

# **Peace, Mediation and Reconciliation: The Norwegian Experience**

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**Your Excellencies,  
Ladies and gentlemen,**

I would like to start with the point that systematic efforts on the part of the international community to achieve peace, security and stability should rest on a firm foundation of international law, the United Nations Charter and the resolutions of the UN Security Council. Even though the threats to peace facing us today are different from what they were when the UN Charter was written, the UN legal order is sufficiently flexible to enable the world organisation to address them. But as I will go on to explain, this does not mean that smaller actors cannot play an important role.

The vast majority of present-day conflicts are internal. Their consequences, however, are felt across national borders. Conflicts cause widespread human suffering and violations of human rights and humanitarian law. And they often pose a threat to regional and international stability.

During the cold war, the many internal conflicts were often overshadowed by super-power rivalry, and while the suffering they caused attracted our sympathy, they were not regarded as having a significant effect on our own security. Peacemaking efforts in the third world was seen largely as the work of “do-gooders” in far-away places.

This has changed. Security has become globalised. We, meaning we in the West, no longer have the luxury of pretending that we can carry on with our way of life and uphold our values regardless of what the rest of the world is doing. This was made abundantly clear to us all on 11 September 2001. The terrorist attacks on the epicentres of economic and military power were organised from mountain caves in one of the world’s poorest and most conflict-ridden countries. The lesson we should draw is that trying to resolve conflicts and addressing security threats in far-away places is in our own interest as well as being a humanitarian imperative.

Small countries like Norway and Belgium have a role to play in this regard. Norway has been involved in a number of peace and reconciliation processes over the years, particularly in the past decade.

The one that has featured most prominently on the international scene, and that is still tragically unfolding before us, is the Middle East process. But during the many years this process has been going on, it has taught us some valuable lessons:

Firstly, greater efforts should have been made to build up trust between the parties. This situation was aggravated by the fact that there was no system for monitoring both parties' adherence to the agreements. The Quartet has learnt this lesson and has included a monitoring mechanism in the road map that was recently presented to the parties.

What is also extremely important is that the road map clearly states what the end result should be - a Palestinian state bordering on Israel, with security for both states and for their citizens.

Secondly, in 1993 the leaders were ahead of their peoples. There was a lack of a broader political dialogue between Israelis, between Palestinians and between both communities. There should have been a massive campaign of peace education. Although some efforts were made in this respect, which were supported by Norway and by other countries, I believe that both sides could have done much more to ensure popular ownership of the peace process. This is no less important in the context of the road map, since this is not a product of negotiations between the parties themselves.

**Thirdly, there is a great need for sustained involvement by the international community. The Quartet, and in particular the United States, has taken on an extremely important mission. Norway will continue its involvement in this process through its chairmanship of the donor mechanism AHLC and its role in the international endeavours to support the Palestinian reform process. We will also assist in the attempts that are now being made, primarily through the efforts of the Quartet, to bring the parties back to genuine negotiations.**

**Fourthly, as we have seen both in the Middle East and in various other conflicts, when an outside party like Norway or Belgium decides to support a political process, it must be a long-term decision. We will have no credibility - in any peace process - if we pull out the moment difficulties arise. We must continue to be involved. We must emphasise co-existence, human rights and economic development, for as long as it takes. We must remind both sides repeatedly that only a peaceful outcome will be accepted.**

**These are useful lessons that both Norway and Belgium can draw on in their work for peace in other areas of the world.**

**In the various peace processes we are involved in today we are trying to take such lessons into account. The nature of our involvement differs with each process, but there are three particularly important features that are common to all of them:**

- 1) Supporting negotiations between the parties;**
- 2) Supporting mechanisms for monitoring negotiated commitments; and**
- 3) Demonstrating real "peace dividends" that benefit the people on the ground.**

**I would now like to tell you about some of the peace efforts in which we are involved. The three features I mentioned are all present in our involvement in Sri Lanka, where Norway is assisting the peace process as a neutral third-party facilitator at the parties' own request.**

**Norway has facilitated the present peace negotiations between the Government of Sri Lanka (GOSL) and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) since 1998. As facilitator, Norway's role is to assist the parties in their efforts to reach a political solution. The nature of our efforts changes according to the stage the process has reached. A significant part of our effort focuses on promoting understanding between the parties: we spend much of our time acting as a channel of communication and helping them find common ground between their respective positions. An important part of our role as facilitator is also to ensure broad support for the process in the international community.**

**The peace process in Sri Lanka has made substantial progress since the parties entered into a cease-fire agreement in February of last year. The parties have held six sessions of peace negotiations since last September, focusing on three interrelated tracks. These are: consolidating security, addressing humanitarian and reconstruction needs in the war-devastated areas, and developing the elements of a political solution.**

**The parties have agreed on the basic principles of a political solution: internal autonomy based on a federal structure within a united Sri Lanka. They are working on giving these concrete form. However, the process of reaching and implementing a final settlement is complicated and will take time.**

Meanwhile, maintaining the cease-fire is essential. The independent monitoring of the cease-fire agreement between the parties has helped them keep this up for 16 months. The Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission, led by Norway and comprising observers from the five Nordic countries, is tasked with making independent rulings on alleged violations of the cease-fire. The monitoring mechanism helps build trust between the parties. It also has a deterrent function and ensures that violations of the cease-fire have a significant political cost, both at local and at international level.

**It is crucial that the economic dividends of peace are experienced by the entire population of Sri Lanka - in the South as well as in the war-torn areas in the North and East. To this end, the Norwegian Government hosted a conference for donors in November 2002, which resulted in pledges to Sri Lanka totalling USD 60-70 million. For 2003 Norway has pledged a total of approximately USD 30 million in financial support. This includes long-term assistance, post-conflict transitional assistance, immediate humanitarian assistance and support for peace and reconciliation activities.**

**Some weeks back, the lack of progress in rehabilitation in the north east led the LTTE to suspend talks and set conditions for its presence at a large donor conference that is to be held in Tokyo on 9-10 June. As facilitator we are now working together with the parties to get the process back on track.**

The three features - supporting peace negotiations, ensuring proper monitoring and demonstrating a peace dividend - are also central to our involvement in the peace process in Sudan.

The peace talks in Sudan are led by the regional organisation IGAD and headed by Kenya. The Troika, consisting of the United States, the United Kingdom and Norway, has been particularly

active in putting the weight of the international community behind the process. Ms Hilde F. Johnson, the Norwegian Minister of International Development, has been personally involved in these efforts.

The Machakos Protocol, which was signed on 20 July last year, was a breakthrough that led to progress in the talks. In October 2002 the parties agreed to cease hostilities and to secure free access for humanitarian supplies. We are pleased that the agreement on the cessation of hostilities is holding and has been renewed, and that the parties have agreed to bolster it with a robust monitoring system. These are vital steps towards ending the war.

Norway is supporting the new Verification and Monitoring Team along with the Joint Monitoring Commission in the Nuba Mountains, which is being headed by a Norwegian general. The Joint Monitoring Commission will continue to require our strong support and financial backing, and all the participating nations should take responsibility in this regard.

We consider that the Security Council in its turn should endorse a peace agreement and mandate an international presence to monitor a cease-fire.

To be effective, a peace agreement will need strong international backing. We are pleased to note the growing support in this regard. It will help demonstrate to the Sudanese people that peace is the best choice on offer.

There are many important tasks ahead. The war-affected areas require reconstruction. Capacity building is needed at all levels of the Sudanese public sector. A sustainable government structure must be built in the South.

Donors have already started planning how assistance

to Sudan should be co-ordinated following a peace agreement, and a meeting was held to this end in Oslo in January 2003. The UN has a crucial role to play in planning and co-ordinating the international assistance.

We are pleased to note that the EU and several of its members are strongly supporting the preparations for international post-conflict assistance to Sudan. International support is a signal to the Sudanese people that the world community is closely following the process towards peace.

**Ladies and gentlemen,**

**Norwegian involvement in peace processes often starts with NGOs or academic institutions. Norwegian participation in the Guatemalan peace process is an example of close co-operation between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and civil entities.**

**Norwegian NGOs had built up a network of contacts with government institutions and civil society in the wake of the earthquake in 1976. When, towards the end of the 1980s, the**

parties to the armed conflict started exploring the possibility of a peaceful settlement, Norway was perceived as a relevant and useful facilitator.

The negotiating phase of the peace process lasted three years. The result was a final agreement signed in 1996, which comprised a comprehensive set of accords committing the Guatemalan government to a wide range of political, social and economic reforms.

The mediation of a UN moderator and the facilitation provided by the six-nation group of friends were essential elements in the peace efforts. Norway tried on its own account to prepare the ground for reconciliation through low-key confidence-building efforts such as strengthening of civil society and a non-judgemental dialogue with the Guatemalan armed forces.

The United Nations Verification Mission in Guatemala, MINUGUA, also played an important role in verifying the agreement on human rights signed in 1994 and, after 1996, the whole peace accord package.

Today Guatemala is free from armed conflict. However, much remains to be done in terms of implementing the final agreement, and these efforts are being supported by the international community, including Norway. It is important that we follow the process to the very end, even though this will necessarily take time.

While the conflict in Guatemala presented a fairly clear pattern of protagonists – government versus a single guerrilla movement, with civil society trying to have a say at the negotiating table – the reality in Colombia is far more complex. There are more actors involved: two guerrilla organisations with different approaches to dialogue with the government, and powerful paramilitary groups. Given the long tradition of violence in this country, and the enormous sums of money from the drugs trade that are backing the various subversive groups, the odds against a smooth peace process are formidable.

In 2000 Norway was invited by the government of Colombia and the guerrillas to integrate the formal support groups of the two dialogue processes. Until the suspension of the peace process in 2002, these support groups – together with the UN special representative – played a facilitating role, and assisted the parties in their efforts to negotiate seriously.

In general the international community believes that there can be no military solution to the armed conflict in Colombia. The parties to the conflict must be committed to peace, and international facilitation will most likely be indispensable.

Norway is prepared to maintain its policy of active engagement with Colombia, but real progress in the peace process is only possible if the Colombian authorities are prepared to undertake political, social and economic reforms that will eliminate some of the underlying causes of the conflict.

Haiti is the poorest country in the western hemisphere. It is in urgent need of international help to break the political and economic stalemate and to create a climate of rapprochement and co-operation with its neighbour the Dominican Republic. Norway's commitment to Haiti and the Dominican Republic was initially limited to humanitarian assistance. It has, however, developed into a broader approach of consensus building, with special emphasis on the role and responsibility of civil society. We are also engaged in supporting political

**dialogue between various parties within Haiti. Our experience in Haiti has confirmed that trust and credibility can best be won through patience, perseverance and impartiality.**

**In the past few days we have witnessed a violent escalation in the conflict in the Aceh province in Indonesia. This is a very sad development. The people of this conflict-ridden province deserve peace, security and prosperity, not further warfare and more suffering. Norway strongly urges the parties to seek a peaceful solution to the conflict within the framework of the territorial integrity of Indonesia. The Norwegian government has for some years provided financial support for the peace process facilitated by the Henry Dunant Center for Humanitarian Dialogue in Geneva. We are prepared to provide further support for the parties with a view to finding a peaceful solution. Urgent steps must be taken to find a basis for further talks and for international monitoring of the situation in Aceh. The situation cannot be allowed to escalate further. The international community needs to continue to pay close attention to developments here.**

**Ladies and gentlemen,**

**No two conflicts are the same. Peace and reconciliation processes pose a wide range of different challenges. The role of a third party facilitator must be carefully tailored to the situation at hand, and based on close dialogue with the parties concerned.**

**Nevertheless, there are several features common to Norwegian involvement in the various peace processes:**

- As a small country, Norway is not in a position to impose solutions on the parties to a conflict. When Norway is acting as facilitator of a peace process, we depend on the parties' genuine will to peace and full acceptance of Norway's role.**
- The kind of neutral role typically played by Norway is made possible by the fact that we are not a major power and have few vested interests. It is also the result of our willingness to support such processes financially.**
- In most cases, Norwegian involvement for peace and reconciliation comes in the form of support for the efforts of a lead facilitator, such as the UN, regional organisations or other countries. Broad and sustained international attention and follow-up is critical for helping any peace process to move forward.**
- Our experience has shown us that we must work together to ensure that all efforts are mutually reinforcing and that they draw on past experience. Above all, we must avoid competition between different countries, organisations and initiatives. Concerted support by the international community can help convince the parties that a negotiated solution is possible and can also exert a certain pressure on their leaders to take the necessary steps in the cause of peace.**
- In general, we have found that it is important to be clear about what our role is and to consider what roles other actors could play, be they international organisations, countries in the region or major powers.**
- Norwegian involvement in peace and reconciliation processes has its origins in the activities of Norwegian civil society organisations such as church networks, research**

**institutions and trade unions. Norwegian NGOs have been working in other countries for decades, and have gained broad international experience. As a result, we have contact with non-governmental actors in many countries, and these contacts are a good basis for participation in peace and reconciliation processes. And we believe we have a responsibility to make a contribution in situations where we have a particular advantage.**

- **Each and every conflict has its own specific dynamics, and this calls for in-depth knowledge and analysis of the political situation in the country concerned. Building good relations with all parties is crucial. So are patience and a readiness to keep up the involvement for many years if necessary. Conflict resolution requires a long-term perspective and sustained and adequate co-ordination.**

**Ladies and gentlemen,**

**I would like to conclude my remarks this afternoon by underlining that, with the globalisation of security threats, the security and prosperity of every individual are the responsibility of all. We feel privileged to have the opportunity to assist in efforts to establish peace. Seeing the results of such efforts is enormously rewarding.**

**Thank you for your attention.**