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NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Delegations
Subject: Concept on EU Peace Mediation

Delegations will find attached the Concept on EU Peace Mediation.

Concept on EU Peace Mediation

1. Introduction

Preserving peace, preventing conflict and strengthening international security is a European Union's (EU) core mandate, as set out in Article 21 of the Treaty of the European Union (TEU).

This Concept aims at further boosting the EU's role as a leading peace mediation, conflict prevention and peacebuilding actor. It sets out an assertive stance for the EU in the practice of mediation, reconfirms its strategic solidarity with the United Nations, and provides the policy foundation for EU mediation. It outlines the specific features of EU mediation practice, strengths and comparative advantages. This new Concept draws on EU mediation experience and lessons learned over the past decade.

Since the adoption of the Concept on Strengthening EU Mediation and Dialogue Capacities¹ in 2009, the EU's experience as a global mediation actor has evolved. The past decade has shaped EU peace mediation and positioned it against the needs of the global context.

A global and value-based actor, the EU acts as a steadfast promoter of the multilateral system with the UN System at its core. The EU plays an essential role in preventive diplomacy, of which the practice of mediation is an integral part. The EU recognises that mediation is driven by politics and considers inclusive political solutions a key component in conflict prevention and sustainable peace.

The increasingly intricate fabric of peace and conflict and the multiplicity of conflict parties have made conflict resolution more complex. Proxy dynamics increasingly influence conflicts and contribute to their internationalisation. Terrorism and radicalisation have become a more imminent security threat and tensions related to environmental degradation, irregular migration and forced displacement, shrinking space for civil society, pushback on women's full enjoyment of human rights, as well as the risk and impact of modern-day pandemics put new pressures on structural conflict dynamics. Elements such as the use of digital technologies, social media and the exponential and increasingly visible impact of climate change also change the ways and the speed with which conflicts evolve. Significant institutional developments, such as the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon, the creation of the function of the High Representative and the formation of the European External Action Service, and main policy advances, including the launch of the Global Strategy for the EU's Foreign and Security Policy in 2016, have similarly been vital in shaping EU mediation. Mediation is an integral part of peacemaking, which according to the UN, is an extension of the parties own efforts to manage their conflict, using good offices and diplomatic efforts that broker an end to a conflict. The UN Guidance on Effective Mediation², published in 2012 upon request of the UN General Assembly to inform the design and management of mediation processes, has also played a significant role in influencing the normative trajectory of EU mediation practice.

¹ <https://register.consilium.europa.eu/doc/srv?l=EN&f=ST%2015779%202009%20INIT>

² <https://peacemaker.un.org/guidance-effective-mediation>

The field of mediation has also evolved during this period, as has the EU's role in it. The number of mediation engagements has increased exponentially, reflective of the number of conflicts across the world. Mediated processes often take a multi-track approach, and the important linkages and interaction between the tracks have become more frequent. The sheer number of mediators and mediation actors has also increased significantly.

An increasing number of countries have developed their own mediation capacity or structures. EU Member States (MS) engaged in peace mediation have built up mediation support structures and have gained experiences in role sharing in mediation. International and regional organisations, private actors and civil society also populate this field. The world of mediation has changed through the introduction of new international actors that have gained relevance in the mediation domain, some of which are taking more directive approaches. This evolved context requires an adapted and firmer EU posture in mediation, in particular as a value-based actor, promoter of multi-track approaches and coordinator of mediation engagements.

2. Key definitions

Mediation is a way of assisting negotiations between conflict parties and transforming conflicts with the support of an accepted third party. The general goal of mediation is to enable parties in conflict to reach agreements they find satisfactory and are willing to implement. The specific goals depend on the nature of the conflict and the expectations of the parties. In order to ensure peace and stability in the long-term, mediation should aim at a process that is inclusive of peace constituencies and be cognisant of and, as appropriate, address the root causes of conflict. Mediation is usually based on a formal mandate from the parties to a conflict, and the parties retain ownership of the outcome of the talks. Mediation can be practiced at all stages of the conflict cycle.

Facilitation is similar to mediation in that it draws on third party assistance to support communication between conflict parties. It is less directive and less aimed at shaping the substance of the negotiations than mediation. It can take place discreetly in a range of different formats adapted to the specific situation at hand, helping to build consensus and political agreement at and across various tracks (mediation formats engaging different levels of society).

Mediation support involves activities that assist and improve mediation practices, e.g. advising of mediators and mediation teams, provision of mediation services in track II and III processes training and coaching activities, developing guidance on thematic and geographically specific issues, carrying out background research, working on policy issues, offering consultation, backstopping on-going mediation processes, networking and engaging with parties.

Dialogue is an open-ended process, which aims primarily at creating a culture of communication and search for common ground, leading to confidence-building and improved interpersonal relations and understanding among representatives of opposing parties that, in turn, can help prevent conflict and be a means in mediation, reconciliation and peace-building processes. Successful dialogue can de-escalate conflict and render more formal mediation possible or unnecessary.

This Concept, unless otherwise stated, uses the term mediation in a broad sense that includes facilitation, dialogue and the advisory side of mediation support.

3. Advancing peace and security through EU mediation and preventive diplomacy

Promotion of international peace and security is part of the EU's *raison d'être* and one of its key foreign policy objectives. Prevention of violent conflict is fundamental in addressing the security challenges facing Europe, its neighbourhood and beyond, and at the same time an enabler for political and social advancement and human security. Mediation is a practice that can be used to prevent, contain or resolve a conflict and to reduce the risks of its recurrence, and therefore a highly cost-effective³ modality. As such, mediation represents an effective avenue for the EU to pursue its foreign and security policy objectives, and merits becoming an even more prominent component of the EU's external engagement.

Mediation is often a non-linear, time-consuming and iterative process, taking place in complex and volatile multi-stakeholder environments. Conceptualising mediation success strictly in terms of peace process outcomes provides only a limited perspective on the impact achieved. Success for EU mediation should rather be assessed in relation to the EU's wider peace and mediation engagement, including building support for a peace process, enhancing process design and strengthening dialogue infrastructures, advising and capacitating mediators, empowering insider mediators, enhancing gender equality and women's empowerment and promoting the inclusion of marginalised groups.

Mediation is also an important instrument of preventive diplomacy. Preventive diplomacy serves to prevent conflict from arising between parties and to avoid the escalation and spread of conflict. Mediated processes and dialogue can be a key pathway to peace by addressing emerging crisis and conflict at an early stage, and have the merit of handling tensions before positions have become entrenched and before they affect people's daily lives.

Favouring a conflict prevention and mediation approach to ensure human security in EU external action has the strategic merit of counterbalancing the enhanced focus on responsive capacity in foreign policy across the world.

4. EU mediation principles

EU mediation engagements are guided by a set of principles outlined below.

a. EU as a value-based actor

The defining feature in EU mediation is that the EU is a value-based actor. The EU's foundational values, as set out in Article 2 TEU, as well as a human rights-based approach in all EU engagement, set the EU apart as a mediation actor. The EU should consistently engage on the basis of its foundational values which include respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, the rule of law and the respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities as well as pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and gender equality. A driving force of EU's engagement in mediation is the respect for international law principles and norms. The value-based actor principle is implemented hand-in-hand with a sense of humility and respect for local contexts.

³ *United Nations; World Bank. 2018. Pathways for Peace: Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict. Washington, DC: World Bank*

EU foundational values and interests go hand in hand, as peace and security, prosperity, human rights, rule of law, democracy, a rules-based global order and effective multilateralism are key objectives underpinning EU external action. The EU recognises that mediation engagements are highly complex in nature, and may require a level of principled pragmatism to achieve overarching objectives. The EU considers that its geopolitical interests and its conflict resolution efforts are complimentary priorities aligned with EU foundational values. The EU's strengths in mediation add to its geopolitical power.

The EU continuously assesses its interests and values in relation to the proceeding of a peace process and its prospective outcomes and takes well-considered, context-specific decisions on how best to constructively engage and support the conflict-affected population.

b. Multi-track mediation

The EU promotes and engages in multi-track mediation as a preferred mode to successfully advance peace processes and dialogue, creating more resilient pathway to peace. The EU plays a connector role in-between tracks, and strives to support inclusive bottom-up approaches that make political agreements between decision-makers possible at several levels of society.

c. Inclusivity

A further defining feature in EU mediation is the emphasis that the EU places on inclusivity. The role that exclusion, grievances and inequality play as drivers of conflict has gained recognition. The EU attaches importance to goal-oriented inclusive mediation approaches, where inclusivity is both a norm and a specific mediation objective, and to process design that enables inclusivity. Inclusive approaches deliver strategic value by providing entry points for talks, fostering legitimacy and building trust between communities, thereby making outcomes and agreements more durable. Inclusive process design, inter-track dialogue and approaches such as inter-generational dialogue can help build social compacts and reconstitute social contracts. The complexities of conflicts often require that mediation at the multi-track level complement the centrality of an official mediator.

As an actor that systematically consults civil society as part of its approach to external action and as a promoter and supporter of multi-track approaches, the EU favours all-of-society approaches to sustaining peace that focuses on giving voice to all groups and leaving no-one behind. Women and youth draw particular attention from the perspective of meaningful participation. In line with a people-centred approach to peace, the EU recognises the need for psychosocial support for actors and individuals that have been through trauma, aiding their readiness to engage in peace discussions and their ability to address grievances. Inclusive approaches to mediation involve engagement with both peace and conflict constituencies. As an actor that opens up space for civil society politically and financially, the EU also safeguards space for civil society liaison with proscribed actors.

d. Coherence with EU foreign and security policy goals

EU mediation engagements are informed by their linkage to strategic priorities and interests of the EU. The EU engages in mediation where it has comparative advantage in relation to other mediation actors, where there are entry points for EU mediation and where the EU can make a useful contribution to sustained peace. When the EU engages in mediation in a given context, attention is paid to ensure coherence with the overall EU strategy, EU values and principles, as well as to ensure a viable contribution toward sustained peace. In settings where the EU has a specific political stance that has direct bearing on conflict dynamics, the EU can work in support of other mediation actors that may be better suited to take on a more prominent mediation role. The entry points for EU mediation should be assessed on a case-by-case basis, informed by a conflict sensitive approach and in consultation with stakeholders, to ensure an overall constructive posture.

e. Applying the EU Integrated Approach with a focus on mediation

The Global Strategy for the EU's Foreign and Security Policy identifies the Integrated Approach as the framework for a more coherent and holistic engagement by the EU to external conflicts and crises. The approach recalls that the Union has a wide array of policies and instruments at its disposal to respond to these challenges – spanning the diplomatic, security, defence, financial, trade, development cooperation and humanitarian aid fields. The Integrated Approach is applied at all levels throughout all phases of conflict. It brings together EU institutions, Member States, international and regional partners as well as civil society to ensure an overall effective contribution to sustained peace. Mediation as a tool, is part of the Integrated Approach, and should be drawn upon where it adds value in the EU approach to a specific crisis, while ensuring coherence with other EU instruments and the broader engagement context.

When applied as a framework approach to EU mediation, the EU Integrated Approach strengthens EU leverage and the possibilities for impact of EU (institutions and Member States) mediation action. In particular, the EU Integrated Approach helps EU efforts on track II and III become more coherent and strategic, thus enhancing opportunities for political outcomes and impact. EU Member States can provide diplomatic and security safeguards for actors engaged in a peace process, reinforcing their confidence in a process, enabling the viability of its outcome. The European Parliament provides support in parliamentary mediation aiming at facilitating inclusive inter-party dialogue, developing parliamentary and political parties' capacities to prevent conflicts as well as promoting a parliamentary culture of dialogue and consensus building.

The Commission plays an essential role in supporting international, regional, national and local peace and mediation infrastructures and helps build partnerships amongst them. The Commission supports national actors' efforts to deliver peace dividends to peace stakeholders, by supporting the implementation of peace agreements, by addressing root causes of conflict and the long-term structural drivers of fragility, including the economic dimension. The humanitarian- development-peace nexus offers a relevant framework in this regard.

f. Partnerships

Partnerships, in particular with the United Nations, are a main principle and pillar of EU mediation practice. Strategic policy dialogue on conflict prevention and mediation, as well as regular exchanges between the EU, UN and OSCE Mediation Support Teams and Units on good mediation and conflict prevention practice and strategic collaboration in mediation are priority avenues in the partnerships approach. Regional organisations are another main partnerships pillar, drawing on mutual learning, sharing of regional, national and local experiences as well as strategic collaboration. The NGO community and civil society actors, which work in partnership with the EU and its MS, represent a further dimension in the family of EU mediation actors and constitute an important community of practice that the EU engages with as partners.

g. Conflict sensitivity, ‘do no harm’

Conflict sensitivity is a key guiding principle for EU engagement. In mediation, this translates to the EU being particularly alert to applying conflict sensitivity before, during and after mediation engagements. Conflict analysis plays an essential role and is a critical step to inform mediation engagement. In the aftermath of a peace agreement, the EU, in cooperation with other international partners, should continue to seek to influence spill-over conflict dynamics by gradually reducing structural risks and root causes of conflict and alleviating divisions and exclusion.

The EU is further guided by the ‘do no harm’ principle ensuring that its actions are fully conflict sensitive and do not reinforce any negative dynamics. The risk of non-engagement is also considered. In instances where the EU assesses that it is not useful to engage, it can support actors that may be in a better position to do so.

h. Human Rights

As a value-based actor the EU applies a human rights based approach to its mediation engagements, in line with the relevant EU and UN norms and standards. Paying due attention to human rights, EU mediation encourages parties to tackle the root causes of conflict, and promotes and favours durable peace agreements that respond to the rights and needs of the conflict affected populations and contribute to sustaining peace.

The EU supports further integration of the conflict prevention and human rights domains, including reaping the benefits of situational and risk awareness among human rights networks for conflict prevention. Human rights are an integral part of the EU’s conflict Early Warning System and conflict analysis methodology.

In many cases, mediation efforts take place in highly complex contexts, where one or several parties to the conflict have committed serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law. The EU will be guided by its policy framework on transitional justice⁴ in this regard, also noting that mediation requires being open to speaking to all peace and conflict stakeholders whose positions have a bearing on the prospect for sustained peace.

⁴ <http://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-13576-2015-INIT/en/pdf>

i. Promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment

The EU is committed to the full implementation of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda⁵, and the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment is an essential feature in EU mediation engagements. The EU attaches specific importance to women's access to and meaningful participation in peace processes⁶, to mainstreaming gender perspective based on gender analysis and to paying attention to gender in political agenda setting, including by enhancing linkages between local women and political decision makers. The EU promotes the implementation of international standards of gender-responsive mediation support. The EU will strive to include and enable the participation of more women as mediators, chief negotiators and political representatives, and it recognises the important work of national and regional women mediator networks. The EU has set a target of minimum 33 percent women participation in all EU actions related to peace processes.

Conflicts affect men and women in different ways, which is why systematic integration of gender perspectives into all mediation and conflict prevention activities is needed. The EU supports the active and meaningful participation of women in peace processes, as it can bring about a positive change in their status in post-agreement societies enhancing their economic, social and political empowerment, reducing gender stereotypes and leading to more sustainable peace. The EU encourages the construction of masculinities and femininities consistent with peace.

j. Climate and natural resources

The effects of climate change are an increasingly present factor exacerbating existing pressures on natural resources and the environment, further aggravated by biodiversity and ecosystems loss, over-exploitation of natural resources such as land and water, and unsustainable management practices, and competition over their control. Environmental degradation and effects such as extreme weather can function as threat multipliers and catalysts for tensions and structural risks in vulnerable contexts, also inducing climate related migration. At the same time, cooperation incentives between conflict parties that recognise the role played by environmental factors and improve access to natural resources such as potable water may create entry-points for mediation and dialogue. The EU should therefore draw on its extensive climate and environmental experience to systematically consider climate and environmental factors and risks in mediation engagements and related conflict analysis, including in assessments preceding EU mediation engagement, where applicable, and continuously enhance its understanding on the interface between the effects of climate change, natural resources and peace.

k. Cultural heritage

Cultural heritage can constitute an important asset in conflict prevention, peacebuilding and mediation, considering in particular its strong symbolic importance for local communities. It offers multiple points for intervention along the conflict cycle. Cultural heritage is key to restoring the social fabric that sustains peace agreements and reconciliation.

⁵ *The EU Strategic Approach to WPS and the EU Action Plan on WPS (EEAS 2019/747- Council document 11031/19).*

I. An evidence-based approach

The EU is a mediation actor that engages in continuous learning and that builds in feedback-loops, such as debriefings and evaluations, in its engagement both within the EU institutions, with Member States and EU mediation partners. This approach has informed the orientations of this Concept and contributes to ensuring accountability of EU mediation actions, as well as a constant attention to quality and effectiveness in EU mediation engagements, and the optimal use of the expertise and knowledge base available across the EU institutions and EU Member States. EU mediation efforts are further informed by joint conflict analysis that offer insights into the conflict dynamics in a specific area, country or region. Mediation engagement heightens the EU's emphasis on continuous analysis, given the dynamic nature of conflict and stakeholders' relationships and behaviours.

5. The facets of EU mediation

a. EU comparative advantages

The EU draws on a number of strengths in its various mediation roles. A peace project in itself, support to peace is inherent to the EU identity and reflected throughout its actions. Its global diplomatic presence through EU Delegations and MS embassies across the world is unparalleled. This equips the EU with significant strengths in situational awareness and the identification of entry points for conflict prevention, including through the EU conflict Early Warning, horizon scanning and conflict analysis practices.

As a value-based mediation actor, the EU also draws comparative advantage from its mediation engagement principles, and its evidence-based perception as a principled actor that promotes inclusive approaches. As one of the most prominent advocates and supporters of multi-track approaches, the EU has also a solid track-record of designing and accompanying approaches that give voice to the full spectrum of peace and conflict stakeholders.

The EU's specific comparative advantages and entry points for mediation engagements are context specific. A series of circumstances influence this, including the EU's and Member States' historical engagement in a country, the EU's current relations with the host Government and how the EU is perceived locally by peace and conflict stakeholders. The geographical proximity of the EU to the country context in question is often also a factor. The EU's overall engagement strategy, including the use of restrictive measures and its posture in the security sector, further determine these entry points. Conflict context are highly complex high-intensity environments, where parties' perceptions of the EU (institutions and Member States), as well as other peace and mediation actors, inevitably vary. Building of trust between a mediator and parties is key. This is a delicate process that requires a well-calibrated and incremental approach to relationships-building and effective process steer.

b. Leverage

The EU draws on its Integrated Approach to security and peace to ensure that mediation efforts are aligned with and accompanied by other support measures, to generate leverage in mediation, by supporting conflict transformation, strategically back other mediators and by assuming a mediation role. The mobilisation of the full strength, capacity and strategic relationships of the EU institutions and EU Member States significantly reinforce EU leverage.

The EU uses its economic and diplomatic strength to support stability and prosperity, and has developed a leadership role in facing the global challenges of our time. The full range of the EU

toolbox can be drawn upon to mobilise leverage, from diplomacy and strategic use of good offices to foreign policy regulatory instruments, trade, assistance, operational and cooperation tools. More escalated conflict contexts will necessitate third parties, such as the EU, that can coordinate and leverage different tools to arrive to an agreement. Incentives but also security instruments and restrictive measures can prepare or flank negotiation processes, in order to leverage a peace agreement. The Integrated Approach also adds value when addressing proxy dynamics, by drawing on EU actors and partners that have access to relevant state and non-state actors.

The EU's continuous engagement in specific country contexts for sustained periods of time and its ability to be present throughout the conflict cycle, including by mobilising substantial external assistance in support of conflict prevention, mediation, peacebuilding and sustainable development, gives the EU added value as a peace supporter. The EU's capacity to accompany an entire peace process and its aftermath is attractive for many stakeholders, allowing the EU to constructively incentivise actors and build relationships based on trust.

The EU rarely engages in mediation as a sole actor. Its strong emphasis on partnerships and capacity to effectively cooperate with international and regional organisations and non-state actors that may have been given a mandate to mediate by the parties in a given context, is another strength of the EU.

c. EU mediation roles

The EU engages in a range of mediation roles and has during the past decade assumed a role in most national peace processes. Some shifts have also occurred in the EU mediation postures as EU experiences in mediation have accumulated over time. As conflicts become increasingly regional and sub-national, the EU's mediation role can manifest itself in a broad range of ways. The extent to which the EU communicates on its mediation engagements depends entirely on what level of discretion is most appropriate for the context in question.

Leading mediation. The EU can increasingly get involved as a third party in helping to address armed conflicts at the track I level, engaging the top leadership of a country and the most senior-level representatives of parties. The EU can engage in these roles when invited to do so and in coordination with other mediation actors. The conflict parties involved in a mediated process should retain ownership of the outcome of the talks.

The EU can also **co-lead a mediation process**, an approach that allows for jointly drawing on the respective relationships and capacities that mediation partners have in a specific country context. Mediation is a collective process that can benefit from a bilateral or trilateral approach. Co-leading arrangements with the United Nations strengthens the multilateral dimension and facilitates coordination and coherence. Constellations that include regional organisations can bring significant local ownership, responsibility and partnership elements to the mediation process.

Facilitating mediation and dialogue spaces. Facilitated mediation space approaches, where the mediation role is non-directive and which focus on facilitating a dialogue space where parties can constructively engage, may become an increasingly common mediation format. The EU has a strong record of accomplishment in opening up spaces for dialogue and talks through its diplomacy, and can take on more discrete mediation roles, preparing the path towards dialogue.

Accompanying mediation. The EU can engage in multiple roles in relation to a given peace process, from supporting working groups and delivering expertise to organising and enabling an environment for negotiators. It can accompany a peace process by helping to create fertile ground for pre-talks, promoting an inclusive process or witnessing its proceedings as a credible and trusted third party. It can also assume witness, observer and guarantor-like roles.

Coordinating mediation. The evolving domain of peace mediation and the complex nature of current and emerging conflicts and crises and their intricate webs of stakeholders, calls for coordination. As an advocate of multi-track approaches, the EU is well placed and experienced in “connecting the tracks”, thereby contributing to a more cohesive and inclusive process. Drawing on relationships established through its role as a leading mediation financier, the EU can help to ensure that the mediation actions on the ground are complementary and cohesive. Strengthened coordination also creates opportunities for better linking track II and III dialogues to track I, providing a more fertile ground for inclusion. Coordinated approaches delivers value for all actors, and prevents competition.

Supporting mediation. The EU can facilitate effective mediation processes led by other actors through capacity building, training, logistical support and provision of expertise to mediators and conflict parties. This support needs to be well coordinated with all mediation actors involved, especially the lead mediator, in order to avoid duplication of efforts and to fully draw on EU comparative advantages.

Leveraging mediation. Given its political weight the EU can provide diplomatic leverage (e.g. as part of a group of friends) and/or economic credence to mediation processes.

Supporting mediation process outcomes. The EU can support mediation processes and, subsequently, the implementation of peace agreements to ensure their sustainability through the full range of civilian and military crisis management and response instruments as well as the political, diplomatic, regulatory, trade and development tools available to it.

Funding mediation. The EU can provide financial support to formal, informal and grassroots mediation processes. The EU can also deliver financial support to the extended mediation community, including by financing insider mediators (institutions or individuals that are seen as ‘insiders’ within a given context to broker differences, build consensus, and resolve conflict), think tanks, the research community as well as NGOs and their local networks, provided that their actions are in line with EU values and principles.

Promoting mediation. Based on its own experience as a peace project and its track-record of peacebuilding, prevention of conflicts, reconciliation, democracy and human rights, the EU is a recognised promoter of and spokesperson for dialogue and mediation as an effective tool of first response to conflicts.

d. Risk perceptions and defining success

The EU considers that the risk of engaging with a peace process that may not advance, or supporting a process that results in a peace agreement that is not durable, are not reasons for non-engagement. Mediation is often a lengthy, non-linear and iterative process situated in a complex and volatile multi-stakeholder environment. Conceptualising mediation success strictly in terms of outcomes provides only a limited perspective on the impact achieved. Success for EU mediation engagements can best be captured in relation to the EU’s role in the broader peace process and dialogue ecosystem.

6. EU mediation figureheads and key actors

A range of EU actors are involved in EU mediation activities. **EU Special Envoys, EU Special Representatives** and **EU Ambassadors** play the most visible EU mediation roles. Their mandates include a host of mediation- and dialogue-related tasks: supporting stabilisation and conciliation processes, contributing to initiatives leading to settlement of conflicts and to negotiation and implementation of peace and ceasefire agreements, facilitating and maintaining close contact with all the parties, etc.

The **EEAS Mediation Support Team (MST)**, a hub of dedicated EU mediation advisors, works with mediation parties and other mediation actors by providing mediation and facilitation, also supporting parties and processes through advising, carrying out temporary mediation support deployments, assessing and identifying entry points for EU mediation and designing and capacitating EU mediation engagements on a needs basis. EU Special Envoys and Special Representatives have a privileged institutional relationship with the MST and may draw on the MST for advice and support to their work, for example by having mediation advisors function as part of their advisory teams.

Members of the MST can carry out mediation assignments, mobilise external experts using its specific budget allocations, or draw upon the **EEAS Pool of EU Mediators**. The pool reinforces the mediation and mediation support capacity of the EEAS, drawing on varied experience and expertise across the political, diplomatic and technical fields.

The MST can also mobilise mediation, facilitation and thematic competence, and elaborate knowledge products. The MST works closely with the Service for Foreign Policy Instruments (FPI). The FPI manages the main EU rapid response instruments dedicated to conflict prevention and mediation, allowing the EU to swiftly mobilise mediation support capacity and intervene flexibly where mediation opportunities arise.

EEAS geographical and thematic divisions and **EU Delegation staff members**, notably Heads of Political Section, can also engage in mediation and mediation support, in coordination with the EU MST.

As part of this concept, EU actions under Article 28 TEU can be mandated by the Council with a specific focus on mediation and mediation support. In line with the 2018 Civilian CSDP Compact, civilian CSDP missions, in particular, could also play a supporting role in peace monitoring and mediation, where relevant and according to their respective mandate.

The abovementioned actors work on mediation under the political guidance of the **High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy**, who also engages as a mediator and facilitator of talks.

The Commission makes important contributions to sustained peace and the viability of efforts to deliver peace dividends to peace stakeholders.

The European Parliament has established a wide range of parliamentary mediation and dialogue activities, contributing to the EU's overall approach.

EU Member States, including through their mediation support structures and mediation capacity, are important mediation actors in their own right and also prominent actors in the EU Integrated Approach to mediation. Where appropriate, individual Member States can take on a mediation or facilitation role on behalf of the EU, if so delegated by the HRVP or the Council. In addition, they can create and operationalise unique entry points for EU mediation across the globe through their privileged bilateral relationships. Experience shows that effective role sharing and collaboration in EU mediation is essential for its success. EU Member States' in-country presence and engagements are an essential aspect in the EU's extensive diplomatic presence across the world, and can play an important role in preparing the ground for EU mediation as well as assuming mediation roles in an EU Integrated Approach.

The **NGO community and civil society actors**, which work in partnership with the EU, represent a further dimension in the family of EU mediation actors and constitute an important community of practice that the EU engages with as partners. They can play a key role in opening up space for mediation and build capacity of mediation stakeholders to support a level playing field, and generate incentives for actors to engage in talks. They can support local mechanisms for mediation and dialogue and help transform relationships between parties. The EU has actively contributed to promote insider mediation and supports **insider mediators**, investing in their capacity-building at a global level, due to their unparalleled access in particular in high-intensity conflicts where other actors cannot engage.

7. EU frameworks for coordinating mediation and mediation support

The EEAS MST engages with MS mediation support structures in regular meetings with a thematic or country-specific focus. These meetings enhance joint EU mediation capacity, and serve as a platform for informal exchanges on specific mediation engagements. Their frequency and working methods should be reviewed to allow for effective implementation of the present concept and more efficient coordination, including on country specific responses.

8. Path ahead

In its continued work to enhance its mediation practice, the EU should further strengthen its cooperation with Member States, boosting the all-of-EU potential as a mediation actor. EU Member States' mediation capacity and in-country presence should be an integral part of an EU Integrated Approach to mediation, working closely with the EU Delegations. Coordination and coherence between the EU and Member States should be strengthened, with the Political and Security Committee regularly informed on the progress of EU mediation work.

Partnerships, in particular with the UN, should remain a top priority in EU mediation practice, and is to be further developed. Joint mediation engagements based on joint situation assessments, as a modality suited for the mediation needs in the coming decade, should be further explored. Joint opportunities for sharing experiences and learning should be enhanced.

The EEAS will develop a comprehensive set of thematic mediation guidelines, in consultation with relevant Commission services, to provide EU mediation actors with substantive guidance as to how EU mediation principles can be applied in concrete settings. The guidelines should be periodically revised according to the evolving needs and lessons identified.

At the EEAS a high level Peace Mediation Task Force will be set up, to steer EEAS mediation engagement politically and to accompany the implementation of the new Concept. The EEAS Pool of Mediators will enhance the EU's reach and capacity. Systematic training and capacity building for the Pool of Mediators, staff in the EU institutions and Member States, will be another priority.

The Community of Practice on EU mediation will continue to provide an interface with the vital mediation practitioners and NGO community on peacebuilding and mediation. Knowledge management and lessons learned should remain a priority to continuously build-up the body of EU mediation experience. EU mediation partners can make an important contribution in that regard.

Joint analysis, including in the form of the EU conflict Early Warning System and conflict analysis, will be drawn upon to assess the needs and entry points for EU mediation in contexts at risk of conflict and facilitate early action. Mainstreaming mediation awareness and know-how across the institutions, and more explicitly reflecting conflict prevention and mediation considerations in EU strategic and programming documents, and crisis response, should also be pursued.

