

# Chapter 4

## MEDIATING THE CONTENTS OF A CEASEFIRE AGREEMENT

*There is no single template for ceasefire agreements. This chapter explores some of the mediation approaches to the most common technical elements in ceasefire agreements. The chapter is not exhaustive; additional issues and technical elements may be relevant in certain contexts.*



FARC ex-combatants readying for assembly process, Colombia, 2017  
Credit: United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia

### 4.1 The contents of a ceasefire agreement

Depending on the context, ceasefires may seek to address a small number or a wide range of issues, such as:

- the protection of civilians and human rights
- the status of combatants, their weapons and their ammunition
- interim or transitional security arrangements
- interim or transitional governance arrangements
- humanitarian coordination and arrangements.

In formulating a basic agenda for ceasefire negotiations – with facilitative support from the mediator – parties try to build consensus around the scope of a potential ceasefire, the issues to be addressed, and the sequence in which they will be negotiated. They also agree on modalities for negotiating contentious issues and resolving disputes. While an initial agreed agenda for ceasefire negotia-

tions typically provides a general direction, the conflict parties may expand it and introduce changes throughout the negotiations, so long as all parties signal their consent.

The format and final contents of a ceasefire agreement are informed by the outcomes of negotiations on all issues, based on the agenda that was initially agreed between the parties and possibly adapted during the course of the talks. In turn, a formalized ceasefire agreement – one that clearly articulates all negotiation outcomes in detail and in an agreed sequence – helps to build trust and encourage compliance. An agreement is more likely to be sustainable if it provides clarity on signatory parties and identifies other parties that are associated with, under the control of or aligned with signatory parties. Throughout the mediation process, mediators can call for such clarity in the evolving ceasefire agreement, including by arranging for technical advice and support. Box 5 provides a summary of the core elements of an effective ceasefire agreement.

## BOX 5: Core elements of a ceasefire agreement

The following elements can strengthen a ceasefire agreement:

- identification of the signatory conflict parties and their affiliates or associates
- clearly stated joint principles, objectives of the ceasefire and definitions to promote a common understanding of the terms used (see Section 4.2)
- clarity on the geography of ceasefire areas, including the type and sources of maps used in all negotiation stages (see Section 4.3)
- modalities for the regulation, control and management of forces, such as the separation, disengagement and redeployment of combatants, weapons and ammunition (see Section 4.4)
- a code of conduct that sets out permitted and prohibited activities, with the aim of strengthening compliance (see Sections 4.5. and 4.6)
- monitoring and verification modalities and mechanisms, designed to enable effective political oversight and to strengthen compliance and accountability (see Chapter 5)
- mechanisms and modalities for dispute resolution and de-escalation, with clear lines of communication and information sharing (see Chapter 5)
- interim, transitional and final security arrangements, and their links to other transitional governance mechanisms and bodies (see Sections 4.7 and 4.8)
- provisions on accountability under international humanitarian law, international human rights law and global normative frameworks on gender, conflict-related sexual violence and children associated with armed forces and groups (see Section 3.4)
- a timeline and matrix that serve as a snapshot of the parties' obligations under the ceasefire agreement, provided as an annex (see Section 6.3)
- the date and time of the ceasefire's entry into force
- signatures on the document, to create a sense of contractual commitment.

## 4.2 Objectives, principles and definitions

Reaching agreement on the objectives, principles and definitions of a ceasefire can build trust among the parties and provide momentum for negotiating other ceasefire-related issues.

**Objectives.** The objectives of a ceasefire sets out its context, the relevant military, political, humanitarian, social or economic purpose, and how the ceasefire is linked to a wider peace process. A preliminary ceasefire may have - broad objectives, such as to create an environment that is conducive to a political peace process. Definitive ceasefires, which are mostly pursued as part of comprehensive peace processes, tend to have the objectives of conclusively ending a conflict and achieving a comprehensive resolution by dismantling or reforming some or all of the security structures involved in the hostilities.

**Principles.** A ceasefire's principles are its guiding tenets and an expression of the parties' goodwill and commitment to a set

of mutually agreed values. Discussions and negotiations around principles provide a mediator with opportunities to build a minimum level of consensus and trust among the conflict parties, before turning to more sensitive operational issues. Through advocacy on relevant principles, mediators can elicit the parties' commitment to international humanitarian law, international human rights law and normative international frameworks (for example, on gender, child protection and sexual violence).

**Definitions.** On the whole, technical terms used in ceasefire agreements have no universally accepted definitions. Based on regional, cultural or linguistic preferences, conflict parties and mediators in any given context may use different concepts interchangeably or ascribe another meaning to a given term. By encouraging conflict parties to produce and regularly update a glossary of agreed terms, mediators can help to reinforce a common understanding of the issues. Such a reference source provides a standard against which parties and mediators can assess (translated) language; it also helps to avoid ambiguity during the implementation stage.

## 4.3 Defining the geographical scope of a ceasefire

To be effective, a ceasefire requires clarity and agreement on the geographical areas to which it applies. Geospatial information and technology<sup>30</sup> can be employed to provide details and context with respect to the natural and built-up environments where a conflict has taken place. Maps and imagery (satellite imagery and aerial photographs) can also be helpful in increasing situational awareness and resolving issues through realistic visualization. Mutual consent is required on the type, scale and source of maps that may be referenced in the agreement text and used during implementation. A useful tool for facilitating technical discussions and coordination is a common “planning map”, which can be updated based on verified information from the parties.

## 4.4 Regulation, management and control of combat forces and weapons

The regulation, management and control of combat forces and weapons can involve a range of modalities. While a ceasefire seeks to “break contact” between forces to reduce the risk of incidents or further conflict, it does not necessarily require the separation or movement of all forces. In some cases, the forces may be “frozen in situ” at their last-known or last-held positions; in others, a ceasefire may call for the physical separation of forces (for example, gradually along front lines).

The parties may use different terms to describe the management of forces, including *disengagement*, *withdrawal*, *redeployment*, *demarkation of areas of control or zones*, *assembly*, *cantonment* and *concentration of forces*. The choice of terms is guided by cultural, regional and contextual factors; some terms may be culturally or politically sensitive in certain contexts. Cross-party agreement on definitions is critical to ensuring clarity on the implied actions associated with each term (see Section 4.2). To ensure a high degree of understanding, ceasefires describe modalities from a technical perspective, using agreed terms.

While mediators can limit misunderstandings by suggesting that the parties standardize

terminology, the timing of all actions related to the movement and control of combat forces is inevitably highly political and symbolic. In considering modalities for the management of forces and combatants, mediators can advise the parties to assess potential implications for local communities and women, especially in contexts with high rates of conflict-related sexual violence.

Sections 4.4.1 to 4.4.3 provide an overview of key elements relating to the separation of forces. They outline important considerations for mediators regarding the management of combatants, weapons, airspace and marine territories.

### 4.4.1 Separation of forces

**Separation of forces.** The breaking of direct contact between forces is commonly referred to as the separation of forces. As part of this process, forces may take up defensive positions or postures, or they may move out of the direct line of fire or the range of certain weapon systems. The process of separating forces involves a carefully orchestrated and phased movement of troops from one geographical location to another, sometimes focused only on specific locations of concern rather than the full conflict theatre. As noted above, parties may use disengagement or other terms to refer to the separation of forces, depending on preferences and political sensitivities.

**Withdrawal.** In the context of ceasefires and de-escalation modalities, withdrawal often refers to a retreat of forces from a forward-leaning or offensive posture to a less threatening position or posture. This process may be a stand-alone action or part of a broader disengagement plan. Ensuring that the parties have negotiated and agreed on withdrawal modalities – and that the agreement provides clear provisions to explain the corresponding steps – is more likely to contribute to a sustainable ceasefire than “agreeing to agree” later, especially in the case of a preliminary ceasefire (see Box 6).

**Redeployment of forces.** From a ceasefire standpoint, redeployment involves the movement of forces from one tactical position to another. Such a modality is also undertaken to create a clear separation zone between the forces, which can be monitored if required. In selecting geographical areas for redeployment, parties consider aspects of the terrain, such as its topography, accessibility and defensibility in case of attack (see Box 6). Through consultation with the parties prior to the finalization of such plans, mediators can highlight the need to consider possible ef-

30. For more information, refer to UN Geospatial or contact [geospatial@un.org](mailto:geospatial@un.org).

## BOX 6: Modalities for the withdrawal and redeployment of forces

The withdrawal and redeployment of forces are usually highly choreographed and can involve the following steps, so long as the conflict parties agree:

- identification of the geographical positions occupied by each party and the types of weaponry and equipment deployed
- identification of preliminary assembly areas, alternative defensive or redeployment areas, and cantonment sites, taking into account possible implications for local communities and critical infrastructure
- comprehensive planning and management of the movement of forces, covering aspects such as route identification and protection, communications, information sharing, public information, timing and movement procedures
- identification of routes, areas for redeployment, and security protocols for the regulation, control or redeployment of weapons (see Section 4.4.2)
- communications and notification procedures (“hotlines”) for responses to actions
- monitoring and verification, and resources required for both (see Chapter 5).

fects of redeployment on local communities.

**Demarcation.** The risk of clashes is higher wherever conflict parties have competing, overlapping or ill-defined areas of control or governance. The demarcation (referred to as delimitation in some contexts) of boundaries or zones facilitates the separation of forces and establishes which forces may operate in specific areas. Conflict parties agree on the broad criteria and modalities of demarcation during the negotiations. An effective monitoring and verification mechanism can enhance the sustainability of a demarcation arrangement (see Chapter 5). If a preliminary ceasefire aims to “freeze” the conflict and to create space for a political process, the separation of forces may be limited or incremental.

**Establishment of zones.** In the context of ceasefire mediation, zones can be understood as distinct geographical areas that are clearly defined or demarcated using readily identifiable ground features or locations. Zones serve as notional barriers between conflict parties. If the parties agree to establish a zone, the ceasefire agreement usually sets out rules on aspects such as access by parties, permitted and prohibited activities, and the provision of services to affected populations. These rules typically govern zones and define their purpose. The most common types of zones are:

- buffer or demilitarized zones, also known as exclusionary zones, where the presence of military personnel and equipment is forbidden
- restricted zones, where certain types of weaponry or activities are prohibited or restricted
- coordination zones, where the movement

of forces must be announced and coordinated, usually through a ceasefire commission or other mechanisms established to oversee the ceasefire.

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*The demilitarized zone on the 38th parallel between the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea and the Republic of Korea may be the most famous of zones. Established by the provisions of the 1953 Korean Armistice Agreement, it is 250 km long and approximately 4 km wide.<sup>31</sup>*

*In Western Sahara, the ceasefire line between Morocco and the Polisario Front is marked by a sand wall or berm, on either side of which are three areas or zones in which activities are prohibited or restricted: a buffer strip, a restricted area and areas with limited restrictions. These zones and their geographical alignment are defined in a military agreement, signed in 1991 by both parties with the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO). The demilitarized buffer strip (5 km wide) is off limits to armed forces. In the restricted area (30 km wide), prohibitions apply to the firing of weapons; the reinforcement, redeployment and movement of troops and equipment; improvements of defence infrastructure; and flights by military aircraft. The areas with limited restrictions allow for most routine military activities, while prohibited actions include: reinforcement of existing minefields; laying of new minefields; concentration of troops; construction of new headquarters, barracks or ammunition storage facilities; and holding of military exercises without prior notification to MINURSO.*

31. The Korean Armistice Agreement, 1953, [https://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/KP%2BKOR\\_530727\\_AgreementConcerningMilitaryArmistice.pdf](https://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/KP%2BKOR_530727_AgreementConcerningMilitaryArmistice.pdf)

**Assembly of forces.** The action of regrouping combatants in a geographical area or location is known as an assembly of forces and is often linked to the separation of forces. Ceasefire agreements that stipulate such a movement of troops specify not only the number of combatants to be assembled and the precise location and modalities for selection of these areas, but also the types of weapons that may be part of an assembly plan.

The locations associated with the assembly of combatants may be referred to as assembly areas, concentration areas or cantonment sites; the action of gathering combatants is variously referred to as assembly, concentration, barracking, quartering or cantoning. Mediators can enhance clarity by ensuring that all parties agree on the selected terminology.

Among the factors to consider during discussions on the assembly of forces are the number and type of assembly areas that may be required; accessibility for, proximity to and anticipated effects on local communities; modalities of logistical sustenance; permitted and prohibited actions; and the management of weapons and ammunition within these areas. In some cases, ceasefire agreements contain provisions on the selec-

tion criteria for assembly sites and even on mutually agreed locations; in others, parties agree to defer these discussions to the implementation stage, although doing so may cause delays in the assembly process.

**Mediation of the separation of forces.** The symbolism associated with a separation of forces – and particularly the surrender of territorial control and the acceptance of restrictions on freedom of action – makes it a highly sensitive endeavour. Effective mediation of disengagement involves an assessment of the broader political, economic and security guarantees that conflict parties may seek in exchange for their commitment. In some cases, disengagement is more acceptable to the parties if it is incremental and linked to political guarantees and relevant confidence-building measures. Joint monitoring and verification mechanisms, with representation of all conflict parties, can also build the trust and confidence needed for disengagement (see Chapter 5).

During the negotiation and implementation of a separation of forces, parties may be expected to provide information on their weapons, equipment, and the size and locations of their forces. Should that be the case, mediators can usefully call attention to this requirement from the outset of nego-



United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus monitors the buffer zone, 2021  
Credit: UN Photo/Luboš Podhorský

tiations, as parties are generally reluctant to share such sensitive military information. In this context, it is up to the mediator to continually assess the parties' willingness to cooperate, and to determine to what extent the information they provide can be verified within the given time frame and with available resources.

Given the high levels of sensitivity, it may be easier for mediators to open discussions by focusing on the criteria for redeployment rather than actual geographical positions. Likewise, it may be less complicated to approach the separation of forces through the demarcation of buffer zones between the parties, as opposed to zones of control. Based on factors such as the type and nature of the ceasefire and levels of progress on the broader peace process, mediators are able to assess the extent to which they can realistically address issues surrounding disengagement.

Negotiations on disengagement in a preliminary ceasefire may be limited to the selective withdrawal and redeployment of forces in certain geographical areas. In contrast, similar negotiations in the case of a definitive ceasefire are focused on establishing a detailed road map – of actions, schedules and locations – for achieving the mutually agreed final status of combat forces.

In asymmetrical conflicts, which may have a number of non-signatory as well as non-participatory entities operating in the same geographical space, the separation of forces poses considerable challenges. In such cases, ceasefire modalities can be introduced to respond to additional considerations, such as the security of signatories, their right to self-defence, incremental weapon management, and robust means for coordination and communication.

Disengagement may not be required across a whole theatre; mediation teams can support the conflict parties in establishing priority geographical areas in which the separation of forces is needed. In this context, it falls to mediators to encourage the parties to agree on specific security and governance arrangements, particularly for areas that may become vacant due to the withdrawal of forces. Mediators are also well placed to consult the local communities on such measures, to include their perspectives in the negotiation process.

#### 4.4.2 Weapon regulation, control and management

The regulation, control and management of small, light and heavy weapons and ammunition can be undertaken on their own or as part of a separation of forces. During negotiations, the parties identify and define the types and categories of weapon involved, ideally using simple language and specifications that allow for easy monitoring. Regulatory measures may include prohibitions or restrictions on the use and deployment of certain weapon systems in a geographical area; in situ management of specific weapon systems under an agreed monitoring regime; and the concentration or handover of certain categories of weapon to a third party. In the ceasefire agreement, parties can also commit to complying with international standards on the safe storage of weapons and ammunition, and to granting access to stored weapons and ammunition for maintenance purposes. Mediators can facilitate related negotiations by offering the parties technical support.

In many cases, especially in preliminary ceasefires, weapon regulations limit or control the parties' use of certain weapons without removing their access to those weapons. Such measures can be particularly useful if trust levels among the parties are low, as they help to focus attention on de-escalation and create a better environment for talks. Weapon control may also be implemented as an initial step towards the separation of forces.

Weapon control discussions may be perceived as one-sided, particularly if proposed measures disproportionately target only one or a few conflict parties, such as armed opposition movements. To ensure all actors see the process as balanced, mediators may wish to recommend weapon control measures that apply to all the conflict parties.

Key considerations for mediation with respect to the regulation, control and management of weapon systems include:

- the information required to prepare a framework for weapon and munitions control, and means for gathering this information
- the effects of topography or terrain on weapon mobility, ranges and munitions (regarding use and stability)
- the geographical areas covered by weapon control, physical routes available for the redeployment or regrouping of weapons, potential weapon storage locations and related supervision

- the types and quantities of weapons and ammunition that need to be immobilized, rendered safe or destroyed on site
- the monitoring systems required for weapon control and the resources needed to establish them
- the scale of planning maps as well as the methods and styles for marking them up, including agreement on colour codes, symbols and signs
- the potential utility of reciprocity regarding weapon control as a means of balancing demands on the conflict parties
- in asymmetric conflicts, methods for establishing perceptions of quid pro quo in weapon regulation, particularly in contexts of aerial, technologically advanced or strategic weapon systems
- the technical expertise required to mediate and implement weapon control.

*In 2006–2007, as part of the peace process in Nepal, the Government of Nepal agreed to secure the same number of weapons as the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) rebels.<sup>32</sup> This was a restrictive option for the Army, especially in view of its broader responsibility to safeguard national borders. The measure enhanced trust, however, and served as a confidence-building step and guarantee for the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist).*

#### 4.4.3 Management of airspace and marine territories

The management of airspace – especially over conflict areas – is increasingly challenging due to advances in arms, ammunition, aircraft and unmanned aerial vehicles. In most contemporary conflicts, the issue of airspace management and coordination is vital. It can also be useful in building confidence among parties before and throughout ceasefire negotiations, as well as during implementation.

Mediators are well placed to ensure that conflict analysis entails assessments of the scope and implications of airspace management, including issues of sovereignty and international aviation guidelines. They may wish to seek technical advice and support, particularly if airspace management is part of an agreement, not least because related monitoring and verification mechanisms require specific technological resources and expertise.

The management of marine territories and areas can assume critical importance in some contexts, with potential implications for international shipping lanes. In addition to alerting parties to the need to manage and coordi-

nate activities in marine territories and areas, where relevant, mediators can offer to make technical expertise available to them during the negotiations.

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*In Colombia, the 2016 Final Agreement to End the Armed Conflict and Build a Stable and Lasting Peace imposed restrictions on the use of airspace by military aircraft. The agreement prohibited aircraft from flying below 1.5 km above the security zones where FARC forces were concentrated in advance of laying down their weapons.<sup>33</sup>*

## 4.5 Codes of conduct to strengthen compliance

A code of conduct sets out agreed norms of behaviour for conflict parties, which helps strengthen compliance and sustainability of an agreement. In an agreement, the definition of a ceasefire and other provisions may explicitly permit or prohibit certain actions; cumulatively, these elements translate into a code of conduct. The permitted activities usually refer to routine administrative and weapon maintenance tasks that are to be conducted by combat units. A ceasefire can also spell out how signatory parties may respond to potential actions by spoilers such as non-signatory groups, especially with respect to actions of self-defence against such entities.

Levels of detail vary across ceasefires. Definitive ceasefires tend to feature a detailed code of conduct, whereas preliminary ceasefires may have more limited references or none. To promote coherence and prevent ambiguity, mediators can encourage parties to list all permitted and prohibited activities in one place in an agreement, under the heading “code of conduct”. This section can serve as an agreed reference tool.

Mediators can play a key role in encouraging parties to commit, through specific provisions in the ceasefire agreement, to disseminating a code of conduct to their respective conflict party members – up and down their chains of command – and to other stakeholders, such as national, regional and local government officials, local communities, women’s groups and youth networks. Publicly distributing a code of conduct furthers the affected population’s understanding of what behaviour to expect from the conflict parties; in some cases, it also supports monitoring and verification frameworks (see Chapter 5).

32. Agreement on Monitoring of the Management of Arms and Armies, 2006, [https://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/NP\\_061108\\_Agreement%20on%20the%20Monitoring%20of%20Arms%20and%20Armies.pdf](https://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/NP_061108_Agreement%20on%20the%20Monitoring%20of%20Arms%20and%20Armies.pdf).

33. Agreement on the Bilateral and Definitive Ceasefire and Cessation of Hostilities, and the Laydown of Weapons between the National Government and the FARC-EP, 2016, <https://peacemaker.un.org/ceasefire-colombia-2016>.

*Signed by the Government of Sudan and the Liberation and Justice Movement in 2011, the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur had an explicit provision on “prohibited activities and positive undertakings”.<sup>34</sup> The provision barred parties from launching offensive, provocative or retaliatory actions; carrying out any acts of hostility, violence or intimidation against the civilian population and internally displaced people in Darfur; disseminating hostile propaganda; carrying out the unauthorized redeployment and movement of forces; perpetrating prohibited acts of gender-based violence and sexual exploitation; and imposing any types of restriction on the safe, free and unimpeded movement of humanitarian agencies.*

*In 2006, the Government of Nepal and the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) agreed on a ceasefire code of conduct. During the cantonment period that followed, they produced a further list of permitted and prohibited activities, which was included in the Agreement on the Monitoring of the Management of Arms and Armies of 2006.<sup>35</sup>*

## 4.6 Safety and protection of civilians

A code of conduct is not restricted to outlining the conflict parties’ acceptable behaviour towards one another; depending on the context, it may also permit and prohibit actions that affect the civilian population or other stakeholders. In contexts where actors have used sexual violence as a tactic of warfare, for instance, a code of conduct can be an effective tool for putting an end to its use.

In addition to reviewing agreed provisions in the evolving ceasefire text through a gender-responsive and protection-sensitive lens, mediators can encourage the parties to consider including explicit provisions on the following elements in the agreement:

- the immediate cessation of violence against all civilians, including conflict-related sexual violence, in accordance with international humanitarian law and international human rights law
- relevant national laws and policies on the protection of civilians, women’s rights and gender equality, including any ratification of international or regional conventions and policy frameworks<sup>36</sup>

- freedom of movement and access for all civilians and humanitarian actors, as well as the needs and rights of displaced people, including their right of return
- missing persons, abductees and detainees, including with reference to:
  - their locations
  - the release of political prisoners
  - access by the International Committee of the Red Cross or other appropriate agencies to detention facilities and detainees
  - the release of all abductees.
- a list of prohibited military activities, such as the following, with specific reference to the safety and protection of civilians:
  - laying of mines
  - stockpiling of weapons
  - movement of weapons, equipment and troops
  - training exercises
  - conscription and recruitment in all forms
  - trafficking
  - abductions
  - conflict-related sexual violence
  - arbitrary arrest
  - attacks on camps of internally displaced persons
  - forced relocation
  - seizure of land or property
  - attempts to damage, control or block access to critical civilian infrastructure
- measures for restoring services for civilians, including through efforts to vacate, rebuild or repair civilian facilities (such as markets, hospitals, schools and playgrounds) and re-establish access to critical health, education and economic activities
- measures for managing weapon-related threats, so as to protect civilians from harm, promote safe freedom of movement, and secure access to livelihoods, health and education, potentially through the conflict parties’ mutual commitment to identifying stockpiles, minefields, unexploded ordnance and chemical weapons
- gender-responsive and gender-sensitive interim and transitional security arrangements on the separation and assembly of forces (see Section 4.7).

During preliminary ceasefire negotiations in particular, mediators are advised to stress the need to comply with international norms and laws to protect civilian lives. The mediation

34. Doha Document for Peace in Darfur (DDPD), 2011, <https://peacemaker.un.org/sudan-dohadocumentpeace2011>.

35. Agreement on the Monitoring of Arms and Armies, 2006, <https://peacemaker.un.org/nepal-monitoringarmies2006>.

36. Relevant agreements include the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW); the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child; the 1998 Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court; and policy frameworks such as CEDAW implementation plans and national action plans on women, peace and security.

process for such ceasefires may face a range of challenges, including access and other restrictions that can hamper the monitoring of parties' commitments to cease all violence against civilians, including conflict-related sexual violence. In response, mediators may wish to develop strategies to help the conflict parties define minimum levels of commitment for a sustainable ceasefire (see Box 4).

Mediators may find that parties that are pursuing a definitive ceasefire are more willing to negotiate commitments on the safety and the protection of civilians. These negotiations typically take place in the framework of a broader peace process, which provides stakeholders with access to additional platforms for addressing the political, social and economic root causes and drivers of a conflict.

*The Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement signed between the Government of Myanmar and ethnic armed organizations in October 2015 features a detailed "military code of conduct".<sup>37</sup> The provisions on the protection of civilians prohibit acts of violence against civilians (including killing, forced labour and acts against personal dignity), sexual violence against women and children, and the recruitment of children. The agreement also forbids attacks on schools, healthcare facilities and religious infrastructure.*

*The 2018 Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan contains provisions for the cantonment of forces to facilitate accountability, disarmament and demobilization.<sup>38</sup> The selection criteria for assembly sites stipulate that the areas should be located away from civilian populations and chosen in consultation with local communities.*

## 4.7 Interim and transitional security arrangements

The meaning, scope and implications of interim security arrangements (ISAs) and transitional security arrangements (TSAs) vary widely, depending on how the parties agree to define them during negotiations. In preliminary ceasefire agreements, ISAs may refer to temporary arrangements that the parties agree to adopt, but that are not necessarily connected to any transitional phase of the peace process or longer-term security sector and governance arrangements. In certain definitive ceasefires, the term relates to security arrangements that are in place before the formal transitional phase of an agreement

commences. In contrast, TSAs are typically synchronized with a broader political transition plan that follows a road map with a set of scheduled activities to which the parties have agreed. Mediators can advise parties to negotiate and agree on such a road map to guide the evolution of ISAs or TSAs into long-term or final arrangements for the security sector and its governance.

ISAs and TSAs are often politically sensitive, since they may be perceived as an acknowledgement of a State's absence in certain areas or a legitimization of a non-State actor's authority. At the same time, these security arrangements provide one of the most visible peace dividends for local communities. Without them, the separation of forces and prohibitions on their activities can create a "security vacuum", leaving territory open to control by other groups, and potentially to lawlessness. ISAs and TSAs thus represent an essential political and security guarantee for the conflict parties and other stakeholders, including the civilian population.

As part of the negotiations on ISAs or TSAs, mediators can encourage the parties to consider the concerns, aspirations and perspectives of local communities before deciding who is to provide security in which areas, for whom and how. Similarly, the negotiations can cover issues related to the governance of the security sector and security providers during periods of transition.

By providing access to technical expertise and advice, mediators can help the conflict parties to generate realistic ISA and TSA options, such as:

- an acceptable third-party actor or actors that can secure an area, either under an executive mandate – from the UN Security Council, for example – which would allow them to arrest and detain people, or at the request of the parties, which would authorize them to work alongside national security providers
- joint units or patrols involving all sides of a conflict, often alongside a third-party presence
- community policing services, which may be considered more accountable than a force brought in from outside, provided the conflict parties and the local communities agree
- modalities whereby designated police or security entities are allowed to operate in a given area under specific conditions, such as prior consent or joint operations, either with local entities or alongside a third-party actor.

37. The Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement between the Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar and the Ethnic Armed Organizations, 2015, <https://peacemaker.un.org/node/2701>.  
38. Revitalised Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan, 2018, <https://www.peaceagreements.org/wgenerateAgreementPDF/2112>.



**Participants in Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration meeting**  
*A delegation of the government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo negotiates with Ituri militia groups on the disarmament of combatants and their integration in the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, 2016.*  
 Credit: UN Photo/Martine Perret

Options that involve third parties require prior consultation with the proposed third party. These options are resource-intensive, and third parties need reasonable amounts of lead time to be operational. Before they can deploy, external actors may require a mandate and a status of forces agreement, in addition to other formal arrangements with host authorities. Regardless of which ISA or TSA option is selected, gender inclusiveness in the respective units or patrols is preferred (see Chapter 3).

## 4.8 Final security arrangements

For the purpose of this Guidance, “final security arrangements” (FSAs) refer to the agreed, ultimate status of combat forces, combatants, the security sector and its governance. In practice, however, conflict parties may choose to use different terms to denote such arrangements. Given that FSAs reflect the relative strengths, positions and interests of the parties, decisions on their scope and on the elements and institutions they may cover vary from one conflict to another.

For ease of comprehension, Figure 1 presents a generic model of FSAs. This section of the Guidance also briefly discusses security sector reform (SSR) and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR), two critical issues commonly discussed as part of broader

security arrangements.<sup>39</sup> Mediators are encouraged to seek relevant thematic expertise when advising the parties on these issues. FSAs are not necessarily preceded by ISAs or TSAs. If parties incorporate ISAs or TSAs in a ceasefire, mediators can usefully encourage them to agree on a clear, timeline-based road map for long-term security sector arrangements, in conjunction with plans for the political transition. The mechanisms and processes associated with such a road map typically outlive some of the other activities agreed within the framework of a ceasefire. The ceasefire monitoring and reporting modalities, for example, generally cease at an agreed stage in the peace process.

In contrast, FSAs, especially those related to SSR elements, continue over an extended time frame, following their own road map as well as their own monitoring, evaluation and reporting modalities within broader political processes. Since many SSR-related and other FSA processes are resource-intensive, mediators may wish to remind the parties about the need to consider their cost and feasibility.

If the root causes or drivers of a conflict involve the security sector or its governance, negotiations on SSR typically assume primacy and result in more detailed provisions on the subject.<sup>40</sup> In the framework of ceasefire agreements and with reference to SSR, the parties may negotiate and agree on commitments to broad principles of institutional and governance arrangements, to be discussed

39. UN resources on DDR and SSR include the Integrated DDR Standards ([www.unddr.org](http://www.unddr.org)) and the SSR Integrated Technical Guidance Notes (<http://dag.un.org/handle/11176/387400>).

40. It is widely recognized that security sector governance deficits are among the root causes of conflict, as highlighted in Security Council resolutions 2151 (2014) and 2553 (2020). See also UN and World Bank, *Pathways for Peace: Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict*, 2018, <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/28337>.



Officials from the United Nations Mission in Liberia meet with commanders of the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy to discuss the Disarmament, Demobilization, Rehabilitation and Reintegration programme in 2004  
Credit: UN Photo/Astrid-Helene Meister

as part of the peace process and taken up through national political, legislative and constitutional processes.

DDR processes serve to disband armed groups or entities and assist former combatants in returning to civilian life.<sup>41</sup> In addition to non-State actors, such processes may also include combatants from national military or paramilitary forces. The integration of former combatants into security institutions is usually linked to long-term SSR processes. In this context, mediators can encourage parties to be realistic in their assessments of integration-related political, institutional, governance and funding demands, within the framework of a broader peace process. DDR processes have increasingly addressed and supported transitional weapons and ammunition management,<sup>42</sup> as well as community violence reduction during the transitional stages. Definitive ceasefire agreements usually contain more detailed references to DDR, although parties tend to negotiate and incorporate provisions and principles that are relatively broad in nature. The actual design and operationalization of an integrated DDR process is typically discussed and agreed through mechanisms established by the ceasefire agreement, during the implementation phase and over an extended time frame. DDR-related principles and provisions

cover various timelines and conditions, such as: the establishment of institutions charged with governing and executing DDR programmes; their composition and mandates; the expected role of the international community (including donors, UN missions and UN bodies); the timelines and locations for disarmament; the moment at which forces are scheduled to be fully demobilized; institutions tasked with executing the integration process, if relevant; the concept of reintegration; and the official conclusion of the programme.

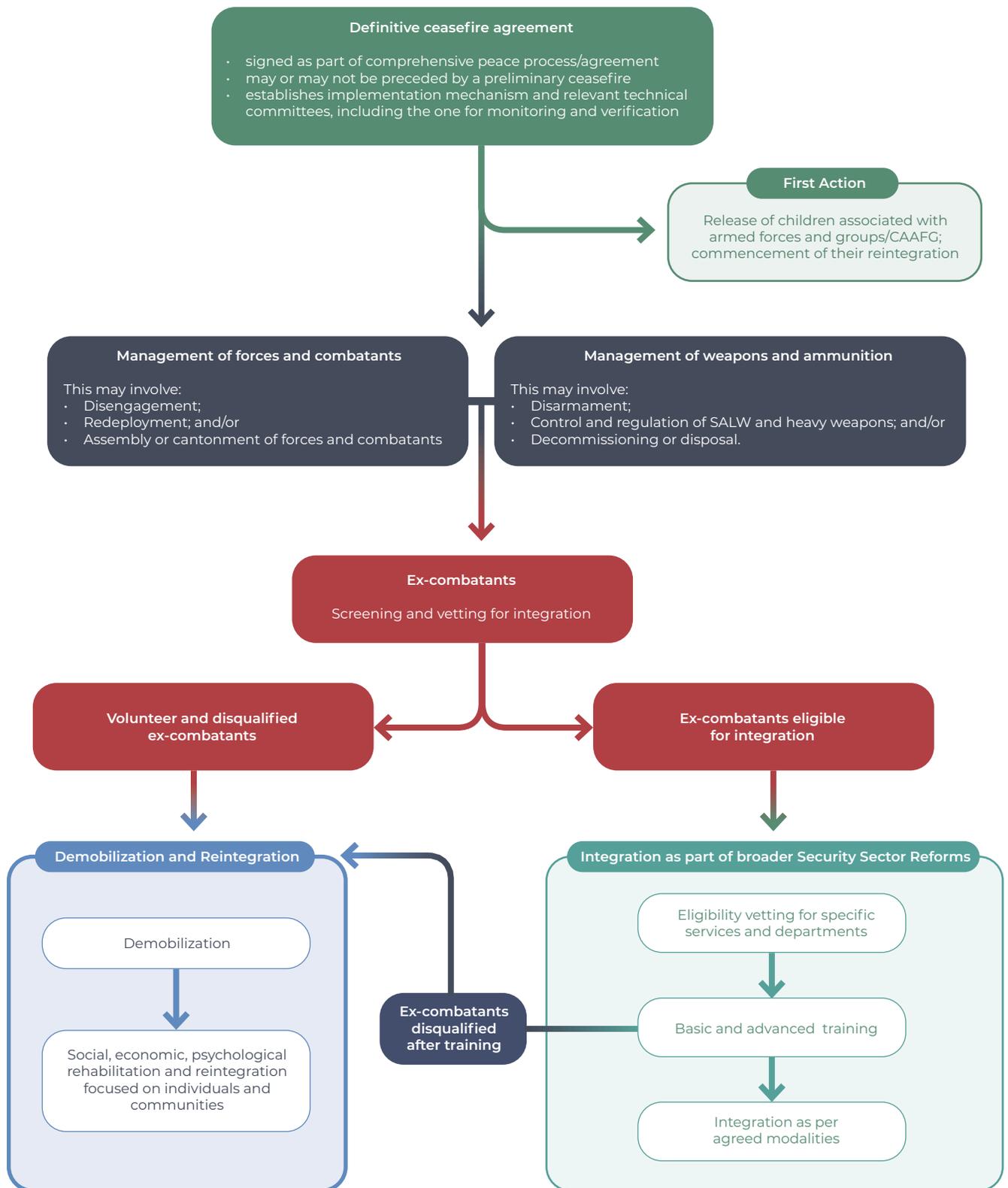
Parties may wish to use names other than “DDR”, in line with their cultural preferences and conflict-related sensitivities (see Figure 1). In the Mindanao peace process in the Philippines, participants agreed to use terms such as “normalization” and “decommissioning” rather than DDR. In Colombia, the disarmament of FARC members was referred to as the “laying down of weapons”, while their reintegration into civilian life was called “reincorporation”.

Given the diversity of functions performed by women in conflict-affected settings, promoting gender-responsive DDR at all stages is crucial for the success and sustainability of interventions. As part of this approach, mediators can seek to create a protective environ-

41. See Module 2.10 of the UN’s Integrated DDR Standards, <https://www.unddr.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/IDDRS-2.10-The-UN-Approach-To-DDR.pdf>

42. See Module 4.11 of the UN’s Integrated DDR Standards, <https://www.unddr.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/IDDRS-4.11-Transitional-Weapons-and-Ammunition-Management.pdf>

**Figure 1: A generic model of final security arrangements in a definitive ceasefire**



ment, grant access to benefits and ensure women's meaningful participation in the assessment, design and implementation of DDR initiatives.<sup>43</sup>

## 4.9 Mines, explosive remnants of war and improvised explosive devices

The scope and extent of provisions on mine action and the clearance of explosive remnants of war (ERW) and improvised explosive devices (IEDs) vary based on the ceasefire and munitions used in a given context. Where relevant, mediators and mediation support teams have a responsibility to ensure these issues are part of the discussions and to provide or offer access to information on potential clearance activities, as well as related sequencing and time frames. Definitive ceasefire negotiations typically cover the complete spectrum of mine action issues, including the establishment of or linkages with the national mine action coordination bodies.

Humanitarian mine action and efforts to clear ERW and IEDs can be undertaken at any stage of a conflict. If conflict parties are not immediately open to clearance activities, then risk education or other activities can provide a "softer" entry point. When implemented during negotiations, mine action can serve as a confidence-building measure and even as an entry point for engaging with conflict parties.

Unless attempts to leverage clearance activities for the purpose of the mediation are carefully managed, such activities may become politicized. Mediators can help to minimize this risk by emphasizing that humanitarian mine action efforts are not dependent on reaching a formal ceasefire agreement.

## 4.10 Logistical sustenance of conflict parties

Conflicts foster different kinds of legal and illicit economies. They help parties sustain their potential to wage war by providing the means to pay, support and supply their combatants. Peace processes can reduce some parties' access to funds and resources if income-generating activities such as illegal taxation, illegal exploitation of natural resources, human trafficking and the op-

eration of check-point economies become defined as violations of an agreement.

In the run-up to and during a ceasefire implementation phase, mediators can encourage conflict parties to discuss the modalities of their sustenance and to consider pragmatic ways to meet their non-military needs, especially if the ceasefire prohibits activities on which they previously relied. The parties' activities and perceptions of the wider peace process may influence their willingness to discuss these issues. In the absence of logistical sustenance solutions, reducing the parties' ability to sustain themselves too early may threaten their survival, which can lead them to disengage from the talks or implementation. Mediators can call for the perceptions of local communities to be factored into any assessment of combatants' non-military needs.

The provision of assistance is a complex issue, especially prior to the signing of a definitive ceasefire or a comprehensive peace agreement. In some cases, a multi-donor trust fund or a single-donor-driven initiative may be established to provide assistance. In others, the national government may assume overall responsibility, although non-State parties, which would need to agree to such an arrangement, may be wary of State support. Such assistance is usually in-kind, as per an agreed scale and modality, with monitoring and verification mechanisms in place.

## 4.11 Informing stakeholders of a ceasefire agreement

Among stakeholders, the prospect of a ceasefire and eventual peace raises expectations as well as apprehension. In deciding how to share the final ceasefire agreement with all stakeholders, conflict parties address issues such as the means and modalities of dissemination, translation requirements, formatting preferences and timing. Dissemination also requires a resource needs estimate and the identification and pre-positioning of resources.

Delays in the dissemination of a ceasefire agreement may have an impact on its credibility and sustainability. Distribution via social media can be an expeditious way to reach target constituencies. Parties may also consider unpacking and presenting salient aspects of the agreement in a comprehensible and engaging manner by using innovative design and infographics.

43. UN Department of Peace Operations, Gender-Responsive DDR: Promoting the Women, Peace and Security Agenda, 2020, [https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/ddr\\_wps-promoting-the-wps-agenda.pdf](https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/ddr_wps-promoting-the-wps-agenda.pdf)



**Raising mine awareness in Somalia**

*A section of ground is cordoned off during a demonstration held by the United Nations Mine Action Service in Mogadishu, Somalia, 2013. The aim was to draw attention to the large number of mines and unexploded ordnance that still exist in the country.*

*Credit: UN Photo/Tobin Jones*

## KEY GUIDANCE POINTS: MEDIATING THE CONTENTS OF A CEASEFIRE AGREEMENT

### Structure and contents of an agreement

- There is no universal template for an ideal ceasefire agreement. The contents, scope and sequence of issues that can be negotiated and agreed are guided by the conflict parties, the conflict dynamics and the objectives of the ceasefire, within the broader political, social and economic context.
- A simple text, phased approaches, clearly defined modalities for implementation and linkages to the broader political process enhance the sustainability of a ceasefire agreement.
- Reaching agreement on the objectives and principles of a ceasefire can build trust among the parties and provide momentum for negotiating other ceasefire-related issues.
- By encouraging conflict parties to produce and regularly update a glossary with definitions of agreed terms, mediators can help to reinforce a common understanding of the issues.
- A ceasefire agreement is more likely to be sustainable if it provides clarity on signatory parties and identifies other parties that are associated with, under the control of or aligned with signatory parties.
- To be effective, a ceasefire requires agreement and clarity on the geographical areas to which it applies.
- Ceasefire negotiations tend to focus on issues that are of critical importance to the conflict parties. A ceasefire is more likely to be credible and sustainable, however, if negotiations also emphasize the safety and protection of civilians.

### Regulation, management and control of combat forces and weapons

- The regulation, management and control of combat forces and weapons can involve a range of modalities. While a ceasefire seeks to “break contact” between forces to reduce the risk of incidents or further conflict, it does not necessarily require the separation or movement of all forces.
- Modalities for the management of forces and combatants are most effective if they address potential implications for women and local communities, especially in contexts that have high rates of conflict-related sexual violence.
- Conflict parties may use different terms to describe the management of forces, including *disengagement, withdrawal, redeployment, demarcation of areas of control or zones, assembly, cantonment and concentration of forces*. The choice of terms is guided by cultural, regional, political and other factors.
- The separation of forces poses particularly serious challenges in asymmetrical conflicts, in which a range of non-signatory actors and spoilers may be active. Mediators can help to protect the ceasefire implementation process by urging parties to consider negotiating methods and modalities that can minimize potential interference by such groups.
- Approaches to the regulation, control and management of conflict party forces – especially with respect to preliminary ceasefires – are most effective when they are dynamic, incremental, innovative and linked to other actions in the broader peace process, rather than considered in isolation.
- The regulation, control and management of small, light and heavy weapons can be undertaken on their own or as part of a separation of forces. An objective analysis of weapons, ammunition and combat equipment is a prerequisite for advising the parties on the development of a pragmatic strategy in this area. Mediators are encouraged to seek expert guidance on these issues.
- In situ weapon regulation and control may provide a feasible alternative to a large-scale separation or redeployment of forces, especially in relation to preliminary ceasefires. As this option allows the parties to retain control of some of their weapons, mediators may wish to explore it as a preliminary step towards a ceasefire.

- In an agreement, the definition of a ceasefire and other provisions may explicitly permit or prohibit certain actions; cumulatively, these elements translate into a code of conduct. Codes of conduct help to reinforce accountability of the parties, strengthen compliance with provisions and enhance the sustainability of an agreement.
- Codes of conduct are not restricted to military issues; ideally, they also prohibit sexual violence as a tactic or weapon of war and govern parties' behaviour towards the civilian population and critical civilian or humanitarian infrastructure. During preliminary ceasefire negotiations in particular, mediators are advised to stress the need to comply with international norms and laws to protect civilian lives.
- The growing complexity and need for management and coordination of airspace and marine territories require mediators to seek specialized advice to enable informed discussions.
- Demining covers a range of options to improve the general sense of security and build trust. Mediators can enable parties to access the technical expertise and advice they need to explore these options. Implementation of options such as humanitarian demining, risk identification and education are not dependent on reaching a ceasefire agreement.
- In the run-up to and during ceasefire implementation, mediators can encourage conflict parties to discuss logistical sustenance and to consider practical ways to meet their non-military needs. This approach is especially applicable if the ceasefire prohibits activities on which the parties previously relied.
- A sustainable and durable separation of forces requires an effective, gender-inclusive monitoring and verification mechanism, which, in turn, has funding and resource implications.
- The innovative use of maps can facilitate discussions and help to track progress or consensus between the parties, such as with respect to the separation of forces. This approach requires parties to consider and agree on map sources, scales and types (such as digital or printed), as well as on marking techniques and safekeeping. Where applicable, maps with agreed action timelines or phases can be integrated in ceasefire agreements, for example as annexes.

### **Interim, transitional and final security arrangements**

- The separation of forces and prohibitions on their activities can create a “security vacuum”, leaving territory open to control by other groups, and potentially to lawlessness. As part of the negotiations on interim security arrangements (ISAs) or transitional security arrangements (TSAs), mediators can encourage the parties to consider who will provide security in these areas and how.
- ISAs and TSAs are often politically sensitive since they may be perceived as an acknowledgement of a State's absence in certain areas or a legitimization of a non-State actor's authority. At the same time, they provide one of the most visible peace dividends for local communities.
- For the purpose of this Guidance, the term “final security arrangements” (FSAs) refers to the agreed, ultimate status and governance of combat forces, combatants and the wider security sector that may feature in a definitive ceasefire agreement. FSAs vary in terms of their scope as well as the elements and institutions they may cover in each context. Two of the most common issues that are discussed in the context of FSAs are security sector reform (SSR) and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR).
- Mediators can usefully highlight the temporary nature of ISAs and TSAs to the parties, while also advocating that they formulate and agree to implement a timeline-based FSA road map – one that includes both institutions and modalities for governance. Undue extensions or delays in ISAs or TSAs can have a negative impact on the sustainability of a ceasefire and the broader peace agreement.