

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

Reconciliation and Transitional Justice

Reconciliation and transitional justice are significant and potentially conflictual issues that need to be addressed as part of conflict resolution processes in fragile and contested polities. Truth and Reconciliation Commissions are implemented after a civil war has ended, or after mass atrocities have been committed, and a nation is attempting to mend social relations within a new, post-conflict political framework. In the past two decades, there has been an almost unquestioned faith in the potential for transitional justice mechanisms such as truth commissions and trials to heal and transform wounded societies. Reconciliation has emerged as a specific goal of many transitional justice processes. In national dialogue processes stakeholders are challenged on how to foster reconciliation and about how different mechanisms such as truth commissions, trials, amnesties, and local justice initiatives can be expected to contribute toward this end goal. But there is still much debate about the meaning of the term, and little empirical evidence of how different transitional justice mechanisms may affect achievement of this desired outcome. This session will explore the interlinkages of transitional justice and reconciliation against Nepali and Colombian contexts.

Set of guiding questions:

- How do national dialogue processes affect other parallel processes?
- What sequencing needs to be considered? To what extent do local notions of national dialogue, when different from western notions, have any possibility of being heard and implemented as a part of the transitional justice process?
- What does justice and reconciliation mean in different cultures?
- What are the various traditional approaches to dealing (and healing) with the past, including healing trauma and living with the legacy of violence and war.
- How can local value systems and local agencies be capitalized on to develop a moral high ground for reconciliation and transitional justice that meets local conditions and local grievances?

Panel:

Jeff Seul, Chair, Lecturer on the Practice of Peace at Harvard Divinity School. He also serves as chairman of the Peace Appeal Foundation and is a partner in the international law firm Holland & Knight (Moderator)

Mandira Sharma, Human Rights Activist, Nepal

Bishnu Sapkota, Board Member, Nepal Transitions to Peace Institute

Valentina Erazo Camargo, Peacebuilding and Participation Coordinator at the Presidential Counsellor's Office for Human Rights of Colombia

