

## UN Chief on Mediation and Settlement of Disputes

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Mr. President, Most Reverend Archbishop of Canterbury, Distinguished Members of the Security Council. War is becoming increasingly complex, and so is mediating peace. Today, internal conflicts frequently take on regional and transnational dimensions. Many feature a deadly mix of fragmented armed groups and political interests funded by criminal activities.

Conflicts around the world drag on for years and decades, holding back development and stunting opportunities, and comprehensive peace agreements are becoming more elusive and short-lived. Political will wanes, international attention drifts. The Central African Republic, for example, has suffered overlapping national and local conflicts for decades, yet some 15 peace agreements have been signed there since 1997.

As bad as the situation is in many parts of the world, I am convinced that it is within our power to tackle and reverse these trends. And this is why, since the beginning of my tenure, one of my key priorities has been a surge in diplomacy for peace. And as I have consistently stressed, we must make prevention our priority.

But prevention also includes investment in mediation, peace building, and sustainable development. We must be bold and creative in bringing together the avenues and capacities that are available for mediation. The United Nations has a number of mediation resources that we deploy in various ways. My special envoys and representatives pursue consultations, good offices, and formal talks, often alongside envoys and mediators from regional organizations and member states.

They may lead a political process, as in Libya or Yemen. They may head a complex peacekeeping operation, as in Mali. Or, they may focus on prevention from a regional office, as in West Africa. Collaboration with other mediation actors is key. Allow me to mention two recent examples. In Madagascar, my Special Advisor has coordinated closely with the Special Envoys of the African Union, SADC, the European Union, and Francophonie to facilitate Malagasy led negotiations toward peaceful and inclusive negotiations aimed at ensuring free and fair elections.

In Gambia, coordinated action by ECOWAS, the African Union and the UN, and neighboring countries succeeded in preventing a major political crisis and supporting a democratic transition. Members of the UN's stand by team of senior mediation advisors are providing advice in the Central African Republic on transitional justice issues as part of the peace process there.

In Yemen, they are assisting with the design of the mediation process led by my special envoy. In South Sudan, they have provided support to the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, IGAD, which is leading the mediation process. The decided engagement of the region, particularly the neighboring countries, backed by the Security Council, was a critical element in the agreement recently reached by the South Sudanese leaders to end the conflict.

Discreet engagement also plays a role. Continuing talks with the Taliban, despite years of war and continued fighting, and away from the glare of publicity, allows positions to be clarified. Renewed engagement with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea has also benefited from this approach.

The United Nations also works with private mediation actors, including non-government organizations which may have greater freedom to establish contacts and foster dialogue with armed groups, militias, and others. Meanwhile, from Afghanistan to Zimbabwe, an enormous range of other actors, national bodies, and civil society groups, including women's organizations, religious leaders, and young activists, play a part in mediation at the local and community level.

Mr. President, mediating an end to today's complex conflicts means we must bring all these tracks together in a coordinated way. We must also find new ways to pursue the more inclusive approaches that are critical to successful mediation. That is what we in the United Nations are trying to do. I continue to offer my good offices and personal engagement wherever they can add value, alongside my envoys and special representatives drawing on the experience of the entire United Nations and those in the broader mediation community.

To complement my efforts and those of my envoys, I've established a high-level advisory board on mediation. I'm pleased to have the Archbishop of Canterbury with us today and look forward to working with him on several concrete initiatives in the coming months. I'm also grateful to former Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo, a member of the board who travel to Liberia on my behalf to support the peaceful transfer of power after the 2017 elections. This is just one example of how we can deploy board members in the cause of conflict prevention. The board's members have experience and networks across the entire spectrum of mediation, and I look to them to provide tailored advice, to find new entry points, and to help train and build capacity amongst our partners.

Mr. President, successful mediation and the peaceful settlement of disputes requires a deep understanding of leaders and their constituencies and strong political will. The Declaration on Peace and Friendship signed by the leaders of Ethiopia and Eritrea last month, after 20 years of conflict and stalemate, is an example of political courage that is already having a positive effect throughout the region.

But we must also continue and strengthen our efforts to move beyond negotiations with political and military elites, and that work means working at the subnational and

local levels to help build peace from the ground up. Local authorities, civil society, traditional and religious leaders all have critical roles to play.

The national conference process in Libya, for example, is a bottom-up inclusive process that has provided valuable insights into the aspirations of the Libyan people. My envoys are supporting local efforts to address communal conflict in South Sudan and engaging with Women's Advisory Board and Civil Society Support room (?) on the Syrian process.

In the Central African Republic, we are engaging at the local level with national authorities and religious leaders in support of the African Union Initiative. And we are also investing in women's meaningful participation and leadership in peace processes, ensuring women always have a seat at the table and that their voices are heard.

I've emphasized the importance of inclusive processes to my own special envoys and have appointed three women to senior mediation roles in recent months. The emergence of regional networks of women mediators is another important development. The Nordic Women Mediators Network and FEMWISE, the African Union Network of Women Mediators, are notable in this regard, and members of my high level advisory board are already in contact with these groups.

Inclusive mediation requires paying greater attention to the gender dimensions of conflict, including conflict related sexual violence and the gendered impact of decisions around post war reconstruction. For example, the design of a post conflict constitutional committee or a federal system will have a significant impact on women and their participation.

And we also need to do much more to engage with young people who are critical agents of change and advocates for peace. It is encouraging that six young refugees took part as observers in the South Sudan High Level Revitalization Forum. We must encourage and support the participation of young men and women in peace processes. We will be holding a first international conference on this subject in Helsinki early next year.

Finally, we should invest in the mediation and conciliation opportunities offered by information technology. We are all aware of the role social media can play in exacerbating divisions and provoking hostility. But social platforms can also be a tool to bring communities together, stimulate dialogue, share information, and heal historic wrongs.

Mr. President, parties to conflict are highly attuned to and play on divisions in the international community. The Council plays a central role in conflict resolution, particularly when it signals to warring parties that they must settle their disputes peacefully.

When this Council is united, we are all more effective, including in our mediation efforts. When we cannot find unity, mediation efforts suffer. Council members and member states more broadly can also support mediation efforts by ensuring that regions speak with one voice. Consistent messaging by regional and sub regional organizations which have the expertise, experience, and capacity to find innovative responses to the most telling, testing challenges can be a great support to the work of this Council. As the conflict landscape has changed, so as our understanding of what constitutes an effective mediation process, innovative thinking on mediation is no longer an option, it's a necessity.

I urge you to commit to more effective use of mediation as a tool to save and improve the lives of millions of people around the world. Thank you.