



# The UN High Level Mediation Course

7-12 December 2014, Glen Cove Mansion

Glen Cove, NY

## CURRICULUM

### Background and Rationale

1. As part of the UN Department of Political Affairs' (DPA) ongoing effort to professionalize mediation within and outside the UN, and within the framework of the UN General Assembly resolution on strengthening the role of mediation in the peaceful settlement of disputes, conflict prevention and resolution (GA/66/291), DPA has been implementing a **training strategy** on mediation over the past few years.
2. It is well recognized that effective **mediation efforts require good preparation**. In particular, mediators and their teams must have a broad range of knowledge and skills in order to deal with the numerous challenges, dilemmas and complexities they are usually confronted with. The UN Secretary-General recommends that mediators and their teams should have the opportunity for training and coaching to enhance their effectiveness (see UN Guidance for Effective Mediation, 2012).
3. Even though many mediation trainings are available, there are **very few learning opportunities that focus on the specific needs of senior UN mediators**, who have to engage in complex political and oftentimes violent conflict situations.
4. Following two successful pilots held, respectively, in New York in May 2013 and Istanbul in October 2013, DPA will roll out the **UN High Level Mediation Course in December 2014 in New York**. The participants will include senior officials from the UN, regional organizations and key Member States. The Course puts a special emphasis on **preparing women mediators**.

### Objectives and Expected Outcomes

5. The **overall objective** of the UN High Level Mediation Course is to **contribute to more effective UN mediation** by deepening the knowledge and enhancing the skills of the



participants through simulation exercises, expert inputs and collective sharing of experiences and lessons. The more specific objectives are as follows:

- a) **Promote a common understanding of mediation and UN mediation policy:** At the end of the Course, participants should be familiar with the main elements of mediation processes and useful approaches for dealing with mediation challenges, as well as with UN policy and guidance concerning mediation and its place within the overall UN preventive diplomacy and conflict resolution architecture.
- b) **Enhance conceptual clarity:** The Course will provide participants with a thorough understanding of the main concepts and tools used in the field of mediation, enabling them to analyze conflict situations more accurately and engage in mediation processes in a more structured and strategic manner.
- c) **Refine key mediation skills:** Course participants will practice various mediation skills in a safe environment, giving them an opportunity to learn new methods of engagement and assess their own strengths and weaknesses.
- d) **Encourage exchange of experience amongst practitioners:** The Course provides an environment for learning where experienced participants have an opportunity to share their critical reflections and learn from senior mediators. A particular emphasis will be given to the exchange between participants from within and outside the UN system.

## Focus

6. The Course focuses on **mediation** taking place in fragile and often violent political contexts. More specifically, it focuses on intra-state conflict and its external dimensions. An emphasis is put on the negotiations that include the top leadership of conflict parties (so-called “Track 1 processes”). The Course will also go beyond formal, high level processes and make the link to mediation efforts outside the limelight of international attention.

7. The Course will mainly look at UN led or UN supported mediation processes. In that respect, the **UN approach to mediation** (including its norms, values, policies and structures) will take center stage. However, the Course will also take account of other organizations that engage in peacemaking (such as regional organizations, states and non-governmental organizations). It will illustrate how the different actors and approaches can be complementary but also create unconstructive competition. The presence of participants from different organizations will be of particular importance for this discussion.

8. The **Course is experience driven**. The basic learning tools will be past and current mediation cases in which the UN played a significant role as a mediator. Theoretical and conceptual frameworks are used to learn from these experiences.



## Logic of the UN High Level Mediation Course

9. The logic of the **Course follows the various stages of a mediation process** (see Figure 1). This will serve to illustrate the different components of the process and their respective core challenges. It is important to note, however, that in reality the stages are not strictly linear: mediators are at all times analyzing and strategizing. A detailed outline of the program can be found in the separate agenda.

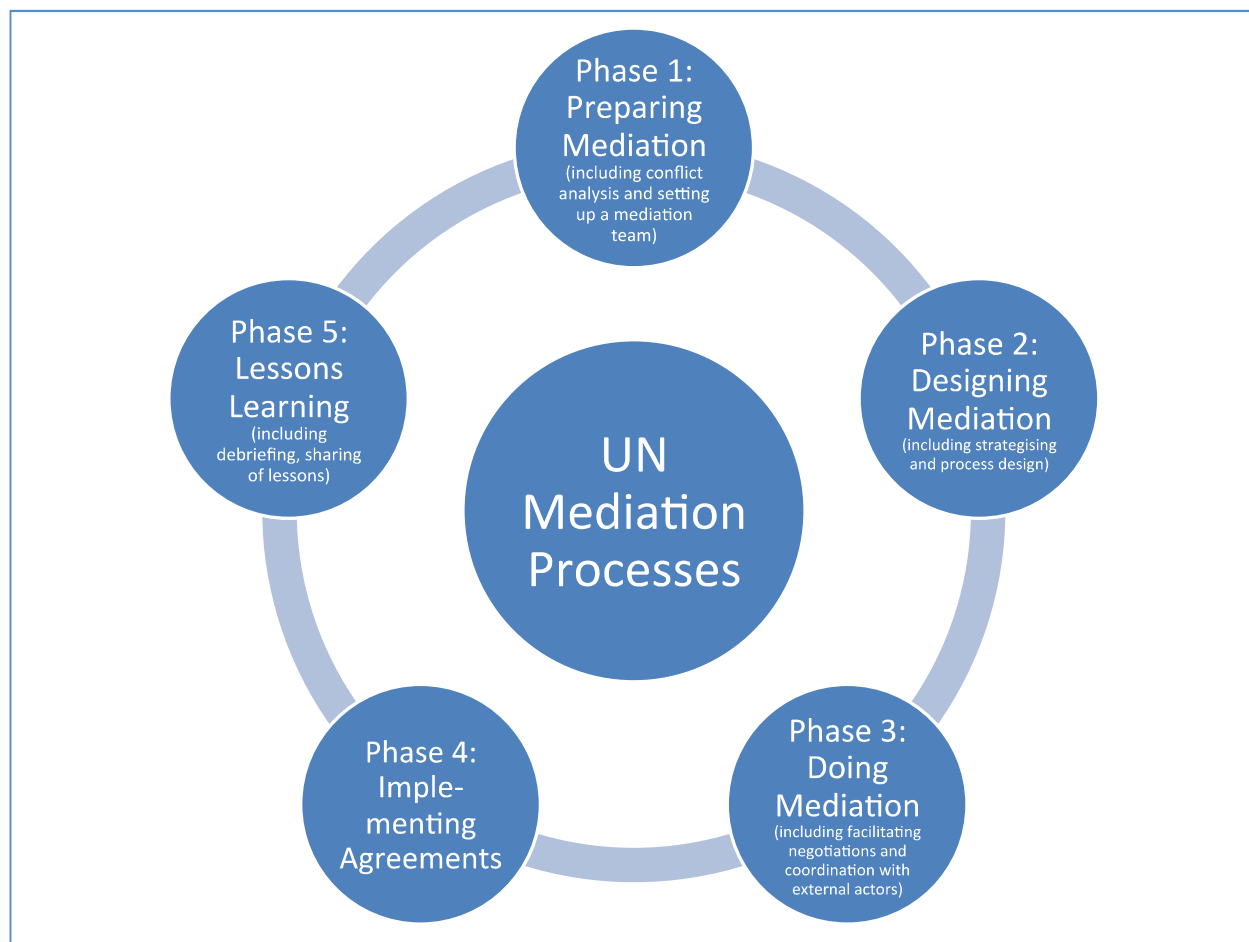


Figure 1: Basic Structure of the UN High Level Mediation Course

10. The question of what it means to be a “UN Mediator” will serve as a running thread throughout the Course. In addition to the five stages indicated in Figure 1 above, some time will be spent on the **UN dimensions of mediation processes**, including **UN norms, values, principles and structures**. This framework will constitute the **UN approach to mediation**.

11. Before engaging in a process, mediators have to spend a substantial amount of time **preparing for mediation (Phase 1)**. They will first and foremost use their **analytical skills** in order to understand the conflict as deeply and accurately as possible. As a basic foundation for



action, a useful **conflict analysis** needs to be conducted. This stage includes an assessment of the **ripeness** of a given conflict for resolution through negotiations.

12. Once a mediator has conducted an analysis of a conflict, he/she will formulate **mediation strategies (phase 2)**. As a foundation for any process, the mediator will have to evaluate his/her **mandate**, taking into consideration the implications of various types of mandate, be they informal or official, national or international, comprehensive or partial. This will translate into mediation strategies that include appropriate process design. One of the key challenges of process design is the question of inclusivity: who should be at the negotiating table and how can the mediator work with parties that are not at the table?

13. The core concern of a mediator will undoubtedly be the **actual facilitation of dialogue and negotiations amongst conflict parties (phase 3)**. This requires a mediation team to master mediation tools that help break deadlocks, find creative solutions and address other challenges at the mediation table. Additionally, UN mediators have to cooperate with other actors and may have to coordinate various peacemaking efforts both within the UN system as well as with other actors. Actors of particular importance in this respect are the UN Security Council, relevant regional organizations and neighboring states.

14. Once a mediation process has resulted in a peace agreement, there is the critical phase of **implementation (phase 4)**. Mediators must have a thorough understanding of the main elements of a quality agreement that is durable. The sometimes contradictory imperatives of different aspects of peace agreements inevitably lead to dilemmas that mediators have to grapple with. Finally, the signing of a peace agreement brings with it the question of what the role of a mediator should be in the implementation phase.

15. After the conclusion of a mediation process, a mediator and his or her team should conduct **debriefings in order to distill and capture the lessons and good practices from a particular mediation process (phase 5)**. These lessons will then be made available to other mediators (with the help of DPA) in order to increase the organizational learning. The lessons will also be shared with local actors involved in mediation processes to strengthen their ownership of the process and ensure the sustained implementation of agreements.

## Methodological Tools

16. The Course facilitation team will draw on a variety of methodological tools in order to create an optimal learning environment.

- a) **Exchange of reflections and lessons from current and past UN mediation processes:** One of the cornerstones of the Course will be the contribution of participants based on their experiences with mediation processes, as well as the experiences shared by senior resource persons and experienced coaches. These



- interactive sessions aim to grapple with dilemmas and the complexity of mediation and promote learning from successful and unsuccessful UN mediations.
- b) **Gender perspective:** The Course will tackle some of the opportunities and challenges arising from a gender perspective. This will help participants increase their awareness of gender issues and provide them with ideas on how to incorporate those issues in a mediation process, conflict analysis and the drafting of peace agreements.
  - c) **Skill sessions:** In order for participants to practice their skills, the Course will include simulation exercises using a fictional case study that is based on complex contemporary conflicts. The exercises will focus on conflict analysis for mediation; mediation strategizing and process design; and getting the parties to the negotiating table; and facilitating negotiated agreements.
  - d) **Conceptual and strategic inputs:** At the start of the thematic sessions, one of the facilitators or resource persons will provide a conceptual or strategic input. These inputs make the connection between mediation theory, UN policies and real-life experiences. At the end of each day, a wrap-up session will summarize the main insights gained during the day and link them to other Course topics, putting the various aspects into the context of an entire mediation process.
  - e) **Evaluation:** Feedback from the participants will form an integral part of the Course and contribute to revising the curriculum and program afterwards. A ‘sounding board’ session will be held daily with 2-3 participants so that the Course can be adjusted and improved immediately. Additionally, written evaluations will be used to amend the curriculum for future Courses.
  - f) **Briefing Notes and Reader:** Participants will be provided with short briefing notes on various topics, and a comprehensive Reader prior to the Course. They will also receive a memory stick with the entire Course material, including presentations and additional readings.

## Participants

17. Similar to the previous two pilots of the Course, the target audience of the roll-out Course are **18–20 senior UN officials (Directors and above)** as well as **highly experienced individuals from regional organizations and key governments** who are or may be eligible to be appointed as senior mediators or senior mediation advisers in the future.

## Date and Venue

18. The Course will take place from **Sunday afternoon 7 December to Friday evening 12 December 2014**. The venue is the **Glen Cove Mansion Hotel & Conference Center in Long Island, New York** (<http://www.glencovemansion.com>).