

Life

as a peacemaker and a peace process actor

A frank conversation with Haile Menkerios, George Mitchell, Joyce Neu, Kieran Prendergast with comments and reflections from Mohagher Iqbal and Neles Tebay

PEACEMAKERS

Ambassador Haile Menkerios

Ambassador Haile Menkerios is the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for the Sudan, with extensive mediation experience across Africa including in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Madagascar and Somalia.

Honorable George Mitchell

Honorable George Mitchell was the United States' Special Envoy for Middle East Peace until May 2011; he was previously the US Special Envoy for Northern Ireland and a US Senator who served as the Senate Majority Leader from 1989 to 1995.

Dr Joyce Neu

Dr Joyce Neu is the founder and Senior Associate of Facilitating Peace. She has worked as a mediator and facilitator for The Carter Center and the Joan B. Kroc Institute for Peace & Justice. She was the first team leader of the UN's Standby Team of Mediation Experts.

Sir Kieran Prendergast

Sir Kieran Prendergast was previously UN Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs and a diplomat at the British Foreign Office. He is now a Senior Adviser to the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue.

Mr Mohagher Iqbal

Mr Mohagher Iqbal represents the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) as chief negotiator in the peace talks with the Philippine Government.

Father Dr Neles Tebay

Father Dr Neles Tebay is a co-founder and coordinator of the Papua Peace Network (PPN) which was established in 2010 to promote peaceful dialogue between the Government of Indonesia and the Indigenous Papuans.

PEACE PROCESS ACTORS

How did you become a peacemaker?

Haile Menkerios: I have had a lifelong engagement in efforts to resolve conflicts but I started with the worst aspect: War – win the war and dictate the peace. I actively participated in the Eritrean liberation struggle for almost 20 years. Later on, I was involved in the negotiations between Eritrea and Ethiopia and worked as special envoy in Somalia. It was that experience, of witnessing the horrendous human and material cost of war, that led to my interest to look for ways to resolve conflicts through peaceful means.

George Mitchell: I became involved through accident. When I retired from the United States Senate in 1995, President Clinton asked me if I would go to Northern Ireland for a brief period, to help in organising economic investment and assistance, and underpin the peace process which was just at the beginning. I did so and, as the saying goes, one thing led to

another. I was asked to perform an assignment for the British and Irish Governments in connection with paramilitary arms and ultimately became Chairman of the three-member International Commission, which participated in the peace negotiations. So there was no intention or purpose on my part to engage in such activities.

Joyce Neu: The first thing that comes to mind is an incident while I was a Peace Corps Volunteer in Senegal. I encountered an elderly woman on a street in a town I was visiting and I asked for directions to the post office. She responded to my question with “Hello”. I asked again, and she again said “hello.” It finally occurred to me that I had not gone through the greeting ritual and that she was negotiating the politeness [...] she wanted to see before she would answer my question. That negotiation over a social interaction has stayed with me all these years. It taught me a lesson: no matter who you interact with, you need to treat people with dignity and respect, whether it is a head of state or a market lady on the street. That

negotiation on the street was [about] so much more than [...] the post office.

Neles Tebay: *I have not deliberately chosen this role but grew into it. Together with a network of inside facilitators, the Papua Peace Network, I create space for Papuans to gather and air grievances and aspirations as well as to explain the concept of dialogue.*

Kieran Prendergast: In my diplomatic service career, I was involved in a number of situations which required peacemaking. For example, I was involved in implementing the Lancaster House Agreement, which ended UDI (Unilateral Declaration of Independence) and transformed Rhodesia into Zimbabwe. I was in Kenya for the very delicate transition from single party rule to a multiparty system. And I was at the UN in New York; for eight and a half years as Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, where the main plank of my job was to promote the peaceful resolution of conflict.

Do you have a role model? Who inspires you?

Haile Menkerios: My inspiration comes from people who are committed to principles, who do not forget that there are issues which need to be resolved. People do not go to war for no reason. Mediators therefore need to understand the root causes and be committed to their resolution. One can think

of high models like Mandela who spent an entire lifetime with all the reasons one could think of for continuing to fight and yet chose to resolve issues peacefully through dialogue and compromise.

George Mitchell: Well, I don't have any individual or conflict in mind when I deal with these situations. There is such a wide variety of issues and no two are the same, and not one individual can provide inspiration for the wide range of issues that I am confronted with.

Joyce Neu: It is an ambivalent role model but it is Jimmy Carter. Because I worked so closely with him for nine years, I saw the way he listened to people and how calm and non-judgemental he was. People seemed to feel very comfortable talking to him. His attention was so focused on his interlocutor that even had there been explosions going on, Carter would not have moved. I might not agree with all of the things he has done in mediation but I think that, in terms of his skills as a mediator, he is really quite extraordinary.

Kieran Prendergast: I have been lucky to observe many great men. It was a special privilege to work with Nelson Mandela on Burundi, and to

see the great calm and authority that he brought. I thought that Kofi Annan, particularly in the first seven years of his term as Secretary-General, was very

bold in overruling cautious advice, pushing ahead towards peacemaking.

What should be the objective of a peace process, and what can be expected of mediation?

Haile Menkerios: The objective of any peace process should be to have conflicting parties recognise their costs in fighting and arrive at a solution through peaceful negotiation and compromise that maximises their gains given the cost. Violent conflicts have a tremendous cost; human and material. People have to weigh these costs, and recognise the benefits of negotiated solutions, to agree to negotiate. If you can convince conflicting parties that they can achieve their realistic objectives better through peaceful means, I believe you have achieved a successful mediation.

George Mitchell: By definition the objective of a peace process should be peace, if at all possible. Mediation may or may not be able to play a role, depending upon the circumstances. I think the most important question is: how does one define peace?

Some would define it as the mere absence of violent conflict, others would include other factors such as opportunity and hope for the people affected. But I think that, in considering these matters, it is very difficult to generalise. A first prerequisite is to end the violence and to bring about a measure of stability and security.

Neles Tebay: *The main goal is to create a structural and institutional environment which allows people to live in peace. This goal can only be achieved through a dialogue process that results in a joint agreement which is thoroughly implemented.*

Joyce Neu: The minimum success of mediation would be that the parties agree to keep talking. But your aim is obviously higher. The goal is to stop the violence, even if stopping the violence is temporary with a ceasefire agreement. Even short of a peace agreement, securing the release of prisoners or saving lives in any fashion is some kind of success. Naturally the ultimate goal of mediation is to go for a sustainable and just peace agreement that leads to the development of democratic institutions, but that doesn't happen often.

Mohagher Iqbal: *The real objective is problem-solving. If the objective of the peace process is just to manage the problem, it is useless [...] the fear things will become worse is always there. Personally, I believe that good mediation happens when the mediator takes a position by siding on the side of truth and letting the guilty comply with his commitment. Ending violence is meaningless if there is no justice instituted and firmly in place.*

Kieran Prendergast: All depends on the individual situation. First off, whether you think you are at a stage where it can only be managed not solved. And depending on the dynamics of the situation, it may be entirely right to understand that you are managing it and that it is not going to be solvable at the moment, no matter how hard you try. Some situations are ripe for solution, some are not. But I believe that, even if a situation is not ripe, there are always things that you can try to do to make that conflict more ripe for negotiation leading to a settlement.

When is the right time to start talks or mediation and when should they end?

Haile Menkerios: The right time to start would be when the parties to a conflict reach the conclusion, either by themselves or through the assistance of others, that they cannot achieve

their objectives through violence, or that achieving them through violence would be too costly. Parties in conflict generally do not reach such conclusions soon enough, and peacemakers need

to engage to convince them of the advantages of a negotiated settlement and to minimise the damage of confrontation. Mediation should be a continuing service, in differing degrees as required, even after agreements are signed until institutional capacities to resolve conflicts without recourse to violence are adequately in place.

George Mitchell: In a general way, you start when you have some reasonable prospect for a successful conclusion, and you end when you have succeeded or failed to accomplish that objective.

Joyce Neu: Ideally you should start before there is any armed conflict. Ideally mediation begins when there are signs of trouble.

Unfortunately, resources for prevention are usually minimal because there are so many crises. I remember being in Côte d'Ivoire in 2003 for meetings with political parties. It was obvious that the situation was dire. It was clear and yet, I don't think much was done about the situation. We need to constantly assess the "temperature" of societies at risk and offer both unofficial and official consultations and good offices. Once an armed conflict has started, we are obligated to make every effort to mediate before using military force.

Kieran Prendergast: It is hard to generalise. You have to look at the situation. You have to be confident you understand it which is, of course, not always the case. You always have to

ask yourself, are you looking for a transformative solution, where the whole of the problem is dealt with? Or are you dealing with an issue of, what I think of as, "rotating elites"? I think there is an awful lot of rotating of elites. The trouble is that the international community says, "Well, ok, we have solved this problem" without actually looking at the underlying issues and the bigger picture, sometimes because the bigger picture is just too complex and difficult.

Have you ever walked away from talks? And under which circumstances would you?

Haile Menkerios: I have been pushed out of talks! From 1991 until 1995, I was special envoy of the Eritrean Government to Somalia and worked along with IGAD (Intergovernmental Authority on Development) representatives to mediate between the different factions in Somalia. With so much resistance from the parties, it just became impossible to continue and we walked away saying "Call us when you need us". And there was definitely a time earlier when I felt there was no possibility for negotiation, when Eritrea was forcibly annexed by

Ethiopia and Ethiopia believed it was possible to maintain its control by force. I believed there was no other option but to fight, and I joined the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF). Almost 30 years from the start, the Ethiopians understood they were unable to crush the will of the people of Eritrea. On the contrary, they discovered that continuing fighting was making them vulnerable to other opponents inside Ethiopia and they offered to negotiate. It was only at that time that we engaged in negotiations.

George Mitchell: I have not and I would not speculate on that. It's one of those things in life that I'll know it when I see it, but there are so many factors involved that it is impossible to make a specific decision until you are actually confronted with the situation.

Joyce Neu: I have not walked away from talks but I have not been engaged in years-long efforts. But yes, I would consider it. As I have gotten either more experienced or older, getting more tolerant in some ways and less tolerant in other[s], I would exercise that option now. I have great respect for people who recognise when it is time to withdraw, as difficult a decision as this is.

Kieran Prendergast: I certainly have walked away from offers that were not acceptable, that were not reputable. I learned when I was dealing with apartheid in the late eighties, that it is a terrible mistake to say that something is an advance, when it is not. For example in South Africa, the government introduced a tri-cameral system, so three ethnically-based parliaments. That was a change but it was not an advance. You also have

to be very, very wary about being invited into a situation where they want to use you as some sort of fig leaf, and say: “Look! We have brought in international involvement!” without giving you the power to deal with the situation. In Iraq, for example, when I was in the UN, my mantra

was that we should not accept responsibility unless we, the UN, were given the corresponding authority to deliver on those responsibilities.

Neles Tebay: *In my opinion it is important for both parties to establish their BATNA (Best*

alternative to a negotiated agreement) for each issue discussed before mediation starts. BATNAs serve as benchmarks deciding whether outcomes are acceptable or not; in the latter case there might be a need to walk away.

Is it the responsibility of the mediator to include gender-related issues in the talks? What are the challenges to putting these issues on the table?

Haile Menkerios: Mediators have a major role in suggesting to conflicting parties what is at stake and which issues need to be addressed to prevent the continuation of conflict and suffering. Mediators should identify what the root causes are and use other experiences to suggest some possible solutions. While it is the responsibility of the parties to address the issues, it is the role of the mediators to remind, to suggest, to propose what agendas need to be included; one set of these are gender-related issues. It is also important to suggest the inclusion of key stakeholders in the negotiation process – women for one. This is not always easy to ensure, however, as those who make wars (invariably men) don't often want to include anyone outside of them.

George Mitchell: Keep in mind that mediation is a voluntary process, as opposed to arbitration. The most successful mediator is one able to encourage the parties but not dictate to them; to persuade them without controlling them; and to make clear to them that they have ownership of the process and of the result. And if that is done, then the mediator can help to get issues on the agenda. But I have never felt that I was in a position to dictate to the parties. It is important that a mediator act with humility, [so] that the process is about the parties not about him or her. I can, and do, and have, made many suggestions, many proposals, but all in the context of the parties themselves having ownership of the process.

Joyce Neu: The answer has to be yes. During the talks you normally discuss issues of governance or security and those could not be more of a gender issue because they affect the lives of citizens. So it means that women and men need to be included. It is the responsibility of the mediator to raise the issue of inclusivity in peace talks. It is more than just the participation of women. When you see agreements and mediation in societies where you have subjugated groups and

mediators have not raised the issue of how the agreement will affect those groups, including women and children, you are not laying the foundation for a sustainable or just agreement.

Kieran Prendergast: Very often the parties are men, and very often they are not really conscious of gender issues, and they need to be reminded that these are important issues. At the same time I think we have to be quite careful when we try to impose our values on others, there are some values that are universal and some values that are cultural, or specific to situations. I think we should stand up and defend universal values, but we should be quite careful not to impose our cultural views on other people. Because it does not actually help make the peace.

Mohagher Iqbal: *Gender is the responsibility of those who raise it. In the MILF, this is not an issue because we are inclusive and we look at the interests of the entire Bangsamoro people, even without the physical presence of women in the panel.*

What do you think is the most unhelpful assumption many peacemakers/mediators make?

Haile Menkerios: Sometimes mediators forget that the perceptions of the parties in conflict are very important. The temptation to propose an already packaged solution is, I think, very unhelpful. One may think: this is a rational solution and the parties should adopt it. Conflict parties like to believe that any proposal has taken into consideration their position, their interest[s] and proposal. Mediators have, thus, to listen to the parties and ask for the parties' proposals as a start. In the end, the mediators may not even include what the parties presented, but the parties will feel they have been listened to and that what is finally proposed has considered their position. Another dangerous assumption is that peace can easily be achieved once the parties sign a deal. Some processes continue for a long time and there is a reason for this. It is very important to have confidence-building measures

between the parties; this often determines whether there will be commitment to implementing any agreement. The conflicting parties need to fully understand and accept the agreement as their own.

Mohagher Iqbal: *A bad referee would always result in bad game; there will be punching, elbowing etc. He can also derail the process, not knowing when to anchor the boat or to slow down if the waves are getting bigger and bigger.*

George Mitchell: I honestly don't know how other mediations have been conducted, other than just reading about them and seeing the results. I do think that, again, each situation is unique and I think it is a mistake to believe that a success in one effort can automatically be transferred to another. I think one must have inexhaustible patience and a willingness to listen. And I think it would be a mistake for any mediator to enter [a process] with a too short a timeframe. At the same time, in all of these processes there is a tremendous amount of repetition. The parties tend to repeat themselves often and figuring out the right time to bring that to a conclusion is an important judgement call by the mediator. It is a judgement

call informed by the specific circumstances of that situation that can't be made in the abstract.

Joyce Neu: I think it is unhelpful to assume that mediators understand or know the conflict and that they don't need to hear from the people affected. Peacemakers need to make a point of hearing from civil society, women, youth and other groups who are not usually well represented by the elites at the peace table. I was recently in the Central African Republic where I met with political leaders as well as the union of market women and the union of taxi and bus drivers. The taxi and bus drivers have the power to literally stop the entire country from moving and they have used this power to negotiate more equitable treatment by the government. I think it is helpful to hear these different viewpoints to learn where the points of leverage are with the parties and who your allies are outside the room, who will be the ones to actually implement an agreement. It also helps to let the parties know that you are not relying solely on their perspective of the conflict.

What is the most striking mistake that you have made? What will you do differently the next time around?

Haile Menkerios: There are too many to remember one outstanding one! Maybe one stands out: to fail to understand that mediation is a continuing effort. Arrangements need to be made for continuous and follow-on mediation on differences that do arise during the implementation phase. Simply because people do agree on an overall solution does not mean that all the details have been

worked out; mistrust [...] also persist[s]. Many times, mediators just want to get an agreement signed and call it done and go home. I think we did that in the Democratic Republic of Congo case, and had to come back later after a second crisis.

George Mitchell: I don't know that there will be another time around! (Laughs) And I try not to dwell on my mistakes.

Joyce Neu: Generically, one key mistake was being rushed. This was the downside of representing President Carter and the reality of many Track I efforts. Carter needed to be able to report to other people about what was happening so he did not want me to be out in the field for weeks and weeks. My schedule was therefore often rushed; I did not learn enough or hear enough points of view and my work was therefore not as well informed as it might have been. After leaving the Carter Center, I was better able to schedule my time and spent more time in-country.

Kieran Prendergast: First of all you are requiring me to admit that I made a mistake (laughs), which I am sure I have. I think mediators should be willing to say “No” more often, in particular when things are put to them with no hope of success. When I was new in the UN, we were required by the General Assembly to do a report on Israeli settlements in East Jerusalem in an area which the Arabs call Jebel Abu Ghneim and the Israelis call Har Homa. So I approached the Israelis and said that we would like to visit and make a direct assessment. We had quite prolonged nego-

tiations but I said that we would have to report the facts as we saw them, with no conditions and compromise. In the end of what I thought was a good faith negotiation, the Israelis said no, on that basis they did not want to go ahead. One could argue that it was a mistake to be so tough on them because we could have visited had we been willing to compromise. But I did not think that the integrity of this UN process would allow us to accept these restrictions.

How are the decisions made on which stakeholders are included at the main negotiation table and who is engaged on the periphery?

Haile Menkerios: Unfortunately, it is those who are part of the problem, part of the conflict, that negotiate solutions. In the interest of stopping the violence other stakeholders, who may not have participated in the conflict or were its victims, are generally left aside or are peripherally involved and yet these are often the groups/sectors that have fundamental stakes in the solutions and play key roles in their implementation.

George Mitchell: Again, that is very specific to the situation in which one is involved. It's really impossible to define how such a decision is made except that, in my view, it ought to be

as inclusive as possible. Let me give a specific example, which also relates to the question on gender issues. In Northern Ireland, the British Government and the Irish Government and the international team which I headed, worked up a process which, through elections, was able to broaden and diversify the composition of the negotiators. It was not an overt effort to include women but a women's party, the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition was created, ran in the elections, got enough votes to be a representative at the table and made a very important contribution to the process. The approach was not intended or designated exclusively to raise gender issues but it had that effect in a very positive way.

Joyce Neu: I have been reading the literature on conflict resolution, negotiation and mediation for many years – about the need for inclusivity and participation in talks. Yet, when I was leading Track II mediation efforts in the late 90s, it was still just the parties to the conflict in the room – it did not occur to me

to bring civil society members or women into the talks. I consulted with people outside of the mediation, but did not think to ask the parties to expand to include women and/or youth in their delegations or to have them as observers to the process. One exception was during the talks between the Government of Uganda and the Government of Sudan, which largely dealt with the issue of Northern Uganda and the Lord's Resistance Army. I noted to the head of the Ugandan negotiating team that he did not have anyone from Northern Uganda on his team. For the next meeting, he added two members from the North. But I neglected to raise the issue of women. Now, without any doubt, I would also raise the issue of the inclusion of women. Mediators, especially Track I mediators, need to make clear that they are upholding UNSCR 1325 and have expectations that the delegations will have gender parity.

Kieran Prendergast: This is an important issue. One has to be very conscious about this

because the more stakeholders are directly at the table, [...] the less likely you are to get a result. You are in a difficult place, in a situation when you have to decide who to include and who to leave out. For example in Somalia, which is still a deeply clan-based

society, the wrecking potential of even very small sub-sub-clans is considerable and you have to find a way – even though it's extremely unwieldy and very time consuming and very expensive – to make sure that every single grouping is somehow

represented in the negotiations and also gets something out of the negotiations. And I met Somalis who said that if they are not included, they will sabotage any agreement. They mean it and they can do it.

Which current conflict do you consider most challenging, and what will it take to solve it?

Haile Menkerios: I think it would be more reasonable for me to talk about what I am engaged in right now. I am in Sudan as head of UNMIS to help implement the Comprehensive Peace Agreement between the South and the North. The process of implementation of the CPA has not been smooth [...] and still requires constant facilitation/mediation between the NCP and the SPLM. Although the South Sudan referendum eventually went well, many other CPA stipulations and post-CPA arrangements are still pending. Abyei, delineation-demarcation of the border, popular consultations in two bordering states (Blue Nile and Southern Kordofan), the sharing of oil and other resources, and a host of other arrangement[s] necessary to effect a smooth “divorce” and good neighbourly relations still remain, some threatening a relapse to confrontation. A serious international effort is now at work, led by the African Union High Level Implementation Panel on Sudan (AUHIP) and with the participation of the UN, the Troika and a host of other regional and

international partners, to facilitate negotiations between the two parties on all these issues. The objective is to help the two parties reach agreements with a view to establishing two viable and co-operating neighbouring states. Not easy but I believe possible.

George Mitchell: Well, I don't believe I know enough about conflicts in which I am not involved to render general opinions. The Israeli-Palestinian, Israeli-Syrian, Israeli-Lebanese, Israel and all of its neighbours – what we refer to, often, as the conflict in the Middle East in general terms – is extremely challenging, has not lent itself to success despite more than half [a] century of active effort, and it will take strong and determined and visionary leadership by all sides for it to be resolved.

Mohagher Iqbal: *Of course, the Moro Question and the armed conflict in Mindanao. It will take pressure from within and from outside to solve it.*

Joyce Neu: Of course at the moment, the inclination is to say North Africa and the Middle East but I will go with the Congo because I think it is so neglected. It deserves more attention, as does Sudan. They are being short-shrifted because they are not the most strategically important countries to the West although the resources are there.

Obviously for us the Middle East and North Africa are of greater security interest right now. Both the Congo and Sudan require more attention as these are regional problems affecting tens of millions of people.

Neles Tebay: *The Papua conflict is the one I consider the most challenging mainly because I am personally affected by it. The relationship between the central government and Papuans is characterised by deep distrust; in addition the Papuan society is highly fragmented.*

Kieran Prendergast: I think Somalia is tremendously difficult. It is a society with one ethnicity, one language and one religion. They are all Somalis – the same ethnic group – [a]part from a small number of Bantu people. One religion: they are all Muslim. One language: Somali. One culture: Somali culture. And it is the most messed up place in the world! It seems to have this tremendous centrifugal tendency. Yet I note, that on things that matter to individuals, they are rather successful in designing structures. For example, in the whole of Somalia, every single mobile telephone is interoperable. In other words, because there is an interest the mobile phone companies have got together and made it work. Another challenging conflict is Afghanistan. The coalition needs to 1) set itself more modest and

realistic objectives – the really essential objective in Afghanistan is to deny the space to al-Qaeda; and 2) understand that they are going to have to talk to the Taliban in order to achieve their basic objectives. Post-9/11 we have imposed – as far as I can see – the completely wrong type of constitution on Afghanistan. We imposed a highly centralised constitution on a country which

needs to be held together very loosely, with a lot of local power structures. I would say the other conflict which is very difficult, and getting more difficult by the day, is Israel/Palestine. As someone put it, it's like negotiating over a pizza, while the Israelis keep eating the pizza so there is less and less left to negotiate over. You've now reached a situation where the settlements are such

an obstacle to a conventional two state solution that people have begun to talk about an eventual single state solution. Another huge problem has been that you expect the two sides to negotiate effectively with one another, when they need first to negotiate internally, amongst themselves.

Has your view on mediation changed over the years? Has your negotiation/mediation style changed over the years?

Haile Menkerios: Oh yes! I think you always begin with wanting shortcuts, quick fixes. You think that, given your understanding of the problem, it is not difficult to propose a rational solution; the parties will see it is a win-win situation and accept it. Many agreements collapse within a very short time simply because the parties have not themselves clearly weighed the options before agreeing on the best/least costly one. The solution reached must be their solution, their success. Commitment to implementation is based on this. I think a successful mediator is one who assists the parties to adopt a certain solution but, at the end, steps aside and makes sure that the parties own the end result. This is something one learns with time and experience, and of course I have been constantly learning and adapting.

George Mitchell: I think it is very important that the mediator not be the focus of the activity but that the parties themselves be the principals and have ownership of the process – and I haven't wavered from that position. I think a mediator is most effective in advancing his or her ideas if he or she can create the conditions in which the parties are genuinely open and receptive to suggestions and want to bring the conflict to a successful conclusion.

Joyce Neu: I think in some ways my role in mediation has changed. When I was mediating, I was usually the only woman in the room but I never raised gender issues. I was a woman but I was not there because I was a woman. I was there because someone thought I had the skills to be there. Now I think I would certainly approach it differently, in the sense that I realise that being a woman mediator was an advantage. It helped to buy trust from the parties who tended to be men and, I think, were less threatened by meeting a woman because it was a bit out of the ordinary. I think that now, being a bit older with more experience, I would try to more effectively exploit whatever leverage I would bring to the mediation and see to it that more voices were heard at the table.

Kieran Prendergast: I am sorry to say that, when I was in my thirties as a young delegate at the UN in New York I thought primarily in terms of procedures and resolutions. I did not think at all about the actual substance because it was in the middle of the Cold War and there was a very strict limit to what could be achieved though the UN at that time. As I got older and saw for myself the costs of conflict and the human suffering, my focus shifted. I also learnt, particularly when I was a diplomat in Africa, that personal relationships very often transcend more objective criteria. At the HD Centre, personal relationships and respect are absolutely key. If the parties feel like you respect them, they may not do what you want them to do, but they will listen to you, and they may be influenced by it. If they feel like you are treating them with disdain, arrogance or lack of respect, they will neither listen to you nor do what you want them to do. So in a way: you can be too young and too keen, too thrusting, and there are large areas of the world where that does not work.