

3rd Meeting of Regional, Subregional and other International Organizations on Preventive Diplomacy and Mediation

Inputs for presentation on Panel 2 “Inclusivity in mediation processes”

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- I am pleased to be here and to share the perspective of the Swiss OSCE Chairmanship on inclusivity in mediation processes. This is a timely topic and one where we can all learn from each other. I will briefly speak about *why* including a wide range of actors in peace processes is important. The focus of my presentation will be on *how* Switzerland through its OSCE Chairmanship in 2014 intends to put the concept into practice.
- As you know, inclusivity is one of the mediation fundamentals identified by the UN Guidance for Effective Mediation. The Guidance usefully defines inclusivity as “the extent and manner in which the views and needs of conflict parties and other stakeholders are represented and integrated into the process and the outcome of a mediation effort.” The Guidance also clarifies that inclusivity is not primarily about ‘who gets a seat at the table’, i.e. who participates in formal negotiations. Rather, it is about how mediators interact with various stakeholders in conflict societies.
- One aspect of inclusivity for Switzerland is the belief that it is necessary to talk to all those actors that have influence in a conflict outcome and thus decide over war and peace. This is the case even if we disagree with some of the actors’ actions and their cause. This acceptance of broad and inclusive participation of parties to a conflict is deeply rooted in the long-established Swiss tradition of neutrality. Therefore, contrary to other countries, Switzerland does not blacklist militant groups. This gives us the leeway to include all relevant actors in a mediation process. For example, Switzerland has continued to speak to Hamas representatives after the 2006 elections with the aim of supporting an inclusive peace process in the Middle East.
- This brings me to another aspect of inclusivity: the systematic engagement of civil society in peace talks. Political elites, religious leaders, refugees and IDPs, all of them should be included in peace talks. There has been said a lot about this aspect. I am not encouraging those who are pretending that all these segments of society should sit at the negotiation table, because peace negotiations are a risky business confronted with many factors that can contribute to a potential failure. Mediators have always to conciliate tensions between inclusivity and process effectiveness.

- The Swiss OSCE Chairmanship promotes the inclusion of women in mediation processes. Switzerland together with other partners supported efforts by the OSCE Gender Section to come up with a series of recommendations for how gender aspects of mediation processes can be better addressed and how the participation of women can be promoted. This resulted in the Guidance Note on Gender Responsive Mediation, which was launched last October in Istanbul.
- Another example is the newly established OSCE Network of Think Tanks and Academic Institutions, which now comprises 37 members. One of the contributions of the Network is to foster collaboration and confidence-building in regions that are experiencing conflict or are in a stage of post-conflict rehabilitation. Furthermore, the recommendations of a current Network study on threat perceptions in the OSCE area will be presented to the formal OSCE process later this spring.
- Why is it important for Switzerland to include civil society in mediation processes? Let me highlight three points in this regard. First, involving the perspectives of civil society allows us to get a full picture of what the conflict is about and to tailor-make our response accordingly. Second, during peace negotiations, civil society can be an important ally in terms of convincing leaders to make the necessary compromises for peace. This kind of bottom-up dynamic can be an important factor in peace talks. Third, we know very well that any peace agreement lives or dies during the implementation phase. If civil society is consulted and public opinion is prepared, implementation is more likely and spoilers are less likely to gain traction.
- In order to engage civil society, the Swiss OSCE Chairmanship organizes this year four regional civil society workshops in Belgrade, Dushanbe, Warsaw, and Vienna. The workshops are platforms for NGOs, academics, journalists and others to come together and make recommendations for the work of the OSCE, including its role in mediation processes. These recommendations will then feed into a civil society conference that is held in parallel to the Ministerial Council in Basel in December 2014.
- Switzerland as Chair of the OSCE in 2014, and Serbia, that will assume the Chair in 2015, jointly proposed a work plan for the “Helsinki+40 process, designed to reform the Organization and set out a vision for its future. This plan puts much emphasis on the conflict cycle, protracted conflicts and mediation. As OSCE Chairperson-in-Office Burkhalter said at his opening statement in the Hofburg at the beginning of this year:

It is in the spirit of “Helsinki+40” that we seek to strengthen the OSCE's competence to act by building up its capacities to prevent violent conflicts and mediate lasting solutions. We have already started to provide mediation training to OSCE staff and will continue on this path. We would also like to strengthen ties between the OSCE and the UN mediation support unit. Moreover, we encourage participating States to make full use of the toolbox the OSCE provides to address the conflict cycle.

- In the context of mediation, it is also important to mention the efforts of our three Special Representatives, who represent the OSCE in established negotiation formats regarding the protracted conflicts as well as post-conflict rehabilitation. The first concerns Ambassador Radojko Bogojevic, who mediates on behalf of the OSCE in the Transnistrian conflict in Moldova. Last week, he conducted his first visit to the region to prepare for the next round of the so-called ‘5+2’ talks. He made a point of including a meeting with civil society actors in his schedule to garner their views on the settlement process.
- Special Representative Ambassador Angelo Gnädinger, who works on promoting peace in the South Caucasus, is also committed to civil society inclusion. He will try to facilitate people-to-people contacts at different levels, for example between experts. Ambassador Gnädinger hopes that civil society initiatives and high-level mediation efforts, such as the Geneva International Discussions and the Minsk process, will reinforce each other.
- Finally, the Special Representative for the Western Balkans, Ambassador Gérard Stoudman, also strives to combine civil engagement with formal peace processes. This is particularly relevant in the context of the implementation of the Belgrade-Pristina Agreement of April 2013.
- In conclusion, let me emphasize three key points. First, inclusive mediation is an essential element of the Swiss Chairmanship as part of our effort to promote conflict resolution in the OSCE area. Second, we should keep in mind that civil society inclusion is no “silver bullet” for conflict solving. It is one element that allows the mediator to maximize the chances for peace, but in the end it is up to the parties to seize the opportunity. Third, for a successful implementation of a peace arrangement it is essential to have the buy-in of civil society and the population at large. For this purpose, they need to be involved early in the mediation process for facilitating ownership of its outcome.