

RESEARCH REPORT



Getting into Talks: Designing a Viable Early- Stage Peace Process

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Introduction

In the current global conflict context, designing and incepting a viable early-stage peace process is urgent for civilians in many places, but also faces emergent challenges. As conflicts have become more fragmented, with multiple conflict actors engaging across varying geographies (Bell and Wise, 2022a), so have peace and mediation processes, with complex configurations of interested, and at times competitive, third parties (Adhikari et al., 2025). The escalation of many contemporary conflicts means that trust between parties is low, and that even raising the prospect of talking with 'the other side' is considered unacceptable, making exploratory activities immensely sensitive. Although such sensitivity has existed in previous periods of armed conflict, many peacemakers in contemporary conflicts are struggling to engage with and cohere across multiple initiatives and dialogue tracks, where different configurations of distrust make incepting viable peace processes harder to navigate.

A range of different factors inform whether and when peace or dialogue processes are accepted by conflict parties. Research indicates that peace processes tend to be initiated when all conflict parties consider alternatives to dialogue unavailable or infeasible, and when all sides foresee that, 'a negotiated solution is possible' (Zartman, 2000, p. 229). There are strong incentives for dialogue when all sides perceive themselves to be in a mutually hurting military stalemate, in which military victory is highly unlikely for any side (Ibid.). Elite and public support for peace negotiations, and a baseline level of trust in the feasibility of the process, are further factors which encourage dialogue, and yield lasting results.

Drawing from a review of global pre-negotiation peace agreements from 1990–2024,¹ academic and policy literature, and PeaceRep's experiences with supporting dialogue stakeholders, this report sets out some key issues that need to be considered when designing a viable peace process in the early stages. Although political analysis and context specificity will make some of these key issues more relevant to some conflicts than others, peace agreements and mediation literature identify some common process design challenges for third parties and funders to consider, that are often raised when engaging with peace process stakeholders. Whilst the report is structured with sections on trust- and confidence-building measures, and preparing for pre-negotiation phases of talks, it is important to note that there is no default linear trajectory of early-stages of peace processes. The fragility of early attempts to bring conflict parties into dialogue means that there are often multiple rounds of confidence-building and pre-negotiation that can breakdown before more structured forms of talks move forward.

Trust- and Confidence-Building Measures

Building trust is a core objective of peace mediation (Gehrig et al., 2023). Deciding to enter a dialogue process, and to make concessions, relies on levels of trust between parties. Trust between parties can be impacted by multiple factors, including continued violence by one or more conflict parties, violations of previous ceasefires (Sticher, 2022), and failures of prior peace processes (Adhikari and Hodge, 2024). Furthermore, in multi-party conflicts the state's behaviour in negotiations with one non-state group can influence the behaviour of other non-state actors (Bara and Clayton, 2023), which is increasingly relevant in the fragmented conflicts of the 2020s.

Given the centrality of trust, Confidence-Building Measures (CBMs) are often utilised during and in the pre-negotiations phases to build trust, lower the risks of misunderstanding and escalation between conflict parties, and allow for frank discussion (Mason and Siegfried, 2013). CBMs often deal with a specific issue that—even if substantive—is related to the objective of getting people into talks (Gehrig et al., 2023). CBMs can sometimes be categorised as political, security, economic, and social, but there is not always a neat divide (Mason and Siegfried, 2013).

Whilst CBMs can be an effective way of building trust to enter dialogue, it is important to be aware that they can generate the opposite effect: if CBMs are not contextually specific, they risk undermining parties' confidence in the validity of the process. There is a need for clarity about 'whose confidence is being built, why, and about what,' and for third parties to be open to not using the term 'confidence-building measure' if parties prefer something more appropriate to their context (Buchanan, 2019, p. 16). It is important to understand the following measures as examples but not a blueprint: issues or actions that could build trust between the parties need to be identified by parties and other interested groups (Kemp, 2011).

The following actions are common CBMs agreed to by parties across different conflicts and contexts, however, these are not the only actions that conflict parties and mediators can take to build trust.²

Releasing Prisoners or Granting Forms of Amnesty

Agreeing to release prisoners to facilitate talks is consistently included in pre-negotiation agreements, with examples from the Democratic Republic of Congo (2001),³ South Africa (1990),⁴ Yemen (2018),⁵ Tajikistan (1996),⁶ Afghanistan (2020),⁷ Sudan (2024),⁸ and Armenia/Azerbaijan (2023).⁹ These releases can range from general releases of all prisoners relating to a conflict, or target specific groups or categories of prisoners, such as political prisoners held by the state. Whilst prisoner releases could show the seriousness of parties' intention to talk, they also present risks, particularly if prisoners released include those accused of serious crimes, including Conflict-Related Sexual Violence and/or Gender-Based Violence (CRSV/GBV). Releasing prisoners accused of sexual and gender-based crimes can risk women's immediate personal security, but also risks undermining their confidence in future process to take seriously CRSV/GBV. It also risks indicating to conflict parties that any future process might be willing to prioritise inclusion of violent actors over a gendered approach to dealing with violence. In the Philippines/Mindanao in 2000, this risk was addressed in relation to a different type of CBM, by guaranteeing the security of individuals participating in talks, but agreeing that this did not cover anyone accused of 'crimes against chastity' [rape].¹⁰ Genuine consultation with women's representatives can identify contextually appropriate ways of navigating this, but this becomes challenging during closed Back-Channel Negotiations (BCNs).

Establishment of Joint Programmes or Commissions

Creating joint commissions and programmes on distinct themes, such as environmental, humanitarian, or developmental, has been used as a form of confidence-building in multiple contexts. Such measures allow for representatives of conflict parties to work together, and negotiate on distinct themes, which can have an incremental effect on the broader peace process. For instance, in Western Sahara in 2010, parties agreed to resume family visits as a way to 'build a new dynamic for the next steps of the negotiating process',¹¹ whilst in Georgia/Abkhazia in 2001, parties agreed on a programme of measures which included organising meetings of youth representatives, scientists, writers, and students from both sides, to build interpersonal relationships and to restore ties across social, economic, and cultural sectors.¹² In Yemen, parties agreed in 2024 on measures to de-escalate by taking measures on banking, commercial flights, and to convene 'meetings to discuss all economic and humanitarian issues based on the roadmap'.¹³

Whilst such economic, humanitarian, or social forums can create a space for meeting and building relationships across conflict lines, there is also a risk that these become a way of parties to stall development of engagement on more political or security issues, by using such programmes to avoid substantively addressing key issues. Clarifying the motives of parties to take part in such a measure is a way of dealing with this risk (Mason and Siegfried, 2013).

Security Guarantees for Participants in Talks

In contexts like Armenia/Azerbaijan (1993),¹⁴ the Philippines (2000),¹⁵ Indonesia/Aceh (2001),¹⁶ Thailand (2013),¹⁷ and Colombia (1991),¹⁸ parties have explicitly set out security guarantees for participants of talks, to ensure greater confidence in the safety and sincerity of the dialogue process. This guarantee is particularly important in contexts where trust between parties is low due to the use of targeted attacks or assassinations on key political, social, and military figures, particularly towards members of non-state groups by the state. This security measure can also be useful contexts where certain actors are listed as 'proscribed' or 'terrorist' groups, as their members and supporters may need guarantees that they won't be subject to arrest or detention if they travel internationally for meetings (Buchanan, 2019). Parties do not necessarily need to produce publicly available agreements that state what guarantees have been made, as this may be politically contentious and difficult for some parties to agree to (particularly if there are proscribed groups involved). However, it is important that all parties involved are clear on what has been agreed, and that this understanding extended to all third parties and any countries involved in hosting early stages of talks, as failing to uphold such guarantees could be severely damaging to parties and talks.

Staggered, Partial Ceasefires

Staggered unilateral, sometimes partial, ceasefire declarations can be deployed to enhance confidence for non-state armed actors on the state's involvement in a peace process. Such ceasefires can be either temporary (with a defined period of ceasefire ranging from hours to months) or indefinite and can be general or address specific limited issues (such as to facilitate humanitarian access or evacuations). Ceasefire declarations can include conditions under which the ceasefire could be renewed, or abandoned, and they can also be asymmetric, in which parties cease some form of military operations but not all. For example, the Government of Colombia suspended airstrikes—but not ground operations—initially for a month in March 2015. This followed the FARC-EP declaration of an open-end ceasefire in December 2014, understood as being 'designed to enable peace negotiations to continue' and 'linked to a clear demand for the government to cease its military operations' (Sticher and Vuković, 2021, p. 1294). Although this asymmetric, semi-bilateral ceasefire partially broke down in April 2015 when the FARC-EP killed a group of soldiers, with government subsequently resuming airstrikes, the FARC-EP continued to engage with peace talks even when they ended their unilateral ceasefire in May 2015.¹⁹

Symbolic Gestures

Not all CBMs need to be formally agreed mechanisms: they can also be done through symbolic gestures which emphasise humanity and the possibility of empathy across conflict divisions. These can be micro- or macro- level actions: from interpersonal behaviours to high-level political demonstrations of goodwill. Interpersonal gestures such as handshakes, shared meals, kneeling at memorials, removing military helmets, and recognition of cultural values can all send signals that one party is open to exploring the 'interests, concerns and grievances' of the other side/s (Kemp, 2011, p. 3; Buchanan, 2019). Meanwhile, co-operation in multi-lateral fora on subjects unrelated to the conflict can also demonstrate confidence. For example, in 2023, Armenia explicitly framed its support for Azerbaijan to host the 29th Session of the Conference of Parties (COP29), and the withdrawal of its own candidacy, as a 'sign of good gesture' in a joint statement between the two countries.²⁰ The options for symbolic gestures are extensive, as different cultures will have their own ways and practices of showing respect and understanding. With these measures, the cultural context is paramount, as making a symbolic gesture that demonstrates misunderstanding of the other's culture could be interpreted as insincere, or worse, an antagonism or a sign of disrespect, widening rather than bridging the distance between parties.

Preparing for the Pre-negotiation Phase of Talks

Effective dialogue and negotiation processes hinge on thorough planning, which can commence long before considering the prospect of negotiations or making any public commitments to engage in them. The following section raises some of the issues that mediation actors or donors may wish to think about when supporting early-stage peace talks and are common questions that emerge when PeaceRep has engaged with dialogue stakeholders. These issues are also frequently addressed in pre-negotiation agreements that have been made public, and are listed on the PA-X Peace Agreements Database, giving an insight into early-stage talks across a diversity of conflicts.

Timing

The timing of negotiations is one factor that can influence their outcome. Negotiation processes tend to be initiated when all conflict parties consider alternatives to dialogue unavailable or infeasible, and when all sides foresee that, 'a negotiated solution is possible', then the process is thought to be *ripe* for settlement (Zartman, 2000, p. 229). However, 'ripeness' to negotiate, might not always mean ripeness to make concessions and ripeness to reach an agreement (Sticher, 2022). It is also acknowledged that to reach to a point of 'ripeness,' a critical mass within each party must view negotiation as a viable strategy – highlighting the need to internally deliberate on the need for a process with key actors within one's group (Lustenberger, 2012). Once parties have agreed to negotiate, there are other ways that temporality becomes a consideration for process design. Parties, mediators, and facilitators can establish how timeframes and schedules will be agreed,²¹ put a clear timeframe on phases of negotiations,²² establish a termination period of CBMs,²³ and set out how joint bodies, mechanisms, or committees will be time-limited or operational by a certain date.²⁴ Deadlines and time limits can be a way of keeping momentum (or at least the image of momentum) in peace processes, but this also comes with risks of patchy implementation according to party preference (Mac Ginty, 2022).

Deciding How, or if, to Continue with Back-channel Negotiations (BCNs)

Back-channel communication, either direct or indirect, is a popular feature of early stage talks or pre-negotiation phases, due to the informality, flexibility, and political cover that this can provide at a time when trust between parties is limited (Wanis-St. John, 2006; Pruitt, 2008). BCNs can be a precursor to front-channel, formal negotiations (as happened in Northern Ireland and South Africa), or can continue to run parallel to front-channel talks throughout a process, as a more discrete forum for breaking deadlocks (Pruitt, 2008). However, holding early-stage talks in secret needs to appraise risks of broader exclusion, especially wider society's potential support for any agreements which eventually become public (Wanis-St. John, 2008), and the gendered exclusions that are a common feature of BCNs at early stages (Corredor and Anderson, 2024). Conducting secure and confidential BCNs may also be harder to organise in an age of advanced digital technologies and mass smartphone ownership, where there are now greater risks of both inadvertent and intentional disclosure that talks are happening (Bell and Wise, 2022b; Bell, 2024, p. 189).

Early Consideration of Inclusion

The perception that early-stage talks must be narrow or exclusive for efficacy is contested and is a choice for parties and/or third parties as to how inclusive they think the process could or should be. Depending on who is making this decision, early-stage processes can establish exclusive practices that can have path dependencies for later-process stages, even if there is an intention to open talks to broader constituencies at a later stage. Actors concerned about exclusion may find it helpful to ask the following questions of process design: 'how to best understand power dynamics and structures; what and where the tangible entry points for other voices and civilian perspectives are; how to expand conceptions of inclusion' (Buchanan, 2019, p. 22). To mitigate exclusion risks, multitrack dialogue processes where multiple tracks (Track 1, 2, 1.5) are often deployed simultaneously, involving conflict actors and stakeholders at different levels are seen to be effective in enhancing the legitimacy of the peace process and securing grassroots buy-in (Boutellis, 2020; Bohmelt, 2011). Such an approach is understood to enhance the effectiveness of a process by promoting linkages between various tracks, reducing spoiling by actors that may otherwise be excluded from the process, and increasing domestic ownership of the process (Pring, 2023; Palmiano Federer et al., 2019). In today's fragmented and complex mediation marketplace, however, inclusion through multitrack dialogue may be undermined by exclusive practices in a competing process, particularly if the exclusive process is where the 'core' political deal is being made (Pospisil, 2025).

Understanding How a Process Fits within the Wider Multi-mediation Ecosystem

Contemporary international mediation and peacemaking space is crowded with a marked increase in the numbers of states, and an array of international organisations (governmental and non-governmental) bringing their own norms, practices, and modalities (Lanz, 2021; Crocker, Hampson, and Aall, 2015). Owing to such global fragmentation and conflict complexity, mediation efforts are increasingly ad-hoc and piecemeal, defined as 'multi-mediation,' or the use of multiple overlapping mediation processes in a complex conflict system (Bell, 2024; Adhikari et al., 2025). Different mediators have different relationships to conflict actors, who can provide unique opportunities for back channels and engagement (Badanjak and Peter, 2024), but when international efforts are not coordinated, this diversification can also enhance domestic fragmentation and incentivise 'forum shopping' – where domestic parties can choose to engage in forums most favourable to their interests, ultimately reducing trust in such forums as arenas for genuine resolution of conflict. Process design may also vary across mediation initiatives, with different carrots and sticks offered by different third parties, and with some processes more inclusive than others. There is a need for innovation in coordinating different process and thinking through how to bring together state and non-state actors in support of peace processes, including in 'mini-lateral' formats such as 'contact groups' or 'troikas' (Whitfield, 2025).

Clarifying Objectives of the Process

Parties may agree to enter into a pre-negotiation with very different objectives of engagement, particularly if they are at different points of 'readiness.' This means that some parties may be genuinely ready to talk, whilst others may view pre-negotiation processes as a delaying tactic or as a way to achieve outstanding conflict goals. Part of the purpose of pre-negotiation talks is to start to tease out and understand what parties expect to come from exploratory dialogue, 'even if the objectives are very general and long-term' (Frazer and Ghetts, 2013, p. 8). Sometimes stating the objective of a process is a public commitment that parties makes; for example, in Libya, delegations in the Murzuq Peace Dialogues in 2019 'pledge[d] from now their readiness to start a process of constructive dialogue in order to reach a final agreement for peaceful coexistence between the two parties,'²⁵ and in Colombia in 2023, the Government and the FARC-EP 'reaffirm[ed] their firm intention to advance towards the construction of a Peace Agreement that puts an end to the armed confrontation and seeks to achieve a comprehensive, stable and lasting peace, with social and environmental justice.'²⁶ Awareness of general objectives can support other elements of pre-negotiation, such as agenda setting or mechanisms for structuring talks that best support reaching parties' objectives.

Anticipating Potential Issues That Parties Will Need to Discuss

A key element of the pre-negotiation phase is agenda setting and giving parties the time and space to articulate the issues that need to be addressed in order to reach their objectives. This can be done iteratively, or by starting with one or two issues around which consensus can be built relatively easily as way to 'create confidence in the process and between parties,' leaving more contentious or difficult topics for later stages (Frazer and Ghetts, 2013, p. 13). Other parties may prefer to establish an agreed agenda early on, as a way of establishing their version of events, and ensuring that key grievances are not left out of future talks. An example of iterative agreement is in Mindanao, where a pre-negotiation press release in 1997 stated that, although parties had not reached agreement on which issues would form the agenda for formal talks, the meeting had been cordial, and that they were willing to meet again for further discussion after they exchanged position papers.²⁷ Sequencing interactions in this way can support trust-building between parties; however, decision making over which issues and what orders of sequencing can be governed by power dynamics between parties and third-parties in negotiations (Mac Ginty, 2022), and therefore there is no 'ideal' sequence or pathway to follow.

Assessing Potential Process Mechanisms

Along with CBMs, there is growing evidence that the process design—dealing with specifics about where, when, who, what about—is likely to impact the parties' willingness to engage substantively with the negotiations (Arévalo, 2024). There are multiple mechanisms that parties use to conduct pre-negotiation stages of dialogue, and these vary depending on the context (Frazer and Ghetta, 2013). Deciding how to design talks includes reaching forms of agreement on, for example, the location of meetings; modalities of meeting (such as direct or indirect dialogue, and digital or in-person); how records will be kept; when and how often parties will meet; how they will communicate with their wider organisations or constituencies during talks; decision-making procedures; the role and responsibilities of the mediator; consequences for violating agreed procedures; inclusion criteria; agenda-setting procedures; and composition of negotiation teams.²⁸ Some parties prefer to set all of these details out explicitly in joint agreements that they can use as reference documents if they perceive issues with how the process is running – for example, the 1996 'Rules of Procedure' agreement in Northern Ireland.²⁹ Other parties will prefer to keep these decisions vague and flexible, so that they are not tightly committed to ways of talking that may not work well for them when dialogue gets under way. Understanding parties' preferred ways of working can help to establish the degree of formality needed to govern process mechanisms, but examples of how other parties have addressed these issues may also be helpful.

Centring Dignity and Respect for Participants

Although a core principle of mediation, ensuring human dignity and respect for participants of talks can sometimes be pushed aside due to time or resource pressures. However, this can potentially be a critical factor in the success of dialogues, as participants who do not feel comfortable or respected will struggle to fully contribute to early stages of a process, which in turn may risk damaging the legitimacy of talks (Melcher, 2024). Centring dignity and respect can be done through often simple and inexpensive measures: ensuring that participants' travel arrangements are scheduled in a way that includes enough time to rest; offering adequate refreshments; facilitating easy access to per diems or funds that cover travel costs; offering to support associated care costs for participants with caring responsibilities; and welcoming and 'hosting' participants at all meetings, even if low-key or informal.³⁰ Careful thought, however, needs to be given on how to support comfort and respect without adding unnecessary inducements to prolong the talks due to luxury travel, per diems or other associated dialogue 'perks,' which can be a difficult balance for mediators and funders to strike (Tieku, 2012).

Supporting Marginalised Participants

Often there are asymmetries between the levels of experience and technical expertise of negotiating across parties to pre-negotiation, which can make it challenging to explore the commonalities between parties, and for disadvantaged parties to fully trust in the potential of the process. This can particularly be the case in processes where one party is a government with historical experiences of negotiating with armed groups, and the other party is a less-established non-state armed actor, especially those that emerge from popular revolutions. In order to address this imbalance, some early-stage processes have incorporated forms of third-party support to parties in the form of technical expertise on issues such as constitutional reform, legal advice, financial support, and even provision of professional attire for non-state armed groups to attend talks (Melcher, 2024; Buchanan, 2019). Such support may need to be provided in a way that is acceptable to all parties, and that does not risk the neutrality or impartiality of mediators.

Ownership of Process Terminologies

Although there are established international 'languages' of mediation and dialogue, which use specific technical terms, there may be local dialogue 'languages' that are more acceptable or preferable to parties during pre-negotiation, particularly if certain technical terms mean different things to different parties. For example, in Aceh parties preferred to use the term 'humanitarian pause' rather than a ceasefire, due to the parties' understanding of what a 'ceasefire' would mean (Bell, 2009), and in Colombia, the Government and the FARC-EP approved in 2024 a 'Protocol of pedagogy of the peace dialogues, of the process, the agreements and protocols' to facilitate agreed understanding.³¹ Third parties may need to be flexible with how terms are defined and used—including creative naming of concepts or issues—rather than rigidly sticking to pre-determined or 'technical' terminologies, as this can avoid getting stuck on naming problems, and improve the agency and ownership of parties (Wise, 2018; Krystalli, 2021). However, this can also push dealing with contentious issues to a later stage of a process, which eventually will have to be addressed or resolved to reach substantive agreement.

Considering the Role and Likely Impacts of Digital Technologies

Even if not explicitly built in as a process mechanism, such as the digital element of the Libyan Political Dialogue (Hawke, 2024), digital technologies will invariably be used by parties to coordinate, strategise, and influence the process. Therefore, it is important to understand how digital technologies might be used, whether there needs to be a common understanding or rules governing the use of digital technologies, and what the participatory and safety risks of these technologies could be for different categories of participants in the dialogue (not only different parties, but also different genders) (Buchanan, 2019; Bell, 2024, p. 191). In some processes, mediators have tried to govern the impact of social media use through standalone codes of conduct or by inserting clauses on social media into peace agreements. However, these have often had limited effectiveness due to drafting and implementation issues and attempts to do this need to be carefully thought through (Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, 2024).

Conclusion

The orthodoxy of 'mediation by technocracy' is facing multiple challenges as it navigates the global fragmentation of the 2020s (Pospisil, 2025), and it is legitimate to question the usefulness of comparative, historic examples, particularly knowing how important politics and context are to resolving violent conflict. There are, however, some perennial questions which emerge when PeaceRep engages with peace process stakeholders across diverse conflicts, demonstrating the demand for structured ways of thinking through difficult choices and drawing on comparative experiences. Whilst the mediation field grapples with the changing nature of peacemaking, and the limitations of some of those orthodoxies, peace process stakeholders in live processes are still considering how to navigate questions of confidence, procedure, inclusion, time, and language. In this report we have attempted to share some of the insights and lessons learned from both relevant literature and a history of peacemaking (PA-X Peace Agreements Database), whilst acknowledging the limitations of approaching mediation from a 'blueprint' approach. Taking a more political approach to the early stages of mediation still requires consideration of some of the issues raised in this report, but ultimately peace process viability depends on the buy-in of a multiplicity of parties and interests.

Endnotes

¹ Qualitative analysis of peace agreements from 1990–2024, PA-X Version 9. Bell, Christine, Sanja Badanjak, Adam Farquhar, Juline Beaujouan, Tim Epple, Robert Forster, Astrid Jamar, Kevin McNicholl, Sean Molloy, Kathryn Nash, Jan Pospisil, Robert Wilson, Laura Wise. (2025). PA-X Codebook, Version 9. Peace and Conflict Resolution Evidence Platform (PeaceRep), University of Edinburgh; Bell, C., & Badanjak, S. (2019). Introducing PA-X: A new peace agreement database and dataset. *Journal of Peace Research*, 56(3), 452–466. Available at <https://www.peaceagreements.org/>;

² Additional examples are available in Mason and Siegfried 2013 'Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) in Peace Processes' https://peacemediation.ch/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/AU-Handbook_Confidence-Building-Measures-in-Peace-Processes.pdf and Kemp 2011 'From Confidence Tricks to Confidence Building: Resolving Conflict in the OSCE Area' https://www.ipinst.org/wp-content/uploads/publications/ipi_e_pub_building_confidence.pdf

³ The 'Acte d'Engagement Gaborone', 24 August 2001 mentions 'wishing to agree a republican pact and as a token of good faith so that the Inter-Congolese political negotiations may proceed peacefully... .. undertake to implement throughout the national territory, the following provisions:... 3. To release immediately and unconditionally, under the auspices of the CICR and Congolese human rights NGOs, all detained or imprisoned political prisoners, hostages and those who have been detained or imprisoned on the basis of their origin or their political and/or legal activities in the past;'

⁴ South Africa, 4 May 1990, 'Groot Schuur Minute': 'The establishment of a working group to make recommendations on a definition of political offences in the South African situation; to discuss, in this regard, time scales; and to advise on norms and mechanisms for dealing with the release of political prisoners and the granting of immunity in respect of political offences to those inside and outside South Africa. All persons who may be affected will be considered. The working group will bear in mind experiences in Namibia and elsewhere. The working group will aim to complete its work before 21 May 1990. It is understood that the South African government, in its discretion, may consider other political parties and movement and other relevant bodies'

⁵ Yemen, 17 December 2018, Agreement for the exchange prisoners, detainees, missing persons, arbitrarily detained and forcibly disappeared persons, and those under house arrest: 'To demonstrate goodwill and to promote the peace process, the Yemeni parties and the Arab Coalition Representative (hereinafter referred to as the "Parties") agreed to conduct comprehensive and complete exchange of all prisoners, detainees, missing persons, arbitrarily detained and forcibly disappeared persons, and those under house arrest, in accordance with the following principles...'

⁶ Tajikistan, 11 December 1996, Protocol on Settlement of the Military and Political Situation in the areas of Confrontation: 'As a confidence-building measure, the United Tajik Opposition shall release the military personnel of the government forces taken prisoner or hostage in the course of the recent events in the Tavildara, Komsomolabad, Garm, Tajikabad and Jirgatal regions. The United Nations Mission of Observers in Tajikistan and the International Committee of the Red Cross shall be requested to assist in the conduct of this humanitarian action.'

⁷ Afghanistan, 19 August 2020, Resolution of the Asad 1399 (August 2020) Consultative Peace Loya Jirga: '2. The Jirga approves the release of 400 prisoners demanded by the Taliban in order to remove any obstacles so that peace negotiations can begin, to stop the bloodshed and observe the public interest; 4. It [should] be ensured that upon the release of these prisoners, direct negotiations start immediately, without any excuses.'

⁸ Sudan, 2 January 2024, Addis Ababa Declaration between The Coordination Body of the Democratic Civil Forces (Taqqaddum) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF): The RSF agreed, at the request of Taqqaddum, and as a gesture of good faith, to release 451 prisoners of war through the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

⁹ Armenia/ Azerbaijan (Nagorno-Karabakh), 7 December 2023, Joint statement of the Presidential Administration of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Office of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia: 'Driven by the values of humanism and as a gesture of goodwill, the Republic of Azerbaijan releases 32 Armenian military servicemen. In its turn, driven by the values of humanism and as a gesture of goodwill, the Republic of Armenia releases 2 Azerbaijani military servicemen.'

¹⁰ Philippines/Mindanao, 9 March 2000, Agreement on Safety and Security Guarantees: 'These MILF members, for the duration of the peace talks, shall not be restrained, searched, seized, and harassed on their persons or property in connection with their participation or involvement in the peace talks, except in cases of commission of common crimes such as crimes against persons, chastity, property and other similar offenses.'

¹¹ Morocco/Western Sahara, 9 November 2010: Communique Third Informal Meeting on Western Sahara: 'For the first time, the delegations of the two parties and the two neighboring states joined together to discuss the program of Confidence Building Measures set forth by the High Commissioner for Refugees. During this meeting, the parties agreed to resume family visits by air without delay on the basis of strict application of the agreed Plan of Action of 2004.'

¹² Georgia/Abkhazia, 16 March 2001, Yalta Declaration of the Georgian and Abkhaz Sides: '1. To organize the meeting of the youth representatives of both Sides in Tsinandali.'

¹³ Yemen, 22 July 2024, Statement by the Office of the UN Special Envoy for Yemen: 'Resuming Yemenia Airways' flights between Sana'a and Jordan and increasing the number of flights to three daily flights, and operating flights to Cairo and India daily or as needed; Meetings are convened to address the administrative, technical, and financial challenges faced by the company.'

¹⁴ Armenia/Azerbaijan (Nagorno-Karabakh) Agreement to a Meeting between the Officials of Azerbaijan and Nagorno-Karabakh on 28 July 1993, 27 July 1993 'In case of reciprocal commitment from both parties, we commit to guarantee the security of persons on the territory controlled by us in the area from altitude 482,2 where at 14:00 hours on 28.07.1993, a meeting will be held between official representatives of Azerbaijan and Nagorno-Karabakh.'

¹⁵ Philippines/Mindanao, Agreement on Safety and Security Guarantees, 9 March 2000 '1. The Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) hereby extends safety and security guarantees to MILF members who are directly and principally involved in the GRP-MILF Peace Talks.'; Philippines, Joint Statement of the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) and the Panel for Peace Talks with the CPP/NPA/NDF and the National Democratic Front (NDF) Delegation (Breukelen Joint Statement), 14 June 1994, 10. The GRP Panel and the NDF Delegation hereby agree to adopt safety and immunity guarantees for personnel who will participate in the peace negotiations as negotiations, staffers, consultants and security personnel, and the ground rules for future talks.

¹⁶ Indonesia/Aceh, Directive agreed upon by the Government of the Republic of Indonesia and the Leadership of the Free Aceh Movement, 16 February 2001, 'Commander to Commander meetings are to be organised by the newly formed Joint Committee for Security Matters (JCSM), which will ensure that security guarantees are provided, and will send their reports to the Joint Council'

¹⁷ Thailand, General Consensus on Peace Dialogue Process, 28 February, 2013, Safety measures shall be provided to all members of the Joint Working Group throughout the entire process; General Principles of the Peace Dialogue Process, 31 March 2022, 'appropriate safety and security measures will be provided to designated BRN representatives to participate in the mentioned consultation.'

¹⁸ Colombia, Acta de Resumen, Reuniones entre el Gobierno de Colombia y la CGSB, 10 November 1991, 'Talks will be restarted by 1 February 1992 in Caracas, subject to consent by the Venezuelan government. The government reiterates the guarantees it has made for the transport of the CGSB [Coordinadora Guerrillera Simón Bolívar] commission under the same conditions as previous occasions.'

¹⁹ The Guardian, 22 May 2015, Farc ends ceasefire after air raid kills 26 leftist rebels in Colombia attack. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/may/22/colombia-farc-suspends-cease-fire-air-raid-kills-leftist-rebels>

²⁰ Armenia/ Azerbaijan (Nagorno-Karabakh), 7 December 2023, Joint statement of the Presidential Administration of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Office of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia: 'As a sign of good gesture, the Republic of Armenia supports the bid of the Republic of Azerbaijan to host the 29th Session of the Conference of Parties (COP29) to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, by withdrawing its own candidacy. The Republic of Armenia and the Republic of Azerbaijan do hope that the other countries within the Eastern European Group will also support Azerbaijan's bid to host. As a sign of good gesture, the Republic of Azerbaijan supports the Armenian candidature for Eastern European Group COP Bureau membership.'

²¹ Central African Republic, 17 July 2017, Feuille de route pour la paix et la réconciliation en République Centrafricaine; Libya, 19 November 2020, Roadmap for the Preparatory Phase of a Comprehensive Solution; Mali/Azawad, 24 July 2014, Feuille de route des négociations dans le cadre du processus d'Alger; Sudan, Darfur, Southern Kordofan - Blue Nile - Abyei, 21 March 2016, Roadmap agreement.

²² Guatemala, 29 March 1994, Agreement on a Timetable for Negotiations of a Firm and Lasting Peace in Guatemala; El Salvador, 21 May 1990, General Agenda and Timetable for the Comprehensive Negotiating Process, Caracas; Chad, 13 June 2011, Communiqué Final sanctionnant la rencontre entre la délégation officielle tchadienne et le Front Populaire pour le Redressement (FPR).

²³ China/India, 29 November 1996, Agreement between the Government of the Republic of India and the Government of the People's Republic of China on Confidence-Building Measures in the Military Field Along the Line of Actual Control in the India-China Border Areas.

²⁴ Colombia, 14 December 2000, Acuerdo sobre Reglamento para la Zona de Encuentro, Gobierno Nacional-ELN; South Africa, 6 August 1990, Pretoria Minute; Papua New Guinea/Bougainville, 24 November 1997, Cairns Commitment on Implementation of the Agreement Concerning the Neutral Regional Truce Monitoring Group for Bougainville; Philippines, National Democratic Front, 14 February 2004, Oslo Joint Statement; Central African Republic, 21 June 2008, Accord de Paix Global entre le Gouvernement de la République Centrafricaine et les Mouvements Politico-Militaires Centrafricains désignés ciaprès; Colombia, 24 October 2017, Joint Announcement by the National Government and the National Liberation Army (ELN).

²⁵ Libya, 17 October 2019, Declaration of Good Intentions.

²⁶ Colombia, 2 September 2023, Acuerdo Especial para la Instalación de una Mesa de Diálogos y Negociaciones de Paz entre las Delegaciones del Gobierno nacional y del EMC de las FARC-EP.

²⁷ Philippines (Mindanao), 7 January 1997, Joint Press Release.

²⁸ Based on a review of all pre-negotiation agreements listed on the PA-X Peace Agreements Database, August 2024 (PA-X Version 9). However, not all early-stage processes publish written agreements that detail the mechanisms for talking, and different contexts and cultures will have their preferred ways of establishing these procedures.

²⁹ Ireland, United Kingdom, (Northern Ireland), 29 July 1996, Rules of Procedure; Afghanistan, 14 December 2021, Doha Peace Negotiations Procedure; Philippines, (Mindanao), 26 February 1997, Administrative Procedures in the Conduct of GRP-MILF Technical Committee Meetings; Colombia, 10 March 2024, Protocolo X - Comunicaciones e Información Pública de la Mesa de Diálogos de Paz entre el Gobierno de la República de Colombia y el Estado Mayor Central de las FARC-EP.

³⁰ Insights gathered from PeaceRep experiences working with peace process stakeholders.

³¹ Colombia, 10 March 2024, Comunicado final del Ciclo IV.

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About Us

PeaceRep is a research consortium based at Edinburgh Law School. Our research is rethinking peace and transition processes in the light of changing conflict dynamics, changing demands of inclusion, and changes in patterns of global intervention in conflict and peace/mediation/transition management processes.

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