

Friends of Mediation Ministerial Meeting in New York

Tuesday 20 September 2011 at 8.00 – 9.30 AM

Permanent Mission of Turkey to the UN

The Friends of Mediation met for the second time at ministerial level in the margins of the United Nations General Assembly on September 20, 2011. The meeting was hosted by the Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Ahmet Davutoglu, and co-chaired by him and the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Erkki Tuomioja. The President of the 66th UN General Assembly, the Foreign Ministers of Bangladesh, Belgium, Indonesia, Ireland, Norway, Romania, Sweden, Tanzania and Uganda and the Deputy Foreign Ministers of Brazil, Morocco and Spain, as well as the USG Pascoe of the Department of Political Affairs, the Chairman of the Commission of the African Union and the Secretary-Generals of the Arab League, the OAS, the OIC and the Deputy Secretary-Generals of ASEAN participated in the meeting. The meeting was also attended by representatives from Burkina Faso, Costa Rica, Germany, Malaysia, Mexico, the Philippines, Slovenia, the EU and the OSCE, as well as two representatives of track II actors namely by Nobel Peace Prize laureate Mr. Martti Ahtisaari from Crisis Management Initiative (CMI) and Mr. Vasu Gounden, Director of the African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD).

The discussion focused mainly on two issues. In this regard, the participants held an exchange with a view to providing insight to the UN Secretary-General as he develops guidance for more effective mediation on the basis of mediation experiences as follow-up to the UN General Assembly resolution “Strengthening the role of mediation in peaceful settlement of disputes, conflict prevention and resolution” ([A/RES/65/283](#)) adopted by consensus in June 2011. They also brainstormed on how to maintain the momentum generated by the “Peace through Mediation” initiative and what could be the future activities of the Friends of Mediation for the year ahead, taking into account that the President of 66th General Assembly has chosen mediation as a major theme of the session.

Guidance for more effective mediation

Regarding the development of guidance, several key points were addressed:

- As a starting point, it was emphasized that one model does not fit all mediation situations. Conflicts are different, and mediation guidance should reflect this. It was emphasized that in some situations silent diplomacy is the most appropriate and effective way to proceed, but in all situations trust between the parties and the mediator are key to success. Accountability and impartiality of the mediator was also highlighted.
- The need for inclusiveness in mediation efforts was stressed as a means to increase the effectiveness of the exercise and to ensure that the negotiated settlements are complied with all the relevant parties. The participants also noted that engaging the relevant actors to a conflict was preferable to isolating them.

- The importance of coordination and conveying a unified message was emphasized, as there are often various actors involved in the same mediation effort. It was however stressed that there must be a balance between coordination and the need for flexibility.
- It was agreed by all participants that the UN should have a central role, at least in coordinating among different mediation actors, even though it may not always be the lead mediator. There was a clear consensus that interaction between the UN and regional organizations should be further enhanced. This could also assist in having more clarity of the roles of each organisation in a given conflict. Both the UN and regional organisations need the support of the international community.
- The role of regional organizations was strongly underlined. Local knowledge and expertise, including engaging neighboring countries, are often critical for the success of mediation efforts. A sense of local ownership brings credibility. At the same time, international support was felt to be of key importance. Need for further capacity building for regional organizations was stressed.
- There was a clear willingness for more engagement with track II actors, whose increasing and valuable role in mediation was recognized. As such, the role of non-governmental organizations and broader civil society was stressed by many participants. It is also important to engage more women, to harness the expertise of elders as well as the voices and aspirations of the youth. Local actors are often best in preventing conflict and preventing relapse into conflict if they have capacity and use of necessary structures.
- There was a resolute call for stronger involvement of women in mediation. Security Council resolution 1325 provides us with an excellent tool, but in real life, women's involvement, especially beyond civil society participation, remains strikingly low. The importance of enhancing women's rights in the ongoing transition processes was also strongly emphasized.
- It was noted that the crucial relationship between peace and justice must be approached in a careful manner when developing guidance for mediation. It was emphasized that peace and justice, if properly pursued, promote and sustain one another.
- It is stressed that mediation efforts should be based on a vision for the future and that the ultimate objective of any mediation initiative should be to bring parties to the conflict around a common vision.
- The importance of timely intervention in potential conflict situations was emphasized as well as the need to equip the international community with an effective early warning capacity.

Maintaining the momentum

A number of ideas for future activities of the group of Friends of Mediation were voiced as well as new ideas for the promotion of mediation and for the maintaining of momentum.

- The Friends of Mediation expressed their readiness to cooperate actively with the President of the 66th Session of the General Assembly who had chosen the “Peaceful Settlement of Disputes including Mediation” as one of his main priorities.
- The Participants decided to create a network of focal points in the Ministries of Foreign Affairs to better coordinate their mediation activities. In this regard, the importance of regular exchanges among the Group members was also underlined.
- Enhanced cooperation and contact with civil society actors regarding mediation was emphasised. A proposal was put forth for organizing biannual workshops with the participation of track II actors.
- Regional seminars or workshops on mediation-related themes were proposed, particularly with a view to allowing regional organizations to share experiences and best practices, as well as their comparative advantages. These could also be seen as a form of mediation related capacity-building.
- The Friends of Mediation should continue to rally support in order to strengthen the mediation capacity of the UN as well as the links between the UN and regional and sub-regional organisations. To this end, a proposal was put forward by Turkey to host/establish regional UN Centre(s) of Mediation with a view to streamlining UN efforts. Such centres could undertake a range of activities focusing mainly on capacity-building, including training programs.
- The Permanent Representatives in New York were tasked to work on a follow-up resolution on mediation in the General Assembly in the next spring.