The Fourth Conference on National Dialogues and non-formal dialogue processes

The House of the Estates, Helsinki
11-12 June, 2019
Conference Report
Conference report compiled and authored by
Conference Secretariat in Felm
National Dialogue Conference organized by:
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1. Introduction

All photos used in this report by Ms. Heli Pekkonen.

The Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland together with Felm, Finn Church Aid (FCA) and Crisis Management Initiative (CMI) organised the fourth conference on National Dialogues and non-formal dialogue processes in June 2019 in Helsinki, Finland. The Conference was a continuation of conferences held in April 2014, November 2015 and April 2017. The conference enjoyed wide participation of around 200 people from all over the world with a common interest in national dialogues. The goal of the conference was to create a space for joint reflection, peer learning, networking and in-depth discussion with practitioners, stakeholders and experts working with dialogue processes in different contexts. In addition, the conference aimed to identify common challenges and develop recommendations for national dialogue processes.

This conference report summarizes and describes the key issues discussed during the session which are based on individual session reports prepared by designated rapporteurs. Due to varied data collected from the sessions, some sessions in the report are more detailed than others. However, to help the reader the conclusions/main take-aways of each session are summarised at the beginning of individual session reports. These conclusions/main take-aways are based on material prepared by the rapporteurs and checked by the team in charge of planning and implementing the session. Also, a summary of the main findings of 2019 National Dialogue Conference, prepared by the Secretariat, can be found in chapter two. The content of the Conference Report is not necessarily reflecting the views and positions of the organizers of the conference.
The fourth National Dialogues Conference built on the lessons from previous conferences, with a special focus on understanding the ecosystems of national dialogues and on exploring what support technology can bring to respond to the complex processes of national dialogues. These two core topics were explored through several geographic focus areas as well as in relation to other recurring themes, such as gender, reconciliation and psychosocial support. The National Dialogues Conference is an important initiative of Finland's mediation efforts which emphasise inclusiveness, local ownership and the role of women, youth, religious peacemakers as well as civil society in peace processes.

Both the main themes are a novel way of looking at national dialogues, and both resonate well with the challenge of increasing complexity in societal and international arena. Peace processes and national dialogues are intertwined with a complex web of local, national, regional and international actors, each contributing their part to the whole. Thinking of national dialogues holistically as ecosystems helps us understand and overcome the systemic complexity and ensure the inclusion and ownership of those affected by the process, while also including all the actors who are able to support the process. Ecosystems are discussed as a cross-cutting topic linking it to other themes and various cases of national dialogues. These sessions are found in section A.

The second main theme – new technologies in support of national dialogues – is discussed in section B. Technologies’ role in supporting both peace and conflict are specifically discussed, and it was concluded that while we must stay alert to the multifaceted role of technology, its potential must not be disregarded. Furthermore, digital media as a special topic was discussed and practical tools of peace technology were introduced to the audience. In section C, other thematic focuses are discussed, as a continuum from previous conferences and due to their importance to contemporary national dialogues. These focuses are federalism, reconciliation and psychosocial support, and land rights. Lastly, in section D, this paper explores where the field of national dialogues and mediation is currently heading, based on the closing discussion in the conference.
2. Main findings and reflections

Complexity – turning away from linearity and accepting messiness as a rule

Conference discussions highlighted that while peacebuilding practitioners do understand the nature of conflicts as unpredictable, fluid and having parallel effects, the human mind is naturally turning to linearity and seeking control, orderliness and predictability. Therefore, we often notice that over-linear approaches continue to guide the thinking in peacebuilding practice, negotiations and dialogues. In practice making the shift away from a linear approach has proved challenging.

Peace agreements and processes seldom are homogenous. Therefore, no single ideal type of process design can be articulated for national dialogue processes. It needs to be accepted that there is not always clarity how the process will go. Complexity and unpredictability of transitions forces us to look at national dialogues as elastic concepts that evolve over time. This is in contrast to some of the central tenets of liberal ideas, such as objectivity and single polity, that lead to one comprehensive national peace accord. It was emphasised during the conference that we should be talking about national dialogues in the plural. Seldom is there one comprehensive national dialogue taking place, but many dialogues are happening simultaneously in multi-layered sequences, also in the local level leading into local agreements. A good example, discussed during the conference, are Kenya's multiple dialogue processes that form an ecosystem. The dialogues in Kenya take place in parallel, with multiple ownerships and without any one coordinating entity, but with a joint overall objective. Despite the many challenges along the way to the next elections in 2022 in Kenya, there is a suitable overall political environment to engage in dialogue and violence prevention work.

Embracing openness in terms of opportunities for local peace processes and the frameworks in which dialogue happens, and being relaxed about expected outcomes, helps deal with complexity. The complexity of conflicts and managing complexity forces us to find new ways and mindsets. Solutions suggested during the conference include adaptability, accepting messiness as the rule, unlearning the ideal of a linear peace, and thinking in trade-offs in terms of conflict management, inclusive dialogues and national peace. Other important principles to tackle complexity include pragmatism, humbleness and risk-taking. One of the sessions investigated how negotiations frameworks can accommodate the complexity of asymmetrical federalism. It was emphasised that more attention needs to be paid to the contextual realities, which outline the preferred negotiations framework. Accommodating complex and time-consuming federal processes requires long-term commitment and a process of experimentation, learning and adaptation. Asymmetrical federal designs and processes emerge because of fragmentation and conflicting demands. It provides options to address diverse aspirations and ongoing conflicts in a phased approach where all stakeholders and interest groups have an opportunity to negotiate their “realities”. Thus, in some contexts an asymmetrical process might be the preferred framework to accommodate such complexities, as for example in Myanmar.

The ecosystem of national dialogues was seen as a helpful concept that allows us to systematise and enrich the peace and conflict discussion. An ecosystem can be described the network of relationships and constant and non-linear interaction between individuals, groups, and institutions, and it is their behaviour that peacebuilding aims at affecting. Each conflict has a complex ecosystem which is constantly changing, and the position of all players in this ecosystem has to be understood. For example, in the session focusing on cross-border dialogue in the Lake Chad Basin, supported by regional organisations, it was stressed that due to the multitude and diversity of actors in the region, it would be important to conduct a careful mapping of all actors, their roles and approaches.
to allow a sufficient coordination of activities by relevant regional entities. Moreover, instead of solely focusing on conflict, the ecosystem of peace should be also better understood. Working for an ecosystem of peace means, for example, that those who have the potential to positively influence peaceful change are identified and harnessed to counter-balance with those in whose interest it is to continue the conflict with new positionings achieved through political gains.

Finally, it is important to recall that conflicts are essentially a human condition, part of human existence where relationships matter. If we want to be able to transform complex violent conflicts that negatively impact millions of people worldwide we need to become better at understanding and working with conflicts where thinking through ecosystems - understanding the behaviour and relationships of individuals, groups and institutions – can be helpful. Questions concerning relational and psychosocial aspects of conflict, also in relation to reconciliation, were discussed during the conference and participants felt that more attention and learning should be invested in them in the future.

**Tackling complexity: more focus on local solutions and knowledge in dialogue processes**

Also solutions on how to tackle complexity were discussed. The systems thinking, while not providing magic new formulas in peacebuilding, can help us to have a more flexible and adaptive structure in working with complex issues. Specifically, systems thinking urges, instead of focusing on international actors in peacebuilding, a shift in power toward local agency. This need was highlighted in many of the conference sessions, e.g. in the session on Yemen it was noted that in lieu of a large national process there may be greater benefits in having several localised dialogues that better reflect the needs and demands of the people in the various governorates. Indeed, in the past 25 years there has been an increase in local peace agreements and a decrease in comprehensive ones.

Being sensitive about and understanding the conflict context are important fundamentals of peacebuilding practice. While national dialogues share some commonalities, each process should adapt to serve its particular context and people. Moreover, there has also been a shift from conceptual authority (state-building in the 1990s and 2000s) to contextual authority of locality. It was emphasised by the participants that we must continue to be innovative and experimental in finding more incremental and layered approaches to strengthen locally led processes and the resilience of local actors and institutions in building a common vision of a society in transition.

Part of the ecosystem thinking are the roles of external and internal actors. It was stressed that peacebuilders should critically think about the role of international actors in dialogue and peace processes, as well as the level of adaptivity they are prepared to have in their actions and operations. In addition of the overall discussion on complexity, this was raised, for example, in the session on Somalia’s reconciliation process with calling of national ownership over the country’s truth and reconciliation process. International actors should let the national and local actors own their processes and define the support that is needed from outside. In turn commitment and will is required from local and national actors to create the trust both of citizens and international actors. In Somalia also the local solutions are challenged; for example, the traditional culture relating to reconciliation, which could help in the national healing process, has deteriorated in the civil war. However, despite the deterioration of traditional systems, many still have more faith in them than in the government, where people with criminal backgrounds are often in power and clan-affiliation is a dominant factor.
Moreover, the importance of local knowledge was brought up as well as greater reliance on local and national facilitators, who are often trusted and understand better the context and sensitivities; whereas international actors' role should be shifting more towards accompaniment and technical support, when requested. Peer learning and reflection amongst local and national peacebuilders was also seen as an important approach - learning from previous examples and country contexts for the better design and implementation of national dialogue processes. It is certain that international support continues to be needed in peace and dialogue processes, but there should be honest reflection on and solutions for how to confront external interests and competition in conflict countries, to unlearn untrue paradigms, to avoid readymade solutions, to increase pragmatism and true national and local ownership, as well as to be better and humbler in accompanying national actors.

**Inclusion and exclusion dynamics need attention in process design**

Inclusivity is an integral part of National Dialogues and it has been one of the key principles and themes of previous National Dialogues Conferences. Inclusivity continued to be in the centre of discussion also during this conference with the focus, in particular, on women and youth. In the session on Libya, it was stressed that despite challenges, national dialogues continue to be the best suited method for inclusive conversation.

Inclusion indeed is crucial. However, the trade-offs of inclusion and effectiveness need careful consideration. It is important that we have an inclusive overall design, but the level of inclusion might vary from dialogue to another. Peacebuilders and facilitators have to be attentive with the consequences of inclusion as inclusion can also mean that some voices cannot be heard in the presence of others, especially if the issues on the table are sensitive, the context is marked by huge distrust or/and there is a fear for intimidation, abuse or conscious misunderstanding; people/groups might feel uncomfortable and unwilling for sharing their views. Therefore, attention has to be paid to the different inclusion and exclusion dynamics and how it affects agenda setting. Inclusivity can also come at a cost; in case of Yemen inclusivity was and continues to be a key principle of dialogue; however, it also led to very broad and unrealistic outcomes which are difficult to implement. Moreover, the question of identities was also brought up during the discussion; today identities can be chosen and wrapped more freely and each of us has a combination of different identities. It may become difficult to access those new identities and, at the same time, unseen links and networks between different actors are emerging. These multiple identities need to be taken into account when designing inclusion.

When it comes to inclusion of women in peace processes, it is important to understand that women are not a homogenous group but that women represent their own constituencies, they come from different religious and social backgrounds and their needs vary. Focus should be given to the strategies of women’s inclusion and the ways to influence the agenda. Gender in facilitation was one of the themes discussed. It was pointed out that gender does not equal women but refers to the multi-layered and complex social power dynamics. Participants emphasised that for gender sensitive facilitation it is important to understand the local context and conflict dynamics as well as be conscious of gender norms, roles and expectations as well as stereotypes. The facilitator should pay attention to avoiding reinforcing gendered expectations. External actors can promote an inclusion agenda that women can leverage as an opportunity for participation and influence, but it has to be remembered that these gains can easily be lost if they are perceived as externally imposed. In the discussion of federalism negotiations, it was emphasised how important it is to take the role of gender into account: In Syria, gaining self-administration has been an opportunity to promote the inclusion of women in the decision-making.
The role of young people in dialogue processes was a theme that recurred throughout the conference, starting from the high-level discussion, to the specific session, peace technologies and others. It was noted that young people are heterogeneous, and as such it is important to employ a full range of civic action. The importance of intergenerational dialogue was brought up and it was encouraged to have critical analysis of generational change and impact. Influencing the openness and points of views of elders and decision-makers through mutual mentorship is one way to foster peace and social and political transformation. Moreover, strategic partnerships, networks and alliances, both among young people as well as between young people and power-holders, were stressed as key for amplifying young people’s voices and increasing the diversity of voices who influence and are consulted in policies, programmes and decision-making. Moreover, especially digital media has widened the reach to the young people significantly, and it may be the primary source of information for some of the younger audiences and urban people. The ways to strengthen the use of digital media for dialogue, contributing to positive impact and change, especially amongst the young people, needs further attention. Digital media literacy skills have to be improved as well as undertaking the challenge with underrepresentation of some voices in the Internet. In many (digital) platforms women have remained underrepresented and they are, in many cases, the ones who are attacked in social media discussions.

“On the concept of inclusivity, what is the most important takeaway for you from the Conference?”

| Sustainability & effectiveness | 3 |
| Technology, complexity and knowledge | 2 |
| Diversity | 4 |
| General comment | 1 |
| Gender | 2 |
| Must be increased | 2 |
| Research & analysis | 1 |
| Critique | 0 |
| Land rights | 0 |

“In order to build peace and make it sustainable all stakeholders within the communities need to be part of the process. Therefore, without inclusivity there will be no success.”

“The success for any kind of national dialogue is its appeal to and involvement of all the sectors of the respective society across the wide range of the political, geographic and social spectrum.”

Peacetech will become an important tool to consider in ND processes. This can assist with inclusion and give a better analysis of data.”

“We have not progressed that much from the discussions we were having a couple of years ago, I would have welcomed more in-depth discussions around meaningful participation of marginalised groups (what does it look like, how does it work in practice, what have we learned?). The discussions could have been defined more narrowly – instead, we were again having discussions on what inclusion is and why it important (we established that it is important more than a decade ago).”

Results from the post-conference questionnaire.
The challenge of technology in support of national dialogues must be undertaken

Technology is increasingly affecting how peacebuilding and dialogue processes take place and shape the possibilities that peace practitioners, owners and other stakeholders have while working on these activities. This means that the use of technology and data is no longer a choice in peacebuilding since, whether we want or not, peace processes are influenced by technology regardless. With tools and methods such as machine learning, sentiment analysis, blockchain and modelling, the potential to develop peacebuilding practices is enormous, but it is important to keep in mind that engaging with new technologies does not automatically translate into success. To unlock the potential, it is important to bring together the problems and the efforts to solve them. Ready-made and linear solutions rarely work so the context and the owners of processes should determine the issues and needs. Furthermore, the rather pragmatic question of user experience and engagement must also be addressed, as even the most fitted and sophisticated tools are a waste of resources if no one is using them.

Unfortunately, technology is often used for adverse purposes as well. Such purposes can be, for example, profiting from illegal activities, creation of disharmony and polarisation in societies or purposefully predisposing people to harm’s way. To make things worse, spoilers of peace processes are willing to take risks in the digital realm, whereas peace practitioners are typically averting risks, which leads to an asymmetry of responsibility and required resources. Other challenges are cyber-colonialism (the control of use and flow of information to someone’s own benefit) and ethical considerations such as potential lack of inclusion and ownership and the non-neutral nature of technology, which all, if not properly taken under consideration, can lead to serious problems. Countering all these issues at hand requires resources, which ought to be diverted more towards peacetech.

As one prominent area of peacetech, the conference delved into the role that digital media has in national dialogues – both in positive and negative sense. The distance between digital and traditional media has been reduced, which gives all the reasons to say that the contemporary media landscape is going through an age of “hybrid media”, where dialogues and discussions around political events are more and more affected by coexistent group dynamics and merging conversations, giving the digital and other media a feature of fluidity. We should not speak of one national conversation, since in reality multiple conversations are taking place at the same time, at various levels of society, and often in different languages. It is for this reason that practitioners in national dialogue processes must be well informed of the local context and (political) situations, engage various local actors in the process as well as know what to communicate, when and to whom. Inclusivity must also be accounted for, as top down processes have the tendency to create new conflicts. All of this increases the complexity of the whole media landscape, to which peacetech has a lot to offer, for example in terms of influence or analysis.

National dialogues are deeply impacted by challenges such as poor media literacy throughout societies and social media algorithms. Also, some voices are bound to be underrepresented as not all have equal resources and equal access on the Internet. For example, women have remained underrepresented in digital platforms and are, in many cases, being attacked more often than men in social media. While some are underrepresented in digital media, others are greatly benefitting from the possibility of scaling up the narrative in digital platform. The use of bots and social media analytics gives an important advantage in getting messages through with precision regarding the recipient, not to forget the enormous amount of data that can be mined from digital media platforms.

Concrete examples of peacetech were also demonstrated by Games for Peace, the Institute for Economics and Peace and Inforglobe. The demonstrations showed how digital tools can be used to bring significant efficiencies
and opportunities to national dialogue and mediation efforts, though human contact and communication is still at the heart of these efforts. The demonstrations illustrated the power of peacetech in the fields of gaming, data analysis and visualisation, and engagement.
3. Conference sessions

A. The inclusive ecosystem of national dialogues

High-level discussion: Transforming conflicts in a complex world

Moderator: Mr Nicklas Wancke, Journalist, Yle Broadcasting Company

Session speakers:
- H.E. Hailemariam Dessalegn, Former Prime Minister of Ethiopia
- H.E. Yasser Abdullah Al-Raeini, Minister of State for Implementing the National Dialogue Outcomes in the Yemeni Government

Main takeaways from the discussion:
- **Learning for better processes**: learning from previous examples and country contexts is important for the better design and implementation of the national dialogue processes.
- **Regional dialogue to support national dialogue**: national dialogues do not take place in vacuum and can be affected by developments outside the country. Addressing regional issues can support the national level process.
- **Inclusion**: inclusion is important for the successful implementation of the dialogue process and ensuring sustainable results and should be considered already at the preparatory phase.
- **Ownership**: National dialogue processes should be, and remain, locally owned. While national dialogues share some commonalities, each process should adapt to serve its particular context and people.
The objective of the session was to reflect the experiences and lessons learnt about national dialogue as an approach for conflict transformation in Ethiopia and Yemen. The opportunities for peace and transformation as well as challenges and preconditions for a successful national dialogue were discussed against the backdrop of previous national dialogues in Yemen, and in the new political situation in Ethiopia.

In their discussion, the panellists focused on the opportunities and challenges of national dialogues, reflecting particularly the importance of careful preparation and management of national dialogue processes and highlighting the importance of inclusive participation and national ownership in these processes as well as the importance of learning as the means to better manage the complexity and uncertainty of these processes.

When discussing the appropriates of national dialogue as an approach in the current context of Ethiopia, H. E. Hailemariam Dessalegn noted that the country’s current condition, and the opportunities and challenges it presents for national dialogue, cannot properly be assessed without understanding the country and the wider region’s long and complex history. Ethiopia’s previous experience of national dialogue is from 1993, which led to the establishment of Constitutional Assembly and the adoption of the country’s current Constitution. However, concerns about inclusion and democracy have remained, and the number of armed groups established in the multi-ethnic country reflect some of the prevailing issues in Ethiopia. According to Minister Dessalegn, national dialogue is needed to build national consensus – and the nation itself – by bringing the different actors and armed groups to the table.

In Ethiopia, the national dialogue process should address many challenges and structural issues. Therefore, it becomes also a question of process design; how to ensure all concerns will be addressed in an inclusive and structured manner. Designing and structuring the dialogue process at different levels and tracks serves as the means to manage the process, while an inclusive preparatory phase should precede the national dialogue process. Mr Yasser Abdullah Al-Raeeini shared that in Yemen, different technical sub-committees supported the preparation of the national dialogue process, while one of the key preparatory matters concerned inclusion. In Ethiopia, where the national dialogue process is at its preparatory stage, three parallel dialogue processes have been established; the first concerns inter-party and civic organisations’ dialogue, led by the Commission for Electoral Processes, the second concerns transitional justice, led by the National Reconciliation Commission, while the third parallel dialogue process is led by the Boundaries and Identity Issues Commission to address matters related to identity. Different dialogues can operate at different levels; local dialogues can deal with specific local concerns, while issues that bear greater significance for the entire nation can be brought on the national agenda, as in Ethiopian identity and language questions and the respective constitutional provisions have been included in the national level agenda.

Learning, from the country’s own history and previous experiences with national dialogue, as well as similar processes elsewhere, is important. Experiences of national dialogues in Yemen, Sudan and South Sudan show that building and maintaining popular trust towards the national dialogue process is important. Slowness or lack of results from the dialogue process can decrease people’s trust towards the process and increase frustration, which can endanger the entire process. In the Yemeni context, trust-building has been a critical need, especially in a situation when there was involvement in armed engagements while the national dialogue process had started. Mr Yasser Abdullah Al-Raeeini shared that while people were doubtful about the process, trust-building was needed in order to increase participation and inclusion in the dialogue process in the first place.
It was acknowledged during the discussion that the inclusion of all stakeholders in the process can be challenging and time-consuming, yet the panellists emphasised that there is no alternative to inclusion. Without inclusion, the results of the dialogue process will not be sustainable. Youth was mentioned as a particular group, in addition to women, to be considered when discussing inclusion. This is particularly important in the context of the African continent, where approximately 70% of the population is below 30 years old. The collective movement of young people and the transformations they have brought has been witnessed in Africa and the Middle East in the past years, and the meaningful inclusion of the youth in the national dialogue processes must receive thoughtful attention. While it was noted that it is important for the youth to organise themselves in a proper and appropriate manner when striving for political transformations, it was also mentioned that national dialogue alone is not enough to address the demands of the younger population. Political, economic and social transformations, that make a difference in people’s lives and bring food to their tables, should follow the dialogue process. Young people must be given hope that national dialogue process can make an actual difference in their lives and futures.

The regional context, and the possible implications it can have for national dialogue process, should be taken into consideration when designing and implementing national dialogue. Minister Hailemariam Dessalegn pointed out how the entire Horn of Africa region is very complex and volatile, and none of the regions’ countries are immune to the developments in their neighbouring countries. The complexity of the regional dynamics and ongoing conflicts add to the complexity of the national dialogue process but also highlight the importance for regional cooperation and dialogue alongside the national processes. According to Minister Dessalegn, it is important to consider and develop ways to bring people together, not only in the national but also regional setting as well. In the case of Ethiopia, it would have been challenging to begin the national dialogue process prior to reconciling with neighbouring Eritrea first. Similarly, Dessalegn illustrated that it is oftentimes a colonial border that separates people in the different countries in the region – how could national and regional dialogues address the legacies of colonialism and remaining boundary issues and conflicts?

While learning from other countries’ experiences with national dialogues was emphasised important throughout the discussion, the high-level panellists pointed out national ownership as a critical factor for successful national dialogue process. National ownership was noted important in terms of design and the content of national processes but also in terms of participation. Mr Yasser Abdullah Al-Raeini reminded that the situation and issues discussed in every country are always unique to the specific context. Minister Dessalegn similarly pointed out how history has already proven the attempts of transferring Western democratic models to African context as failing. Therefore, it is important that each nation finds solutions that are applicable and suitable to its own context and people. Equally, it was reminded that that national dialogues should be carried out without the interference of external actors and international direction. The expertise on the national questions and the solutions to national problems is always with the nation itself.

Yet there is still a role for the international community in supporting national dialogue processes. Technical expertise was mentioned as an area, where the international community can provide its support for national dialogue processes. Similarly, some national dialogue processes can benefit from external observation and measures enhancing the accountability of the process. Oftentimes national dialogue processes require more commitment, political will and trust than great financial contributions for their successful implementation.
Addressing complexity in national dialogue processes

Keynote speaker: Dr Jan Pospisil, Head of Research, Austrian Study Centre for Peace and Conflict Resolution

Moderator: Mr Itonde Kakoma, Programme Director, CMI

Panel:
- Dr Jan Pospisil, Head of Research, Austrian Study Centre for Peace and Conflict Resolution
- Dr Alhaji Sarjoh Bah, Head of Conflict Management and Post-Conflict Reconstruction Division, African Union
- Ms Roxaneh Bazergan, Team Leader, Mediation Support Unit, United Nations
- Ms Stine Lehmann-Larsen, Director, Mediation, Policy & European Relations, European Institute of Peace

Main takeaways from the session:
- The central aspect in complexity in national dialogue processes is well demonstrated in the outstanding heterogeneity in the peace agreements and processes.
- No single ideal type can be articulated for national dialogue processes. This is in contrast to some of the central tenets of liberal ideas such as objectivity and single polity.
- Challenges: complementarity, confronting external interests and competition in conflict countries, coming with readymade solutions, loading the process with expectations, untrue paradigms about the nature of peace
- Solutions: pragmatism, national ownership and accompanying national actors, risk-taking, unlearning untrue paradigms and being open-minded, humility about agreements, local peace agreements over comprehensive ones

Dr Jan Pospisil, Head of Research, Austrian Study Centre for Peace and Conflict Resolution, in his keynote speech stressed that even though there already is a common understanding that conflicts do not evolve in a linear way, the linearity still tends to guide the thinking in peace negotiations, dialogues and peacebuilding: “we always look for a linear curve of peace and conflict”. Pospisil explained that a linear approach to peacemaking can be explained by Hobsbawm’s concept of invented traditions, a process of ahistorical imagination of a peaceful path to OECD-like statehood. This raises a question of the ideal peace process design. Pospisil said that the complex story of peace looks at all agreements and processes. All peace processes are completely different and there is no ideal sequence or process design you can find. There has been a shift from conceptual authority (state-building in the 1990s and 2000s) to contextual authority of locality. We have to accept that there are limits to how much we can know (i.e. the conditions of non-knowledge).

Dr Pospisil presented some examples where reality contradicts liberal ideas. Root causes are often thought of in objective terms, whereas in reality perceiving root causes is subjective and a crucial part of the conflict itself. This is well demonstrated in the Colombian Comprehensive Peace Agreement where all the contesting root causes are included, not just a few of them. Non-implementation can also play an important role in peace processes, e.g. in the case of the referendum in Abyei between Sudan and South Sudan, where the Abyei status referendum was scheduled but postponed, and the independence referendum was not implemented. This goes contrary to the paradigm that the better agreements are implemented, the more sustainable the peace process is. The implementation process can also allow parties to stick to their positions while keeping the process ongoing. We
Ms Roxanah Bazergan, (Team Leader in Mediation Support Unit, United Nations) commented that the question is misleading, because the concept of national dialogues is not uniform, and it needs more nuance. She continued by saying that the UN is becoming more sophisticated in partnerships. Since it is impossible for one single organisation to manage the complexity of a peace process, it is important to ask who can do what, who has access, leverage, credibility, channels and what needs to be done in a visible way, what in a discreet way.

Complexity in peace processes means unpredictable and parallel effects and fluidity and permanence of political settlement, which could be described as formalised political unsettlement. There are ways to untangle and manage complexity, e.g. modelling to identify nodes, loops and feedback, managing the process in an inclusive manner and managing the effects by creating resilience. Solutions include accepting messiness as the rule, unlearning the ideal of a linear peace, and thinking of trade-offs in terms of conflict management, inclusive dialogues and national peace. Embracing openness in terms of opportunities for local peace processes and the frameworks in which dialogue happens and being relaxed about expected outcomes helps deal with complexity. Other important principles include pragmatism, humbleness and risk-taking.

Dr Pospisil’s key note presentation was followed by a panel discussion on the same topic of complexity, moderated by Mr Itonde Kakoma, Programme Director, CMI. The discussion started with a live poll asking whether national dialogues continue to be the most convenient way to manage complex change processes, with which 63.9 per cent agreed with and 36.1 per cent disagreed.

National dialogues continue to be the most convenient way to manage complex change processes?

![Poll Results](image)

Results from the conference polls.

Ms Roxanah Bazergan, (Team Leader in Mediation Support Unit, United Nations) commented that the question is misleading, because the concept of national dialogues is not uniform, and it needs more nuance. She continued by saying that the UN is becoming more sophisticated in partnerships. Since it is impossible for one single organisation to manage the complexity of a peace process, it is important to ask who can do what, who has access, leverage, credibility, channels and what needs to be done in a visible way, what in a discreet way. Ms Stine Lehmann-Larsen (Director of Mediation, Policy & European Relations Division, European Institute of Peace) combined
efficiency and inclusiveness. Dialogues cannot deliver on massive governance goals, so expectations should be managed. Complex national dialogue processes are not the only way of ensuring participation in national governance. She stressed that we should not make processes more complex than we have to. Dr Sarjoh Bah (Head of Conflict Management and Post-Conflict Reconstruction Division, African Union) emphasised that not much can be done without the African Union (AU) on the African continent. However, the AU is confronted by five topical dilemmas. First, the AU finds itself in the middle of an ecosystem where it must be able to respond to the aspirations of the people of Africa, to the needs of their member states and to the wider international community. Second, there is the question of sovereignty and national ownership and how to manage that balance. The AU needs to act in a way that respects countries' sovereignty and national ownership without compromising the organisation's continental leadership. Third, national dialogue processes need to be transformational, not cosmetic. Fourth, the absence of strategic guidance is a challenge and key institutions should be on the same page when it comes to major conflicts; for example in Libya, where there was not common agreement by the AU, EU and UN. Lastly, the dilemma is how to address inclusivity in societies that are highly fragmented along ethnic, religious, ideological and other lines. How could the national dialogue processes better reflect the diversity of society?

Ms Bazergan echoed Dr Pospisil by saying there is a move away from comprehensive peace agreements and towards more incremental or local-level peace agreements. She emphasised the point that parties and views are not equally weighted in peace agreements and their implementation, and that different aspects of the process are highly interconnected and interdependent. Understanding these nuances and political commitments is necessary to move the process forward. Ms Lehmann-Larsen emphasised the complementarity of different actors working on national dialogue processes, and the importance of identifying the added value each actor can bring. International community should give space for owners of national dialogue processes and give support only when requested. Dr Bah continued by stressing the importance of humility; we should not be afraid to say “I don’t know”. Coming with ready-made solutions will not be helpful. Complementarity is important, but it is not a strategy for national dialogues. Despite stressing their complementary role, external actors often come with ready-made solutions. The AU has a close relationship with Regional Economic Communities (REC), because they understand the nuances and are closer to the centre of gravity. In most cases, as a matter of principle, the AU wants the RECs to be the first responders, because the AU has had challenges with cooperation with the UN, usually in cases where there is a lot of international interest. In addition to Libya, Dr Bah mentioned Somalia, where “Mogadishu is pulled in all directions” with the competing interests of international community and Syria, where selective application of “responsibility to protect” (R2P) has undermined the principle. Dr Pospisil commented that there has been a change from the 1990s and early 2000s to R2P. Sovereignty has made a comeback, though the nature of sovereignty has changed since the Cold War. This can also be seen in national dialogue processes, which are less and less large, state-led processes, and instead increasingly localised and smaller scale. Ms Bazergan added a note on the UN and risk taking. As there are different interpretations in the Security Council about how matters relating to peace and conflict should be conducted, it is very difficult for the UN to manoeuvre between all the stances and possibilities. This takes, perhaps, more of an eye for creativity rather than risk taking measures to manage the totality of partnerships while getting peace processes forward.
The objective of the session was to explore the role of gender in the facilitation of dialogue processes with perspectives from dialogue stakeholders, practitioners and academia. The aim was to create a space to share good practices, reflect on challenges and foster a better understanding of how gender dynamics play out in peace processes and their facilitation. The discussion brought together third-party facilitators and process support actors, actors from a conflict context – from Yemen and Syria – who also facilitate at the community level and are part of facilitated negotiations.

The session started with presentation of three key components of facilitation and their gender dynamics to frame the discussion: (1) Actors – who are the people and what are the gender aspects – how it affects their negotiation behaviour and their conflict behaviours; (2) Content / issues / agenda – what are we talking about. How do men and women perceive this differently, and what is the differentiated impact? And (3) Process related aspects – design of the process – gender specificities of the process design and conceptual framework.

It was noted how gender impacted the negotiation behaviour in the Yemeni National Dialogue and how these aspects were taken into account by the dialogue facilitator. It was noted how the popular protests in 2011 paved the way for women's more prominent role in the public space. Despite the limitations of a society that does not traditionally allow women to participate or lead in the public sphere, women were part of designing
the political process with the support from international community that insisted on women's participation. As an example, the UN Special Envoy for Yemen insisted on parties upholding the 30% quota for women as a requirement for participating in the process. Women and young people had an urge to instil change, to be part of the process and to bring their issues to the negotiations table, such as raising the marital age. In the end, women were able to lead three out of nine groups of the national dialogue in Yemen. However, there was resistance to their role by certain conservative religious groups who sought to sideline women. They mobilised women of faith's support against women's leadership role as well as the quota by using religious justification. This resulted in tension between diverse women's groups. Following tense periods of consultations and negotiations, the women were able to reach unity. At the end, 30% quota in all decision-making bodies was agreed and the minimum age of marriage was raised to 18 years. In the constitutional committee there were four women who played a major role in ensuring that there were no loopholes left in the draft constitution in terms of women's rights. With the recent escalation of conflict, there is some concern that the progress made for women's rights is lost. Women in Yemen continue to fight for maintaining and advancing women's political rights. One avenue for this is the Women's Advisory Group to the UN Special Envoy for Yemen.

During the session experiences were shared both as a participant as well as a facilitator of dialogues. It was highlighted that in the Syrian context the success of the dialogue requires true understanding of facilitation, from process design, understanding of local dynamics to the role of the facilitator. Limited understanding of interests and conflict dynamics, despite otherwise technically sound facilitation, can be counter-productive. Moreover, quotas alone do not bring results, as inclusion needs to be balanced between elite and grassroots voices and perspectives. Currently there are number of dialogues initiated in Syria, but these need to be grounded in deep understanding of context. Women have advised the negotiating parties in the UN-facilitated political process about entry points for trust building. It was noted how the Women's Advisory Board (WAB) to the UN Special Envoy for Syria has been the only platform in the Geneva peace process where diverse elements of the society are around the same table to discuss a broad spectrum of issues. However, the negotiations in Geneva are not enough, but there need to be dialogues, facilitated by trained men and women, on the ground to ensure priorities from the ground inform the political process.

The importance of local knowledge and how substance drives the dialogue process design was emphasised. Different substance requires different structures, even within the same dialogue process. As a facilitator, it is important to rely on local knowledge and find people who can act as a compass in the context. Experiences from national dialogue process design from Lebanon, Myanmar, Nepal, South Africa and Syria were brought up, how women were involved in these processes and how women's participation influenced the agenda. As an example in Myanmar, while the majority of negotiators were men, women were able to influence the agenda by leveraging their facilitator role. In Lebanon, the lack of women's participation in the national dialogue on the impact of the Syrian crisis to Lebanon resulted in a limited, security-focused approach.

Also, a conceptual lens on gender coupled with experiences from working with conflict-affected populations was brought forward to the discussion. Different gender related concepts – gender, gender sensitive and intersectionality were unpacked: whether we like it or not, there are social constructions about roles and norms and behaviours. Gender sensitivity relates to how different things affect women and men differently. Intersectionality refers to the idea that gender alone does not affect a person's identity. We need to look at socioeconomic status, age, inter-generational aspects, and understand that gender is not a static but dynamic concept with varied connotations. Therefore, when designing gender sensitive processes, attention has to
be paid to how gender roles are changing. The design needs to be similarly agile. At the same time, gender sensitive design is also about accepting the differences between women and men. Examples were provided how women in the Middle East are leveraging these differences in dialogue processes. A need for redefining power and leadership was emphasised. Leadership and power come in different shapes and forms, and one person carries multiple roles and identities: “the woman stirring the food may be the woman stirring the whole village with her spoon”.

Much still needs to be done to ensure women’s meaningful participation. Without the political will of the UN Special Envoy for Syria the Women’s Advisory Board would have not been established. Different arguments for gender-sensitive processes exist, stemming from pragmatic arguments around increasing the effectiveness and efficiency of processes, to rights-based arguments. It was highlighted that at the end of the day, this is about justice and rights. If the process is designed by men, people should not be surprised the outcomes are patriarchal. Outcomes need to speak to the needs and priorities of women and men.

Matters of gender are some of the few aspects crossing across all geographic and other divides, and present some of the issues of shared interest and priority for people across the divides. Finally, some concrete recommendations on how to move from the normative to the pragmatic were provided. First, there must be understanding of the gendered and differentiated impact of conflict on men and women through a gendered conflict analysis. As an example, the issue of detainees in Syria is highly gendered, where male detainees are celebrated as heroes and female detainees are shamed. Second, facilitators and mediators need to be aware of mansplaining, i.e. especially men explaining things to women to appear knowledgeable or from the mistaken assumption that women have inferior understanding of the issue. Third, gender sensitive budgeting is crucial for ensuring women’s participation. This can entail for example budgeting for child’s travel to accompany the mother. Fourth, there must be a levelling out the playing field by raising gender awareness among key stakeholders. Finally, quotas alone are not enough, but a critical mass of women and feminists are needed.
Inside or outside of the room – and does it matter?
Re-thinking strategies and spaces for youth to mobilise for peace

**Moderator:** Ms Lumi Young, Coordinator, Youth, peace and security project, Allianssi

**Session speakers:**
- Mr Suchith Abeyewickreme, Interfaith Colombo & United Religions Initiative
- Ms Fatima Askira, Executive Director, Borno Women’s Development Initiative
- Mr Ahmed Hadji, Team Leader and Co-Founder, Uganda Muslim Youth Development Forum

**Main takeaways from the session:**
- The traditional set-up of development (short-term programmes that expect to get results in one year) rarely reach out to a wide number of young people but recycle through these programmes the same individuals that are usually palatable to UN, donors and government authorities.
- 2250 can learn from 1325 implementation by adopting the idea of “take what you have and use it to your advantage”. One such asset is using networks to advocate for resources and policies.
- Young people are heterogeneous, and as such it is important to employ a full range of civic action. Young people’s contributions to peace should be recognised instead of perceiving them as a problem, as is often done.
- Intergenerational dialogue and critical analysis of generational change and impact should be encouraged. Influencing the openness and points of views of elders and decision-makers through mutual mentorship is a way to foster peace and social and political transformation.
- Strategic partnerships, networks and alliances, both among young people as well as between young people and power-holders, are key for amplifying young people’s voices and increasing the diversity of voices who influence and are consulted in policies, programmes and decision-making.
The objective of this session was to expand the concept of national dialogues by interrogating the different formal and informal spaces in which dialogue happens, and how seeing these spaces can be bridged. The session explored examples where civil society has been able to create interlinkages between national, local and regional stakeholders and concrete ways in which different societal groups, in particular young people, mobilise for peace around national dialogues.

In Uganda young people want to engage with the conflict and peace framework; however, what is important for young people is the active and meaningful participation as well as recognition of their role in sustaining peace. The idea of social inclusion and the diversity of youth voices is critical; for example, the town hall approach is a good way to get young people’s ideas and policy proposals into the wider framework. As peace processes are often formal and exclusive, a new space needs to be created for young people that would be owned by them and would allow them to set up the agenda.

There has been a positive change in how youth inclusion has been addressed and talked about. The challenge, however, is that youth spaces are often not linked to the formal high-level processes. This requires active expanding of the scope of influence towards more official spaces and therefore, new ways to make an impact have to be created and innovated for the youth. The session also considered how the two resolutions, 2250 and 1325, could be brought together. In Nigeria the perceptions towards young women have changed – they can, for example, be suicide bombers or Boko Haram members. Therefore, women do not have access to all spaces in the same way as before. Moreover, in Nigeria, there are lots of young people working outside of the room that find heroism through violent extremism, through killing themselves. Narratives have to be changed so that the peacebuilders are seen as the real heroes.

There was also questioning of how to work in an environment where spaces are not transparent and are kept closed by the ruling elite? And how could young people push for transparency? Young people need to create their own spaces, but, for example in Sri Lanka, it is difficult when racism and hatred that has taken over. Examples were also given of interreligious dialogue. The youth groups go to religious places as a collective and the religious leaders have to address their demands for an inclusive society. Every mosque, every temple, every church etc. is also a space for peace and dialogue. Moreover, in order to cross sometimes challenging boundaries a reverse mentoring of religious leaders is needed – opening up a dialogue, asking for mentoring and trying to make it more open minded in return. Young people also need to be in spaces that are intergenerational, for example, Sri Lankan identity crisis needs an intergenerational approach, the elders will not have the imagination to make the “identity jump”. In Uganda young people have increasingly been seen as a threat. There is a growing trust deficit that limits the intergenerational dialogue, e.g. in the interreligious community the trust issues are evident. Young people in Uganda don’t trust religious or political institutions and in turn there is failure to recognise the potential of young people for economic and social transformation.

When it comes to resolution 2250, it should be linked to actual issues and focus on empowerment, not only on education. Many questions and challenges remain when it comes to social movements, e.g. social media, fake news and the spread of misinformation. It was noted that the Ugandan government sees resolution 2250 as an international document coming from the outside. When young people are invited in formal spaces, the invitation is provided to those who government officials know and who will speak the language they are comfortable with. Also, the development community “keeps recycling the same young people”. Instead, young people themselves are able to create social movements and use arts, stand-up comedy etc. to counter the hostile narratives. More resources should be invested in finding more creative ways to sustain peace and create the next generation of peacebuilders;
young people need to open the spaces and be the force for radical change in the societies. The meeting also asked what can resolutions 1325 and 2250 learn from each other? In the past 3-4 years 1325 implementation has become more visible, e.g. powerful women at the AU level have formed networks to push for a change. 2250 can learn from 1325 to use those resources that you have, even small ones, and use those to push for change. The African Women Leaders’ Network in Nigeria can amplify the voices and needs of women and make an actual impact on influencing policy changes through advocacy. It was also emphasised that when it comes to these two resolutions the link to the real issues and concerns is missing.

Finally, there was discussion of how to reconcile negative perceptions of young people and to make sure more people are included, not only those who are palatable to donors, decision-makers and power-holders. Firstly, the heterogeneity of young people should be emphasised. Moreover, attempts should be made to change narratives about young people e.g. in media and avoid exclusion in every possible way. The small initiatives by young people need to be recognised. Governments should not see the young people as a threat but understand that they also want to contribute to society and that the voices of the young people on the grass roots level need to be brought into the room. A full spectre of civic action is needed: hold spaces where conversations happen and create spaces for young people, both radical and non-radical, to come together and have dialogue. There is a need to address the effect of exclusion that drives young people to violence. We should be able to help young people reflect on the possible existing injustices and help them verbalise them.
The session looked at Kenya as an interesting case for innovation in the National Dialogue arena. It is a case of an eco-system of multiple National Dialogue processes that take place in parallel, leading towards a joint overall objective of change; this allows various initiatives' ownership in the process, while it is not steered by any one coordinating entity. While this kind of a setting is often difficult to steer, there are opportunities to be found.

Election-related instability has resurfaced in Kenya time and time again, tearing the country apart especially in 2007 and 2008. Kenya presents a non-traditional, highly complex and non-linear challenge to the concept of sustainable peace. The peace agreement of 2008 in Kenya has proven quite multifaceted. While it has seen both continued renegotiation and attempted implementation, it hasn't ended the regularly recurring issue of election-related violence. Renegotiation has been both formal — with both government and civil society being represented in discussions — and informal. This variety in approaches has nevertheless been unsuccessful in upholding stability and peace. Recently, in March 2018 the Building Bridges Initiative, a deal signed by President Uhuru Kenyatta and his main opposition counterpart, Mr Raila Odinga, started a government led National Dialogue conversation. At the same time, different peacebuilding, human rights, women's, religious and youth groups have started separate National Dialogue processes.

National dialogues in Kenya as a contribution to violence prevention and sustaining peace

**Moderator:** Dr Thania Paffenholz, Director, Inclusive Peace, Geneva and Project Leader, Kenya Dialogue Support Project of Inclusive Peace

**Session speakers:**
- Rev Dr Samuel Kobia, Senior Advisor on Cohesion, Peace and Conflict Resolution, Office of the President
- Ms Florence Mpaayei, Kenyan Civil Society Leader, Hekima Institute of Peace Studies and International Relations
- Ms Roseline Odede, Federation of Women Lawyers in Kenya FIDA and Advisor to the Dialogue Reference Group of the joint religious actors of Kenya
- Prof Adams Oloo, Senior Lecturer, Department of Political Science & Public Administration, University of Nairobi, and Panel Member of the official BBI (Bridge Building Initiative)

**Main takeaways from the session:**
- There are many challenges along the way to the next elections in 2022. However, there is a suitable overall political environment to engage in dialogue and violence prevention work.
- There is a growing anti-political sentiment in Kenya stemming from widespread corruption, criminal impunity, and poor and elitist governance. Prior to the 2022 elections the focus should be on enhancing citizen participation in the dialogue as well as strengthening good and trustworthy leadership. People’s trust in politics has to be restored, since without trust durable peace and stability will be difficult to achieve.
- The current constitution, resulted through the national dialogue process, is a highly valuable legal document and the focus prior to 2022 elections should be in its implementation. Its flaws and imperfections are acknowledged, but they do not render it inadequate.
- In order to unite the Kenyans, the soul of the nation needs to be restored. This could be realised through the formation of a national ethos, something the people can believe in, have faith in, and which they are ready to defend.

The session looked at Kenya as an interesting case for innovation in the National Dialogue arena. It is a case of an eco-system of multiple National Dialogue processes that take place in parallel, leading towards a joint overall objective of change; this allows various initiatives’ ownership in the process, while it is not steered by any one coordinating entity. While this kind of a setting is often difficult to steer, there are opportunities to be found.
Although there is a suitable overall political environment to engage in Dialogue and Violence Prevention work, there are many challenges along the way to the next elections in 2022. The hope has been expressed to hold on to already existing agreements, and not make new deals at this point. Implementation, on the other hand, is needed, demonstrated especially in Kenya’s relatively new constitution, as well as in internal devolution. The constitution is a formidable piece of legislation and good enough to be implemented as it is, though it leaves many important things out and could be argued to have been somewhat rushed.

How could a sustainable peace be attained that would exist for longer than the election period? Concerns have been expressed, inter alia, about the reformation of the corrupted police forces, the disbanding of criminal groups, as well as organised militias that support certain political entities. A non-cohesive approach to cohesion has taken place and the culture of impunity has continued when it comes to criminality, that includes murder, rape, and forced displacement. Victims are often able to identify the perpetrators, but justice has not been met, which can lead to further violence. A lack of coordination also exists in all directions, both horizontally and vertically. This makes it impossible for different parties to be aware of each other’s concerns, interests, and thoughts. Political subculture has also seen decreasing interest in electoral participation, as voters become more and more disenchanted.

In the spirit of implementing the 2008 agreement, the Dialogue Reference Group (DRG) has worked to ensure that the killings of supporters of the opposition side would be prevented. The DRG has had engaged in discussion both with the opposition and the ruling party and has brought them together. However, troubles flamed up again after the 2017 elections. Religious groups, on the other hand, have demonstrated their power to have more inclusive, cross-party disclosure. Indeed, more rigorous, local-level participation should be formed to make decisions more inclusive and well-informed. Nairobi-led decisions cannot be currently seen to represent the views of Kenya as a whole.

However, there is a huge potential to make a difference in Kenya. The heterogeneity of communities and identities and the divergences between national, religious and nationalistic views should be appreciated and seen as an asset in achieving a lasting peace. Despite some successes demonstrating the possible value of an external mediator, such as Kofi Annan, most mediation attempts don’t succeed because they fail to include the society, not excluding the real violators and offenders, to the process so that they would feel ownership of it. It was also stressed during the session that women continue to be marginalised, even though the constitution regulates their representation. This negatively affects other marginalised groups as well, because the exclusion of one group often leads to exclusion of others. Concern over increasing anti-political sentiment was echoed during the discussion – widespread corruption and poor governance were seen as key reasons behind the huge frustration amongst people. The focus should also be on enhancing inclusion as well as good and trustworthy leadership and on avoiding elitism and biased agendas guiding the process. Elite and ethnic-driven processes and politics tend to leave the average citizen and his or her needs and views in the shadows.

It was summarised during the session that in order to unite Kenyans, the soul of the nation needs to be restored. This could be realised through the formation of a national ethos, something the people can believe in, have faith in, and which they are ready to defend. This kind of a need to strengthen national identity has risen also before in Kenyan history, always at a time of crisis. The nation has had to ask itself who it is, what it believes in, how those beliefs can be accomplished, and how it can remain truthful to itself. These instances occurred in 1969, 2002, and 2010 – upon gaining independence, through a new leadership, and with the enact-
ment of the constitution, respectively. The year 2002 saw Kenyans as the happiest people in the world, as a sentiment of renewal and hope surged through the country. Now the focus in Kenya has to be on having revived faith and trust in the future and on inclusive national discussion and dialogue that would lead to durable peace and stability in the country.
The Yemeni National Dialogue Conference: Moving forward after four years of conflict and regional involvement

**Moderator:** Ms Sama’a Al-Hamdani, Researcher and Analyst

**Session speakers:**
- H.E. Yasser Abdullah Al-Raeeini, Minister of State for Implementing the National Dialogue Outcomes in the Yemeni Government
- Mr Baraa Shiban, Yemeni expert and political analyst
- Ms Maysaa Shuja al-Deen, Researcher and Writer

**Key takeaways from the session:**
- Inclusivity comes at a cost. In the case of Yemen, it led to a very high number of outcomes, often broad and unrealistic, which are difficult to implement.
- In comparison, the ongoing negotiations are very high-level, taking place between the internationally recognised government and Ansar Allah, with a dominant role for the UN and some member states.
- In lieu of a large national process, there may be greater benefits in having several localised dialogues that better reflect the needs and demands of the people in the various governorates.
- The known main issues and solutions in the Yemeni National Dialogue Conference should be reactivated and reassessed with the goal of establishing a framework for the constitution.

The objective of this session was to understand to which extent the current conflict and the regional involvement has changed the validity of the outcomes and the implications of the Yemen National Dialogue in 2013—2014, and to explore how to build on, and effectively implement, the outcomes of the National Dialogue in a post-conflict phase.

The Yemeni National Dialogue Conference (NDC) in 2013 and 2014 came at a pivotal time because change was within the realms of possibility. The NDC was not perfect, but it was far more inclusive than any other processes that Yemen had seen before. The NDC widened the political players by including youth, women, and representatives from various governorates such as Mahra etc. In comparison, the ongoing negotiations only take place between the internationally recognised government and Ansar Allah, with a dominant role for the UN and some member states such as the United Kingdom. The inclusiveness was limited by the fact that the government never made any efforts towards becoming inclusive and representative of all the groups that have been involved in political processes or in the NDC. The NDC also created an elite that continues to be appointed by the government. The inclusiveness also has some downsides, as it led to the outcomes becoming very broad and sometimes unrealistic. The high number of outcomes will also lead to difficulties in implementing them. Though being less inclusive, previous efforts of dialogue and negotiations in Yemen, such as in 1994 and 2010 – without the UN umbrella – were more focused and realistic.

Other issues with the NDC were first the fact that the main sources of conflict were not tackled properly, such as the issue of the South, the Sadaa issue, transitional justice and decentralisation (despite 70% living in rural areas) and federalism. The latter was one of the most contentious issues, but still only discussed inside a timeframe of two weeks. Other key issues, such as the economy, were also not addressed. It should also be emphasised that the process should not focus too much on the tools and methodologies, but on the substance of the dialogue. In the end, the NDC was a process to assist Yemenis to identify the future state of Yemen and its institutions.
There were also several procedural errors, such as the President of the state also being the president of the NDC (although as a representative of the General People’s Congress), as well as the lack of transparency in the selection criteria for the various NDC Committees. Furthermore, the Gulf Cooperation Council went from being a broker to becoming a part of the conflict. The change of policy was largely due to the rise of Mohammed Bin Salman in Saudi Arabia, as King Abdullah had previously tried to reduce the Saudi involvement in Yemen. The Gulf Cooperation Council could not play a constructive role at this stage due to its heavy involvement in the conflict.

The main issues and solutions in the NDC are still valid, but they would need to be reactivated and reassessed. This would then, as initially intended, establish the framework for the constitution and need to be approved by referendum. Today there’s a need for a discussion, solutions and funds to address the economic situation and sustainable development at local and national level, as well as the strengthening of state institutions. Moreover, a need exists for another NDC because of all the new actors that have emerged in Yemen that have new priorities and demands, such as the Southern Transitional Council and actors in Mareb and Hadramawt. The new NDC could take place in the shape of several local dialogues rather than a broader national process, which would better address the needs and demands of the people and build trust from the bottom up.
National Dialogue – A role in bridging Libya’s complex transition?

**Moderator:** Dr Edward Marques, the Interim Head of Middle East and North Africa Programmes, CMI

**Session speakers:**
- Mr Fadel M. Lamen, Director General, National Economic and Social Development Board & Chairman, National Dialogue Commission
- Ms Azza Maghur, Lawyer, Maghur & Partners
- Mr Moulay Qudaidi, Head of Social Council of Tuareg in Libya
- Dr Rida Al Tubuly, Founder and Director, Together We Build it

**Main takeaways from the session:**
- National dialogues continue to be the best suited method for inclusive conversation.
- Long distances, competition for oil, weak administration and democracy, local ownership and legitimacy, hate speech and extremism, and militias are some of the most pressing issues facing Libya.
- Exclusion of women and marginalisation of South-Libya must be changed for the better, and tribal representatives and their relations must be accounted for in national dialogue processes. Though the Libyan conflict has been worsened by external interference, international support is still needed for example in building of democratic institutions, inclusion and risk management.

The session aimed to explore whether national dialogue could and should still play a role in the complex conflict Libya faces, and what challenges should be overcome for it to succeed. The country is faced with many levels of division and mistrust, but also a deep desire to improve the national project.

Libya has historical issues of long distances between urban centres, competition over the oil, and weakness in the administrative system that the country has not been able to resolve. Moreover, current conflicts reflect the long shadow of dictatorship, which was not conducive to political participation and power sharing. After the
fall of the dictatorship, the focus was pinpointed overly on elections and constitution writing, and these first steps proved to be too hasty. Instead, national dialogue should have been prioritised to first build common ground. National dialogue agendas between 2013 and 2014 have included natural resource management, local governance and economic diversification, which are key questions for Libya's future. Though national dialogue attempts are steps towards positive direction, the dialogue in the national level has been overshadowed by the international/UN track, and there is a need for increased national ownership and strengthening of local legitimacy. The question of who are involved around the peace tables is an extremely important question since experience has shown that some of the models of the formal process have not worked. Libya requires a clear plan, to avoid full scale conflict and to retain at least the minimum level of democracy.

The next steps in Libya should address both aspirations and fears and pacify the regional and international involvement in the conflict. Good intentions and readiness to compromise are the key, and while we face the factor of unpredictability, national dialogues are best-suited to address the need for inclusive conversation. Historically there has been a pattern in Libya, whereby long efforts towards political agreement are followed by a rapid collapse to war. The role of militias is central to this problem, as a fledgling democracy cannot withstand strong militias. Building and maintaining democracy takes a lot of work and dialogue, and the isolation law and exclusion of the other side have been very problematic from this perspective. Another difficult issue in Libya is hate speech, which is thriving especially among the youth. In order to resist hate speech, Libya should initiate peace education to counter all the damage done by years of continuous conflict.

The south of Libya has suffered in particular from marginalisation and neglect, and this has led to growing numbers of weapons, extremist activity, weak borders and lack of development and institutionalisation of rights. The international community bears responsibility in these issues. However, while the south has been marginalised in many processes, there have been a number of local reconciliation committees that have successfully addressed tribal conflicts and ceasefires. Importantly, neutral (and local) third parties are used to secure the agreements. Tribal representatives have also advised the national dialogue council, to prepare the basis and framework for dialogue among Libyans. Transitional justice is also an important factor in resolving many inter-tribal issues. This process has been promising but requires more work in the future.

Though Libyan conflicts are made more complex by external interference at both local and national level, Libya should still be considered as part of the international community. The UN has had a foundational role in Libya's history all the way since its establishment in 1951. However, the international community should show wisdom in their support to the Libyans, as the country still does not have experienced politicians, of which some – to make matters worse – are disingenuous or with malicious intent. Libya would have needed wise support to avoid the events of past years, especially in fields such as organising successful elections, inclusion and awareness of the risks related to weapons and armed groups. The UN and the international community need to show leadership also on women's empowerment and inclusion because these efforts have previously failed.
The role of regional organisations in fostering inclusive, cross-border dialogue – the case of the Lake Chad Basin

**Moderator:** Ms Johanna Poutanen, Head, Women in Peacemaking, CMI

**Session speakers:**
- Ms Fatima Askira, Executive Director, Borno Women’s Development Initiative
- Dr Alhaji Sarjoh Bah, Head of Conflict Management and Post-Conflict Reconstruction Division, African Union
- Mr Boubakari Mana, Technical Director of Lake Chad Basin Commission

**Main takeaways from the session:**
- Due to the multitude and diversity of actors in the region, it would be important to conduct a careful mapping of all actors, their roles and approaches to allow a sufficient coordination of activities by relevant regional entities. It is challenging for regional entities to track the status of all ongoing initiatives.
- The sovereignty of member states at times poses challenges to the ability of regional organisations to make decisions and implement due to lack of readiness of national governments to delegate power to regional entities.
- The potential politicisation of processes poses a risk to their efficiency, which calls for careful mitigation. The regional organisations play a key role in accompanying the stabilisation process to ensure continued political will and support the maintenance of momentum.
- Securing sufficient long-term resourcing and ensuring capacities is also essential for sustainability, appropriate pace and inclusivity.

The session discussed the recent regional approaches taken to address the multidimensional and transnational challenges experienced in the Lake Chad Basin (LCB) region. Persistent security issues mostly owing to the so-called Boko Haram insurgency, competition for limited resources such as water, climate-change related threats to sustaining livelihoods, and consequent humanitarian loss and displacement, are among the multiple interlinked issues faced by the communities in the region.

In 2018, the African Union (AU) and the regional Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC) jointly developed a Regional Stabilisation Strategy (RSS) for the Lake Chad Basin, which aims to address the root causes of the current crisis and highlights the need for regional dialogue, cooperation and the engagement of civil society. The RSS is articulated around nine pillars of intervention and will be operationalised through a set of Territorial Action Plans for the eight so-called Boko Haram-affected key areas in the LCB which are tailoring the strategy’s peacebuilding objectives to local contextual needs.

As envisioned in the RSS, the Lake Chad Basin Governors’ Forum, coupled with an extensive stakeholder consultation process in Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria, was pioneered in 2018. Its establishment specifically stemmed from the identification of areas that required regional measures beyond military efforts: human security, governance and development. The LCB Governors’ Forum is at the centre of the regional dialogue efforts, uniquely contributing to enhanced collaboration and concrete recommendations. Other measures envisage confidence-building between the diverse group of relevant stakeholders, including civil society and...
traditional and religious leaders, and especially women and youth. The approach is inclusive in bringing in a variety of perspectives from bottom-up and in engaging different governance and language systems from within the region.

The role of the LCBC as a regional body regarding the RSS is mainly related to supporting the capacity- and relationship-building between its member states, along with supporting the regional structures for dialogue. It communicates policy recommendations regarding the crisis to national governments and the international community and supports the sharing of best practices and mutual experiences among the concerned national actors in the region.

The added value of the AU as a continental organisation in the LCB context relates to the work with its member states, sub-regional organisations and civil society towards ensuring a common understanding of and vision vis-à-vis the challenges, helping build ownership, and enhance strategic dialogue and political cooperation between concerned parties. While regional organisations are in a key position to accompany the institutionalisation of regional dialogue platforms and the establishment and fostering of shared values within the national actors in the region, strong local and national ownership and understanding of the realities on the ground is essential to achieving legitimate and sustainable regional approaches.

Regional organisations also play an important role in ensuring mutual accountability in stabilisation processes, through accompanying the establishment of appropriate monitoring mechanisms.

The institutionalised involvement of civil society actors and local populations via the envisaged Regional Civil Society Platform is key to ensuring that relevant local constituencies feed into the decision-making processes of inclusive dialogue at different levels (local, national, regional). This is also seen as a way to build trust between civil society and governments. It is important to ensure that the civil society actors involved have the possibility to process the appropriate information at the appropriate time. Civil society also holds a key role in monitoring that implementation is according to commitments made at higher political level. The inclusion of often marginalised groups, such as women and youth, is particularly important to provide for needs-based approaches and their sustainability.

Regional organisations play a key role in supporting structures that reinforce the participation of civil society in regional dialogue processes. The establishment of the Lake Chad Basin Governors’ Forum and Civil Society Platform contribute to innovative dialogue processes and inclusion and bottom-up participation in decision-making processes on regional stabilisation and peacebuilding. Civil society representatives are to participate in the envisaged Joint Steering Committee for the RSS. In addition to civil society and traditional and religious leaders, mechanisms for the inclusion of the private sector and the media are being designed.

Enhancing the participation of women requires the mapping of key stakeholders, their approaches and the appropriate means to include women in the process. Designing a Gender Policy would secure the space needed for dialogue including the voices of women relevant to the process.
What should a Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Somalia look like?

Moderator: Mr Johan Svensson, Peace & Reconciliation Advisor, Embassy of Sweden in Somalia

Session speakers:
- Mr Jama Egal, Consultant in the Ministry for Interior, Federal Affairs and Reconciliation, Somalia
- Ms Sadia Elmi, Delivery and Performance Management, the Ministry for Interior, Federal Affairs and Reconciliation, Somalia
- Ms Rowda Olad, Founder and clinical director of Maandeeq Mental Health without Borders, Somalia
- Mr Osman Moallim, Executive Director of Somali Youth Development Network

Main takeaways from the session:
- Neither top down nor bottom up approaches suffice in the Somalian context. For example, it is difficult to start from the bottom if there is no higher-level guarantor or the security situation is unstable. Regardless, local level consultations are needed.
- A good starting point is to focus on truth telling, after which accountability, forgiveness, acknowledgement, healing and trust-building should follow. Restoring relationships, returning properties, establishing mental health services and returning from exile are important milestones in the process of reconciliation. The international community should let Somalia to have the ownership over the truth and reconciliation process and merely support the country in this endeavour.
- A central challenge for the truth and reconciliation process is that traditional culture relating to reconciliation, which could help in the national healing process, has deteriorated in the civil war.
- Despite the deterioration of traditional systems, many still have faith more in them than in the government, where people with criminal backgrounds are often in power and clan-affiliation is a dominant factor. The TRC’s independence has been questioned as well, as its members are drawn from clan affiliated parliament and security sector.
- Despite the many challenges, the timing for a truth and reconciliation process is ripe since there is now some level of stability in the country.
The aim of this session was on sharing expertise, lessons learnt from past processes and technical guidance in designing the process for establishment of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission for Somalia. This requires a special focus on the inclusiveness of such a process, the realisation of human rights and the utilisation of dialogue and consultation in the process design, while taking into account the local context of Somalia. The session brought together representatives of the government of Somalia, civil society actors and international support actors.

The Federal Government of Somalia approved the National Reconciliation Framework in March 2019. The comprehensive document consists of five central pillars and it paves way for reconciliation activities throughout the country. One of the pillars addresses the acknowledgement of and dealing with the past, which is the basis for the process of establishing a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) or similar structure mindful of the local contexts in the country. The process for establishing a TRC is still at the planning stage, and many questions are still open, such as whether it concentrates on political or social sphere and who it will consist of. Regardless, it is important for the TRC to enable sharing stories and developing mechanisms to forgive and to bring different sectors of community together. The most important aspect is Somalian ownership in the process.

Implementing a TRC to the context of Somalian society and culture, while at the same time reflecting international standards, is a challenging task. In overall, the concept of restorative justice has strong roots in Somalia due to its culture and Islamic concepts, and these could be utilised in a TRC. Unfortunately, there are great many issues to hinder the success of a TRC. These include weaknesses in societal systems such as trust and legitimacy, in the security environment, the exclusivity of the societal environment, clan affiliation, power imbalance and weak legal system. Additionally, external actors and stakeholders affect the process, complicating it further.

One way to get forward is to learn from past processes. The session made comparisons to South Africa, Kenya and Sierra Leone. The blueprint for the Somali TRC is similar to the South African example, but at the moment Somalian officials are also interested in the example of Sierra Leone, where the efforts have been very well localised. Kenya's example offers a TRC with a wider mandate to enact reconciliation activities. However, while these ideas could prove helpful in Somalia, one should be aware of failures in history as well. It should also be emphasised that a TRC is a western model, and it should be asked whether it is truly what Somalia needs for a sense direction and unification. It has worked to an extent in South Africa, Kenya and Sierra Leone, but is it the case in Somalia? Somalia has its own rich culture of reconciliation, and though these practices have eroded during the civil war, especially among the youth, it would be only sensible to make efforts to revive and use them in this difficult task. However, contrary to this, a point was put forth that oral tradition is particularly strong in Somalia, and therefore a TRC and other frameworks – coming from written tradition – could help systematise the process. It is also easier to contribute to the process if there is a basis on which to add or comment.

Addressing trauma is another key factor in reconciliation in Somalia. The civil war naturally had an enormous impact on Somali society, and it affected all walks of life with high levels of trauma. It affects not just political or societal, but family relations as well, and therefore political institutions do not suffice since they do not properly address the deep-cut trauma and victimisation. To address these core issues, construction of mental health services is needed. They should address identity, both victims and perpetrators, and a sense of justice should be achieved in the process. The implementation of mental health services is difficult while resources are low and the stigma relating to mental illness predominates. Raising awareness is an important activity to address both these problems. Social stigma can be addressed by educating people about the issue, and politics can be advo-
cated to better understand that mental health affects other societal fields as well, including the security sector which is often considered the first and foremost priority. The ‘do no harm’ principle should be kept in mind in order not to re-traumatise those impacted by the civil war, but more professionals are needed for this end. The resources are alarmingly low compared to the crying need. There is also a need for best practices and ethical guidelines for conduct in the Somalian context.

Since the civil war in Somalia, civil society has had a critical role, and it has filled the gaps left by the weak or altogether collapsed government. Political conflict within the federal structure and power sharing structure based in the four main clans is prone to jeopardise progress, and for this reason local level is a very important driving force, to which civil society organisations (CSOs) have an access. The peace process and the TRC are no exceptions to this, as CSOs have participated in their creation. The discussion and issues at the grassroots need an environment in which to sit down and talk, where there is restraint of the cycle of violence and war trauma and the chance to build positive peace. CSOs can help in the inclusion of people that are otherwise easily left out, including women, the young and rural population. The inclusion of women is particularly important since they play central role in Somali society, and thus it does not make sense to exclude them from such a key process as the truth and reconciliation process.
B. New Technologies in support of national dialogues

Peacetech – does it live up to the hype?

*Keynote speaker:* Mr Salem Avan, Director of Global Services Division, United Nations

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

*Panel:*
- 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

*Main takeaways from the session:*
- The use of technology and data is no longer a choice in peace mediation since they affect processes regardless. Tools and methods such as machine learning, sentiment analysis, blockchain and modelling are far too big of an opportunity to disregard.
- To unlock the potential of peacetech, it is important to bring together the problems and the efforts to solve them. Ready-made and linear solutions rarely work so the context and the owners of processes should determine the issues and needs. The users' engagement is a central challenge to ensure that the tools are actually being used.
- Spoilers of peace processes are willing to take risks in the digital realm whereas peace practitioners are typically averting risks. This leads to an asymmetry of responsibility, and therefore the capacity to answer the challenge of the spoilers should be strengthened.
- Other challenges are cyber-colonialism (imperialist tendency to control the use and flow of information for their own benefit) and ethical considerations such as potential lack of inclusion and ownership and the non-neutral nature of technology. All these factors, if not properly taken under consideration, can lead to problems.
- Solving problems requires resources, and to this end they should be directed more towards peacetech.
The objective of this session was 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. The keynote and the panel are reviewed below.

In his keynote, Mr Salem Avan noted that the linkage between technology and human development has been long recognised, and as the importance and centrality of technology elsewhere in the society grows, the practice of peacebuilding, too, should follow. There are many different fields and issues where peacetech and the many tools it represents are relevant. The cyber security field has changed the geopolitical landscape and lowered the barrier for conflict. Artificial intelligence and machine learning are being applied to identify complex patterns and potential triggers, in addition to better understanding social media and human interaction within it. The cost of conflict can be illustrated in a defensible way. Sentiment analysis, blockchain and modelling all provide their own approaches and solutions to the table. According to Mr Avan, the use of technology and data is no longer a choice in peace mediation, as it influences peace and security, engages and disengages people and creates stability and instability regardless. Technology is changing the tempo in which human engagement is occurring, and as a result, the timeline between peace and conflict is shrinking. Technology also continues to create asymmetry, as conflicts see less and less about states fighting other states while other actors are increasing their significance.

In the panel discussion the opportunities and risks of peacetech were particularly scrutinised. Mr Avan started by pointing out that technology helps to understand the landscape we operate in and it has the ability to overcome the asymmetry in a way that everyone involved in a peace process has an equal footing to assess information, which enables effective peace dialogue and mediation. Relating to this, both Dr Andreas Hirblinger and Ms Talia Hagerty emphasised peacetech’s importance in facilitating inclusion, building trust and empowering people. On the other hand, as noted by Ms Hagerty, aggregating and assessing data can also increase the impact in people’s lives, with the caveat that technology can very well be used to further opposite objectives as well, such as terrorism and cyber-crime. Dr Hirblinger added that as technology itself is not neutral, it can affect processes in an unexpected manner as well, and this is something for which we must adapt.

Another aspect of peacetech is the question of how to get people to engage and familiarise themselves with new methods, tools and ways of thinking, and how to connect the supply and demand of peacetech. Technology developers could create the most ingenious tools that are based on actual need, but if the peace practitioners are not engaged with their use the development of the tool has been a waste of resources. Ms Hagerty pointed out that there are two ways of looking at this. On one hand, people often do not know the need or lack of something in their work before it is demonstrated to them, so there might be some room for a proactive approach for the supply of peacetech. On the other hand, peacetech’s purpose is to solve practical problems, and for that end, the problems and demand for the solutions should always come first. Mr Avan added that the ecosystem for supply and demand of peacetech is unbalanced, since the context is so messy. There are a great many solutions to a plethora of problems, but these do not result in coordinated efforts to utilise technology in the most effective way. This was supported by Dr Hirblinger’s research, according to which technology is not used equally among different fields of peace work, and smaller organisations are often using technology more proactively than larger ones. Scaling up and increasing efforts for integration are also major challenges in the ecosystem. Therefore, there is work to do in developing a working ecosystem which brings together all the necessary efforts to solve problems in all their complexity, as envisaged by Mr Avan. A key question is how to reach a nexus where complex problems and suitable solutions meet in a point of mutual understanding.
The ethical considerations regarding peacetech are numerous as well. There is no universal approach to how technology is being used, and therefore the issues stem widely from language barriers, gender inclusivity, internet infrastructure and privacy to changing power dynamics and the lack of representation and mandates, as listed by Dr Hirblinger. As an example, people’s representation and ownership can be jeopardised if we resort to analysis of open data, and disregard conventional forms of participation. Mr Avan continued with a remark that it is an open question who determines the ethics, since legal structures largely lag behind in the physical world, often leaving much room for companies to determine what is acceptable. These issues should not, however, hinder the progress made possible by technology, as pointed out by Ms Hagerty. Ethics could be thought of more pragmatically as a way to increase the ownership of the solutions, which in turn can lead to greater implementation of technology in communities.

In the future, Mr Avan expects technology to be increasingly applied for and against peace, since the contemporary world is largely tied to it. Ms Hagerty added that an important starting point for the way ahead would be correcting the imbalance of resources, which are overwhelmingly directed towards activities that are incompatible with peace. Much remains to be done for example in gender disparity and in capacity-building. Dr Hirblinger concluded with a remark that even though technology will surely be increasingly applied in national dialogues, peace mediation and peacebuilding, some underlining issues cannot successfully be tackled with technology, and therefore the more conventional sphere of peacebuilding should not be disregarded. However, a lot has been done in the field of technology, and these efforts and the knowledge they bring still need consolidation and distribution to the peacebuilding field.

Where do you think peacetech would be the most useful?

- In conflict analysis
- In engagement with the parties
- In promoting inclusivity
- In strategic communications

Did you knowledge on peacetech increase during the conference?

- Yes
- No

Results from the conference polls.
National Dialogue in the age of digital media

Moderator: Mr Matthias Wevelsiep, Development Manager – Digital Transition, FCA

Session speakers:
- Mr Ahmed Hadji, Team Leader and Co-Founder, Uganda Muslim Youth Development Forum
- Mr Sanjana Hattotuwa, Researcher, University of Otago (via video link)
- Ms Achol Jok Mach, Specialist, PeaceTech Lab Africa
- Mr Jukka Niva, Head of Yle News Lab, Finnish Broadcasting Company

Main takeaways from the session:
- There are no longer differences between digital and traditional media, and we are currently living in the age of “hybrid media”. Dialogues and discussions around (political) events are fluid and they are affected by group dynamics and merging conversations.
- We should not speak about one national conversation, since many conversations are taking place at various levels of the society and usually in multiple languages.
- The actors and institutions running the national dialogues should know the local context and (political) situations, engage various local actors to the process as well as know what to communicate, when and to whom.
- Top down processes might create (new) conflicts and poor communication or knowledge of the context may cause new exclusions and tensions.
- Poor media literacy skills and social media algorithms may have impacts on the dialogues, and in digital media some voices might be underrepresented as not all have equal resources and equal access on the Internet. In many (digital) platforms women have remained underrepresented and they are, in many cases, the ones who are attacked in social media discussions.
The objective of this session was to discuss and clarify the role of digital media in national dialogue processes as an increasingly important component in dialogue ecosystem. Moreover, the session aimed at identifying recommendations on how to better utilise digital media in dialogue processes and, on the other hand, prevent risks linked to it. The session combined academic and practical insight to create a comprehensive picture of the topic.

Digital media can be difficult to grasp because it is part of, and to some extent a constituent of, larger media ecologies, where the fluid dynamics of hybrid media take place. Merging conversations, parallel dialogues occur in many languages while the media platforms themselves are becoming merged with traditional media using social media and the line between news media and other forms of information sharing are becoming fuzzy. Both traditional and new media are increasingly consumed via mobile phones and the many social media platforms. Digital media in national dialogues can be tackled, first, by interacting and participating in its platforms and, second, by analysing its contents. Interaction via digital media has a potential for powerful impact due to its scale. On the other hand, hate speech and polarising input have increased their prominence in societal discussion, which is another reason to strengthen positive alternatives to counter their prominence. However, one should keep in mind that hybrid media ecosystems are not limited to digital media. Radio broadcasting, for example, can have an even better reach, for example in rural areas, where people may not have the necessary infrastructure and where literacy rates may be low.

To analyse and understand the conversations and local media realities, we need to understand the context where they take place. Various tools and methods can help different viewpoints and discussions to be more visible. For example, visualising the most used words or hashtags and comparing the used language between different groups can help uncover the key message, and understand the situation and stances of different groups. Hateful terms and targeting practice in social media can be mapped and isolated for further analysis.

Interaction in digital media.

It is important to maintain the viability and credibility of the national dialogue process, and to that end it is paramount to communicate to a wide audience about its developments. When developing a media campaign or communications strategy, there are some cornerstones to keep in mind:

- Accurate information
- Action to make the line between news and fake news explicit
- Mobilising common voices against forces of radicalisation etc.
- Conflict sensitive approach
- Privacy policies
- Knowledge of different ecosystems, risks and contexts
- Local ownership

Another useful principle is not to be limited to high-tech solutions. Radio broadcasting in Eastern Africa have proved an effective medium to reach people – including those who are illiterate. This, of course, can be also a problem, since it is difficult to verify information if you are illiterate, and this can amplify the spreading of rumours. However, when radio is broadcasted by a trusted actor and it is done right, it can spread positive message widely and in local languages. It can also topple radicalisation among the population.

Nonetheless, digital media widens the reach significantly, and it may be a primary source for some of the younger
audiences and urban people, for instance. Still, people should be educated on the new media ecosystem because common user is not very well aware of mis- and disinformation or how algorithms and online trolling, for instance, work. It does not help that in order to get visibility, the message needs to be engaging, which usually means pre-digested and often polarised views. The conversation is also often led by small groups and from outside of the communities, which can result in manipulation and exclusion instead of diversity of voices.

Government officials could sometimes benefit from education as well, since they often portray social media solely as an enemy and a threat, thus dismissing it altogether.

How to avoid negative consequences?

Digital media is at the same time both an opportunity and a risk. While digital media increases risks, it also presents an unprecedented source for analysis. New tools and skills are needed to meet the challenge and guide national dialogue processes to a more knowledge-based direction which may mitigate the risks that come with digital media landscape. Here are some general principles that would be good to follow to avoid negative consequences:

- Study situations and contexts
- Start with local actors; how they communicate and interact
- Know what you want to communicate and to whom
- Be aware that it is not one conversation, but multiple conversations taking place at different levels of the society
- Remember national ownership

Lastly, it should be emphasised that tech companies should be included to discuss these issues instead of discussing them in isolation among NGOs, owners, etc. Tech companies dominate the private sphere and have a lot of power and influence in the national dialogue process and user experience through their products and practices.
Peacetech in practice: How digital tools support the work of peace actors

*Moderator:* Ms Achol Jok Mach, Specialist, PeaceTech Lab Africa

*Session speakers:*
- Ms Roxaneh Bazergan, Team Leader, Mediation Support Unit, United Nations
- Mr Shmuel Elmakies, Software Engineer & Social Activist, Games for Peace
- Ms Talia Hagerty, Senior Research Fellow, Institute for Economics & Peace
- Mr Mikaeli Langinvainio, CEO, Inforglobe

*Main takeaways from the session:*
- Various digital tools can be used to bring significant efficiencies and opportunities to the mediation effort, but the practice of mediation has remained a highly human-centred endeavour.
- We should be careful of how the data is gathered and filtered and analyse what implications it might have for the national dialogue processes.
- Digital tools might also drive the processes and dialogues to unexpected directions if the tool has not been designed with the processes in mind. For example, Facebook was never designed to be a platform for dialogue, and as a result it tends to polarise the discussion instead by highlighting opposite views.
- Despite problems and sensitivities with technology at a general level, the demonstrated tools of peace-tech were all very encouraging and promising. Developing innovative solutions, while being aware of risks, can greatly improve peacebuilding and national dialogue endeavours.
This session aimed to showcase and concretise peacetech by demonstrating existing digital tools to an audience. In a series of demonstrations, the audience got a hands-on understanding of the state of play in peacetech and assessed the demonstrated tools with a set of key questions.

Digital technologies can bring significant efficiencies and opportunities to the mediation effort. At the same time, the dual use nature of digital technologies also means that their use can present important risks. For example, the source(s) of the information/data and the actors who filter it might make the collected data political in the given context. Thus, understanding various risks linked to digital technologies allows mediators to better leverage the opportunities, which various digital solutions offer to the mediation. United Nation's Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs uses digital tools under four thematic areas:

i) Conflict analysis: various technical solutions give us new tools to analyse the conflict, but digital technologies also increase the contents for the conflict analysis. Knowledge of the mediators and the tech experts might be somewhat mismatched, which might cause problems for the data collection (what is collected and why) and therefore for the analysis.

ii) Engagement with conflict parties: instant message services and social media have instant impacts on the conflict parties, and mediators might have troubles to keep up with the tempo. Digital technologies provide new spaces for dialogue and negotiation where information flow is rapid and additional voices from social media might distract from or put pressure on conflict parties during negotiations.

iii) Inclusivity: Digital technologies offer new opportunities for engaging and including the perspectives of a wider set of stakeholders throughout a mediation process. However, it remains highly important for mediators to acknowledge that having a voice is not the same as being heard, nor is collecting data the same as participatory dialogue. It is also important to see what happens afterwards in the process, so that peoples’ inclusion does not remain superficial.

iv) Strategic communications: Digital tools have become an initial part to inform and deliver communications but there has not been, this far, a truly strategic way to deliver it. Digital technologies can be used to drive the key messages at target audiences and influencers to magnify their effect. For example, virtual reality-briefings to the security council are held to create closeness and a better emotional connection to the given situation.

However, though digital technologies are often deemed revolutionary due to their velocity, scope and systems impact, the practice of mediation remains highly human-centred endeavour. The situations are highly complex and contextualised knowledge of (local) practices and ways to communicate (such as humour, sarcasm etc.) are needed.

Apart from the UN, other smaller organisations are also working to combine digital technologies and peacebuilding, as demonstrated in the session. To start with, Games for Peace has intercultural programmes and events through which young people in conflict zones can build dialogue and understanding with each other through online gaming. Games for Peace use popular video games, whose themes revolve around the ideas of communication and collaboration within a virtual world. The programmes stimulate trust between children in Israel, Palestine, the Middle East and other parts of the world suffering from conflict and aim to counteract
the negative stereotypes players from different national, religious and ethnic backgrounds often have of each other. The Play2Talk school programme is taking place in Israel and it uses Minecraft to foster trust and create a dialogue between Jewish and Arab pupils. Teams are mixed, and an automatic online translation programme is used to overcome language barriers.

The Institute for Economics & Peace (IEP) works on developing metrics to analyse peace and to quantify its economic value. It is developing global and national indices, calculating the economic cost of violence, analysing country level risk and understanding positive peace. IEP produces reports for example on global peace, global terrorism, positive peace and sustainable development goals. IEP utilises a wide range of digital tools to demonstrate that peace is measurable, tangible, attainable and specific.

Inforglobe aims to build common understanding in (highly) complex situations. Their Multiview software enables participatory analysis and decision-making and visualises for example the systemic nature of issues (i.e. how they are interacting and affecting each other and how certain key issues are interlinked to other aspects). The output can be utilised to draw shared conclusions on what to do and how to move forward. Inforglobe also offers digital components (such as a participatory assessment tool and a participatory risk management tool) for engaging different stakeholders in the key processes.
C. Other Thematic focuses

Addressing Diverse Demands for Self-Governance in Federalism Negotiations

**Moderator:** Ms Kristiina Rintakoski, Director of Peacebuilding and Advocacy, Felm

**Session speakers:**
- Dr David Williams, Executive Director, Center for Constitutional Democracy
- Mr Victor Biak Lian, Operations Manager, Euro-Burma Office
- Mr Upendranadh Choragudi, Program Development Advisor, Bayda Institute
- Zozan Alosh, Humanitarian advisor at Syrian Democratic Council
- Mr Hannes Siebert, Senior Adviser, Felm, Joint Peace Fund and Common Space Initiative

**Main takeaways from the session:**
- More attention needs to be paid to the contextual realities, which outline the preferred negotiations framework. Accommodating complex and time-consuming federal processes requires long-term commitment and a process of experimentation, learning and adaptation.
- The role of gender needs to be taken into account when considering federal negotiations. As it was pointed out, in the case of Syria, gaining self-administration has been an opportunity to promote the inclusion of women in the decision-making.
- Asymmetrical federal designs and processes emerge because of fragmentation and conflicting demands. It provides options to address diverse aspirations and ongoing conflicts in a phased approach where all stakeholders and interest groups have an opportunity to negotiate their “realities”. Thus, asymmetrical process might be the preferred framework to accommodate such complexities.
- Asymmetrical federalism has critics as well as supporters. Critics argue that asymmetrical frameworks negatively affect processes where weak parties negotiate with strong states. To minimise the power imbalance, symmetrical process should be prioritised. The challenge is how to address the ideological, normative and historic positions of stakeholders in the current context and unfolding reality.

This session investigated how negotiations framework can accommodate the complexity of asymmetrical federalism. The objective of the session was to learn from the past processes and explore the key characters of successful federal negotiation frameworks.

Federalism, as a governance model and power-sharing framework, has become an important instrument for peace negotiations as it can provide a voice to all parties in a conflict and particularly those who have formerly been marginalised from the political processes. Over the past 20 years, however, peacemakers and mediators have faced difficulties in their attempts to assist parties to address diverse minority groups’ demands for autonomy and self-governance. Following long civil wars trust levels tend to be low, while to ensure maximum level of autonomy, minority groups insist on political guarantees from the dominant groups or governments. The challenge is that most functioning federal states evolved over decades, as in the case of India, which has seen 104 changes to the constitution over a period of 50 years since the adoption of their latest constitution.

A federal system is one in which the constitution divides power between the union government and more local governments. In other words, it is a property of constitutions and state governments. There are as many varia-
tions of federal designs as there are federal states. No “model” or existing dialogue framework can point to how such complex systems should be negotiated in a relatively short period of time.

In symmetrical federal models, union constitutions provide that the states have the same powers, but the states may use these powers differently. Some symmetrical union constitutions provide that the states have the power to write their own state constitutions and to organise their own governments and the different state constitutions may provide for very different types of government. This is still a symmetrical system, because all states have the same powers; they just exercise them differently. This type of variation is just a difference between the states, not federal asymmetry. In asymmetrical federal models all sub-states have the same constitutional status, but one or more of them have considerably more autonomy than the others. At its best, asymmetrical federalism can address the conflicting demands for autonomy and unity in fragmented and multi-ethnic states, such as Myanmar, where economic and political realities within different regions are diverse. The criticism towards asymmetry points out that such models can be complicated due to their nature and tendency to stir conflict. Particularly in fragile evolving democracies, asymmetrical federal systems need to be carefully studied before adopted.

In the Myanmar peace process, it took three years to negotiate the main instruments of change – the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) and the Framework for Political Dialogue (FPD). The creation of these instruments was based on assumption of symmetricity among the ethnic stakeholder. As the process unfolded, the diverse needs, aspirations and interest of the different ethnic communities and the Bamar community regarding federalism has played itself out, stressing the structural shortcomings of the FPD. It is clear, that the interests of the stakeholder groups are significantly different – some want greater autonomy, some want decentralisation, and some have gone as far as claiming they want independence. The current framework of the political dialogue does not accommodate these disparities nor ensure that each stakeholder group has a chance of negotiating a fair solution for themselves without compromising the others. The State Constitution Coordinating Body (SCCB) has worked on the overall federal negotiation’s strategy of each state and region. It is essential to explore workable options on how to negotiate a federal system that meets the expectations and hopes of all Myanmar’s stakeholder groups.
Reconciliation, psychosocial support and dialogue

**Moderator:** Mr Antti Pentikäinen, Research Professor, Director, Mary Hoch Center for Reconciliation, George Mason University

**Session speakers:**
- Dr Abiye Iruayenama, Head of Psychology Department / Training Centre, Neem Foundation
- Ms Anne Nuorgam, Chair, Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, Finland
- Ms Rowda Olad, Clinical Director, Maandeq Mental Health WB, Somalia
- Mr Zedoun al Zoubi, Common Space Initiative

**Main takeaways from the session:**
- Peacebuilding and reconciliation are more effective when processes include psychosocial support.
- Traumas can become inter-generational unless traumatising events and issues are addressed in reconciliation processes and traumatised individuals receive specialised care.
- Supporters need support: local peace builders and MHPSS professionals are also personally affected by the conflict psychologically and socially.
- In order to achieve sustaining peace, reconciliation is more important than comparing who has suffered most pain.
- Peace mediation teams should be trauma-informed and include an MHPSS-professional.
This session thematically brought together reconciliation, psychosocial support (PSS) and dialogue efforts to explore transformative capacities of their synergy through interventions from ‘insider reconcilers’, peace actors, or, community activists, facilitators and researchers. The session was built on discussion, where some personal experiences of the participants, relevant to the theme of the session, were shared and reflected on. Such ‘storytelling’ was mentioned also as a reconciliation tool that involves sharing, hearing and active listening.

The session began by a question: is it possible to build a bridge between truth and reconciliation without addressing the damage that the conflict has caused to human relations and the psychosocial wellbeing of the affected populations? Mental health and psychosocial support professionals in the panel mentioned that although not all members of the affected populations are traumatised, the world feels a dangerous place to live in for those who are, even after the atrocities are over.

One of the participants recalled her experience of surviving a roadside bomb. After the initial relief, her family and community soon forgot about the event, because such incidents were very common in Somalia that time. She told that in Somalia, almost all members of the society are psychologically negatively affected by the protracted conflict, but their psychosocial needs are not met by anyone. Therefore, mental health and psychosocial support programs are urgently needed. According to the panellist, many international organisations in Somalia claim to be working on psychosocial support, but their programs are not sufficient.

In Nigeria currently 7.1 million people need humanitarian aid. Many have been displaced from their homes. The scope of the Neem Foundation’s activities extends from early warning to rehabilitation as well as mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) in Borno, the most affected state in Nigeria. The Foundation involves women and youth leaders in the processes. It was stressed that it is ineffective to do peacebuilding without awareness of the psychological and emotional effects of conflict, which are often unconscious.

Reconciliation was also linked to national level truth and reconciliation processes in Finland in the case of the Sami. A panellist recalled having to attend a boarding school at the age of eight for a year and to learn Finnish. The most Sami children stayed there for nine years, which created a feeling of not being understood and being utterly lonely. According to the panellist, many grown-up Sami who have been separated from their parents and native tongue during their formative years, share a feeling of loss of words in certain situations. Sami in Finland, Norway, Sweden and Russia share experiences of not receiving school education in their own language, and high suicide rates among populations. Grown-ups who were forcefully separated from their parents to boarding schools lack the experience of being parented and as adults do not know how to be parents themselves. Immediately after the Canadian Truth and Reconciliation Committee, the Finnish Samis started to demand the historical injustices dealt with the State of Finland. It was highlighted that the most important issue for the Sami society is social healing to disrupt inter-generational passing on of traumatising experiences. Also, in Finland there has been silence around the painful issues in the case of Sami and opening up the truth about injustices may be hurtful. Therefore, a lot of work is ahead.

Syria is one of the worst humanitarian catastrophes in the world. A Syrian discussant shared the memory of his life-changing experience of being incarcerated for a month with 90 other people in a tiny room where many of them died. This experience committed him to human dignity, peace and reconciliation instead of wanting to punish those who kept him a prisoner. According to him, one’s pain cannot be measured and compared against others’ pain.
It was also discussed how reconciliation and PSS could look like in the participants' own contexts and agreed that one must study carefully the needs of the people to design programs that respond to those needs. In Somalia the needs are very different in different parts of the country. Nigeria has over 600 ethnic groups. The issues therefore vary from banditry to farming related conflicts and other resource related conflicts and to kidnappings. Often states tend to have a top-down approach, which is not always connected with local indigenous knowledge. Such efforts remain superficial and do not create a real change. Sometimes, all that is needed from the government is to scale up the efforts the civil society is already doing.

Discussants emphasised that there can't be reconciliation if violations continue. As a recent example of such violence was mentioned an attempt by the State of Finland to build an arctic railroad through the lands of the Sami. The Samis in Finland looked at the Canadian model of dealing with truth and reconciliation. After learning from that process, in collaboration with Finnish universities, studies and teaching in reconciliation were started in the University of Lapland. These courses are university credited and give reconciliation skills to students including young Sami people. The truth and reconciliation process involve PSS experts in regional health care institutions to provide the affected people the psychosocial support they need when sharing their experiences and pain. Metsähallitus (National Forestry Office) is part of the process, which will hopefully prevent future conflicts. Lack of trust towards the State of Finland is the biggest challenge for the reconciliation between the Sami and the State as the Samis are still working on coming to terms with the fact that the government might not be imposing laws/regulations that could purposefully harm them. The Samis need to work on building trust towards the government.

“No war lasts forever but reconciliation takes for years”, was stated in the session that also asked, “which is more important, truth or reconciliation?” The question is difficult, but the participants emphasised that for them, peace is more important than anything else. A comment from the audience reminded participants that MHPSS needs in Syria are enormous and that support in this sector is very much needed. A Syrian member of the audience pointed out that in Syria, there is now a whole generation that has known nothing but war. Participants reminded all of the dangers of lapsing back to violence as the reconciliation process might be interrupted due to new incidents.
Land rights in peace negotiations:  
The key to sustainable peace and natural resources management

**Moderator:** Mr Sami Frestadius, Advisor for Just Peace, Felm

**Session speakers:**
- Dr SiuSue Mark (PhD), Land & Natural Resources Advisor, Joint Peace Fund
- Ms Everlyne Nairesiae, Global Land Indicator Initiative (GLII) Coordinator, Global Land Tool Network (GLTN), UN Habitat
- Dr Andrés García Trujillo, Researcher, the Institute for Integrated Transitions

**Main takeaways from the session:**
- Grievances and issues related to land and natural resources are at the heart of many conflicts, and they should always be included in conflict analysis as one of the sources of grievances and conflict drivers. Also, they are not limited to rural contexts, but have linkages with urban conflicts as well.
- Combining traditional land ownership conventions with private ownership models is an ongoing challenge. In Myanmar, the government considers many ethnic minorities’ lands to be vacant, and the burden of proof of ownership is placed in the communities. A solution for this could be to reverse the setting and make the state prove that an area is empty of people before declaring it vacant.
- Land reform and comprehensive rural development plans are tough sales for urban populations. Combined with strong landed elites, the situation is very difficult. Solutions and better ways of selling the benefits for all audiences need to be developed.
- The international community has a role to play in all peace processes. In Colombia, international support and production of norms, standards and concepts in the 2011 Human Development Report were valuable. In Myanmar, the international community should re-engage process and find ways to influence the government to play its part in the peace process and change. The UN is an important asset in maintaining the importance of, and giving attention to, land issues.
- Even if land and natural resource regimes were perfect, issues such as land degradation and the effects of climate change on livelihoods will continue to fuel land-related grievances.
The aim of this session was to assess the processes for inclusion of land issues in conflict analysis and resolution mechanisms including development and implementation of peace agreements. Land related grievances are often causes of conflicts, which mostly relate to agriculture, indigenous land rights, forestry and other natural resources. The session featured experiences from several countries, focusing on Myanmar and Colombia.

The case of land rights and natural resources in the conflict and peace process in Myanmar was presented. Land control, access and ownership and natural resources are a central driver in the conflict between the government and armed ethnic groups. Hence, they have also been a central theme in the ceasefire agreement, ongoing national dialogues and the peace process. Current legislation in Myanmar considers many minority areas to be “vacant” and does not recognise traditional land ownership conventions. Currently, about a third of the Myanmar area is considered to be “vacant”. This has risen fears of land grabbing, especially following the high interest from China to invest heavily in Myanmar as part of the Belt and Road Initiative. This is combined with a withdrawal of the international community following the Rohingya crisis, which has allowed a partial return of the “bad old ways” and damaged trust in the peace process. Myanmar is very centrally governed, and the military has a veto over most issues. The armed groups argue for decentralisation and transition towards a more real federalism, putting land issues and natural resources under more local control, among other things. Challenging the vitality of the whole peace process, the government and elites closely connected to it and the military are unwilling to translate national dialogue and peace process outcomes into legislation and constitutional reform. As the peace process seems to be unable to move forward, ethnic groups have lost trust in it, and the majority of armed groups have refused to sign the ceasefire agreement since 2015.

In Colombia land issues, including ownership, access and control are at the heart of the conflict between the government and FARC. FARC's roots are in the peasants’ movement for land reform, and it refused to discuss a peace without land issues. Historically, land ownership has been very centralised and landed elites have wielded large political and economic influence in Colombia locally and nationally. Even today, Colombia has one of the most unequally distributed land ownership in the world. In the peace agreement of 2016, comprehensive rural reform was the first of six partial agreements. The challenge was therefore not why, but how to include land issues in the peace talks. Agreement was found in the Havana talks, partly thanks to international attention to land issues, especially by the UNDP's Human Development Report 2011 in Colombia that focused on rural development. The government was also preparing a rural development plan on its own. Linking peace with a rural development plan increased the acceptability and helped to sell the benefits of peace for all parties. However, the agreement lost the referendum in 2016, and the current government was elected on a platform that was against the peace agreement. This shows the challenges of selling the peace to the urban majority that was largely unaffected by the rural conflict between the government and FARC. The implementation of the agreement and the rural reform have therefore moved forward slower than what was agreed and anticipated. Six lessons can be drawn from the peace negotiations. First, it was crucial to agree on a clear and limited agenda. Prior peace processes had failed partly because they tried to cover too many issues. Second, the process design and negotiation methodology allowed both parties to have equal ownership of the text. Third, preparations for implementing the peace institutionally and in legislation were launched before-hand and during the negotiations. Fourth, selling the benefits of the peace to all audiences needs to be a higher priority. Fifth, the implementation needs to be quicker, smoother and less bureaucratic. Sixth, there should have been some engagement with vested interests and elites to control against potential spoilers.

The UN/SG Guidance note on land and conflicts was released in March 2019. The aim of the note is to raise the attention given to land by the UN. Land is important in core UN activities and in its mandate of peace and se-
curity, human rights and development. The UN should therefore not shy away from including land issues in all conflict analysis and related discussions, also in urban contexts. Coming around the table and agreeing that land is important has been an important first step towards the right direction. Since the note is still very recent, UN HABITAT is currently looking for countries to pilot its recommendations.

At the end of the session participants shortly discussed details related to how to revive and build trust in the Myanmar peace process, formalisation of traditional land ownership, assessing the relevance of the guidance note in the discussed countries’ cases, linkages between urban poverty and land issues and conducting land reform in the context of strong landed elites.
D. The future of National Dialogues and Mediation

*Moderator:* Dr Thania Paffenholz, Director, Inclusive Peace, Geneva

*Session speakers:*
- Dr Ville Brummer, Programme Director, CMI
- Ms Everlyne Nairesiae, Global Land Indicator Initiative (GLII) Coordinator, Global Land Tool Network (GLTN), UN Habitat
- Mr Mahmoud Ramadan, Common Space Initiative
- Mr Kai Sauer, Under-Secretary of State, Ministry for Foreign Affairs
- Mr Hannes Siebert, Senior Advisor, Felm, Common Space Initiative, Joint Peace Fund

The two key themes of this year’s National Dialogue Conference concentrated around complexity and the ecosystem of national dialogues and peace technology. This session had two interrelated objectives, to draw up some of the key findings and takeaways from the conference and to have a look at the future of national dialogues and mediation.

The ecosystem of national dialogue was seen as a helpful concept that allows us to systematise and enrich the peace and conflict discussion. It was emphasised that we should be talking about national dialogues as plural. Seldom is there one comprehensive national dialogue taking place, but many dialogues are happening simultaneously in multi-layered sequences. Each conflict has an ecosystem and we have to understand the position of all players in this complex ecosystem. However, instead of solely focusing on conflict, we should look at and understand better the ecosystem of peace. The importance of local knowledge was brought up as well as relying...
more on local and national facilitators in processes. There is a strong call for national ownership and the international community’s role focusing on accompaniment and technical support.

In addition, more efforts in the future should be put on further elaborating how to revitalise some of the tools used to support both dialogue processes and developing new innovations. Specifically, integrating gender in facilitation and process design was mentioned, and the lessons should be learnt from innovations introduced by impressive female speakers in the session on “Gender in Facilitation”.

Peacetech’s big promise is more analytically sound processes and outcomes. However, the discussion, for example, on the combination of participation and social interaction with artificial intelligence and data, has focused on manipulation and propaganda. During this conference it was noted that without considering and developing positive aspects of technology, we can also lose the opportunities to increase transparency and bring analytically sound elements to the peacebuilding discussion. Technology is revolutionary in terms of increased data on the dynamics of conflict and peace. However, we should also keep in mind not to use technology at the expense of inclusion – we need to avoid creating new dynamics of exclusion, vulnerability and exploitation through technology. Aspects of access to technology, risks and privacy, data ownership and use need to be addressed as well as ensuring human interaction and the emotional aspects of engagement. A few concrete peacetech examples were given from Myanmar. Peacetech has been used, for example, in ceasefire monitoring where ethnic groups have developed an app to capture on their phone the violations and fed them into a database. This has changed the perspective of the facilitation strategy. Moreover, in single text process, an attempt has been to animate the process of 700 participants and a number of position papers, among other documents. Peacetech was also considered as an opportunity in enhancing accessibility and predictability; for example, co-facilitation can take place on-line to link voices and choices.

Using tools of technology is something that has been acknowledged by the Finnish Government to promote peace and development, and cooperation has been developed in particular with the UN. The UN Technology and Innovation Lab, with “peace and security” as one of the focus areas, has been established in Helsinki. It was suggested that peacebuilders and start-up companies would strengthen the cooperation in developing new solutions.

It was also noted that accessibility and connectedness have influenced the social fabric in many of the countries under discussion. The question of identities was also brought up; today identities can be chosen and wrapped more freely and each of us has a combination of different identities. Traditional parties are facing difficulties in accessing those new identities and, at the same time, unseen links and networks between different actors are emerging. These multiple identities need to be taken into account when designing inclusion. Moreover, there is a need to pay attention to the different inclusion and exclusion dynamics and how it affects agenda setting. The extent to which different issues affect different communities vary – issues may become very specific or more broadly shared. Also, how women and men approach different issues vary – land rights were brought as an example.

It was also stressed that inclusion (who to include into what, when and how?) will continue to remain an open debate; however, it is clear that those dialogues that are disconnected from the change dynamics often relate to the question of inclusion and exclusion.
4. Conclusions

During the conference days it was emphasised that to think about peace processes from the perspective of an ecosystem, recognising the constant interaction between different actors and the non-linearity of processes, helps us to better understand the constantly changing dynamics of peace and dialogue processes. Complexity and unpredictability of transitions forces us to look at national dialogues as adaptable concepts that grow over time. As mentioned by Mr Rolf Steffansson, Executive Director of Felm, in his closing remarks, “National dialogues come in many shapes and sizes and we have no models and guarantees of what will work.

Therefore, strengthening local social institutions and ensuring inclusion is very important”. The importance of inclusion was also addressed by Ms Elina Kalkku, Under-Secretary of State, in her closing remarks: “Inclusivity is an integral part of national dialogues. National dialogue is about building peace and reconciliation at different layers of society in a multi-layered way to ensure its sustainability. If people do not feel they have been part of the solution, this will only strengthen the agenda of spoilers. Therefore, an inclusive ecosystem is important. The participation of women, youth, and religious and traditional peacemakers enhances national ownership and adds legitimacy to national dialogue processes”

This year’s conference also introduced the new main theme, peace technologies. According to the pre-survey of the conference, most of the participants were either new to the theme or only broadly familiar. However, based on the feedback survey, it was encouraging that the knowledge of participants about peacetech somewhat increased during the conference. Over the days it was noted by many participants that peacetech should be seen as a tool to support national dialogue and peace processes: various digital tools can be used to bring significant efficiencies and opportunities to the mediation effort, but the practice of mediation has remained, and should remain, highly human-centred endeavour. As Ms Kalkku stressed, “digitalisation can also have adverse effects – data gathering can be used for good and bad purposes. We need to be vigilant and discuss also challenges associated with peacetech”. Peacetech is also something that cannot be ignored as to a large extent it already impacts the peace processes, for example, through digital tools (e.g. social media). Peacebuilders have to learn to utilise technology for their own benefits to improve dialogue and mediation processes as there is still a lot of unused potential. Moreover, it was stressed in the discussions that the starting point for using the peacetech is the context and the owners of the processes should determine the issues and needs for peacetech – more cooperation and dialogue is needed between peacebuilders and technology developers. Priority should be in making conflict-sensitive and ethical technological tools. Other ongoing challenges are the digital spoilers, cyber-colonialism and the lack of inclusion and ownership.

As in previous National Dialogue Conferences, the feedback given by participants was very clear about the importance of the conference as a space to promote peer learning on national dialogues and for networking. As highlighted by Ms Kalkku, one of the key deliverables of the conference is the opportunity to share experiences on what has worked and what has not, both in the formal meetings and in the informal discussions during the breaks. Indeed, in the feedback the participants also asked for more time for informal discussions and reflections in between the sessions.

The “word cloud” in the closing session gave a snapshot of themes that the participants found the most interesting during the conference. Out of the themes, reconciliation, psychosocial support, federalism, peacetech and youth were highlighted as the most interesting that give some perspective and ideas to think about as themes
for the next national dialogue conference. During the closing remarks the role of youth were addressed by both speakers. Ms Kalkku emphasised that the youth have to be part of the development of their societies – they also need access to education and jobs. Mr Steffansson concluded that despite discussing many complicated and complex issues during the conference, also what was discussed was something which is quite simple and universal: hope. Part of this hope and future perspective are the young people and it is high time that we take seriously the reality that in many countries young people are in the majority. It also means that we must find ways to include them in national dialogue processes in a meaningful way.

Results from the word cloud.
5. Annexes

Conference Concept Note

11–12 June 2019, The House of the Estates, Helsinki

Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland in cooperation with Felm, Finn Church Aid and Crisis Management Initiative

The Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland together with a consortium of NGOs is organizing the fourth conference on National Dialogues and non-formal dialogue processes in June 2019 in Helsinki, Finland. The Conference is a continuation of conferences held in April 2014, November 2015 and April 2017. The conferences have enjoyed wide participation and they have provided a space for joint reflection and in-depth discussion with practitioners, stakeholders and experts working with dialogue processes in different contexts.

The National Dialogues Conference is an important initiative of Finland's mediation efforts which emphasise inclusiveness, local ownership and the role of women, youth, religious peacemakers as well as the civil society in peace processes. The fourth conference will again bring together different stakeholders working on national dialogues to share knowledge and lessons, and to promote peer learning to improve the practice of national dialogues.

Background and Objectives

Most contemporary conflicts are internal. Intra-state conflicts often have structural causes, such as inequality or identity. Rarely are such conflicts monocausal and, accordingly, our efforts to resolve them need to address this complexity.

National dialogues place emphasis on internal actors and may be particularly useful in addressing intrastate conflicts with a multiplicity of stakeholders. Working to broaden political ownership national dialogues can ensure more inclusive processes and lasting results. These dialogues come in different forms, with varying aims and intentions – but what is common to them is the aim to expand political participation, to generate new approaches and solutions, or to manage change at critical times. Broad interest has emerged in the potential of national dialogues as an effective approach to prevention, resolution, and transformation of conflict.

The series of National Dialogues Conferences participates in and contributes to the wider debate relating to national dialogues. The conferences create a space for actors working with national dialogues to learn from each other, share experiences and create contacts. In addition, the conferences aim to identify common challenges and develop recommendations for national dialogue processes. The fourth National Dialogues Conference builds on the lessons from previous conferences, with focus on understanding the ecosystems of national dialogues and on exploring what support technology can bring to respond to the complex processes of national dialogues. These core topics will be explored through several geographic focus areas as well as in relation to other recurring themes.
Theme 1: The Ecosystem of National Dialogues

Although most contemporary violent conflicts are intra-state, the dynamics, effects and efforts to mediate them transcend national borders. Peace processes are part of a complex web where local, national, regional and international actors play various roles – be they social, political, military or economic. Conflicts and peace processes are therefore increasingly viewed from the perspective of ecosystems, recognizing the constant interaction between different actors. To understand the ecosystem of national dialogues we need to think holistically, while paying attention also to the parts of the system and how they interact with each other. One key question to be addressed is how to create an inclusive ecosystem, even if all dialogues and tracks are not inclusive?

In this respect, reference could also be made to the discussion on the concept of sustaining peace. The UN has recognized that sustaining peace should be broadly understood as a goal and a process to build a common vision of a society. It is important to ensure that the needs of all segments of the population are taken into account, and that inclusivity is the key to advance national peacebuilding processes and objectives.

Theme 2: New Technologies in support of national dialogues

New technologies offer tools for national dialogue processes to increase their reach and impact and to overcome established social practices. New technologies can also support knowledge creation and sharing of knowledge in informal and formal dialogues. For example, new communications tools such as social media can help initiate contact between groups that are in conflict with each other. User friendly data collection tools offer new methods for monitoring and evaluation of online dialogues. Furthermore, online dialogue and digital games can provide new ways for conflict parties to re-imagine a future together.

However, the use of new technology also entails new risks and raises ethical questions that need to be considered. It can pose significant risks in states affected by, or at risk of, violent conflict. While, for example, social media can help initiate contact between different groups, it has also proven to contribute to or reinforce polarization along socio-economic, ethnic or religious lines, and it has been used as a tool to provoke hate and violence. It is vital to strengthen analysis of the use of technological tools and the causal shifts in power balances in the conflict ecosystems.

Cross-cutting and session specific topics

This year, the National Dialogues Conference continues to systematically integrate gender in all aspects of the conference by mainstreaming it to all activities. The conference will also deepen the examination of selected substantive topics, that are either topical in multiple national dialogues, or are emergent themes in need of closer examination. Some of the topics include: local governance and federalism, natural resources in national dialogues, reconciliation and integrating psychosocial elements in dialogue processes. Process design will be closely examined, with specific focus on inclusivity and inclusiveness; women, youth and minorities as well.
Conference Programme

TUESDAY, 11 JUNE 2019

8:30–9:00  Registration

9:00–09:40  Opening and Welcoming Remarks

Hall 15, Interpretation: simultaneous (Arabic/English)

Mr Matti Anttonen, Permanent State Secretary, Ministry for Foreign Affairs
Masters of Ceremonies: Ambassador Sirpa Mäenpää and Ambassador Antti Turunen

09:45–10:45  High-level discussion: Transforming conflicts in a complex world

Hall 15, Interpretation: simultaneous (Arabic/English)

H.E. Hailemariam Dessalegn, Former Prime Minister of Ethiopia
H.E. Yasser Abdullah Al-Raeiini, Minister of State for Implementing the National Dialogue Out comes in the Yemeni Government

Moderator: Mr Nicklas Wancke, Journalist, Yle Broadcasting Company

10:45–11:15  Coffee & Tea Break

11:15–12:45  Addressing complexity in national dialogue processes

Hall 15, Interpretation: simultaneous (Arabic/English)

Keynote: Dr Jan Pospisil, Head of Research, Austrian Study Centre for Peace and Conflict Resolution

Moderated Panel Discussion
Dr Alhaji Sarjoh Bah, Head of Conflict Management and Post-Conflict Reconstruction Division, African Union
Ms Roxaneh Bazergan, Team Leader, Mediation Support Unit, United Nations
Ms Stine Lehmann-Larsen, Director, Mediation, Policy & European Relations, European Institute of Peace
Dr Jan Pospisil, Head of Research, Austrian Study Centre for Peace and Conflict Resolution

Moderator: Mr Itonde Kakoma, Programme Director, CMI

12:45–13:45  Lunch

A group photo will be taken prior to lunch.
Parallel thematic sessions 1

A) Inside or outside of the room — and does it matter? Re-thinking strategies and spaces for youth to mobilise for peace

Room: 13

Mr Suchith Abeyewickreme, Interfaith Colombo & United Religions Initiative
Ms Fatima Askira, Executive Director, Borno Women's Development Initiative
Mr Ahmed Hadji, Team Leader and Co-Founder, Uganda Muslim Youth Development Forum

Moderator: Ms Lumi Young

B) National Dialogue – A role in bridging Libya's complex transition?

Hall 15 (Plenary), Interpretation: simultaneous (Arabic/English)

Mr Fadel M. Lamen, Director General, National Economic and Social Development Board & Chairman, National Dialogue Commission
Ms Azza Maghur, Lawyer, Maghur & Partners
Mr Moulay Qudaidi, Head of Social Council of Tuareg in Libya
Dr Rida Al Tubuly, Founder and Director, Together We Build It

Moderator: Dr Edward Marques, the Interim Head of Middle East and North Africa Programmes, CMI

C) National Dialogues in Kenya as a contribution to violence prevention and sustaining peace

Room: 3

Rev Dr Samuel Kobia, Senior Advisor on Cohesion, Peace and Conflict Resolution, Office of the President
Ms Florence Mpaayei, Kenyan Civil Society Leader, Hekima Institute of Peace Studies and International Relations
Ms Roseline Odede, Federation of Women Lawyers in Kenya FIDA and Advisor to the Dialogue Reference Group of the joint religious actors of Kenya
Prof Adams Oloo, Senior Lecturer, Department of Political Science & Public Administration, University of Nairobi, and Panel Member of the official BBI (Bridge Building Initiative)

Moderator: Dr Thania Paffenholz, Director, Inclusive Peace, Geneva and Project Leader, Kenya Dialogue Support Project of Inclusive Peace

15:30–16:00 Coffee & Tea Break
16:00–17:45  Parallel thematic sessions 2

A) What should a Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Somalia look like?
Room: 23

Mr Jama Egal, Consultant in the Ministry for Interior, Federal Affairs and Reconciliation, Somalia
Ms Sadia Elmi, Delivery and Performance Management, the Ministry for Interior, Federal Affairs and Reconciliation, Somalia
Ms Rowda Olad, Founder and clinical director of Maandeeq Mental Health without Borders, Somalia
Mr Osman Moallim, Executive Director of Somali Youth Development Network

Moderator: Mr Johan Svensson, Peace & Reconciliation Advisor, Embassy of Sweden in Somalia

B) Land rights in peace negotiations: The key to sustainable peace and natural resources management
Room: 3

Ms SiuSue Mark (PhD), Land & Natural Resources Advisor, Joint Peace Fund
Ms Everlyne Nairesiae, Global Land Indicator Initiative (GLII) Coordinator, Global Land Tool Network (GLTN), UN Habitat
Dr Andrés García Trujillo, Researcher, the Institute for Integrated Transitions
Moderator: Mr Sami Frestadius, Advisor for Just Peace, Felm

C) Where is Gender in Dialogue Facilitation?
Hall 15 (Plenary), Interpretation: simultaneous (Arabic/English)

Dr Nada Aswad, A member of the Board of the Syrian Society for Social Development “SSSD”
Dr Bilqis Abu Osba, Professor of Political Science, Sana’a University; Head of Awam Foundation for Culture and Development
Mr Hannes Siebert, Senior Advisor, Common Space Initiative, Felm
Facilitator: Ms Anna Hess, Senior Programme Officer, ETH Zurich

18:15–20:00  Cocktail Reception

Hosted by Ms Elina Kalkku, Under-Secretary of State (Development Policy), Ministry for Foreign Affairs
Address by Mr Pekka Haavisto, Minister for Foreign Affairs
Location: House of the Estates
WEDNESDAY, 12 JUNE 2019

8:30–8:40  
**Opening of the Second Conference Day**  
*Hall 15, Interpretation: simultaneous (Arabic/English)*

8:40–10:15  
**Peacetech—Does it live up to the hype?**  
*Hall 15, Interpretation: simultaneous (Arabic/English)*  
**Keynote:** Mr Salem Avan, Director of Global Services Division, United Nations

**Moderated Panel Discussion**

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

10:15–10:45  
**Coffee & Tea Break**

10:45–12:30  
**Parallel thematic sessions 3**

**A) National Dialogue limits in the age of digital media**

Room: 17

Mr Ahmed Hadji, Team Leader and Co-Founder, Uganda Muslim Youth Development Forum  
Mr Sanjana Hattotuwa, Researcher, University of Otago (video link)  
Ms Achol Jok Mach, Specialist, PeaceTech Lab Africa  
Mr Jukka Niva, Head of Yle News Lab, Finnish Broadcasting Company

**Moderator:** Mr Matthias Wevelsiep, Development Manager – Digital Transition, FCA

**B) Reconciliation, psychosocial support and dialogue**

Room: 3

Dr Abiye Iruayenama, Head of Psychology Department / Training Centre, Neem Foundation  
Ms Anne Nuorgam, Chair, Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, Finland  
Ms Rowda Olad, Clinical Director, Maandeq Mental Health WB, Somalia  
Mr Zedoun al Zoubi, Common Space Initiative

**Facilitator:** Mr Antti Pentikäinen, Research Professor, Director, Mary Koch Center for Reconciliation, George Mason University
C) The challenge of addressing diverse demands for autonomy and self-governance in federalism negotiations
Room: 23
Dr David Williams, Executive Director, Center for Constitutional Democracy
Mr Victor Biak Lian, Operations Manager, Euro-Burma Office
Mr Upendranadh Choragudi, Program Development Advisor, Bayda Institute
Ms Maysaa Shuja al-Deen, Researcher, the American University in Cairo
Mr Hannes Siebert, Senior Adviser, Felm, Joint Peace Fund and Common Space Initiative

Moderator: Mrs Kristiina Rintakoski, Director of Peacebuilding and Advocacy, Felm

12:30—13:45 Lunch

13:45–15:30 Parallel thematic sessions 4

A) Peacetech in practice: How digital tools support the work of peace actors
Room: 17
Ms Roxaneh Bazergan, Team Leader, Mediation Support Unit, United Nations
Mr Shmuel Elmakies, Software Engineer & Social Activist, Games for Peace
Ms Talia Hagerty, Senior Research Fellow, Institute for Economics & Peace
Mr Mikaeli Langinvainio, CEO, Inforglobe

Facilitator: Ms Achol Jak Mach, Specialist, PeaceTech Lab Africa

B) The role of regional organisations in fostering inclusive, cross-border dialogue – The case of the Lake Chad Basin
Room: 3
Ms Fatima Askira, Executive Director, Borno Women's Development Initiative
Dr Alhaji Sarjoh Bah, Head of Conflict Management and Post-Conflict Reconstruction Division, African Union
Mr Boubakari Mana, Technical Director of Lake Chad Basin Commission

Moderator: Ms Johanna Poutanen, Head, Women in Peacemaking, CMI

C) The Yemeni NDC: Moving forward after four years of conflict and regional involvement
Hall 15 (Plenary), Interpretation: simultaneous (Arabic/English)

H.E. Yasser Abdullah Al-Raeini, Minister of State for Implementing the National Dialogue Outcomes in the Yemeni Government
Mr Baraa Shiban, Yemeni expert and political analyst
Ms Maysaa Shuja al-Deen, Researcher and Writer

Moderator: Ms Sama’a Al-Hamdani, Researcher and Analyst

15:30–16:00  Coffee & Tea Break

16:00–17:00  Closing discussion: The future of National Dialogues and mediation
Hall 15, Interpretation: simultaneous (Arabic/English)

Dr Ville Brummer, Programme Director, CMI
Ms Everlyne Nairesiae, Global Land Indicator Initiative (GLII) Coordinator, Global Land Tool Network (GLTN), UN Habitat
Mr Mahmoud Ramadan, Common Space Initiative
Mr Kai Sauer, Under-Secretary of State, Ministry for Foreign Affairs
Mr Hannes Siebert, Senior Advisor, Felm, Common Space Initiative, Joint Peace Fund

Moderator: Dr Thania Paffenholz, Director, Inclusive Peace, Geneva and Project leader, Kenya Dialogue Support Project

17:00–17:15  Closing Remarks
Mr Rolf Steffansson, Executive Director, Felm
Ms Elina Kalkku, Under-Secretary of State (Development Policy), Ministry for Foreign Affairs
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National Dialogues Conference

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11-12 June 2019
Doty          Anisa     Independent Researcher & Consultant
Dybkjaer-Andersson  Andreas    Danmission
Egal           Jama       Ministry of Interior, Federal Affairs and
El Belazi      Abdussalam CMI
El Massri      Ahti       Interpreter
Elmakies       Shmuel     Games For Peace
Elmi           Sadia      Ministry of Interior Federal Affairs and
                  Reconciliation Somalia
Elo            Satu
Erkul          Ambassador Vakur  Embassy of Turkey
Eronen         Oskari     CMI
Eskinder       Abera Nahom
Fredriksson    Maria Liselott Volunteer
Frestadius     Sami       Felm
Garcia Trujillo Andres    Institute for Integrated Transitions (IFIT)
Gutlen         Ambassador Åge B.  Embassy of Norway
Hadjji         Ahmed
Hagerty        Talia      Institute for Economics and Peace
Hakanen        Outi       Ministry for Foreign Affairs
Hashi          Wali       CAFIS Organization
Havunen        Minna     Felm
Hemberg        Jouni      Finn Church Aid
Hernandez Miranda Atahualpa    IELCO
Hess Sargsyan  Anna      Mediation Support Project, Center for Security
                        Studies, ETH Zürich
Hietanen       Riiikka Emilia  Volunteer
Hijawi         Samah      independent Interpreter
Hiltunen       Anna-Mari Hannele Volunteer
Hirblinger     Andreas    Graduate Institute of International and
                  Development Studies
Honkela        Timo       University of Helsinki
Horttanainen   Pia        Ministry for Foreign Affairs
Huuhtanen      Heidi      The Berghof Foundation
Hwijeh         Farah      Common Space initiative
Hätönen        Meri       Ministry for Foreign Affairs
Iruyenama      Abiye
Isotalo        Riina     Felm
Jaarva         Meeri-Maria    OSCE
Ja’dan          Ahmed
Jakobsen       Troels    Danish Embassy Helsinki
Jokinen        Hilikka     CMI
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Paulasaari      Pyry       Volunteer
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Pedersen        Miriam     European Institute of Peace (EIP)
Pekkonen         Heli       Felm
Pellosniemi      Cecilia    UN Women
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Perukangas      Milla      Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers, FCA
Petäsnoro       Ville      Volunteer
Pospisil         Jan        ASPR - Austrian Study Centre for Peace and Conflict Resolution
Poutanen        Johanna    CMI
Puoskari         Edla       FCA
Pyykkö          Iina       United Nations, Joint Programme on Building National Capacities for Conflict Prevention
Quadadi         Moulay     Ministry for Foreign Affairs
Raitala          Essi       Common Space Initiative CSI
Ramadan          Mahmoud    Ministry for Foreign Affairs
Rautavaara       Antti      Ministry for Foreign Affairs
Rieppola         Mariikki   Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers
Riihelä          Maria      Felm
Rintakoski       Kristiina  Felm
Ristimäki        Maria      CMI
Rognvik          Sylvia     CMI
Ruohomäki        Olli       Ministry for Foreign Affairs
Salonen          Ilpo       Media
Salovaara        Anna       Ministry for Foreign Affairs
Samie            Raeifa     Bareket Amal
Savolainen       Juha Samuli Ministry for Foreign Affairs
Sauer            Kai        Ministry for Foreign Affairs
Shaiban          Baraa     Ministry for Foreign Affairs
Shefiu           Abdulkareem Strength in Diversity Development Centre
Shujaan AlDeen    Maysaa     freelance research
Siebert          Hannes     Felm
Silvennoinen     Suvikki    Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland
Sims             Bryan      Humanity United
Steffansson      Rolf       Felm
Stenius          Otto       Ministry for Foreign Affairs
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Stuart           Lucy       Inter Mediate
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The Fourth Conference on National Dialogues and non-formal dialogue processes