

# Quarterly Progress Update on the Multi-Year Appeal

1 January to 31 March 2018

Department of Political Affairs (DPA)



United Nations  
Department of Political Affairs  
DIPLOMACY. PREVENTION. ACTION

The Department of Political Affairs (DPA) continued to work on its six priority areas: conflict prevention, crisis response, investing in peace, expanding partnerships, strengthening United Nations system-wide collaboration, and ensuring organizational effectiveness. These priorities are in line with the objectives set out in the DPA Strategic Plan for 2016-2019.

## Conflict prevention

In **Comoros** tensions arose around the national dialogue conference (*Assises Nationales*) on political reforms in February 2018. Thanks to extra-budgetary funding, DPA undertook a mission to promote a peaceful and constructive dialogue between the parties. The mission contributed to decreasing tensions among stakeholders on sensitive reforms and emphasized the need for the national dialogue to be governed by a consensual, transparent and inclusive approach.

In **Madagascar**, extra-budgetary funds supported DPA's deployment in March 2018 to engage stakeholders that are key to the Department's preventive diplomacy efforts. Specifically, the mission engaged President Rajaonarimampiana and two former presidents, with a view to resolving mounting political tensions around the 2018 electoral process, and help address the absence of trust and communication among the main political actors. The mission was also able to conduct a first-hand assessment of the situation in the country and recommend the appointment of a UN Special Adviser for Madagascar to lead a more robust and sustained political engagement in order to facilitate an understanding on the conduct of elections.

In the aftermath of contested elections in **Honduras** in November 2017, extra-budgetary funding was instrumental in responding to a request from the Government of Honduras for technical support to implement a process to facilitate a national dialogue. More recently, DPA deployed an exploratory mission to Tegucigalpa in February 2018 to assess the conditions for a possible national dialogue. The mission concluded with the presentation of the assessment report to the Government of Honduras, which recommended a series of confidence-building measures that could help establish the basis for a future dialogue. In particular, it recommended measures that would contribute to the promotion of the necessary political reforms within the framework of the Honduran Constitu-

tion, respect for human rights and the rule of law. The report has successfully influenced thinking and become a "road-map" for the United Nations Resident Coordinator in Honduras, who has engaged national stakeholders in pre-dialogue talks.

In **Thailand**, the United Nations continues to seek ways to contribute to a favorable environment for achieving sustainable peace in the southern provinces. In March 2018, DPA's liaison presence in Bangkok coordinated the quarterly meeting of the *Deep South Contact Group* – a joint initiative of DPA, the Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights, and the Office of the United Nations Resident Coordinator that brings together analysts, civil society representatives, and international non-governmental organizations to discuss developments related to the peace process, the overall human rights situation, and the opportunities to address conflict in the region. DPA's nimble presence on the ground has helped facilitate the Group, enhance the United Nations system's understanding of the political context and advocate for conflict-sensitive United Nations programming.

## Crisis Response

During the first quarter of 2018, the United Nations Special Envoy for **Syria**, Staffan de Mistura, held a special "Round Nine" meeting of intra-Syrian talks in Vienna, based on Security Council resolution 2254 (2015) and the Geneva Communique. The Envoy also pursued the establishment of the Constitutional Committee in Geneva, consistent with resolution 2254 and building on the Joint Declaration of the Syrian National Dialogue in Sochi held from 29 to 30 January 2018. Throughout this process, the Office of the Special Envoy continued its engagement with the Women's Advisory Board and the Civil Society Support Room. With the rapid deterioration of the humanitarian situation, especially in Eastern Ghouta, Idlib and Afrin, the Office of the Special Envoy hosted the International Syria



Support Group's task forces on ceasefire and humanitarian access in support of implementing resolution 2401 (2018). Extra-budgetary resources were critical in supporting the direct costs of the Geneva talks, as well as deploying expertise, including to the Astana meetings convened by the guarantor countries (Iran, Turkey and Russia). Similarly, extra-budgetary funding was used to strengthen the United Nations' preparedness should the parties reach a political agreement by supporting the work of the Syria Inter-Agency Task Force to advance the priority thematic issues (civil documentation, housing/land and property, and local governance).

The **Standby Team of Senior Mediation Advisers** continues to be an essential tool of DPA's Crisis Response System, able to deploy where needed within 72 hours. For example, in Togo, DPA continued to support efforts by the President of Ghana to facilitate a negotiated solution to the constitutional reform crisis in the country. During February and March 2018, a Senior Mediation Adviser, who is specialized in process design, closely advised the Ghanaian facilitation team. The Adviser was part of a larger United Nations technical support team, which included United Nations electoral and constitutional experts, led by the Resident Coordinator. The talks were suspended on 23 March, as Government and opposition reached a stalemate on the current President's eligibility to stand for re-election at the end of his present mandate in 2020. Nevertheless, efforts by the President of Ghana – backed by United Nations technical expertise – allowed for progress in defining an agenda for dialogue and the implementation of some confidence building measures by the Government and opposition.

## Investing in peace

In **El Salvador**, DPA has continued to accompany the work of the *Group to Support Political Dialogue* comprised of eleven national representatives of academia, think-tanks, business sector and the church representing different positions on the political spectrum. The Group aims to foster conditions for political dialogue in El Salvador by generating confidence between political stakeholders, proposing substantive reforms and a policy agenda to address issues that require catalytic political agreements to advance democratic governance and sustainable development. DPA has deployed a small team of experts to advise on necessary reforms and help the Group develop concrete proposals to promote political agreements for consideration by decision makers.

Extra-budgetary funding supported 16 out of 24 electoral missions conducted by DPA's Electoral Assistance Division in the first quarter of 2018. These included advisory missions, review missions and needs assessments that provided technical electoral support and advice to electoral processes in various countries. For example, DPA deployed a follow-up assessment mission to **Iraq** from 4-11 March 2018, to review the progress of the political and technical preparations for the Parliamentary and Governorate Council elections scheduled for 12 May 2018. The mission produced recommendations for senior leadership of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq, as well as for national and international interlocutors. The review also assessed the progress made with the voluntary return of internally displaced persons and the procedures for them to participate in the elections. Finally, the assessment helped define the regulatory framework to deploy a new technology on election day, as well as software development and testing. In addition, DPA deployed a needs assessment mission to **Nigeria** from 22 January to 2 February 2018 upon request of the government to identify specific areas that may require electoral support from the United Nations ahead of the 2019 general elections. The mission assessed the political and security environment, the legal and institutional framework, the capacities and needs of the electoral stakeholders, with a particular focus on the electoral administration.

## Deepening partnerships with Member States and regional organizations

In line with United Nations efforts to provide capacity-building support to regional organizations, DPA, in cooperation with the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), organized and facilitated the second training for the **Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in Peacemaking and Preventive Diplomacy** on 5-9 March 2018 in Manila. The participants included representatives from ASEAN Member States, the ASEAN Secretariat, the new ASEAN Institute for Peace and Reconciliation, as well as officials from Bangladesh, Maldives, Nepal and Sri Lanka. The training included techniques in preventive diplomacy, conflict analysis, and negotiation exercises, with case studies on peace processes from within the region. The training provided an opportunity for further sharing of experiences between the United Nations and ASEAN, and it resulted in enhanced capacity of ASEAN diplomats to undertake activities in the realm of peacemaking and preventive diplomacy.

DPA's Liaison Office in Gaborone partnered with the Secretariat of the **Southern African Development Community** (SADC) to co-organize a BRIDGE (Building Resources in Democracy, Governance and Elections) workshop on gender and elections in Pretoria, for participants from the SADC region on 26-28 March. Over 40 participants (22 women) from electoral management bodies of the Member States in the region as well as from the SADC Electoral Advisory Council, regional electoral bodies, regional organizations and international NGOs attended the training. The training provided a valuable opportunity for participants from the region and beyond, particularly representatives of the electoral management bodies in the SADC region, to share views, experiences and best practices on how best to tackle the challenges facing women's participation in electoral and political processes. This was the 4<sup>th</sup> event on gender and elections that DPA has organized over the past two years with extra-budgetary funding.

During the first quarter, DPA also delivered workshops for young **Ethiopian** and **Egyptian** diplomats, from 19 to 23 February in Addis Ababa and from 25 February to 1 March 2018 in Cairo, respectively. A total of 72 young women and men diplomats were trained in bilateral and multilateral dialogue and mediation. The workshops were funded entirely with extra-budgetary funding and helped deepen the cooperation and partnership with both countries. They also provided the opportunity to present the role of the United Nations in the maintenance of international peace and security, negotiations, mediation and implementation of peace agreements. The workshops built on the success achieved in a similar workshop previously conducted in Eritrea in November 2017. DPA is now exploring options for additional workshops to be conducted with officials in other countries of the Horn and East Africa.

## Strengthening partnerships with the UN system and beyond

The United Nations is increasingly looking at the importance of facilitation and mediation at the sub-national level in view of conflict dynamics. With this in mind, DPA's Mediation Support Unit organized a workshop in collaboration with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, on mediating sub-national conflicts in New York on March 2018. It included the participation of senior staff of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali, the United Nations Mission in South Sudan, and the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia. The workshop explored approaches and tools used by United Nations peace operations to prevent and resolve conflicts

at the subnational level. Following the workshop, a Senior Mediation Adviser from the Standby Team was deployed to Bangui, Central African Republic, to work with the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) on the elaboration and implementation of a strategy to advance local ceasefire and peace agreements in different hotspots across the country. The Standby Team member is also advising on how to ensure that MINUSCA's efforts at the local level support mediation at the national level led by the African Union.

During the first quarter of 2018, **DPA's Liaison Office in Vienna** – funded with extra-budgetary resources – continued its close collaboration with the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). Notably, it supported the “*informal open-ended reflection process on Civil Society Organizations' participation in OSCE events*”. This process was held at Ambassadorial level and chaired by Switzerland. It was established by the OSCE Chairmanship with a view to finding consensus on the issue of Civil Society Organizations' participation in official OSCE meetings. The Liaison Office contributed to and channeled United Nations' expertise on practice regarding participation and registration of civil society organizations in official meetings of the United Nations, which was deeply appreciated by the participants.

In addition, extra-budgetary funding ensured DPA's participation in the *Conflict Prevention and Peace Forum's* meeting on **Burundi**, which took place in Maputo, Mozambique, in February 2018. The meeting brought together United Nations agencies and regional experts on Burundi to discuss human rights, political analysis, humanitarian action and the economy. It also brought Burundian civil society to the discussion. The meeting was an opportunity for DPA to develop common analyses with the broader United Nations system on the political crisis in Burundi and to generate new ideas for further prevention efforts. The engagement was timely and important given the pervasive fear that there may be a re-escalation of violence around the upcoming referendum to change the constitution on 17 May 2018, as well as the general elections scheduled for 2020.

Finally, DPA provided support to the United Nations Country Teams in the **South Caucasus** region to organize a forum for civil society partners to discuss priority areas for coordination and engagement linked to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals in the South Caucasus region. The civil society partners greatly appreciated the United Nations' support for such efforts and used the discussion to identify several priority areas, such as youth, women's empowerment and information technology.

## Institutional effectiveness

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Extra-budgetary funding continues to be essential to ensuring that DPA staff at headquarters and in the field are properly equipped with the necessary skills in key areas such as mediation processes, electoral violence, gender, peace and security, and drafting for political analysis. In 2018, DPA expects to use extra-budgetary funds to cover up to 97% of the Department's overall training portfolio.

For example, DPA in collaboration with the United Nations System Staff College, organized a training on "*A Political Approach to Preventing and Responding to Election-Related Violence*" for 27 DPA staff in New York on 21-22 March 2018. The training provided participants with practical knowledge about elections and electoral assistance, skills in election-related conflict risk analysis, and conflict mitigation tools that can be used to prevent and respond to election-related violence and other election-related political crises. Similarly, DPA's Gender, Peace and Security team hosted the second **DPA Gender Advisers Workshop** in New York on 6-8 February 2018. The meeting provided an opportunity for 17 field-based Gender Advisers and Gender Focal Points to discuss good practices and persistent challenges in their work, as well as to engage with other United Nations entities, including UN Women, the Office of the SRSG on Sexual Violence in Conflict and the Office of Counter Terrorism. Participants shared lessons from the efforts of Special Political Missions to increase women's participation in peace and reconciliation processes. Examples included the adoption of quotas to ensure women's political representation in parliament; agreements reached with joint communiqués addressing sexual violence in conflict; and creating inclusive mechanisms to facilitate women's participation in peace processes.

Finally, the Security Council Affairs Division (SCAD) has successfully completed the pilot and first phase of the development of the new iSCAD+ database. The new database automates processes of data entry, diminishes the risk of incorrect data, enlarges the current storage and ensures the highest level of security necessary for the handling of the data of the Security Council.

## DPA's Partners visit to Colombia

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DPA, in coordination with the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia, organized a field visit to Colombia on 1-2 February 2018. Twenty-one Permanent Missions – from the Asia Pacific, Eastern European, Latin America and Caribbean and Western European and Other Groups – took part. The visit provided DPA's partners first-hand exposure to DPA's work in the field and the catalytic role extra-budgetary funding plays. Following the visit, DPA issued a supplementary appeal for funding of \$1.3 million to meet the Mission's most immediate needs, specifically in relation to the reintegration of former combatants, reconciliation and peace consolidation in the areas where former FARC-EP members have been relocated and where the Mission has a presence.

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