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Centre for
Humanitarian
Dialogue



Meeting report

Oslo Forum 2006
Annual Mediators' Retreat

Improving practice by
confronting reality

Losby Gods,
June 26 - 28 2006

114, rue de lausanne
ch – 1202
geneva, switzerland
info@hdcentre.org
t: +41 22 908 11 30
f: +41 22 908 11 40
www.hdcentre.org

The Centre for Humanitarian
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Switzerland, dedicated to the promotion
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prevention of conflict and the alleviation
of its effects through dialogue.

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What is the OSLO Forum?

The OSLO Forum is a process led by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue to improve practice in conflict mediation, enhance its reputation and status as a profession and contribute to the professional development of the current and the next generation of conflict mediators.

Anchored in an annual gathering in Oslo, the process includes two regional retreats and other meetings, the purpose of which is to :

- Provide a venue for those engaged as conflict mediators to meet as a peer group, and learn from each other's experiences in an informal and confidential setting;
- Bridge institutional divides so that UN, regional IGO, government or non-governmental mediators are encouraged to look beyond their own institution for advice and lessons;
- Contribute to a stronger shared identity among conflict mediators to enhance the professionalism of their work, and,
- Develop a cadre of experienced individuals from within conflict mediation support teams and beyond and mentor those, who may be able to assume lead roles in conflict mediation in the future.

The retreats deliberately refrain from seeking to generate specific recommendations or conclusions, but aim to stimulate debate and critically examine current practice.

Executive summary

The OSLO Forum 2006 was exceptional in bringing together over 60 senior conflict mediators and other key peace process actors, who seek to resolve conflict through dialogue. Previous retreats had involved only mediators, but this year half the participants brought to the table other experience gained through participation in peace processes. Participants were well prepared, eager to discuss and appreciated the background material that had been provided in advance. Even more than in previous years, participants took the opportunity to actively engage and network throughout the retreat. Notably, the exchange between mediators and experts was regarded as valuable, and surprisingly novel.

The two groups attended sessions of various formats either jointly or in parallel. Guest speakers included Gerry Adams, President of Sinn Féin, Luis Moreno Ocampo, Chief Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court and Javier Solana, High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy and Secretary General of the Council of the European Union.

The fourth annual event of its kind, the OSLO Forum 2006 focussed on the delicate balance mediators need to strike between the growing demands and imperatives of the international community and the needs of a particular mediation process.

The sessions were dedicated to a range of topical issues, including the challenge to:

- Identify the mediating institution best suited to a particular conflict environment;
- Address and understand religious components of conflict;
- Create the conditions for transforming armed groups to peaceful political actors;
- Understand the constraints and opportunities of the interplay of conflict mediation and the International Criminal Court;
- Manage peace processes involving multiple constituencies;
- Appreciate what theorists and policy makers can learn from practitioners who are faced with the realities on the ground and vice versa;
- Agree on the utility of guiding principles or ethical codes of conduct for mediators and what they should contain.

Recurrent themes of concern to both the senior conflict mediators as well as the key peace process actors were:

- the growing external pressures on mediation processes, including unrealistic timeframes, expectations and politically imposed restrictions on whom to talk to and how;
- the need to discuss the challenges of implementation and how

“ 2006 focussed on the delicate balance between the growing demands of the international community and the needs of a particular mediation process

to devise an agreement that creates favourable conditions for sustainable peace;

- the growing competition between mediation actors and how to effectively coordinate these, or establish and maintain lead roles.

This public report, while respecting the strict confidentiality of the meeting itself, is intended as a summary document. A more detailed report is available to participants only. Further information and background papers to all sessions can be accessed through the HD Centre's website.

Mediating religion, politics and culture

How do the religious elements of conflicts affect their nature and their amenability to mediation? Are international mediators too secular in their approach? What alternatives can religious institutions, actors and models offer for the resolution of conflicts? How to know whom to include among these religious actors – and, once included, what to expect from these actors as negotiation partners?

To appreciate what role religion plays or is perceived to play in today's conflicts, participants were presented with different views: a spiritually motivated view, exploring the positive roles that religious actors and viewpoints can play in conflict resolution; a pragmatic view that contends that religion is most often used to mask other concerns; and the commentary of a practicing mediator on those views.

Participants found it hard to identify either cases where religion was truly a means to solving a conflict, or cases where they felt religion was the true root of the conflict. Northern Ireland was mentioned to illustrate that conflict might be framed in terms of religion, but the real concerns are often associated with economic and social inequalities. Consequently, the discussion quickly turned to questions of peace process management more generally. It was widely agreed that peace processes tend to be insufficiently inclusive, especially of religious hardliners; Sudan and Afghanistan are recent examples. Also, sometimes those included did not really represent the constituency they claimed to. The problem when dealing with such identity issues is to find formulae to share power and resources that do not disaggregate wider communities into even smaller constituent parts.

Many agreed that mediators themselves do not need to be associated with a particular religion provided they have the right resources on their teams to provide understanding on the relevant issues.

However, the point was made that mediators should be much more thoughtful about the identity they project, and how that will play in a given cultural environment. There was a strong consensus on the importance of deep knowledge of the conflict, although questions flowed from this about how this affected a mediator's neutrality.

Conversations with the prosecutor of the International Criminal Court

Luis Moreno Ocampo, Chief Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC) consulted with mediators on the interplay of conflict mediation and the pursuit of justice.

“ in some instances mediators perhaps have to accept that mediation is unrealistic

Ocampo stressed the complementarity of mediation and the ICC, but pointed out that in some instances mediators perhaps have to accept that mediation is unrealistic. Overall, the Chief Prosecutor resisted the argument that the ICC may harm attempts to arrive at peace, stating that the prosecutor can adjust the timing of investigations and indictments as well as the profile of an investigation in order to respect the pace of any peace negotiation.

Ocampo described the approach taken by his office in selecting cases, as one that carefully aims to maximize impact, taking into account:

- Gravity – the ICC is not another human rights court, it will only deal with exceptionally grave crimes: genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes;
- Victims’ interests – investigations can be stopped in the interest of the victims;
- Timing – both for peace processes and for the sequencing of work load for the ICC.

The advantages of the ICC were presented as:

- Deterrence – the most serious crimes are almost certainly planned and premeditated, hence they can be deterred;
- Complementarity – the ICC only acts when states cannot or will not and the fact that the ICC receives referrals from state parties or the Security Council lends it credibility and legitimacy;
- Endurance – in contrast to special tribunals (e.g. the Special Court for Sierra Leone) the ICC takes a long-term approach;
- Witness protection – the Court’s mechanisms for witness protection have proven successful.

Discussion among mediators focused on the apparent gap between the promise of international justice and the reality of how difficult it would be to enforce in practice. For this reason, though supportive of the ICC’s purpose there was some continuing scepticism regarding real deterrent impact. Mediators too stressed that they felt at present we were in a transition phase, where certain results such as total amnesties were no longer acceptable, but yet neither was meaningful accountability likely.

The result was some confusion as to the limits of permissible amnesties, or at least the boundaries of acceptable discretion in this area.

There was general agreement that as yet peace and justice are not always fully reconcilable and that it will take some time until the ICC can enjoy the necessary powers of enforcement to reach the long term goal of both justice and prevention of future crimes. The international community is increasingly accepting the Court as a reality and among mediators there is a strong interest in learning more about the criteria of involvement.

Creating the conditions for transformation from war to peace: Conflict parties' perspectives

What can mediators or facilitators do to create the most propitious circumstances for transforming armed groups to political parties? What are the most challenging aspects for an armed group moving from conflict to peace in terms of internal dynamics? What factors or aspects external to the armed group can facilitate the process of moving from conflict to peace (or may hinder it if not handled appropriately)? What role can the international community play? Should mediators always focus on fostering such transformation? When might this be wrong or unrealistic?

The discussion centred on disconnections of perception in asymmetric conflicts – which make up the majority of current conflicts. A range of arguments presented the need to take into account the psychology and motivations of all parties, rather than getting tangled up in principles, non-negotiables and preconditions. Tools for moving stalled processes forwards were examined such as timetables/deadlines, external champions and parallel initiatives. The greatest challenge identified, paradoxically perhaps, was the management of internal constituencies. It was clearly of great interest and value to the participants to hear Gerry Adams' analysis of the Sinn Féin experience and compare it with other analysis of politicised Islamic armed groups and their approaches to negotiation.

According to Adams it is rare that two sides want to end a conflict and send for mediators. People use violence when they believe there is no alternative, and transformation requires that alternative to be found. What was unique to the Irish situation was that Sinn Féin, the weaker party, had to take the initiative to do that. One of Sinn Féin's particular successes was the persuasion to a new outlook of a group of Irish, who did not want a republic, and who had been given a veto over the process by the British.

Adams recalled a telling response from George Mitchell to a remark that he needed to bring justice to people oppressed by the British system: *"If my job is to bring justice to this issue, then I need a*

“ it is rare that two sides want to end a conflict and send for mediators. People use violence when they believe there is no alternative

different brief.”. Though the Irish process is called successful it has yet to reach its destination.

Conflict parties need to look for external help and support at different moments of the process – from the Diaspora, from other governments, or for quiet support provided by other initiatives.

Adams identified some key elements he saw as transcending individual conflict situations:

- Dialogue is central and must be inclusive. Neither side can dictate who represents the other and there must be no preconditions to dialogue. Everything must be on the agenda and there must be respect and an attitude of equality round the table;
- You need to tackle the causes of the conflict and not just the symptoms;
- There must be timeframes to keep the momentum up. Even if they are changed as in the Irish case, it is important to have them;
- The most difficult negotiation is the internal negotiation with your own side.

An expert agreed strongly on the point about no preconditions when speaking on the Islamist perspective on negotiation. He described the politicisation of Muslim discontent with the current world order, perceived as a colonialist Western hegemony aiming to impose its own values and methods of control and order on others. He also suggested an ambiguity in the Western attitude to violence – as something unacceptable, and yet sometimes justifiable if the enlightened world is perceived to be threatened. Furthermore, as the West tries to reconfigure its own rules outside the pale of international law, this forces the “Other” also to reconfigure themselves to avoid acquiescing to Western demands and accepting the rules of a game they in fact want to change.

He pointed out that military symmetry is basically impossible today, leaving real negotiation as the only option. From the point of view of political Islam, the value of respect from your adversary, however grudging, cannot be overplayed. Islamists speak more of ethics than politics, whereas Westerners expect demands. He also stressed the need to better understand the psychology of conflict, of how people can become traumatised by loss, humiliation, abuse, occupation. Only with such an understanding can the structure and timetable of talks be properly designed, and there will perhaps always be members of groups who won’t feel ready to do politics. His emphasis was that demilitarisation is an extremely valid part of the process – more so than disarming and ending violence per se.

It was agreed that timeframes are often not designed for the parties or the process, but for political processes outside (like the US and Iraq). Darfur was cited as an example where the proliferation of mediators stymied any chance of a useful timeframe being workable, which led

“timeframes are often not designed for the parties or the process, but for political processes outside

to fragmentation. Participants also stressed the need to recognise that armed groups often have limited capacity to implement.

More discussion centred on why the position of Western governments has hardened, especially when history shows that most negotiations take place through continuing violence; all the more, as it is self-defeating to allow yourself to be deterred from negotiations by violence.

Undoubtedly, September 11th has changed the strategic context in which mediators work, but it is not as relevant as where the conflict is, and what the conditions are which may exacerbate it. It is critical for the UN to maintain a minimum of independence, impartiality and neutrality (Is it failing in this in the Israel/Palestine conflict?), when groups and governments will deal with those whom they think have something to offer or who will somehow aid their cause.

Peace process management: The challenge of multiple constituencies

Most conflicts are multi-dimensional both in terms of issues and actors involved. How can mediators identify critical constituencies – internal and external – that have a legitimate stake in a conflict, and what are the risks of inclusion and exclusion? How can different actors be accessed, tracked and, where necessary, harnessed to ensure a workable solution without neglecting the demands of transparency, confidentiality, or the efficiency of a process?

The discussion focused particularly on asymmetric conflict and participants were drawn to the question of peace process design, especially in view of implementation – how an agreement can be structured to facilitate easier implementation, how the management of the negotiation process can affect implementation opportunities, what contextual conditions need to pertain to favour implementation etc. Despite common concern that all conflicts are different and generalisation should be avoided, some valuable observations and lessons learned were identified:

Observations

- The longer processes go on, the harder for government negotiators to contain political opposition; often elections during or after peace processes are won by opposition & hardliners;
- Early ceasefires are often unrealistic in asymmetric conflicts – a basic structural incompatibility is the fact that the government side is following a pacification agenda, seeking to stop war, violence and terrorism whereas the other side may gain leverage through escalation;

- Civil society can help ripen a situation for negotiation – but the more inclusive a process, the more difficult to reach agreement;
- Peace processes seek to achieve a dynamic change in social systems, not simple changes of static positions, hence local politics will always remain broader than the actual peace process.

Lessons learned

- Understanding internal structures of parties is key in developing strategies;
- Encourage parties not to think in terms of positional bargaining or concessions;
- Concessions can put substantial internal pressure on a party and even alienate internal constituencies;
- In all communication, it is key to speak with one voice;
- Media are a vital constituency, they also reach the diaspora, who can be a powerful agent in a peace process;
- Parties must have a communication strategy to preclude spoilers from questioning potentially positive developments;
- Government negotiators should avoid to instrumentalise breakthroughs politically, this may make their political survival dependent on concessions by the other side;
- Parties should include and inform the population to avoid facing an audience rather than participants in the peace process; audiences quickly turn into juries.

As the discussion turned more to implementation, mediators called for some room for flexibility in implementation, and for some distance from headquarters. Others pointed out that too much ambiguity can be destructive, contrary to Kissinger's famous quotation.

Common principles that the participants could agree on were the importance of building trust and confidence, being truthful, and insisting that the parties must agree not somebody else; you cannot listen enough; you cannot rely on anything but doggedly following up.

The Darfur Peace Agreement: A debate

Two teams of three, comprising both experts and non-experts were asked to debate the pros and cons of the May 2006 Darfur Peace Agreement with a view to power sharing, wealth sharing and security arrangements. The debate was designed to illustrate the difficulties in reaching compromise and effectively combining a variety of individual expertise. A short briefing featuring the main aspects of the conflict and the Darfur Peace Agreement had been distributed in advance.

Five major themes emerged from the debate :

- **Availability of military expertise and advice in negotiations**
Participants agreed that there was plenty – arguably too much – of such expertise. The US attaching a US colonel to the SLM was seen as a very constructive model of practice.
- **Capacity of negotiating parties**
Both the SLM and the JEM needed external advice and preparation before coming to the table. Who is best placed to provide such training and support? How should mediators manage capacity building activities and maintain the appropriate level of neutrality and impartiality?
- **Pace of negotiations**
How much time should mediation reasonably take when civilians are being killed? Will the killing stop if negotiations progress quickly? How to balance maximum inclusiveness with the slowing effects of numerous perspectives? Following a speedy process, a key weakness of the Darfur Peace Agreement is that people in general don't know what it is all about, and thus there is minimal ownership.
- **Parties change their goalposts**
Mediators often perceive the changing of goalposts as an indicator for not being serious about the negotiations. What tools and strategies can a mediator apply to remedy such a situation?
- **Fragmentation of groups during negotiation**
Internal constituency management is the toughest job of all in a peace process. Participation in the Darfur Peace Agreement negotiations was very limited, and not always logical or transparent. Participants were at a loss why the JEM, a relatively small group, was invited and other much bigger groups excluded. In consequence, it was felt, that the question of who could legitimately speak for Darfur was not adequately addressed.

Echoing the session on the political transformation of armed groups some expressed the opinion that the deadlines in the case of Sudan were extremely unhelpful, especially with a view to constituency management issues.

Guidelines for mediators in armed conflict: Help or hindrance

Mediation is often perceived as forced to forgo principles under the pressures of Realpolitik. Bearing that in mind, is a set of ethical standards or guidelines for mediators in armed conflict desirable? What would be their content and scope? What options do we have and how should we pursue them?

The UN has its charter with objectives and principles to which its officers should be held, including specific guidelines for mediators on justice and accountability issues. These guidelines, however, do not touch on ethical standards per se and may not be so useful to other types of organisation.

The international community should take more collective responsibility for the UN Security Council to do more to facilitate the mandates it sets. Guidelines would not be a substitute for this political groundwork, but could nonetheless be very valuable to help the mediator to maintain credibility and consistency. While the humanitarian experience on ethical guidelines was broadly positive, this experience was deemed less relevant in conflict mediation, most notably in terms of different expectations of transparency and publicity.

Nevertheless, flexible, non-binding ethical guidelines as opposed to rules would be useful. Such a document – described by participants as a resource pack – could address good ethical conduct in a way that was relevant to all such actors. While there is a bias against self-conscious professionalisation, the idea of a repository of ethical good practice and the ability to transfer valuable experience seem to find consistent favour amongst practitioners. There was less discussion than might have been expected on what the negative aspects of such guidelines might be. Though few suggestions emerged on substance, it was felt there should be emphasis on helping mediators to look beyond agreements to implementation. Generally, a set of guidelines would help mediators better manage complex realities, including the risks of forum shopping and competition among mediators.

Question time: Matching mediators to conflicts

Styles and approaches to mediation have been repeatedly dissected in the analysis of conflict mediation practice. How manipulative, formative, interventionist or merely facilitative should a mediator be? Is there a link between the intensity of conflict and the effectiveness of manipulative approaches? When is a conflict ripe for mediation by whom? Who does and who should decide who mediates a conflict, and on what grounds? To what extent does the nature of an actor dictate the most suitable strategy?

Several themes emerged in this exploration of the strengths and weaknesses of different types of mediators as seen from a governmental, an advisory and a non-governmental perspective:

- **Competition among mediators**

Participants explored the possibility of assigning a lead mediator to coordinate efforts of a larger group of mediators, but were

conscious about the difficulties to organise the sharing of information and preclude the parties from playing on mediator against the other.

- **Succession of mediators**

Aceh was cited as a positive example of competition. Even though the first agreement (mediated by the HD Centre) failed, it played a vital role in ripening the situation for the final agreement (mediated by CMI). In Darfur on the other hand, the succession of mediators arguably allowed the parties to manipulate information and mediators. There was some discussion about entry points for and ripeness of a conflict for mediation, whether those are to be judged according to military or political indicators, and whether those can be created.

- **Strategy**

The question whether a mediator should commit unconditionally to a process or maintain the option to withdraw from the process or impose conditions was central to the discussion. Most participants identified the key functions of a mediator as finding ways to help parties achieve and maintain genuine communication, and suggesting options for a solution to the conflict. Mediators should inject fresh ideas and proposals to the negotiations, but should also have marshalling power – military, economic and political – to exert legitimacy and credibility. Importantly, they should communicate their strategy to the parties from the outset to avoid being taken for granted by the parties.

- **Terminology**

The distinction between facilitation and mediation was dismissed as one of semantics rather than substance (facilitation can be used as an excuse to explain failure).

The transmission belt between theory and practice in conflict resolution

The purpose of the session was to explore the link between theory, training, and practice in the field of international mediation. The idea of a transmission belt was used to the mechanisms that transfer knowledge between one mediation experience and the next.

There was unanimity that to date there has been no systematic approach to the preparation of mediators in any major institution, including large and small governments, NGOs, the UN, and so forth. There was some debate on what makes a good mediator and whether the skills of a good mediator are teachable. The consensus emerged that there are some parts – the science – that can and should be taught, and others – the art – that were more difficult to teach.

At least, the right environment and encouragement could cultivate the required attitudes through modelling and person to person contact such as the Oslo Forum.

The session clearly endorsed further work in making a functional reality of the transmission belt, while making it evident that topics and teaching methods will need to be further researched, and then delivered in ways which adapt to an extremely busy audience. Essentially, the issue is how to make theory, knowledge, history, and case experience accessible and digestible for a range of different consumers in a range of institutional training and education settings. Likewise, the biggest challenge is to acknowledge the value of anecdotal evidence without getting lost in a conceptual desert in order to establish the best modes of practice and feed practitioners experience into the theory.

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Often, there is an established body of widely – accepted tradecraft, but in many cases the theory is still in debate – nevertheless this is perfectly teachable. Some of the controversies raised included whether stopping the violence should be first objective or whether premature ceasefires make mediation less effective, whether there are conflicts where mediators should bail out entirely or whether mediators have an obligation to keep trying.

A certain bias against traditional teaching methods was evident, together with a strong conviction that an ability to understand and analyse the context of a specific conflict is more important than deep knowledge of mediation theory. There are also concerns about applying lessons out of context, or learning the wrong lessons from an experience and perpetuating them. It was generally felt, that traditional teaching environments are limited because high status learners may need a specialized pedagogical approach. The session raised a number of options for tools to support knowledge transfer, including learning through:

- Practice and practical training deployments;
- Computer modelling;
- Improved expert/staff support during an effort;
- Better exploitation of techniques in parallel sectors such as industrial and traditional mediation if relevant;
- Analysis based on debriefing of parties to the conflict as opposed to just the mediators.

The discussions made it clear that there is an emerging trend towards institutionalization of the transmission belt, including the recently established UN Mediation Support Unit, but that approaches are aspirational and it is not yet clear how well they will succeed, especially in terms of their goals for sharing the resources created.

The UN's role in mediation: First among equals or last resort?

What are the actual and potential strengths and weaknesses of the UN as conflict mediator? How do they compare to those of other multilateral institutions?

The UN is uniquely able to communicate with everyone, although its involvement in the Middle East process and stance on the recent Palestinian elections may have compromised it in this regard. In contrast to states, it is also in a position to engage for the long term. Its presence is therefore almost always welcome because it implies the presence of its agencies and all their resources in the reconstruction phase (if mandates and resources to do so are provided). Even if it is not seen as 100% neutral, the UN is still normally regarded as more neutral than others. However, it is difficult for the UN to act quickly.

Armed groups often see the UN as conferring some kind of international recognition on them and on the process, something which governments will usually strenuously oppose. The UN can, in principle, bring coherence to a situation where there are multiple mediators – although it is not clear that this has been borne out in practice. The loyalty of UN officers can create added complexity, and their own flexibility may be compromised by hard won multilaterally-debated mandates. It is not always clear that the UN is best suited to ensuring the ownership by the people of a process.

The SG should be able to say no, and more often. The UN can maintain a kind of symbolic importance as much by non-involvement as by engagement. Many thought that the UN should be a last resort mediator, and that it should be empowered to act as coordinator or clearing house – but that its current overstretch (a recognised phenomenon to which no solutions were suggested) makes that a significant challenge, alongside the deeper political challenge of maintaining visible impartiality.

The role of SRSGs is pivotal, but there are aspects of appointment which are not well coordinated. Briefings remain inconsistent and patchy, and there is a failure to draw on existing institutional knowledge, especially from those agencies that have been there in advance, sometimes by years, of the crisis for which an SRSG is appointed.

The liberal peace: In crisis or in transition?

A concluding session aimed to interrogate the broad model of the liberal democratic society which, it is assumed, is used by conflict mediators as the aspirational final destination of their endeavours.

A provocative paper *The Limits of the Liberal Peace – a Mediator’s View* suggested that the role of the conflict mediator should be rethought, and brought back to the key task of stopping and preventing further violent conflict, and not aiming for wholesale transformation of societies.

Participants generally agreed that international actors need to pay much more attention to implementation much earlier. Creating the instruments or mechanisms for governance in transitional periods is essential to facilitate peace and enable the protection of human rights. However, the ultimate goals should be interrogated within the contexts of specific societies and conflicts to test their applicability, identify priorities, and how they might be achieved in the context and with the resources likely to be available.

It was suggested that this is a question of choosing where to stand on a spectrum of policy choices. The fact that international actors work to deadlines dictated at home, and continue to apply non-adapted models or insist on standards which their own states do not meet poses serious problems. For example, the Western model of a majoritarian democracy can be deeply destabilising in a fragile state. There is a continuing failure to listen, look, learn and be humble.

Other participants argued that the major challenge lies in managing transitions and underlined the gap in transitional management capacity and ideas. The question as to why secession has become a solution *non grata* was raised, alongside the point that there is insufficient analysis as to whether the changing of order by force is destabilizing or indeed the opposite. It was felt that agreements have generally become more comprehensive, perhaps due to the liberal model. Yet, they were often unbalanced for those in charge of negotiation tend towards a more political rather than technical or economic background. There is a persistent trend for elites to continue talking to elites with few concessions in terms of who is represented at the table, and the issues that are prioritised.

Some of the key transition management tasks will include to :

- Offer real guarantees, including autonomy rights etc
- Design electoral systems and encourage people to participate in politics in order to reduce tension following elections (this will include policies that are often neglected by the liberal model such as governments of national unity, quotas for minorities, specific electoral systems that give disproportionate representation to minorities, etc);
- Separate short-term from long-term peace.

Speaking from a military perspective, some participants called upon peace builders to be clearer on whether they are aiming at order or justice; noting a distinct difference between the two. The concern to include human rights protection is misplaced, rather mediators should

think with a view to build the organisations that can protect them. Justice is undoubtedly part of a lasting solution, but according to a formula that fits the situation.

Oslo Forum 2006 and beyond

For the first time in the history of the Oslo Forum, the challenge of identifying women mediators was made a prominent theme at the retreat. The arguments as to why a more reasonable proportion of women mediators would be a benefit to peace have been well made already. To move towards practical action to redress the current imbalance, retreat participants contributed over a hundred names of potential women mediators. The HD Centre will work to follow up on this with activities to promote better inclusion of women at senior level in the negotiation of peace.

As in previous years, participants of the Oslo Forum 2006 put forward many ideas and suggestions for further debate, and we are keen to incorporate and address those in our planning of next year's retreat and our work more broadly. While the next Oslo Forum is scheduled to take place at the end of June in 2007, a related meeting focusing on Asia in November 2006 and another in Africa in early 2007, will surely generate as many ideas and insights as mediators come together to discuss their experiences in a regional context.