they’ve learned to never take anything for granted, and they’ve had to learn to be humble as well. You can never forget that the conflict parties you’re dealing with, and this includes armed groups, are themselves engaged in the high risk activity. They’re in conflict, they’re risking their lives, they’re responsible for communities and supporters and a complex web of things. They are taking risks and we need to be sensitive and aware of their internal dilemmas and calculations that they’re making.”

Teresa Whitfield talks about engaging with armed groups and the second publication in the Mediation Practice Series during the HD Centre’s first podcast.

A day to mark a decade

In 2010, the HD Centre welcomed many distinguished guests to a reception at its headquarters at the beautiful Villa Plantamour and a dinner in Geneva hosted by one of the HD Centre's founders to celebrate the completion of the organisation's tenth year of operations.

The reception offered the HD Centre an opportunity to introduce its new Honorary President, the former Secretary-General of the Council of the European Union and NATO Dr Javier Solana, to the international community. During the event, Dr Solana spoke about the HD Centre's humanitarian approach to ending and mitigating conflict and the significant role of private organisations in international mediation.

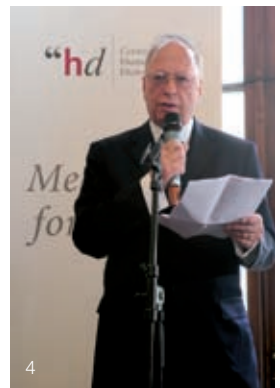
This was also an opportunity for the HD Centre to reflect on the success it has had as an organisation since it was established by its four founders in 1999. Dr Solana expressed his enthusiasm for the work of the HD Centre and outlined some of the HD Centre's many achievements during its first decade of operations.

The event was organised with a significant Genevan institution, the Fondation pour Genève, as well as one of its sections, the Club Diplomatique de Genève. In his speech, Dr Solana also took the opportunity to highlight the important role the City of Geneva has played in

promoting peace and the humane treatment of people during war. He honoured the dedication of the many Genevois who have contributed to Geneva's unique position as a humanitarian centre.

Eminent guests at the event included Kofi Annan and members of the HD Centre's Board, as well as representatives from the city's banking, humanitarian and diplomatic communities.

1. Dr Javier Solana, HD Centre Honorary President, speaks during the HD Centre's 10th anniversary celebration.
2. The HD Centre celebrated its 10th anniversary on 26 April 2010 in Geneva.
3. Dr Javier Solana and Mr Angelo Gnaedinger, HD Centre Interim Executive Director in 2010.
4. Ambassador François Nordmann, President of the Club Diplomatique de Genève, speaks during the 10th anniversary event.
5. Dr Javier Solana & H.E. Mr. Kofi Annan, former UN Secretary-General.
6. Reception at the Villa Plantamour, the HD Centre's headquarters.



Diplomacy

Ambassador Reza Alborzi

Ambassador Reza Alborzi is a Senior Adviser at the HD Centre

How would you define the difference between public and private diplomacy?

I would rather use “government diplomacy” instead of public diplomacy. Public diplomacy is used these days to describe the very fashionable diplomatic exposures of people as expressed in the media and by non-political leaders including religious leaders, social movements, artists etc. We have seen the effects of public diplomacy in the war against Iraq where the streets of Europe were full of people demanding their leaders to stop the war. Private diplomacy is what we refer to as a professional – but non-governmental – approach to diplomacy. It is exercised by professional diplomats without affiliation to spheres of national security interests. It is therefore result driven and reliably impartial. Private diplomacy relies on logic and the power to convince. It represents a professional approach to opportunities for solutions.

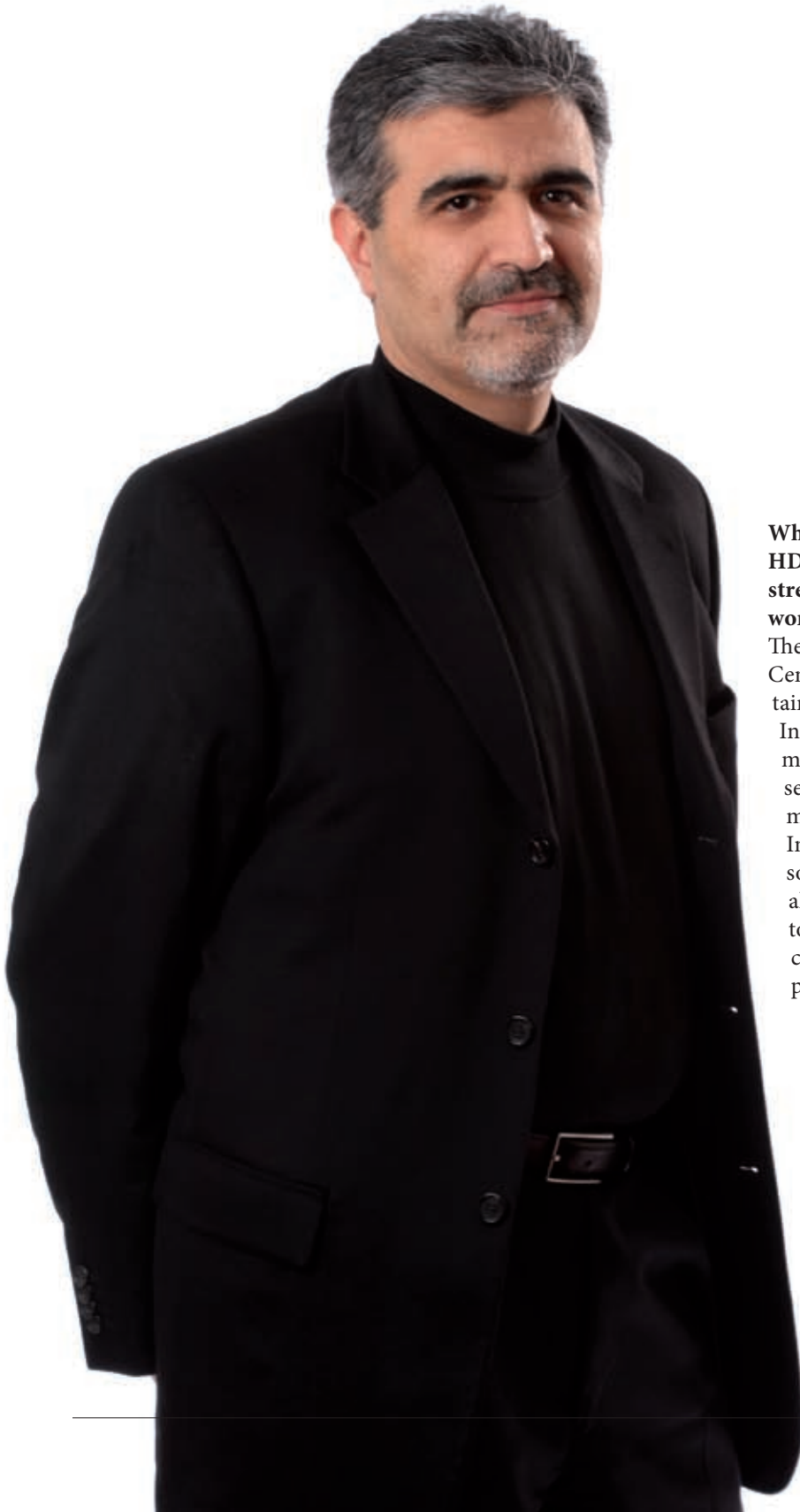
As a former diplomat and current Senior Adviser to the HD Centre, how do you assess the relative merits of public and private diplomacy?

The world is still dominated by the diplomatic activities of states. In my view, the trend is to see more private actors in mediation and on the diplomatic scene. The post-Wiki Leaks era would make it difficult for governments to exercise their traditional diplomatic activities without the fear that sooner or later they will be revealed to the public and misused by opponents. Discretion is a necessary tool of diplomacy. It has been decisive in the past, it will always be in the future. The reason is that any diplomatic effort needs to develop a critical mass to attain its goals. This critical mass cannot be achieved without discretion. If exposed transparently in its infancy it will have to compromise under pressure. In mediation, deniability is a useful tool which makes the

belligerents maintain their confidence in the process while playing their defiance. This tool will be less and less available in government diplomacy in the future. The field vacated by governments will be increasingly filled by private diplomatic actors.

How does the HD Centre use private diplomacy to pursue its mission to improve the global response to armed conflict?

The HD Centre represents an efficient private approach which tries to complement state diplomacy including the United Nations activities in reducing armed conflicts. It has proven to be a nimble organisation, utilising its niche and exclusive advantages to respond to armed conflicts. Its role will be defined more and more by its complementarities. Its limits are humanitarian barriers, in contrast to the political and ideological barriers of government diplomacy.



What do you think are the HD Centre's most significant strengths in the diplomatic world?

The biggest strength of the HD Centre is its people and its sustained qualitative human growth. In government diplomacy what makes people take an actor seriously is the political and military power behind him. In private diplomacy it is your sophistication and professionalism which creates a power to deliver. Experienced and accomplished mediators are important assets.

What are the biggest challenges facing an organisation like the HD Centre in the diplomatic world?

The HD Centre is a knowledge based organisation. It needs to invest more in this know-how while remaining independent and neutral.

The View from Geneva



The Villa Plantamour, the HD Centre's headquarters.

The HD Centre's headquarters in Geneva benefits from a unique location: Villa Plantamour, a historic building with an unequalled and beautiful outlook on Lake Geneva and the Alps, lent by the City of Geneva as a support to our activities. It offers the HD Centre a discreet environment for holding meetings and the picturesque, yet calming, view has allowed us to make a success of many events held at the HD Centre.

On 26th April, the HD Centre held a reception to celebrate its 10th anniversary, which gathered many personalities from Geneva, as well as our Honorary President Dr Javier Solana, former Secretary-General of the Council of the European Union and

some of our Board members including Karin Jestin, Chair of the Board. We seized this opportunity to offer our invitees an insight into the HD Centre's work – of course within the limits of confidentiality.

Villa Plantamour also welcomes outside meetings; the rooms and their equipment are lent for free to not-for-profit organisations when we do not use them. With this activity, we support Non-Governmental Organisations by providing them with a venue that does not impact their often limited budgets. We also allow UN agencies, for example, to hold brainstorming sessions in a neutral environment. All of them really appreciate our location, where, as they

say, they feel free of any constraint and can fully concentrate on the contents of their workshops.

Alexis de Siebenthal is the General Services Officer in the HD Centre's Geneva headquarters.

A year at the HD Centre

At the start of the year, the HD Centre organised a study tour to Kenya for Sudanese officials as part of early preparations for Popular Consultations in the Blue Nile and Southern Kordofan States in Sudan. The HD Centre also published the first Mediation Practice Series publication entitled “External actors in mediation: Dilemmas & options for mediators”.

Later in the spring, the HD Centre continued to develop its “Women at the Peace Table” programmes in Africa and Asia when it convened senior female mediators and negotiators at roundtable meetings in Nairobi and Jakarta. In Sudan, a workshop was held with Arab groups involved in the Darfur conflict to discuss humanitarian issues in the region. The HD Centre also established a group of ‘Preventing Election Related Violence’ volunteers to monitor the build up to elections in Mindanao in the Philippines. In Geneva, the HD Centre brought together leading figures from the humanitarian, diplomatic and financial communities to celebrate the completion of its first decade as an organisation.

As summer started, the HD Centre’s headquarters in Geneva was honoured to receive a visit from the Liberian President, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf. In the Philippines, the HD Centre arranged for some high profile international negotiators to meet the President and representatives from the opposition movement



The Villa Plantamour.



Oslo forum opening plenary with Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu, Prince Turki Al-Faisal and Minister Jonas Gahr Støre, moderated by Ms Lyse Doucet, 15 June 2010.

INTERNATIONAL SNAPSHOT

Mediators meet

In June 2010, over 90 senior mediators, decision makers and peace process actors met in Norway to discuss issues ranging from violent transitions of power to the situation in Sudan and how to talk to the Taliban.

Since the HD Centre and the Royal Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs established the Oslo forum series of mediation retreats in 2003, senior representatives working at a high level have been provided with a rare, discreet opportunity to exchange views and ideas as well as relate their experiences of international conflict mediation.

The event was notable for the broad range of participants who attended from across the globe including Saudi Arabia, Qatar, India, Pakistan, South Africa, Brazil, the USA, Indonesia and China. There were also a number of both state and non-state mediators at the retreat.

The 2010 retreat also included innovative, new 'reality check' sessions. These used provocative statements to successfully stimulate debates among participants including whether mediators should focus on ending violence or transforming societies. In fact, the tension between getting agreements signed and ensuring the quality of a peace process emerged as one of the most significant issues for mediators during the event.

The Oslo forum was followed in November by the biennial Asian Mediation Retreat. This took place in Hanoi with the co-operation of the Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam. Participants attended from across Asia as well as the UN and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. Issues discussed included the role of regional organisations in conflict resolution and the management of territorial disputes.

To find a summary of the debates and the full meeting reports, visit the HD Centre website, www.hdcentre.org or www.osloforum.org

involved in the national peace process. A second workshop was held with Arab groups in Sudan and the HD Centre also supported the establishment of an election dispute resolution process which contributed to the successful elections in Somaliland (an unrecognised autonomous region of Somalia).

The summer was dominated by the discovery of a serious fraud at the HD Centre and the subsequent review and overhaul of the organisation's administration and internal controls. There was also a change of leadership for the HD Centre with Angelo Gnaedinger becoming an interim replacement for Martin Griffiths who remains with the organisation as Senior Adviser to the Executive Director.

The prestigious eighth annual Oslo forum retreat for mediators, which the HD Centre jointly hosts with the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, also took place over the summer. This brought together senior international representatives to discuss the latest issues in mediation.

As autumn approached, the HD Centre convened a regional roundtable for female mediators and negotiators from across the Asia-Pacific region. The HD Centre's office in Sulu in the Philippines also convened a clan conference to address the issue of clan-related violence in the area. In addition, the second publication in the Mediation Practice Series "Engaging with armed groups: Dilemmas & options for mediators" was published.

Finally, winter brought round the biennial Asian Mediators Retreat, this time organised with the Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam and held in Hanoi. The end of the year also saw a change in Chairman for the HD Centre when Karin Jestin stood down to be replaced by Jean-Marie Guéhenno who became the new Chair of the organisation as it moved into 2011.

The View from **New York**



New York City

The HD Centre is present in New York with the lightest of footprints: a part time Senior Adviser, Teresa Whitfield, who also holds a position at New York University's Center on International Cooperation. The arrangement proves both cost- and substantively effective. Teresa conducts liaison for the HD Centre with the United Nations on operational projects as well as for the Mediation Support and Oslo forum teams. She is also called on for advice on individual projects or HD Centre-wide priorities such as gender issues or the impact of counter-terrorist legislation on conflict mediation. She briefs UN officials on the HD Centre's work, keeps the HD Centre abreast of critical developments within the UN,

and represents the HD Centre within the broader New York community of UN member states, NGOs, policy and academic think tanks. She also keeps the HD Centre aware of wider trends in mediation and peacemaking which emerge from the international community in New York.

During 2010 the HD Centre's presence was boosted by regular visits to New York by senior staff, including Interim Executive Director Angelo Gnaedinger, Africa Regional Director Hiruy Amanuel and other staff from Geneva, Nairobi and Manila. In June two senior advisers, Priscilla Hayner and David Petrasek, travelled to New York to take part in a meeting the HD

Centre hosted between the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC), Luis Moreno Ocampo, UN officials and a small group of other individuals in order to exchange views on the challenges of interaction between conflict mediators and the ICC.

In short, this modest New York presence represents a resource that can be drawn upon by all of the HD Centre's staff and a valued contribution to many aspects of its work.

Teresa Whitfield is the HD Centre's Liaison in New York.

Transitional Justice

Ms Priscilla Hayner

Ms Priscilla Hayner is a Senior Adviser at the HD Centre

How would you describe transitional justice and its role in conflict resolution?

Transitional justice refers to a range of policies or mechanisms that may advance accountability and reconciliation for serious rights abuses in a country's past. Following an armed conflict, there may be a great number of victims, as well as accused perpetrators, that need some form of attention, accountability, or redress. While prosecution of wrongdoers in the courts may be desired, it is usually not possible for all cases, given weak judicial systems and the large number of persons who may be complicit in serious crimes. Thus, accountability and redress may also be pursued through a broad truth-seeking process, such as a truth commission, or through providing reparations to individual victims or affected communities. Finally, reform of the judiciary, police, and military may be needed. All of these topics might be broached in the process of mediating a peace agreement, and may

feature in a final agreement either in specific or general terms.

Ideally, broad principles and commitments will be reached, allowing a longer term process of consulting victim communities and the public on exactly what kind of mechanisms would be ideal. There is no one model to follow; each initiative must be uniquely crafted for each society.

How receptive are conflict parties to advice about transitional justice?

In many cases, the warring parties themselves prioritise “justice” as they set out the agenda for the talks, as each side may feel they, or their supporters, have been wronged. There is often an interest in a truth commission, based on familiarity with the better-known processes such as the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission. There is also usually no argument with the idea of reparations, and indeed this may be an attractive element for all sides. The negotiating parties often quickly understand that a blanket amnesty

for serious crimes is no longer acceptable, given developments in international law, and the parties to talks often appreciate, or require, further information in this area. In those few cases where the International Criminal Court is active, the parties have indeed insisted on much greater clarity on what the ICC will mean for them. In all of these areas pertaining to transitional justice, therefore, the negotiating parties are often keen to receive information, clarifications, and options.

Where has a focus on transitional justice helped to support sustainable peace?

There can be a delicate balance between the need to push for accountability – so that those in power in the future might expect to be held to account for their actions, with the hope that this will deter further abuses – versus expediting a peace agreement with powerful leaders who will have no interest in being put on trial. But it is not uncommon for the local population to see justice as a



central part of any stable peace plan. For example, one of the most contentious issues in Darfur has been that of reparations, and the inability to sufficiently resolve this issue was a major impediment to the Darfur talks three years ago. In Kenya, despite possible risks, the public strongly supports the engagement of the International Criminal Court, and also continues to hope for a strong truth commission: a typical taxi driver in Nairobi will tell you that violence may be repeated after the next election if there is not some means to hold to account those responsible for the past violence. Elsewhere, as in Peru, a creative strategy of mapping out the impact of the violence through a truth commission, and then implementing a robust community-based reparations program, has helped to address the extreme inequalities that helped to fuel, and were worsened by, that country's war.

“... we may see a deepening in the understanding of peace mediation and peace processes more generally, including a sober look at ‘peace and justice’ issues, when questions of accountability emerge at the peace table.”

Much of transitional justice is based on the idea of listening to victims and survivors; recognising their needs and suffering can directly enhance the sustainability of a peace plan.

What is your role at the HD Centre and how does your expertise in transitional justice inform your work?

As a Senior Adviser, I assist the HD Centre mediation experts in specific contexts where questions of justice and accountability emerge. This may be early or late in the process, but it is common for the question to feature eventually. It is important for the parties to be informed about the options before them, including how other countries have addressed similar challenges, and ultimately understanding that justice must be understood more broadly than criminal justice.

How did you get involved in the issue of transitional justice and what drew you to it?

After working as an intern for the truth commission in El Salvador in 1992, I was fascinated with the dynamics of the process, and

I began comparative research on truth commissions. After publishing a book comparing truth commissions globally (Unspeakable Truths), I joined two colleagues to co-found the International Center for Transitional Justice in 2001. Admittedly, my engagement in the subject has been driven in part by sheer interest, as well as the chance to assist important processes at the national level.

What has been your greatest success in the field of transitional justice so far?

The most difficult by far has been completing a book – twice (the second edition of Unspeakable Truths was released in 2010, now covering 40 truth commissions). Having a chance to relay the experiences and perspectives of commissioners, victims, policymakers, and others – who have absolutely fascinating experiences and stories to share – has been very rewarding. It was also an honour to serve as human rights adviser to the Kenyan peace talks in 2008, with Kofi Annan. More generally, I am happy that the field of transitional justice as a whole has incorporated the fundamental principle of

consultation and national ownership, prioritising the need to provide comparative information so that the best decisions can be taken by local actors.

Where do you see the field of transitional justice focussing in the future?

It has been broadening in the last years, incorporating issues of economic development, peace-building, ‘identity’ and conflict, and other areas. All of these are relevant and useful, but it may now be the time for the field to consolidate, and to strengthen some of its core areas. Second, I believe that justice experts might perhaps be more self-critical of the impact of justice initiatives, and more regularly undertake an honest assessment of outcomes. Finally, and most importantly for HD, we may see a deepening in the understanding of peace mediation and peace processes more generally, including a sober look at ‘peace and justice’ issues, when questions of accountability emerge at the peace table.



Produced by the HD Centre

Publication

Mediation Practice Series 1
External actors in mediation

“Mediators seek to encourage unity of effort, maximise the influence on and assistance to conflict parties and build support that will be sustained through the implementation and peacebuilding that will follow any negotiated settlement. Most eschew the idea of collective mediation, but look for external actors prepared to follow their lead, open to the possibility of developing complementary initiatives, and/or ready and able to make a substantial contribution to the peacemaking effort. What this involves will vary in accordance with the capacities and resources of the external actors, as well as the characteristics and requirements of the specific mediation. But it is likely to include some combination of logistical, substantive and financial support to the mediation itself, assistance to, encouragement of and/or pressure on one or more of the conflict parties, public support of the process and any resulting agreement in order to build credibility and enhance legitimacy and economic and perhaps even security guarantees for the implementation process.”

An extract from Mediation Practice Series 1 “External actors in mediation : Dilemmas & options for mediators” by Teresa Whitfield. Teresa Whitfield is a Senior Adviser and the HD Centre’s liaison in New York. This publication is available in print and via a download on the HD Centre’s website www.hdcentre.org