STOCKHOLM FORUM on Peace and Development 2019

From Crisis Response to Peacebuilding: Achieving Synergies

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IT TAKES DIALOGUE: PROMOTING SUSTAINING PEACE

INSTITUTIONAL LEAD

Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation

MODERATOR

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OVERVIEW

This session sought to stimulate discussion and learning on the relationship between mediation efforts to resolve violent conflict and reach peace agreements, and the broader, longer-term dialogue processes needed to implement these agreements and to build peaceful, just and inclusive societies.

FOCUS AND OBJECTIVES

The session focused on the role and potential of mediation and dialogue in advancing the UN agenda on sustaining peace. Discussion was contextualized with examples from Israel and Palestine, Pakistan, Somalia and Sweden.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Dialogue and mediation are understood in different ways by different actors across all levels, and there is often not a neat categorisation of what these processes entail and how they are used. Some see dialogue as a crisis response. Some refer to mediation as what takes place at a higher level involving main political actors, whereas dialogue is considered a longer-term process that engages stakeholders at all levels of society.

Others express concern that dialogue is viewed merely as a trendy word and exercise that is used to tick a box and show inclusivity in peace and development processes. Mediation and negotiation are considered by some as forms of dialogue—a form of exchange. The design and facilitation of dialogue processes is critical and require non-judgemental attitudes, empathetic presence, and curiosity. It is important to ensure that dialogue is not being utilised as a stalling tactic or employed as window dressing in the name of peacebuilding.

Dialogue and mediation processes are most successful when built on partnerships across different actors and across different levels—local, regional, national and international. This requires communication, cooperation, and coordinating across different actors, drawing on the different strengths and roles of these actors. In the context of South Asia, there is insufficient inclusion of marginalized groups in dialogue to address the frozen security issues, especially women. These processes are highly masculine and are not seen through a humanitarian lens. Seeing it in this way would allow for the inclusion of marginalized groups that are overwhelmingly affected by conflict dynamics. Inclusion of these groups would bring new perspectives on how conflict is viewed and may open up new avenues to overcome these conflict hurdles and pave the way for sustainable peace.

Intra-group dialogue is often crucial for peacebuilding. In the context of Somalia, for example, inter-clan and political conflict are widespread and groups are not monolithic. Before bringing different groups or levels together for dialogue there is often a need for dialogue within the groups to establish a foundation of understanding and common vision on which to build discussion and create foundations for sustainable peace and development.

Dialogue is a critical tool and approach for addressing polarization, low levels of trust in state institutions and inter- and intra-communal tensions resulting from issues such as immigration or decentralisation even in contexts that are considered relatively peaceful, including European cities. Dialogue can be a critical tool for diffusing ongoing conflict as well as applied at an earlier stage of

mounting tensions to prevent escalation or outbreak of violence. It is also highly instrumental in promoting reconciliation. Some people feel that dialogue should be based on common ideals—democracy, civil rights, and human rights.

One-off attempts at dialogue are typically harmful to peace processes and exacerbate polarization. In the context of Palestine and Israel, failed cycles of dialogue have led to a lack of trust in peace processes as a whole, in particular within the youth population. The international community as well as national actors should invest more in long-term dialogue.



RECOMMENDATIONS

- Build dialogue and mediation processes on partnerships across different actors and across different levels—local, regional, national and international.
- Support dialogue with financing that facilitates coordination across organizations.
- Use dialogue more often to deepen inclusivity through intra- and inter-group sessions at country level and with provisions to include marginalized voices.
- Do not use dialogue as a stalling tactic or for ticking the box of inclusivity.
- Be creative in thinking about how to bring people together, building on existing networks and forums where dialogue is already taking place in communities and outside formalized spaces.
- Integrate into dialogue storytelling, listening and showing respect even if you do not agree.

SESSION QUOTES

'[In this context] we must go from a dialogue of coexistence, to a dialogue of co-resistance.'

Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation

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