

*The Third Conference on National Dialogues, 5-6 April 2017  
The House of the Estates, Helsinki*

## **Lessons in process design and potential for self-mediation (UN advisory and policy)**

Perhaps the most outstanding characteristic of formal National Dialogues, as seen from a planning and facilitation perspective, is its bewildering complexity. Not only is the sheer size of these meetings intimidating, but more so the range of political interests, the depth of distrust, the seeming irreconcilability of competing interests and issues, and the fragility of the arrangement that must hold all together. One of the many consistent patterns in failed or weak formal National Dialogue processes is the absence or under-development of deliberate, integrated and coherent designs of “self-mediation” components and procedures. Besides the accumulating practice, important work on taking stock of successes, challenges and lessons is taking place by national and international actors. The UN has been consolidating its experience into good practice and policy; Berghof Foundation, HD and IPTI have been consolidating research-based resource materials; and the Peace and Dialogue Platform has been capturing ongoing National Dialogues processes for the past four years. In this session we will reflect on the latest research findings and lessons learned from ongoing National Dialogues.

The questions to be addressed include:

- what are the planning, management, facilitation, shared knowledge and procedural measures that must be in place in order to manage the complexity of National Dialogues?
- what are the key structural and “self-mediation” elements that needs to be built-into formal National Dialogues to enable consensus-building, common understanding of issues, and deadlock-breaking?
- National Dialogues as third-party instruments for mediation; and National Dialogues as sovereign “self-mediation” instruments;
- comparing negotiation, mediation and dialogue across tracks.

## Panel:

Hannes Siebert, Senior Technical Advisor, CSI (Moderator)

Andries Odendaal, Senior Associate, Centre for Mediation in Africa, University of Pretoria

Roxaneh Bazergan, Senior Political Affairs Officer, UNDPA

Luxshi Vimalarajah, Programme Director, Berghof Foundation

Jonathan Harlander, HD Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue

