The Fourth Conference on National Dialogues, 11—12 June 2019

The House of the Estates, Helsinki

Peacetech – Does it live up to the hype?

Objective of the session

The objective of the plenary is to engage, provoke and challenge the audience to expand their *understanding of peacetech* and critically reflect on the *potential of technology* for or against peace.

Background

Peacetech means technology (methods, systems, and devices which are the result of scientific knowledge) being used to concretely advance steps towards a comprehensive and sustainable peace. In this definition it should be emphasized, that use of technology is not an independent goal in itself, but a tool to further other goals, which in this applied instance is supporting national dialogue and mediation processes. Peacetech already plays a role in national dialogue processes, but there is also much to be done to better utilize its potential. Increasing complexity of conflicts and peace processes requires actors to have access to and understanding of a wider range of tools and technologies.

Technology is a *driver and enabler of sustainable peace* and it allows diverse routes to address complex conflict scenarios. Simultaneously, and perhaps more dominantly, technology is a *driver and enabler of conflict.* Since technology can work both ways, the central question of this plenary will be **"what is the added net value of peacetech in dialogue and mediation processes?"** In other words, what is the value of peacetech after evaluating its pros and cons? Moreover, we should be conscious when computational technologies and human use of technology is deployed in unjust and unequal political, military, economic and social contexts. It is important, for example, to understand the existing power dynamics and how activities utilizing peacetech may reproduce or intensify structural conditions such as racism, gender discrimination, power imbalance, exclusion or inequalities.

This underlining approach will be assessed with a set of more defining key questions below.

Key questions

- To which purposes and to what extent technology is being used in dialogue and mediation processes? What are the opportunities and risks involved with the use of peacetech?
- How should the supply and demand of peacetech be linked in the large scale and how could we build and support an effective ecosystem for this end?
- What are the ethical issues with peacetech and what should the ethics governing peacetech look like? How can we defend human rights in a technological landscape?

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Composition of the session

- Mr Salem Avan, Director of Global Services Division, United Nations

- Ms Talia Hagerty, Senior Research Fellow, Institute for Economics & Peace

- Dr Andreas Hirblinger, Researcher, Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies

- *Moderator: Ms Maria Mekri, Executive Director at SaferGlobe and Consultant at UNTIL*