

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

## **Regional Dynamics of National Dialogues in the Middle East**

While the importance of regional backing for national dialogue processes and the implementation of their outcomes is widely acknowledged, a more delicate discussion on different ways by which regional actors influence national dialogues is largely absent from the broader debate on dialogue processes. This session explores the dynamic of national ownership versus regional pressures on the prospects for, or conduct, of national dialogues through the examples of Yemen, Syria, and Lebanon, among others perspectives.

The session will look at the role of regional actors in influencing national and international actors 1) as the prospect of engagement in national dialogue process arises, i.e. what is their role in determining “ripeness” of the situation; 2) in the planning/ design of dialogue processes, and 3) in their implementation. The panel will attempt to define the most critical junctures at which the regional actors’ engagement and support are essential, and will discuss the balance between necessary and constructive involvement and buy-in versus negative interference, and how such balance can be identified and promoted by those involved in a given national dialogue. Moreover, the panel will discuss the importance of complementarity in informal and formal efforts, and how in each sphere the regional dynamics can and should be taken into account.

On questions regarding inclusion and the role of women in national dialogue processes, the panel will discuss the role of regional dynamics in affecting related decisions. It will discuss to which extent these questions are considered by regional actors and why, or whether regional involvement is limited to other areas, and whether and how regional actors could play a more active role in advancing a meaningful engagement of women and minorities in the various phases of national dialogue processes and if not, why so.

### **Panel:**

Dr. Yasar Qatarneh, Senior Adviser, Crisis Management Initiative (Moderator)

Mr. Marwan Ali, Principal Adviser to the Special Envoy to the Secretary General on Yemen, UN

Dr. Karam Karam, Regional Adviser, Emerging and Conflict Related Issues Division (ECRI), UN-ESCWA

Mr. Oliver McTernan, Director, Forward Thinking

Mr. Abdulnaser Al-Muwadea, Author and Researcher, Yemen

Ms. Minna Saarnivaara, Syria Initiative Project Manager, FELM

