

POLITICALLY
speaking
2017 in Review



UNDPA
DIPLOMACY. PREVENTION. ACTION

CONTENTS

Introduction: International Cooperation Vital as Ever	03
The Case for Prevention	04
Shepherding Dialogues for Peace Away from the Spotlight	07
CICIG: A Model in the Fight against Impunity and Corruption	08
The Imperative of Improving Mediation: The UN's Role	10
INTERVIEW: Peace also Depends on Respect for Indigenous Rights	12
Sustaining Peace in Somalia: Reconciliation in Gaalkacyo	15
Intense Preparation, Potential High Yield: Mounting a High-Level Event at the General Assembly	17
Harnessing Elections Technology: Benefits and Risks	20
No Durable Peace Without Inclusion	
Promoting the Effective Participation of Women in Peace Processes	22

COVER: Reunion of combatant with his family in Colombia. The ending of the conflict in that country has been a relatively rare highlight in peace and security work over the past year. UN Mission in Colombia

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION VITAL AS EVER

MULTILATERALISM IS UNDER STRAIN. That much is clear as we come to the end of 2017. Also clear in the wake of recent global developments is that absolutely nothing

should be taken for granted. Hard won progress in areas such as non-proliferation and international justice, to name just two, has been called into question in terms we had thought consigned permanently to the past.

And yet, the very crises roiling the global community as never before also provide the most potent arguments for defending the system of international cooperation built up over the last 70 years. I recently returned from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea following a visit aimed at opening channels of communication that could help avoid a catastrophic crisis. I went as a representative of the United Nations Secretariat and the Secretary-General. But the visit also translated international concern about the dangerously critical situation in the Korean Peninsula and a desire to look for a peaceful way to defuse tensions. This is what multilateral diplomacy is about, and why the system of peacefully regulating international relations is set to endure, despite the current difficulties.

I am not advocating complacency. Arguments for isolation, for building supposedly impregnable borders, have gained strength recently. This despite the fact that the monumental problems we face – including environmental degradation, violent extremism, widespread armed conflict and attendant atrocities, and the massive population movements they cause – clearly do not know national frontiers. It is also patently clear that no country or even group of countries can go it alone. It is not enough, however, to point to the obvious. And so the best way to defend multilateralism is to strengthen the ways we work to sustain peace, prevent conflict, promote environmentally sound development and ensure respect for human rights. That is what we are trying to do at the United Nations as we discuss with Member States an ambitious project of reform.

The proposed changes to the peace and security pillar of the United Nations, DPA's area of work, aims at rationalizing and streamlining the way we operate, putting the search for political solutions, conflict prevention and peacebuilding at the top of our concerns. As the contours of the reform are debated, we will continue discharging our mandate, providing the Secretary-General and Member States with the support needed to bring parties to conflict around the negotiating table, avert violent confrontation, and lay the groundwork for sustainable peace. The articles in this year-end edition of *Politically Speaking* set out how we tried to do just that in 2017. I thank you for your interest and support and look forward to our continued engagement.



Jeffrey D. Feltman
Under-Secretary-General
Political Affairs



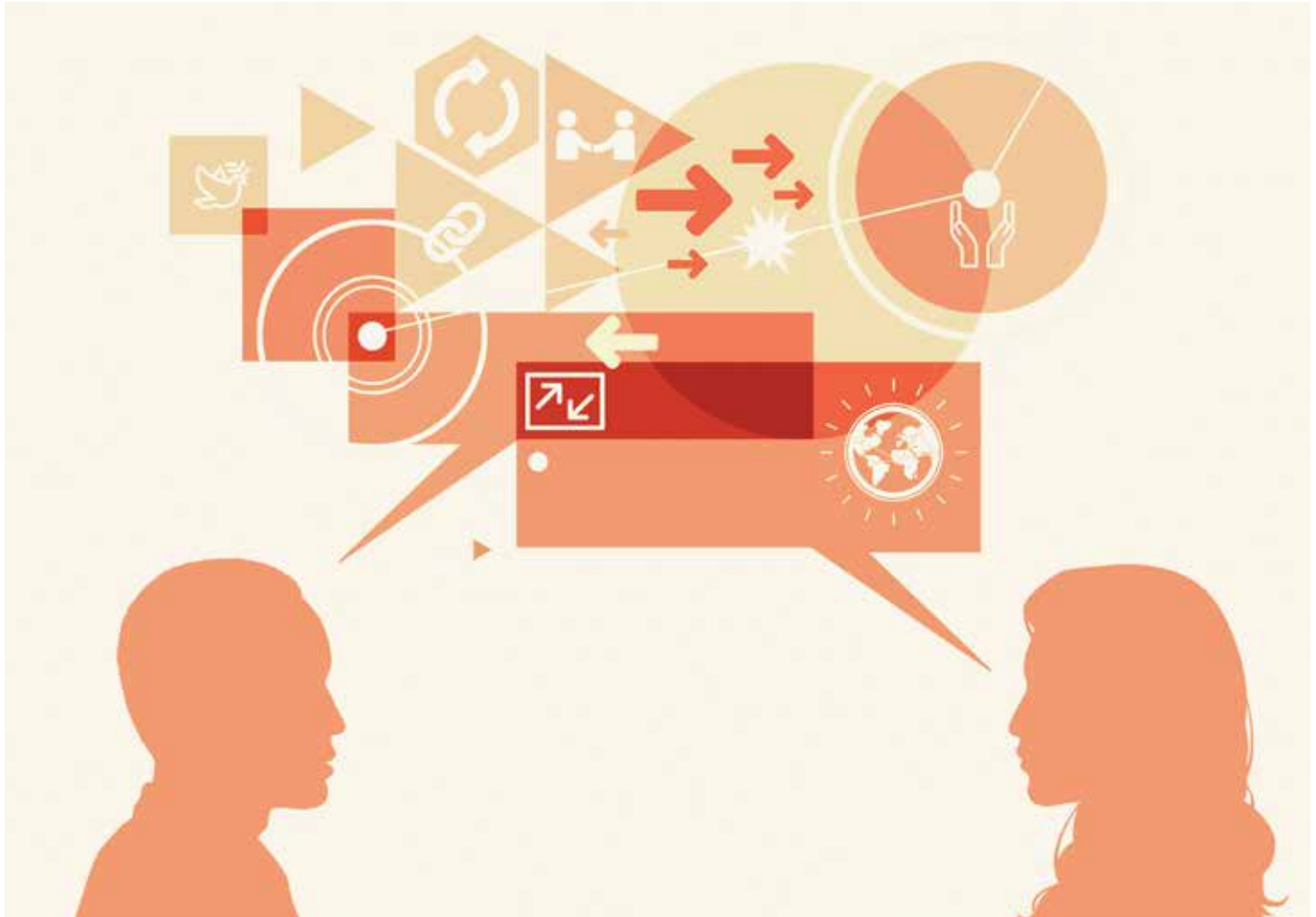
“The best way to defend multilateralism is to strengthen the ways we work to sustain peace, prevent conflict, promote environmentally sound development and ensure respect for human rights.”

ABOVE: Under-Secretary-General Jeffrey Feltman briefing journalists.

UN Photo/Evan Schneider

THE CASE FOR PREVENTION

17 February 2017



The following is adapted from the keynote address of Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs Jeffrey Feltman to the United Nations Association of the United States of America (UNA-USA) Annual Members' Day, held on 17 February 2017 at United Nations Headquarters:

IT IS A PRIVILEGE TO BE SPEAKING to you at this moment of transition in the United Nations and the United States.

At the UN, we have a new Secretary-General with a clear agenda for reinvigorating the peace and security and the development work of the Organization.

Meanwhile, the United States is undergoing a transition that may possibly have a very direct and substantial impact on the United Nations.

It is also a time of turmoil around the world. Old certainties are being

shaken, if not swept away. New forces are emerging, within and among states, challenging the established order, and not always for the good.

I am not sure we can yet call this moment a historical inflection point; that is something for historians to assess in the future.

But the state of the world – and the state of our polities – certainly makes this a time to ask some very frank and difficult questions, of ourselves, of our leaders and of our would-be leaders.

We at the UN have been asking ourselves and our partners some tough questions over the last few years. There have been recent reviews of our peace operations – political and peacekeeping missions; of the peacebuilding architecture; and of the extent of participation of women in peace processes.

And most recently, the Security Council and the General Assembly agreed on a series of steps and processes – under the label “Sustaining Peace” – for making peace durable in countries in conflict or otherwise vulnerable.

But all the questions that have preoccupied us recently essentially boil down to one: Is the UN still fit for purpose? In other words, Can we deliver on the promise of peace, security, development and human rights first made 70 years ago?

For me and those who believe in it, the UN remains the essential international organization. The part of the UN that I lead – the Department of Political Affairs – is responsible for the conflict prevention and mediation work of the Organization. I will point later to a number of instances where we have made a difference in averting violence and in bringing together parties at odds.

But it is also clear that the UN has to be able to respond more quickly and effectively to a world changing at a seemingly head-spinning pace.

CHANGING CONFLICT LANDSCAPE

WE DO OUR WORK against a “landscape of conflict” that is vastly changed since the founding of the United Nations.

We are dealing today mostly with conflicts within states rather than the more classic examples of conflicts between them.

In these kinds of conflicts, issues of sovereignty greatly complicate international efforts to help resolve them.

Furthermore, the triggers of these internal conflicts are many and complex: coups, contested elections, religious and

sectarian divisions, or other manner of grievances within societies that can erupt in violence if not addressed in a sensible way.

Protest movements are challenging authorities on the streets, demanding change and often doing so before elections cycles would provide an opportunity at the ballot box.

Phenomena that do not respect borders – such as organized crime and terrorism – often aggravate longstanding conflicts. The security of our own staff –

“It is clear that the UN has to be able to respond more quickly and effectively to a world changing at a seemingly head-spinning pace.”

in places like Somalia, Iraq and Libya – is increasingly under threat, leaving the UN to try to do effective political work behind layers of sandbags and razor wire.

And where conflicts have left failed or collapsing states in their wake, our prospects for building peace and preventing their recurrence often rests with the very same weak institutions of governance and weak democratic traditions that led to the collapse in the first place.

Over the years the UN has adapted to these changing circumstances with varying success. My own department, the traditional center of discreet diplomacy and analysis, now deploys its own field missions, often to countries still suffering from armed conflict.

IMPROVING THE RESPONSE

IN MANY CASES, the landscape of conflict has changed more quickly than we have been able to adapt. And too often, we have not had the resources, political and material, to do so adequately.

Particularly frustrating for us is not being able to act when we see the signs of impending conflict. And although we diagnosed this problem long ago, moving from early **warning to early action remains difficult, for a number of reasons.**

First, countries in difficulty are often not receptive to outside help. The United Nations has to respect the sovereignty of its member States. We may see situations that cry out for third party mediation or other assistance, but we need to be asked to help. We cannot force ourselves in.

Naturally, most countries would prefer not to have to involve outside actors in what they see as their internal political processes. They may fear the “internationalization” of their problems. This is understandable to an extent. But it also often translates into an unwillingness to accept help until problems have degenerated to the point where they cannot be ignored by the international community. Ironically, aversion to or fear of intervention can result in actual calls for international assistance down the line.

Secondly, the resources available for conflict prevention are still quite modest. While everyone accepts that it is better and less costly to prevent a fire than to fight one, prevention is still vastly underfunded. Perhaps that is so because it is harder to show success in prevention: There are usually no cameras to show peace prevailing. But when conflict is not averted, the consequences can be catastrophic. Violence in its many forms has been estimated to cost the world economy \$13.6 trillion. We invest a tiny fraction of that in prevention – even though studies indicate that every \$1 devoted to prevention can yield as much

as \$59 in return.

A third difficulty in engaging in effective prevention is lack of international unity. In Syria, for example, we see the dire consequences of Security Council disunity. The same is true of other places where we work. The cost of such disunity is counted in lost lives and destroyed societies.

And yet, although the constraints on prevention are substantial, they are not insurmountable. I believe, for one thing, that the view of prevention as a euphemism for intervention is fading. The common message across the recent reviews of the UN's peace and security work was the pressing need to bring preventive diplomacy, good offices and peacemaking back to the fore.

Secretary-General António Guterres has made a clear commitment to upholding a "culture of prevention" and pledged a "surge in diplomacy for peace".

PREVENTION AT WORK

CONFLICT PREVENTION CAN BE A HARD SELL, but there are many tangible examples of effective preventive diplomacy. In **Somalia**, for example, where we have a special political mission (SPM). The country has for the past few years lived under the first legitimate government in decades. With the support of a major African Union security operation, and thanks to an electoral process we are helping to shepherd this year, the country is trying to turn the corner. Just last week, Somalia elected a new President.

In **Burkina Faso** in 2015, our efforts helped overturn an attempted coup and put the country back on the path of democratic transition. Burkina is a good illustration of how we work in partnership with regional and other organizations.

In 2014, we closed our political mission in **Sierra Leone**, after 15 years of UN peace operations of various kinds. The UN withdrawal was a graduation of sorts

for Sierra Leone, moving the country from a horrific armed conflict to a budding democracy.

In **Guinea**, UN mediation has played a highly successful role in preventing political confrontation from becoming the kind of ethnic conflict that could have spiraled out of control.

Most recently, in **The Gambia**, the UN and its regional partners helped avert what could have been a major crisis in persuading the loser of presidential elections to finally give up power.

"It was the recognition of our interdependence that led to global unity on climate change and the sustainable development goals. The UN is where that unity is best forged."

THE WAY FORWARD

I CITED LACK OF INTERNATIONAL UNITY as one of the main obstacles in the way of effective conflict prevention. And it is probably the most difficult hurdle to overcome. Countries will defend their interests, and oppose what they see as contrary to those interests, occasionally to the detriment of prevention or peace-making. In an increasingly interdependent world, however, the traditional understanding of interests also needs to change. It was the recognition of our interdependence that led to global unity on climate change and the sustainable development goals. The UN is where that unity is best forged.

As the Secretary-General said recently,

"in a world in which everything is global, in which the problems are global – from climate change to the movement of people – there is no way countries can do it by themselves. We need global responses, and global responses need multilateral institutions able to play their role."

For that, he continued, it is important to restore confidence in global multilateral institutions. The crisis in confidence in these institutions mirrors the trust gap afflicting so many societies. For the Secretary-General, the two phenomena go hand in hand, and addressing one can only help the other.

Therefore, in relation to his own role, the Secretary-General has said he is deeply committed to reform in order to adapt the UN's peace and security strategies, operational set-ups and institutions in order to make them more effective and make major strides in regaining the full trust of the international community. This reform process should move quickly: The Secretary-General has just established a team that will give him recommendations for change by June of this year before he engages in consultations with Member States and relevant entities and takes action.

The Secretary-General has made his agenda clear: to make sure that prevention, enduring peace and human rights prevail, we need to address the root causes of conflict. And to do that, we need to reform the way the UN does business.

The UN needs to reform not because it has failed, although there have been some disastrous failures. Indeed, those failures, and its many successes, point to its abiding strength: the unique capacity, and occasional incapacity, to bring the world community together to continuously forge a common destiny. At a time of significant international tension and change, we need more multilateralism, not less. We need a stronger UN. 🍷



LEFT: UN Helicopter Support to the Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission lands on Gotel Mountain (Cameroon/ Nigeria), to reach border areas of difficult access. UN Photo/Daniel Baril

SHEPHERDING DIALOGUES FOR PEACE AWAY FROM THE SPOTLIGHT

03 July 2017

THIS WEEK, TWO PEACE PROCESSES involving the United Nations, and specifically the Department of Political Affairs (DPA), made international headlines. The Conference on Cyprus reconvened in Switzerland on 28 June 2017, while peace in Colombia moved a step closer when the FARC-EP guerrillas finished handing in their individual weapons to the UN Mission in the country on 26 June. But the good-offices and conflict-resolution work of the UN and DPA is also carried out away from the spotlight, as we were reminded on 28 June with the announcement that the Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General for the talks between Greece and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia was traveling to Skopje on 1 July. Those talks are just one of a number of more discreet dialogue efforts led by the DPA. We look below at some of these other political missions, which, although carried out quietly, are just as consequential as better known initiatives.

GREECE - THE FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA "NAME ISSUE"

MR. NIMETZ WILL BE IN SKOPJE, capital of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, from 1 to 4 July to discuss ways forward in finding a solution to the name issue.

Negotiations on the name dispute began in 1993 and have been held under the auspices of Personal Envoy Nimetz since 1999.

EQUATORIAL GUINEA - GABON BORDER DISPUTE

ON 15 NOVEMBER 2016, UN mediation efforts in another little-known dispute were crowned with success. That day, the Presidents of Equatorial Guinea and Gabon agreed to submit their longstanding border dispute to the International Court of Justice (ICJ).

The border dispute dates back to 1972 and revolves around which country may exercise sovereignty over the Mbanié, Cocotiers and Congas islands off the West African coast. The Department of Political Affairs (DPA) has been involved in the mediation process since July 2003, at the request of Equatorial Guinea and Gabon. Two Special Advisors and Mediators – Yves Fortier of Canada from 2003 to 2008, and

Nicolas Michel of Switzerland from 2008 to 2014 – and a Focal Point – Under-Secretary-General Jeffrey Feltman from 2014 onwards – facilitated the political agreement endorsed in Morocco.

GUYANA - VENEZUELA BORDER CONTROVERSY

THE UNITED NATIONS has also been assisting Guyana and Venezuela in resolving a long-standing border controversy between the two countries.

CAMEROON-NIGERIA MIXED COMMISSION (CNMC)

IN 2002 THE INTERNATIONAL COURT OF JUSTICE (ICJ) ruled to hand sovereignty over the Bakassi Peninsula and in the disputed area in the Lake Chad region to Cameroon. The two countries subsequently asked the Secretary-General to help implement the ICJ ruling, which led to the creation of the Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission (CNMC). The CNMC is chaired by the Secretary-General's Special Representative for West Africa and the Sahel.

The CNMC has largely finished its work: By 2015, about 2,000 kilometers of the 2,100 km land border had already been assessed and agreed upon by the two countries. However, the presence of Boko Haram in the border areas presents a real obstacle to wrapping up CNMC's mission. 🗨️



LEFT: Secretary-General António Guterres (right) meets with Iván Velásquez Gómez, Commissioner of the International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG).

UN Photo/Eskinder Debebe

CICIG: A MODEL IN THE FIGHT AGAINST IMPUNITY AND CORRUPTION

03 July 2017

UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL for Political Affairs Jeffrey Feltman and the Foreign Minister of Guatemala, Carlos Raul Morales, co-chaired on 27 June 2017 a meeting on the work of the International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG). This unique entity, which marks its 10th anniversary this year, is still little known outside Guatemala, but in that country it is a major player, having carried out numerous ground breaking investigations into illicit political-economic networks and state institutions. For example, CICIG's work alongside the Attorney-General of Guatemala is credited with helping spark the large-scale social movement against corruption in the country in 2015.

As evidenced during the 27 June meeting, CICIG is seen by many in the international community, and civil society within and outside Guatemala, as a

successful model in the fight against impunity, corruption and organized crime. CICIG head Iván Velásquez briefed the meeting on the main achievements of the Commission over the past year in relation to two aspects of its mandate: promoting criminal investigations into illicit political-economic networks entrenched in state institutions; and promoting institutional and legal reforms key to consolidating the fight against impunity in Guatemala. During the briefing, a number of UN Member States expressed full backing for CICIG and great appreciation for the work of Commissioner Velásquez. The support he enjoys is reflected in the confidence demonstrated in his work by Secretary-General António Guterres, who has just extended his mandate for another two years.

CICIG began its work in 2007 as an independent, international body de-

signed to support Guatemala's Public Prosecutor's Office, the National Civil Police (PNC) and other State institutions in the investigation of crimes committed by members of illegal security forces and clandestine security structures and, in a more general sense, help to disband such groups. To do so, CICIG assists with investigations and criminal prosecutions in a small number of complex cases, as well as implementing steps—in accordance with its mandate—aimed at strengthening the institutions of the justice system so that they can continue to tackle these illegal groups in the future.

CICIG investigates the existence of illicit security forces and clandestine security organizations that commit crimes that affect the fundamental human rights of the citizens of Guatemala, and identifies the structures of these illegal groups (including the links between such groups and State officials) as well as their activities, operating modalities and sources of financing. Secondly, CICIG helps the State to disband clandestine security structures and illegal security groups, and promotes the investigation, criminal prosecution and punishment of the crimes committed by the members of such groups. CICIG also makes recommendations to the State of Guatemala regarding public policies to be adopted—including the necessary judicial and institutional reforms—to eradicate and prevent the re-emergence of clandestine security structures and illegal security forces.

CICIG has the authority to provide technical advice to the state bodies responsible for conducting criminal investigations (especially the Public Prosecutor's Office). CICIG can act as a complementary prosecutor, and has legal standing



LEFT: Under-Secretary-General Jeffrey Feltman (second from left) and Iván Velásquez Gómez, Commissioner of the International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG) (second from right). Photo: CICIG

“CICIG is seen by many in the international community, and civil society within and outside Guatemala, as a successful model in the fight against impunity, corruption and organized crime.”

to file administrative complaints against public officials, particularly against officials who have carried out acts to thwart the fulfillment of CICIG’s mandate. It can also act as an interested third party in disciplinary procedures undertaken against such officials. Furthermore, CICIG has the authority to ensure confidentiality for people who cooperate in investigations – be it as witnesses, expert witnesses or a person who cooperates – and foster their protection before the relevant authorities.

UPDATE

THE LAST WEEK OF AUGUST 2017 has seen a number of fast-moving events touching on the work of the International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG) and its head, Commissioner Iván Velásquez. On 23 August 2017, UN spokesperson Stéphane Dujarric fielded questions

from journalists in Guatemala regarding reports that the country’s President, Jimmy Morales, planned to ask the Secretary-General for the removal of Mr. Velásquez as Commissioner during a meeting set for 25 August. Mr. Dujarric said the UN Secretariat had never received any complaint about the role of Commissioner Velásquez, be it from the Government of Guatemala or from the country’s justice sector institutions. “On the contrary,” he said, “we recently hosted a donor meeting at UN Headquarters with the participation of the Foreign Minister, the President of the Supreme Court, the Attorney General as well the Minister of Interior. They all praised the Commission’s work.” The spokesperson added that Secretary-General António Guterres “heartily commends the work of Commissioner Velásquez and looks forward to continu-

ing to support him carrying out his functions at the helm of the Commission.”

During their 25 August meeting, the Secretary-General and President Morales “exchanged views on security and justice.” The Secretary-General reiterated the United Nations’ commitment to the fight against impunity and corruption, and the Organization continuing support to CICIG. He also reaffirmed his confidence in Commissioner Iván Velásquez.

It came as a shock to the Secretary-General, then, when two days later President Morales declared Commissioner Velásquez persona non grata and called for his immediate departure from Guatemala. The Secretary-General said he fully expected that Mr. Velásquez would be treated with the respect due to his functions as an international civil servant.

The Secretary-General also recalled that under Commissioner Velásquez’s leadership, CICIG had “made a decisive contribution to strengthening justice sector institutions in Guatemala, helping to ensure justice was done in numerous cases. Mr. Velásquez has worked tirelessly to promote a culture that upholds the rule of law and rejects corruption.”

The President’s order has been challenged by Guatemalan lawyers and civil society institutions in the country’s Constitutional Court, which has suspended it while appeals are heard. [On 29 August, the Court decided to permanently suspend the President’s order.]

For a rundown of the cases CICIG has been involved in, please visit the Commission’s website: www.cicig.org.



THE IMPERATIVE OF IMPROVING MEDIATION: THE UN'S ROLE

11 August 2017

ABOVE: The Department of Political Affairs assisted the Office of the Special Envoy for Syria in brainstorming in-between rounds of talks in Geneva, including on their structure and design. Seen in this picture is Staffan de Mistura, Special Envoy for Syria, with a member of the UN Standby Team of Mediation Experts.

UN Photo/Elma Okic

* undocs.org/A/72/115

THE UNACCEPTABLE LEVELS OF SUFFERING caused by violent conflict demand a surge in diplomacy, including strengthening mediation capacity in the broadest terms. That is the overarching argument in Secretary-General António Guterres's recently released report* on UN activities in support of mediation, which recalls that the number of major civil wars almost tripled in the decade to 2015, a period that also encompassed a six-fold increase in fatalities in conflict.

In the document, the Secretary-General writes that the inability to prevent crises is the most serious shortcoming of the international community.

In his first address to the Security Council, on 10 January 2017, he singled out mediation as an important tool in this regard, informing the Council of his intention to launch an initiative to enhance United Nations mediation capacity.

“The pressing need for mediation and other efforts to end the conflicts of today is as urgent as the requirement that we direct greater attention, efforts and resources to preventing the conflicts of tomorrow,” he says.

The report provides a snapshot of how the United Nations

RIGHT: In Myanmar, DPA's Mediation Support Unit (MSU) supported the conceptualization of the United Nations platform of support for the Joint Monitoring Committee. Former Special Adviser Vijay Nambiar attending a plenary meeting of the ethnic armed organizations in Mai Ja Yang, Kachin State, 2016. UN Photo

BELOW RIGHT: Thematic expertise provided by MSU has included assistance to the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) and the Gaalkacyo Ceasefire Team Advisory Group on the implementation strategy of a local ceasefire agreement. UN Photo/Ilyas Ahmed.



supports peace talks around the world in addition to walking the reader through the different phases of negotiations and the challenges that often accompany them.

For example, reviewing UN support for mediation process and strategy, the report points out that “getting the mediation process right can be as important as the substance of the talks.”

The agenda, sequencing of issues, composition of delegations and degree of inclusion are frequent subjects of dispute which would need to be confronted before parties engage in focusing on the substance of their grievances. In the absence of the will among the conflict parties to move forward, mediation teams may need to engage in “talks about talks” and shuttle diplomacy to prepare the ground.

“Mediation support actors” can also assist in providing space for reflection and comparative experience on process design, according to the report. For example, the Department of Political Affairs assisted the Office of the Special Envoy for Syria in brainstorming in between rounds of talks in Geneva, including on their structure and design. It has supported similar exercises on behalf of the Secretary-General's Special Envoy to Facilitate Dialogue in El Salvador and his Personal Representative on the border controversy between Guyana and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

In high-pressure environments, the report goes on, mediation teams have to explore possible arrangements for stopping or reducing violence, while remaining attuned to their longer-term implications. Mediation support can assist by providing specific thematic expertise. DPA's Mediation Support Unit (MSU) can deploy experts on constitutions, transitional justice, inclusivity, gender, security arrangements and ceasefires, power-sharing, natural resources and reconciliation to complement and reinforce the capacities of mediation teams on the ground. MSU has provided technical expertise to processes in Yemen,



“The number of civil wars almost tripled in the decade to 2015. Between 2011 and 2015, there was a sixfold increase in conflict.”

Somalia and Myanmar, for example.

The report also sets out how the Secretary-General intends to strengthen the Organization's mediation support activities. The Secretary-General points out that while the challenges facing mediation are fundamentally political in nature, “strengthening the capacities of mediators, conflict parties and societies at large to engage in mediation processes enhances the chances of their success.” He adds that professionalizing the field of mediation and building institutional capacities through training and research, documenting practices and developing guidance will improve the organizational preparedness of the United Nations and its partners and with it the chances for more effective mediation. 💡

INTERVIEW:

PEACE ALSO DEPENDS ON RESPECT FOR INDIGENOUS RIGHTS

09 August 2017

LASTING PEACE REQUIRES that States establish conflict-resolution mechanisms with the full and effective participation of indigenous peoples, in particular indigenous women, declared the three main UN entities charged with advancing indigenous rights in a 9 August joint statement. This is because, in large part, indigenous peoples are increasingly being drawn into conflicts over their lands, resources and rights. And they are paying a heavy price for it. Indigenous human rights defenders are increasingly at risk around the world. Sources report that 281 human rights defenders were murdered in 25 countries in 2016, more than double the number who died in 2014. Human rights organizations also report an alarming rise in arrests and harassment of indigenous human rights defenders, both by state and non-state actors, in recent years.



In this interview with *Politically Speaking*, **Dr. Albert Barume**, Chairperson of the UN Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, talked about how the UN could help prevent conflicts related to land and indigenous rights, and attendant violations.

Politically Speaking: Why is there a marked uptick in arrests, harassment and even killings of defenders of indigenous peoples' rights in the last few years? Is there a larger development that can be identified?

Dr. Albert Barume: The recent growing numbers of indigenous human rights defenders killed or arrested is mostly due to indigenous peoples' enhanced resistance to oppression. Furthermore, human rights violations against indigenous peoples are today easily documented and shared globally thanks



ABOVE: Grand Chief Wilton Littlechild, a Cree Chief from Canada, makes a ceremonial call to order prior to an event held on the occasion of the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples and the tenth anniversary of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), under the theme, "A Decade in Review: Achieving the Rights of Indigenous Peoples". 09 August 2017, New York.

UN Photo/Kim Haughton

to open media platforms. Indigenous peoples and communities have experienced an enhanced understanding of their rights over the last years, including through the work of the three UN mechanisms devoted to indigenous peoples issues and access to information at global scale. There is also a much more globalised network of indigenous peoples, sharing information and cross fertilising. These trends are likely to continue growing, with indigenous youth gradually taking on responsibilities, getting involved in community issues and using efficiently new information platforms and social media.



ing the ILO Committee of Experts on Application of Convention and Recommendation with regards to application of ILO Convention 169 on indigenous and tribal peoples. Dialogue between indigenous peoples and States would lead to among others effective mechanisms of consultation or FPIC (free, prior and informed consent) that are devised in collaboration with indigenous peoples themselves.

What role should indigenous peoples play post-conflict? How can indigenous peoples be included in mediation processes?

Indigenous peoples should be considered as front role players when it comes to addressing conflicts that affect them or in which they are involved. But in seeking to achieve such an objective, it is imperative that indigenous peoples' own conflict resolution or prevention mechanisms are looked into or used. To that end, indigenous peoples' decision making processes and institutions are to be given a particular attention. For instance, many indigenous peoples' lands and territories are occupied or used by armed or terrorist groups. There are also cases where indigenous youth has been left with no economic opportunities and thereby exposed to the risk of being recruited by armed and similar groups, including terrorist groups and global drug cartels. In such situations, the role of indigenous peoples' communities structures and institutions in resolving such global security issues would be of critical importance, as illustrated by many ongoing situations.

What are root causes of such conflicts?

The root causes of conflicts between indigenous peoples and other interested parties, including States and private sector, are rooted in discriminatory dominant development paradigms that for centuries have justified dispossession of indigenous peoples' lands and resources and thereby denying them their cultural existence, self-determined development and life in dignity.

How can the UN help prevent conflicts over land rights and protect the rights of indigenous peoples?

The UN can help prevent the scaling up of conflicts and tensions between States and indigenous peoples by enabling dialogue between the two parties. But for that to occur, trust needs to be built first between indigenous peoples and States because there cannot be dialogue without trust. Trust-building initiatives as first steps towards conflict-diffusing or -preventing dialogues will be critical, as many treaty bodies have underlined, includ-

Because these conflicts usually have a development, human rights and political angle, how does the UN's response fit into the 2030 agenda?

The UN Agenda 2030 offers an opportunity for synchronised and multi stockholder approach to conflicts affecting indigenous peoples in general. But there is a risk of focussing too much on development or social issues, without paying similar attention to human rights and political issues. Quite often, a narrow understanding of development portrays itself as being non-political or having nothing to do with human rights. The World Bank had for instance had such an official position for decades, arguing that it focusses on development and does not interfere with political issues or human rights. The UN and the international community should shift away from such a compartmentalised view or narrow approach to development if the Agenda 2030 is to deliver what is expected from it. 🗨️

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Indigenous Peoples

There are today an estimated 360 million self-identified indigenous peoples in some 90 countries around the world, more than 400 of these groups are in Latin America, while the biggest concentration of indigenous peoples, some 78%, live in the Asia Pacific region. There is no agreed definition of ‘indigenous people’, but commonalities include traditional livelihoods, a distinct relationship with their traditional territories and the experience of colonization, displacement and marginalization distinct from the general population. After a period of colonization, indigenous peoples tended not to be included in post-colonial nation and state building. They usually live in remote territories, many of which are rich in natural resources, that have so far seen little resource extraction.

They are geographically, politically and economically marginalized and experience racism and discrimination. In most countries where data is collected, a clear difference between the indigenous and the dominant population on all fronts can be seen. Virtually every indicator of well-being shows that indigenous peoples lag behind: Lower life expectancy, poorer health, higher infant and maternal mortality rates, lower literacy rates and high levels of poverty. Human rights violations against indigenous peoples often occur in relations with resistance to disruptive activities within their traditional territories, such as natural resource extraction and large-scale projects, like dams, highways or gas pipelines, which are often implemented with little or no consultations with the concerned indigenous peoples and often have a negative impact on their livelihoods. Indigenous human rights defenders are therefore often labelled by their opponents as obstacles to progress, anti-development, or even enemies of the state and terrorists.

The international community has established three specific mechanisms that address indigenous peoples:

UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues: Promotes coordination of UN system action on indigenous peoples, provides advice and recommendations to UN agencies and Member States. It benefits from the participation of a large number of indigenous peoples from all over the world who come to discuss with the international community how to address issues including those issues relating to the difficult historical relationship between indigenous peoples and states.

Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (EMRIP): Provides expertise to Human Rights Council. Thanks to a recently broadened mandate, EMRIP may now support Member States in their efforts to implement the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).

Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples: Also provides advice and recommendations, conducts country visits and responds to allegations of human rights violations – quiet diplomacy. All three mechanisms prepare thematic studies that enrich the work of the UN and provide valuable information to States and other actors.



SUSTAINING PEACE IN SOMALIA: RECONCILIATION IN GAALKACYO

29 August 2017

SUSTAINING PEACE is a relatively new term to describe how the different parts of the United Nations should work together, with ownership by national stakeholders and the support of a wide range of partners, to try to ensure that peace is lasting. It was defined in Security Council resolution 2282 of 27 April 2016, including “activities aimed at preventing the outbreak, escalation, continuation and recurrence of conflict, addressing root causes, assisting parties to conflict to end hostilities, ensuring national reconciliation and moving towards recovery, reconstruction and development”. In the second installment in our series on the work of Special Political Missions, we look at how the work done in Somalia, and specifically in the city of Gaalkacyo, illustrates what that means in real life.

THE SITUATION IN GAALKACYO

Control over the divided city of Gaalkacyo, in north-central Somalia, has been fiercely contested by competing administrations for years now. The Puntland and Galmudug state administrations control the northern and southern sections of the city, respectively. Recurring cycles of violence since November 2015 have had a significant impact on the population, with a number of human rights violations and large-scale displacement reported. The most recent clashes, in October 2016, resulted in the death of 45 people and the displacement of over 85,000 city residents. Instability in the area has created an opportunity for al-Shabaab to exploit. After the latest round of violence, the United Nations Assistance Mission to Somalia (UNSOM) strengthened its sup-

port to achieve a cessation of hostilities and ensure that Galmudug and Puntland authorities fulfill their responsibility to protect the population in Gaalkacyo.

RESTORING PEACE

After the latest outbreak of violence, the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General (SRSG) for Somalia, Michael Keating, led an international delegation to Gaalkacyo to help warring parties reach a political solution. Shortly after, the Gaalkacyo Ceasefire Group

ABOVE: Abdihakim Omar Amey, the Puntland Vice President, and Mohamed Hashi Abdi, the Galmudug Vice President, cut a ribbon during the opening ceremony for a joint police training exercise in Puntland and Galmudug held in Gaalkacyo, Somalia. UN Photo/Omar Abdusalan

RIGHT: Participants attend the opening ceremony for a joint police training exercise for Puntland and Galmudug officers held in Gaalkacyo, Somalia. UN Photo/Omar Abdisalan

Advisory Team, composed of officials from the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and UNSOM's Political Affairs and Mediation Group (PAMG) and Rule of Law and Security Institutions Group (ROLSIG), was deployed to advise a Joint Ceasefire Committee (JCC) - made of Puntland and Galmudug representatives - in sustaining the ceasefire. The international non-governmental organization Interpeace provided logistical and technical support to the ceasefire committee with funds from the UN Development Programme. These efforts paved the way for the three-point agreement reached by the Puntland and Galmudug state presidents on 1 January 2017. The agreement stipulated a withdrawal of forces from the disputed city, the removal of all roadblocks to allow free movement of people and goods, and the introduction of joint police training and patrols. "PAMG and the UNSOM Puntland Area Office advised different levels of authorities and influential figures including women to generate momentum toward the implementation of the agreement, and our effort will continue," notes UNSOM Political Advisor Ilham Gassar.

JOINT POLICE PATROLS

A key component of the renewed commitment to a cessation of hostilities was the implementation of joint training of police from North and South Gaalkacyo to strengthen security and build trust and cooperation. UNSOM Police, reinforced with additional police advisors from the Police Division's Standing Police Capacity in Brindisi and working closely with PAMG, facilitated a Joint Patrol Training course in July and August 2017. Delivered by police officers with



the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), the training sought to promote trust and confidence in Gaalkacyo by preparing a group of 100 selected police officers from Galmudug and Puntland for the launch of joint police patrols in Gaalkacyo under common command. "The joint police patrols in Gaalkacyo are an example of how the New Policing Model is implemented on the ground," says UNSOM Police Commissioner Christoph Buik. "Both the Galmudug and Puntland State Police put into practice principles of cross-border operational cooperation, solidarity and daily information sharing." The New Policing Model was approved by Somalia's National Leadership Forum in 2016 and endorsed in the country's 2017 Security Pact. The Model provides an organizational structure of police agencies at the federal government and federal member state levels that will report to their respective federal and state-level ministries of internal security.

SUSTAINING PEACE: THE WAY FORWARD

United Nations efforts have played a vital role in defusing tensions in Gaalkacyo and providing space for the community to rebuild. Sustaining peace in Gaalka-

cyo will require coherent and long-term support to build the capacity of Somali institutions to deliver good governance and strengthen the rule of law. UNSOM continues to support steps to prevent another relapse into conflict. PAMG will continue to work with different levels of authorities and non-state actors to help them fully implement the previous agreements and bring a political solution to the ongoing dispute over the city. UNSOM and AMISOM Police will start training an additional 100 police officers from Puntland and Galmudug in October. The expanded joint police unit will be in charge of patrolling outside of the buffer zones separating security forces of the two states.

"The UN and international partners have supported the combined efforts of the Federal Government, officials from Puntland and Galmudug, civil society and affected communities to avert a fresh outbreak of major violence in Gaalkacyo," said SRSK Keating. "I hope that joint police patrols in the city will boost the credibility of authorities and go some way to promoting greater trust between parties. This initiative marks a small but important step towards definitively resolving this conflict, for the benefit of all Gaalkacyo's residents." 🗨️



INTENSE PREPARATION, POTENTIAL HIGH YIELD: MOUNTING A HIGH- LEVEL EVENT AT THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

28 September 2017

AMERICAN JOURNALISTS like to call the General Assembly's yearly General Debate, when hundreds of global leaders descend on UN HQ during the third week of September, "the Super Bowl of diplomacy", comparing it to biggest single sporting contest in the United States. And in those hectic early autumn days, the UN does sometimes seem to be hosting a series of competitions – for attention, for the biggest names, for the largest attendance. For DPA, the General Debate is the occasion to focus international interest and energy on different peace initiatives. This year, DPA helped organize a high-level event on Somalia, the Pacific Islands Forum Leaders Meeting and the ASEAN-UN Ministerial Meeting. Another high-powered gathering, on Lib-

ya, served as the stage to relaunch a stalled political process under UN stewardship. The event only lasted two hours, but took weeks of intense preparation to pull off. *Politically Speaking* followed the DPA team responsible for the meeting during the preparatory phase. Read on to get a flavor of the efforts, large and small, needed to put together one of the General Debate's signature events.

"I believe this meeting can have an historic significance," said Secretary-General António Guterres as he opened a high-level meeting on Libya at UN headquarters on 20 September, the second day of General Assembly's 2017 General Debate. "It is my deep belief that there is an opportunity for a political solution in Libya," he added.

The Secretary-General was addressing a widely anticipated meeting, which had been convened to relaunch the Libyan political process under the facilitation and leadership of the United Nations, and to present a new plan for the country's transition. A new start is needed because, as the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Libya, Ghassam Salamé, put it during

ABOVE, FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: Faiez Mustafa Serraj, Prime Minister and President of the Presidency Council of the Government of National Accord of Libya, Secretary-General António Guterres, Special Representative for Libya Ghassam Salamé.

UN Photo/BJ Rubin



the meeting, “A succession of transitions have failed to bring to the Libyan people what they want the most; stable, effective and predictable governance and decent living standards.” Heads of State, Ministers and representatives of 44 countries and three regional organizations took the floor during the event to voice their support for a plan Salamé was presenting formally for the first time. In the wake of the NY discussions, the Special Representative is already helping put the plan into action.

The New York meeting is considered a success. But such an event does not just happen. Weeks of preparation by the Special Representative and DPA staff in New York went into putting the meeting together. In July, during his first meeting with the Special Representative, the Secretary-General asked him and DPA to draft an action plan and strategy for UN engagement in Libya. The Secretary-General also asked that the strategy be presented at a high-level event that he would convene on the margins of the General Assembly, recalls Sandra Bitar, DPA North Africa team member. With less than two months to put together a

CLOCKWISE FROM BELOW: High-level meeting on Libya getting underway on 20 September 2017. UN Photo/Laura Gees

Prep meeting with an Italian delegation. UN Photo/Laura Gees

Meeting with UN Protocol and Liaison Service and Department for General Assembly and Conference Management (DGACM). UN Photo/BJ Rubin




meeting that would eventually bring together French President Emmanuel Macron, British Prime Minister Theresa May, President of Egypt Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi, President of the Republic of Congo Denis Sassou Nguesso, Prime Minister of Italy Paolo Gentiloni, and other leaders, the clock was ticking. Loudly.

The DPA North Africa team, six women hailing from six different countries and speaking a combined eight languages, had to get a sense of the key messages and level of support of different Member States and modulated its outreach on that basis. Francesca Jannotti Pecci, DPA's North Africa team leader, told us about the preparations: "I am very privileged to be able to count on such a strong and diverse team. Preparations for this kind of events, where the entire UN membership is involved, are a very labor-intensive exercise, requiring a lot of coordination among different parts of the UN system, in particular the Secretariat offices and departments, Conference Services, Security, et cetera." And that was just for the logistical arrangements. Preparations also included liaising with many member States and helping to mobilize international support for the new plan.

The meeting itself followed a conventional script: the Secretary-General made an opening statement, followed by Special Representative Salamé, presenting the action plan, after which Faiez Mustafa Serraj, Prime Minister and President of the Presidency Council of the Government of National Accord of Libya gave an update on recent political and security developments, as well as on the humanitarian situation in Libya. Global leaders then took the floor to express support for the new UN-facilitated Action Plan on Libya. There was so much interest in the proceedings that time ran out before all those who wanted to speak could be accommodated. All the footwork, sweat and nerves that went into putting the meeting together paid off, participants agreed.

"There have been numerous statements of support and I believe the main objective of the meeting was achieved by somehow re-placing the United Nations at the center of the facilitation of the Libyan political process," Jannotti Pecci said.

The Libyan delegation said the meeting was "a chance to reunite international community and regional players, and break the political stalemate that the country suffered from for a long period since the signing of the LPA," Taher EL-Sonni, Senior Political Advisor to the Prime Minister and President of the Presidency Council of the Government of National Accord of Libya said.

During the high-level meeting, Special Representative Salamé announced his intention to convene representatives of the House of Representatives and of the High Council of State to swiftly start implementing and taking the first step, outlined in the new action plan for Libya. 

Action Plan for Libya:

The Secretary-General's Special Representative for Libya, Ghassan Salamé, assumed his post at the end of July 2017. He spent his first weeks on the job holding extensive consultations with Libyans across the country. Those consultations formed the basis of the plan he presented at the meeting. The idea behind the plan is to try to identify a viable way forward. The Special Representative emphasized that the objective of the political process is to bring the Libyan transition to an end, towards the establishment of stable, predictable and effective governance.

The first step of the political process consists of amending the Libyan Political Agreement (LPA) in an inclusive and consensual manner that addresses the main concerns that have hampered its implementation so far, the second stage of the political process will consist of a National Conference under the auspices of the UN Secretary-General to bring together members of the LPA institutions and a wide range of stakeholders from across the spectrum of Libya's society. Following the National Conference, the Constitutional Drafting Assembly will have the opportunity to review and refine its work, taking into consideration the observations and suggestions expressed during the National Conference. The House of Representatives and the Constitutional Drafting Assembly should work in parallel towards the adoption of the requisite constitutional and electoral framework for the holding of parliamentary and presidential elections within a year of the high-level event.



LEFT: Presidential and Parliamentary elections in Ghana. UNOWAS CPIO

improving efficiency or lowering costs. In other cases, automatization is prompted by a sense of urgency to overcome a specific obstacle.

If countries so request, the UN, as well as other organizations such as IFES, can help Member States make informed decisions that could bring about consensus and public confidence over the use of technology in elections. Experience has shown that new technologies, if not properly introduced, can present challenges in terms of the trust in the electoral process, potentially creating bigger problems than those they were intended to resolve. In a recent report to the General Assembly, the Secretary-General highlighted the importance of taking politically and financially sustainable decisions about technology, and noted that technology does not, in and of itself, create confidence or prevent fraud.

HARNESSING ELECTIONS TECHNOLOGY: BENEFITS AND RISKS

16 October 2017

CONVENTIONAL WISDOM holds that ever-evolving technology can improve efficiency and performance in most areas of human activity. Elections and technology are, on the surface, a perfect fit. After all, if there is one thing computers, advanced software and the Internet do well is render the use of paper documents like ballots and voter lists obsolete. No surprise then that there has been a widespread belief that information and communication technology (ICT) would bring about revolutionary improvements in how polls were conducted, and all at a lower cost. In light of recent experience in different parts of the world, the faith in technology as an electoral panacea has faded. At a recent meeting in DPA, electoral experts explored why the marriage of high tech and elections has not been completely smooth, and what can be done about it.

Countries worldwide are increasingly relying on information and communication technologies in the conduct of electoral processes, moved by a desire to improve the accuracy, security and integrity of elections. This trend has been particularly noticeable regarding voter registration, results management and, more recently, electronic voting. In some cases, the introduction of technologies is envisioned as part of a long-term plan for

How, then, can new technologies be best applied in elections? That's the question three international experts came together to discuss on 4 October in the Department of Political Affairs (DPA). Peter Erben, Senior Global Electoral Adviser at the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), Niall McCann, Policy Advisor on Electoral Assistance at the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and Simon-Pierre Nanitelamio, Deputy Director of the Electoral Assistance Division of the Department of Political Affairs, drew on lessons from more than two decades of support to electoral processes by the United Nations and IFES.

“The relationship between the success of an election and the use of technology is not always straightforward,” said Nanitelamio. “New technologies cannot, by themselves, build trust in an electoral process, and should not be seen as a technical panacea to electoral problems that are fundamentally political in nature. One cannot rely on ICTs to solve structural issues affecting elections.”

Nanitelamio said that the UN does not consider the use of technology in the field of elections an end in itself. Rather, technology should be used as a tool at the service of electoral

processes to address a specific problem: Is there an issue with the accuracy or credibility of the voter register? Is there an issue with the transmission or the management of the electoral results? Is there a problem with the voting or the votes tabulation procedures?

UNDP's McCann pointed to a specific example of the use of technology in elections, specifically in relation to voter registration. Some countries that do not draw their voter register directly from civil registers but instead have a stand-alone and active registration process for elections have embraced biometric technology to compile digital lists that are “de-duplicated” to ensure that each voter has registered only once, helping preserve the “one person, one vote” principle. However, biometric voter registration systems are coming under increasing criticism from wider public administration and population registration experts over the lost opportunity of focusing such human, financial and technology resources on one functional register of the population. Such resources, it has been argued in recent research by the World Bank and the Center for Global Development, among others, would be better used solving the very issue that leads to the need to detect multiple registrants in the first place – the under-development of the foundational civil registration and wider identity management system in the country.

“Ensuring a holistic, digital birth-to-death population registration system with inter-operability between various state registers while founded on a solid data protection legislative framework would allow the benefits of biometric technology to empower citizens to access many additional public services, not just voting,” said McCann. Enormous savings benefits could be derived by state agencies not having to carry out parallel mass registration exercises that invariably underachieve full coverage as they target only specific audiences.

Cost effectiveness, a major argument for the introduction of electoral technology, is not always a given, Nanitelamio pointed out. “Technology requires significant initial costs and subsequent costs for storage and maintenance of information technology (IT) equipment, which often has a limited lifespan and needs to regularly be updated or replaced,” he said. “Sustainability is almost impossible to achieve where inappropriate technologies are implemented. The IT solution should be re-usable and able to be sustained locally without relying on external experts, technicians and vendors.”

Erben recalled that technologies for voter registration, results management and electronic voting have proven to be vulnerable to failure and security breaches, distrust by contestants and voters, inflated costs and legal challenges. Nanitelamio added that recent elections have highlighted the fact that, while it is difficult to collectively hack voting machines or results management and transmission systems, the IT solutions remain



RIGHT: New Voter Authentication Devices (VADs) tested in Armenia.

EC-UNDP Joint Task Force

vulnerable to hacking. “In such cases, solutions connecting voting machines to the internet needlessly creates another security weakness,” he said. “This is especially dangerous when those machines don’t create a paper trail that allows for double-checking or auditing.”

IFES argues that the combination of paper-based electoral systems and electronic systems can lead to good results and can address mistrust. “Traditional paper-based systems and electronic systems, used together, mutually reinforce each other, leveraging the significant symbiosis between the old and the new,” Erben said.

“There’s no ‘one size fits all’ solution,” added Nanitelamio. He argued that if dealt with adequately, the benefits of introducing technology in the electoral process could far outweigh its numerous challenges. When deciding which technology to use in elections, the challenges need to be carefully considered and balanced against anticipated benefits. The relevance of each possible benefit and disadvantage will vary from country to country, as will the challenges and issues. Any proposed ICT solution should therefore be tailored to the needs and the specific context of each country. As there are many considerations to be taken into account, the appropriateness of a solution will vary from one context to another. It is therefore advisable to conduct an inclusive feasibility study involving consultation with all relevant stakeholders. The feasibility study should assess whether the introduction of technology is feasible throughout the country and within the proposed timeframe and should cover areas such as legal requirements, country’s infrastructure, internet availability, computer literacy, training needs, funding, cost-effectiveness and sustainability. ●



NO DURABLE PEACE WITHOUT INCLUSION

Promoting the Effective Participation of Women in Peace Processes

23 October 2017

TWENTY-SIX SENIOR PEACE MEDIATORS from the United Nations, regional organizations, Member States and international non-governmental organizations involved in mediation met in Helsinki, Finland, earlier this month to discuss the effective inclusion of women, as well as a gendered perspective, in mediation processes. As the Security Council gets ready to discuss, on 27 October, its historic Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, this eighth High-level Seminar on Gender and Inclusive Mediation Processes served also as a timely reminder of how far we still need to go.

Promoting women's effective participation in conflict mediation and addressing their specific needs in peacemaking efforts is a high priority for the Department of Political Affairs. The

issue first made it on to the Security Council's agenda in 2000, with the adoption on 31 October of that year of Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security. However, despite many global and regional commitments and initiatives, the number of women and gender experts involved in formal peace-making processes remains low, while many peace agreements do not include gender-relevant provisions or harness the resources women can contribute to building more sustainable peace.

Inclusive mediation requires an integration of diverse societal perspectives – those of conflicting parties and other stakeholders – and its design includes multiple entry points and diverse mechanisms for participation. An inclusive mediation process does not necessarily mean that all stakeholders can participate directly in the formal negotiations. But such a process can facilitate a structured interaction between the conflict parties and other stakeholders to include all perspectives in the process.

The overall objective of the High-level Seminar on Gender and Inclusive Mediation Processes is to generate more consultative processes by promoting women's effective participation and building inclusive, gender-sensitive mediation capacity at

ABOVE: Sudanese take part in "Citizen Hearings" in Musfa, Blue Nile State, on the border between northern and southern Sudan. UN Photo/Tim McKulka



ABOVE, FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: Deputy Joint Special Representative of the Secretary-General Bintou Keita (UNAMID); Dr. Specioza Wandira Kazibwe, member of the African Union Panel of the Wise; Tarja Halonen, former President of Finland and Member of the UN High-Level Advisory Board on Mediation. CMI/Riku Isohella

international, regional and national levels. The Seminar series is rooted in the premise that women living through a conflict have strategic knowledge and networks to contribute to its resolution and can be critical actors in sustaining peace. Gender dynamics thus create unique opportunities and challenges for peacemaking and need to be understood, analyzed, and used for strategic advantage.

The Seminar invited senior mediators to contemplate practical, “how-to” strategies and tools for more inclusive mediation process design, as well as options for gender-relevant provisions, including specific language, for the key thematic areas of peace agreements. The goal is to increase the availability and quality of gender expertise in mediation processes, and support greater and more effective participation by women at all levels of conflict resolution and peacemaking.

The participants engaged in lively discussions over the topics covered in the seminar. Several UN officials and Standby Team Mediation Advisors also shared their knowledge and experience on the issues discussed. More than 210 envoys and senior mediators have participated in the Seminar series since its inception in 2013, and the seminar series is now a cornerstone of DPA’s efforts to secure more inclusive and gender mainstreamed mediation efforts.

Another outcome of the Seminar series and its high-level deliberations was the launch of the DPA Guidance on Gender and Inclusive Mediation Strategies in March 2017. The Guidance elaborates on the contents of the Seminar to inform mediators and their teams, as well as conflict parties, about the principles and strategies for the effective inclusion of women, as well as a gendered perspective, in mediation processes. The Guidance covers mediation preparedness, process design, and substantive

issues, including security arrangements, addressing sexual violence in conflict, women’s political participation, power sharing and constitutional arrangements, as well as the language and the implementation of peace agreements through a gender lens. The Guidance is now available in all UN languages on the UN Peacemaker website.

The Seminar, held from 10 to 12 October, was the latest in a series that began in 2013 thanks to financial support provided by the Governments of Finland and Norway and their implementing partners, the Crisis Management Initiative (CMI) and the Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO), respectively. The meeting heard opening statements by Peter Stenlund, Finnish State Secretary; Miroslav Jenča, DPA Assistant Secretary-General; Tuija Talvitie, Executive Director of CMI, and Henrik Urdal, Director of PRIO. Former Presidential Advisor on the peace

process in the Philippines, and current Senior UN Mediation Advisor, Teresita Quintos-Deles, also shared experiences on “gendering” the Bangsamoro peace process.

Seminar participants included Tarja Halonen, former President of Finland and Member of the UN High-Level Advisory Board on Mediation; Special Representatives of the Secretary-General Sigrid Kaag (UNSCOL), Michael Keating (UNSOM), Ján Kubiš (UNAMI), Modibo Touré (UNIOGBIS), former SRSG Ellen Løj (UNMISS) and DSRSR Pernille Kardel (UNAMA), along with Deputy Joint SRSG Bintou Keita (UNAMID). Other regional organizations high-level representatives included Dr. Specioza Wandira Kazibwe, member of the African Union Panel of the Wise, as well as the Head of the European Union delegation in Libya, Bettina Muscheidt. Representatives from the Organization of American States (OAS), and the Finnish, German and Norwegian Ministries of Foreign Affairs were also among the participants.

DPA GENDER/WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY TRAINING

In addition to the Seminar series for senior officials, DPA also conducts, on a bi-annual basis, the Gender/Women, Peace and Security training for its staff. The curriculum for this training was designed around the 15 specific Women, Peace and Security commitments DPA took up in 2010. The staff training aims to enable political officers to integrate women’s empowerment and gender equality perspectives in their work, including women’s effective participation in peacemaking and electoral processes; while strengthening their skills by offering practical strategies and tools to implement the Women, Peace and Security commitments. 🗨️



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