

Focal Point meeting of the Group of Friends of Mediation, Helsinki 17-18 January, 2013

Conclusions by the co-chairmen

As co-chair of the Group of Friends of Mediation, Finland organized a Focal Point Meeting of the Group of Friends of Mediation in Helsinki, 17-18 January, 2013. Representatives of 33 members of the Group were present at the meeting.

The purpose of the second Focal Point Meeting was to exchange information on recent mediation related activities among the members and to discuss the future activities of the Group – how to be useful and visible and how to keep the momentum in mediation. The role of the Focal Points in relation to the role of the Group in New York was also discussed.

The following key points were addressed:

- Finding ways to improve the financing of mediation is an ongoing project of the Group as it was tasked by the ministerial meeting on September 2012. Co-chairs are in process of preparing an option paper which will be discussed by the Permanent Representatives in New York. The outcome of the PR discussion will be reported in the next ministerial meeting in autumn 2013
- The Secretary General's Guidance for Effective Mediation was embraced. It was stressed that there are still many topics in the Guidance that need further elaboration. A suggestion was made that the Group could focus on specific issues covered in the Guidance in their future meetings.
- The Focal Points welcomed a proposal of producing a concept paper on a specific aspect of mediation to provide further guidance in mediation. It was suggested that the Group could start from gender issues since there are already ongoing projects and prepared documents within this question. Other thematic issues identified as possible options for further discussions include:
 - peace and justice
 - traditional leaders and elders
 - traditional justice
 - youth in mediation
- The importance of outreach was stressed: both towards potential new members of the Group as well as the wider public. Especially new African states would be warmly welcomed to the Group as this would improve the Group's geographical balance.
- In order to improve visibility and to convince political leaders, public and media of the benefits of mediation the Group could, for instance, start to issue press releases and/or other statements.

- The group was encouraged to continue to organize high-level mediation related events for wider audience.
- Lessons learned approach was welcomed by the participants regarding the question of discussing specific mediation related country and other cases.
- The participants considered training in mediation to play an important role both for the Group itself and for the actors in the field:
 - Specific training workshops could be organized for the Group, eg. in connection with the meetings of the Group
 - Training for peacekeepers and for civilian actors was seen as particularly important.
- The co-chairs of the Group in New York are preparing a calendar for the Group to keep track of events and meetings related to mediation. All the members of the Group were welcomed to provide information for the calendar. Establishing a website for the Group was also discussed. The UN Mediation Support Unit offered their website Peacemaker to the use of the Group as well.

The following proposals and ideas concerning especially the Focal Points of the Group were presented:

- The role of the Focal Points as agents of mediation in their ministries was stressed. The Focal Points are in a key position of mainstreaming mediation at national level.
- The Group decided to meet more regularly in the future. It was proposed that the Focal Points would meet twice a year. The co-chairs Finland and Turkey offered to host one meeting per year that would leave the other meeting to be organized in New York, just before the ministerial meeting.
- It was highlighted that in addition to the work done together as a Group it is important that all the members of the Group also act individually; here the role of the Focal Points is crucial.
- The Focal Point network welcomed the idea of engaging in training. As it was stated in the discussions the Group consists of different kinds of members; trainers, experienced mediators, more generalized experts et cetera, and this wide pool of expertise could be further utilized.