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Centre for
Humanitarian
Dialogue

Mediation for peace

Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue
Strategy 2019-2023

Contents

HD – 20 years of private diplomacy

1999-2007: A niche for private diplomacy

Beginning in Aceh, Indonesia, HD explores and confirms the existence of a niche for discreet, impartial mediation undertaken by independent private diplomacy actors.

2008-2011: From founder organisation to institution

HD's Lisbon retreat maps a path from a founder-led organisation, with an ad hoc portfolio of projects, to a more mature institution, with clear principles, a defined peacemaking method, and robust business processes.

2012-2015: Insider mediation and decentralization

HD's four-year strategy drives decentralization to regional hubs, with growing use of "insider mediators". HD develops tools for conflict prevention and for mediating humanitarian access, with strong results in both areas.

2015-2018: Adapting to a new conflict landscape

Two trends dominate a new phase of warfare – the fragmentation of armed conflict, and the resurgence of geopolitical conflicts. HD develops new capacity to engage with multi-actor and multi-layer processes, and to help manage geopolitical tensions.

2019-2023: The leading private diplomacy actor

HD aims to establish itself as the leading global private diplomacy actor, based largely on a track record of measurable results.

HD's mission and values

Mission: Prevent, mitigate and resolve armed conflict through dialogue and mediation.

Values: Humanity, Impartiality, Independence

HD's goal and strategy

HD aims to be the leading global private diplomacy actor. HD's efforts to help prevent and resolve armed conflict, and to mitigate the suffering it causes, should lead the field. HD's results will be measurable against objective criteria.

This will be achieved by maintaining a clear focus on the organisation's greatest value: mediation and dialogue with actors and issues beyond the frontier of traditional diplomacy.

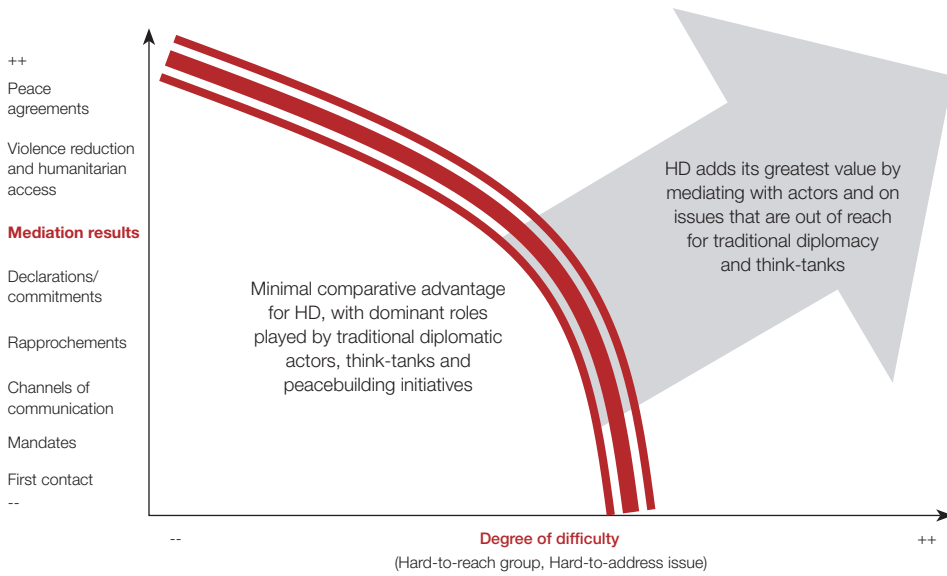To this end, from 2019-2023, HD will:

- adapt to the evolving landscape;

- refine its method;

- maintain a lean and effective organisational structure;

- deliver and demonstrate valuable results;

- nurture entrepeneurial engagement and organisational flexibility;

- strengthen accountability and quality assurance;

- ensure global reach while maintaining a low profile;

- be a principled and collegial actor in an increasingly crowded field;

- deepen partnerships which can lead to peace.

HD's peacemaking value

The Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (HD) is a private diplomacy organisation based in Geneva and founded on the principles of humanity, impartiality and independence. Its mission is to help prevent, mitigate and resolve armed conflict through dialogue and mediation.

HD demonstrates its greatest value by working beyond the frontier of traditional diplomacy (see graph on next page), engaging conflict parties that can be hard for others to reach, and facilitating mediation on issues that may be insoluble via other channels.

HD's added value – Working outside the frontier of traditional diplomacy

Y-axis (from top to bottom):
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Peace agreements

Violence reduction and humanitarian access

Mediation results

Declarations/ commitments

Rapprochements

Channels of communication

Mandates

First contact
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HD adds its greatest value by mediating with actors and on issues that are out of reach for traditional diplomacy and think-tanks

Minimal comparative advantage for HD, with dominant roles played by traditional diplomatic actors, think-tanks and peacebuilding initiatives

--   **Degree of difficulty**   ++
(Hard-to-reach group, Hard-to-address issue)

The challenge

HD was founded 20 years ago. The organisation began with a single project (in Aceh, Indonesia), and a small team, based entirely in Geneva. By late 2018, HD's global reach covers 84 percent of the 'highly violent' political conflicts recognised by the Heidelberg Conflict Barometer, ranging from local and inter-communal conflicts to multi-state international processes.

This comprehensive engagement with armed conflicts around the world has been achieved by decentralisation. HD uses regional hubs to provide high levels of autonomy and flexibility to more than 40 project teams. Most of HD's approximately 200 staff are based in the field.

The model has worked. HD brokered or supported more than 40 acknowledged peace and conflict management agreements between 2015 and 2018. Since early 2017 alone, HD's work has contributed to the handover of almost 4 tonnes of armaments and explosives by ETA; to support for Common Operating Principles for maritime law enforcement agencies operating in the South China Sea; to humanitarian access to address health crises in territory held by the Islamic State; to the evacuation of over 100,000 people in imminent danger of death in Syria; to agreements to address local armed conflict from the Sahel to Sulu, and much more. The organisation may offer a niche contribution to global peace and stability, but it is a real contribution.

The challenge HD faces now is to adapt to the evolving context within which it is trying save lives and promote peace and stability. The pattern of warfare is changing. The pathways to

peace are changing too, creating new opportunities for both preventing and resolving conflict, but also new problems. The actors in the field are also changing. Global norms, including those against warfare, are eroding. The multilateral system is getting weaker – after 20 years of dramatic success in brokering peace agreements, the United Nations has struggled to produce similar results during the past decade. The number of non-governmental organisations in the field has increased, but this has not filled the gap left by the United Nations and other multilateral organisations, and carries the risk of confusion. All this is important for HD to understand, but also to anticipate and consider when adapting its own approach.

Adapting to these changes is less about trying to accurately predict the future, and more about being flexible, and positioning itself for change. HD wants to be an organisation that, more than ever before, clearly sees the evolving niche in which it is adding greatest value. And HD wants to focus on that niche, and to have the methods, systems and culture needed to constantly improve its capacity to produce the best possible results.

At the centre of the organisation's strategy is one thing that is unlikely to change: that HD adds most value beyond the frontier of traditional diplomacy. The purpose of this document is to define the things HD needs to do and be in order to produce life-saving results in that space.

An evolving landscape of conflict in 2019-2023

The two major trends of the current decade are likely to continue during the coming period: the fragmentation of conflict, and the return of geopolitical conflict.

The fragmentation of conflict is evident in all major conflicts. Dozens of conflict actors are present in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Libya, South Sudan and Yemen. In Syria, hundreds of autonomous, or largely autonomous, armed actors have demonstrated military capacity. The factors that have driven this fragmentation remain in place: ever-lower barriers to entry to armed insurgency; the mobilization potential of the internet and social media; and the large number of external third parties willing to provide funding, arms, equipment and even manpower for foreign conflicts.

The resurgence of geopolitical tension during the past decade is, in some ways, a return to normalcy. Historically, the period immediately following the collapse of the Soviet Union was an anomalous one of unipolar domination. The former Soviet Union was in disarray, Europe's transformation excluded a significant military dimension, China was largely focused on its domestic transformation, and there were no other potential challengers to US power. The 'rise of the rest', and Russia's reassertion of a significant international military capacity since 2008, have created the conditions for renewed geopolitical competition at multiple levels, including between Russia and the West; China and the US; Sunni and Shi'a; Saudi and Qatar. In each of these cases, the tensions have largely played out in the territory of third parties.

In addition to these two defining features of the conflict landscape, there are a number of other notable risks and challenges:

> **The internet has proven to be a powerful tool for the inspiration, mobilization, induction, deployment and direction of terrorist and other insurgent activities.**

- **Catastrophic interstate conflict**. The risk of this remains relatively low, but it is still higher than at any time since the end of the Cold War, and requires sustained attention. The combination of geopolitical tension, populist politics, and an unpredictable and unmanaged range of cyber threats drives this rising risk (see below).

- **Populist politics and the decline of global norms**. Political leaders channelling popular grievances – and actively promoting intolerance, xenophobia, simple solutions and confrontation – are in the ascendant. Parallel to this, the system of global norms, including the norms with respect to warfare which have undergirded the imperfect global security system since World War II, are eroding.

- **New norms, new mediators**. With the erosion of the rules-based order framed by the victors of World War II, there is likely to be a rules-vacuum, then a shift towards new rules determined by a new set of rising powers. Some of the powers traditionally seen as rule-makers and brokers will be regarded more as parties to conflict in need of mediation while others, traditionally regarded as sources of conflict, may become sources of new mediation capacity.

- **The use of the internet in conflict**. The internet has proven to be a powerful tool for the inspiration, mobilization, induction, deployment and direction of terrorist and other insurgent activities. A number of states have shown a capacity to limit mobilization through the internet, but the internet is likely to remain an important resource for terrorist and other organisations, particularly in open societies.

- **Cyber warfare**. A decade has passed since the Stuxnet attack on Iran's nuclear programme. Since then, capacities have grown significantly, though largely away from public scrutiny. The rapid growth of this capacity, the absence of any normative framework around it, combined with high levels of secrecy and uncertainty, increase the risk of conflict in this sphere.

- **Hybrid warfare**. The weaponization of new media, the refinement of hostile economic instruments, and the further development of covert military operations and drone warfare – these factors have served to blur the distinction between war and states other than war. As well as posing particular challenges for the mediation community, these phenomena increase the risk of uncontrolled escalation into full-scale warfare.

- **Criminalization and "dark globalization"**. The most successful current business model for insurgency has favoured the use of insurgent-controlled territory and cyberspace for the trafficking of arms, narcotics and people, often as part of global supply chains. One feature of this is the rise of groups which outwardly espouse a cause – political, ethnic, religious, etc. – but which function largely as organised crime syndicates.

HD will structure itself to better understand these risks, and to mitigate them more effectively.

HD's method

HD has limited resources, and the organisation believes it contributes most when it focuses those resources on what HD does best. HD does not engage in advocacy, or deliver assistance to the victims of war, even though those are important things. Rather, HD uses the diplomatic tools it has within a relatively narrow operating space, and uses them in a deliberate sequence. HD follows that sequence because it believes it helps the organisation to intervene at the right time, when the conflict is ripe for resolution and the parties are seeking assistance. This approach also helps us to intervene in the right way, without colliding with others or getting in the way; and it helps us to maximize the chances of getting the right results, in terms of lives saved, and to ensure that those results do not evaporate when HD leaves. HD has also aligned its organisational decision-making processes with this sequence, to ensure proper accountability.

The sequence HD follows is this:

1. Assess – Understanding conflict dynamics, knowing the moment

HD monitors major armed conflicts and high-risk contexts. Its assessment methodology applies a set of filters, each identified with a question: Is the conflict ripe for settlement? Is there a potential value in third party engagement? Are others already present? Is there operational space for HD to add value, either directly or in support of others? Does HD have the appropriate expertise, networks, etc.?

HD should not be working where it cannot add measurable value. Operational Directors are therefore required to present their proposed assessments for approval by their peers in the Senior Management Team. To ensure the filters are rigorously applied, the budget for assessments is held centrally. Each Director therefore competes with the other Directors for the allocation of limited assessment resources, incentivizing the most robust challenges to any given proposal.

Less than a third of assessments pass all the filters and move to the next step. HD has always been an organisation which has been willing to say "no" to projects in which it can't add sufficient value, or the likelihood of that is too small. This is a strength and, given how crowded the field has become and the importance of distinguishing the organisation from the field by the quality of its work, the organisation will enhance its use of this filtering process to ensure it carries out the highest quality work.

2. Engage – Reaching even the most isolated conflict actors

Once HD has assessed the situation and established there is an opportunity to help prevent or resolve an armed conflict through mediation or dialogue, the next step is engagement. Engagement is the process of making contact, building trust, and establishing the parameters of a process to move away from violence. The viability of HD's early engagement is usually dependent on the extent to which the parties involved are confident that HD really does embody its core values of humanity, impartiality and independence. Given HD's niche with

hard-to-reach actors and hard-to-address issues, engagement often entails significant physical, legal, political or moral risks. A decision to fully engage, therefore, is formally approved by the Operations Committee of the Board, which evaluates the mitigation strategies for each risk and applies the principles in HD's Charter.

> To work effectively, HD engages with any actor relevant for the peaceful resolution of a conflict.

3. Operate – Providing facilitation, mediation, dialogue, advice and support

Successful engagement may lead to one of four main operational roles for HD:

■ **Facilitation and mediation**. HD offers a range of services to help connect conflict parties in their search for a settlement, from back-channels operated by shuttle, to fully-fledged mediations in which HD advances proposals of its own. Where discretion is key, HD helps parties in conflict to establish channels of communication to adverse parties, sometimes as a first step to a formal peace process, or to prevent the escalation of an ongoing conflict, or to achieve a humanitarian objective. Maintaining these channels requires specialized professionals and techniques, which HD invests in as a core competence. In other cases, it is the unofficial and informal character of an HD engagement that may be most important, as in the South China Sea where HD brings together representatives of the littoral states as they seek to manage relations in a contested and high-risk environment. In still other cases, HD may offer proposals of its own, as it does in the context of humanitarian access talks with the Afghan Taliban and others. 'Process design' is a core HD capacity and involves adapting the intensity, pace, rhythm, formality, format, decisions on representation and other parameters of a peace process to the needs and wishes of the participants. Every mediation begins with listening to the parties.

■ **Dialogue**. HD may support or manage multi-stakeholder dialogue processes in support of a peace process, often as a complement to a formal peace process. Elite bargains are often not possible or legitimate, at least not by themselves, and often not effective. A movement from war to peace requires a broader consensus. In Libya, HD has engaged more than 100,000 Libyans in a National Conference Process – in meetings all over the country, in refugee communities outside Libya, and via social media. The Process illuminated areas of convergence across the many divisions of Libyan society, and offered a vision for the country as the main parties to the UN-led peace process attempt to move beyond crisis. In the Central African Republic, HD proposed and supported the Bangui Forum which provided a broad-based framework for one of the world's most fragile countries. In the Sahel, HD's dialogue process brings the voice of marginalized youth into wider efforts to bring peace to the region. In a more inclusive age, dialogue is the natural partner of mediation.

■ **Advisory**. HD advises one or more parties to a conflict, helping them to move away from armed violence. HD facilitated secret talks between the Government of Spain and ETA from 2004- 2007. When those talks ended, HD remained engaged, guiding ETA and its

political wing on the steps that needed to be taken, culminating in a handover of almost 4 tonnes of armaments and explosives and the formal dissolution of the organisation. Advising is often unilateral, and relies heavily on trust, but, to succeed, it must be guided by the same principles of impartiality that inform multi-party engagements. In Myanmar, the parties to the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement have not sought third party facilitation or mediation, but have welcomed advice with respect to process design and the sharing of experience from other peace processes.

- **Support**. Where HD is not the lead third party, it may provide technical, expert or logistical support to others – either to the parties themselves, or to another third party such as a national or regional mediator, or the United Nations. Where a lead mediator is operating, HD will never compete – the HD Charter requires that HD puts the interests of the peace process above all other considerations. In Syria, where the United Nations leads the peace process, HD plays niche roles in support: establishing contact with extremist groups and other actors on humanitarian access; engaging with military forces not party to the official UN process; and facilitating local agreements to save lives. In Mali, HD supports the official Algiers process by facilitating agreements between belligerent groups not party to that Agreement.

Each of these roles has evolved over recent years due to changes in both the landscape of armed conflict and in communications technology. Further evolution is expected in the coming period, and HD will invest in the adaptation of these tools, which it will share with other members of the mediation community.

4. Exit – Establishing a strategy for sustaining positive change

In most contexts in which HD works, violent conflict is either recurrent or chronic. The single strongest statistical indicator of whether a country will have conflict in the next ten years is whether it has had a conflict in the past ten years. HD will seek to exit when it has added what value it can, but the risks of continuing or renewed violence almost always remain. Prior to exiting, therefore, HD will assess what the ongoing risks are, and will seek to support local or other structures better positioned to manage those risks. Given the enduring vulnerability to relapse, HD will often maintain a residual monitoring capacity, allowing the organisation to re-engage, if ever necessary.

HD's interlocutors

HD mediates between governments, non-state armed groups, and opposition parties, providing a trusted and confidential space for them to explore options to prevent, mitigate or resolve armed conflict. HD's projects help to reduce tensions, prevent further escalation in conflict, limit the human suffering caused by war, and develop opportunities for peaceful settlement. The ultimate beneficiaries of HD's actions are the victims of armed conflict.

To work effectively, HD engages with any actor relevant for the peaceful resolution of a conflict. HD engages impartially with all those who are close to, or participating in, conflict, and also with others involved in responding to the conflict.

HD avoids taking sides in any conflict, while engaging closely with three main categories of actors:

- **conflict party leaders, commanders and high-level representatives**, to introduce and promote the benefits of non-violent resolution of the conflict.
- **conflict stakeholders and influencers** in all sectors and at all levels, to test and promote support for negotiated solutions.
- **other mediators and dialogue facilitators** (both individual and institutional), to provide substantive and process expertise, and to promote the sharing of experience across the sector.

HD's structure

HD is decentralized

HD's basic business units are its seven Operational Directorates – e.g. Asia, Africa, Global Projects. The Operational Directors are responsible for identifying opportunities in their geographical or functional areas, mitigating risks, managing operations and delivering results. Each of these Directors has a high level of autonomy, and reports directly to the Executive Director.

Reporting to each Operational Director are a number of project teams, often focused on a particular conflict or issue. These are small teams which are set up in different configurations to suit each situation but generally contain the following capabilities:

- A head of project who represents the HD 'DNA' (culture, values and mission), and who can function as the 'HD face' for interlocutors.
- Expertise in mediation process design, and thematic or technical subjects.
- Exceptional field networks, access to conflict actors, and knowledge of the context.
- Convening power, and credible engagement with high-level officials.
- Project management capacity (people management, communications, results reporting, donor relations, finance, administration and logistics).

The typical HD project team will be small, mobile and discreet, compatible with HD's work beyond the frontier of traditional diplomacy. Project teams are supported by the Mediation Support and Policy team in Geneva, and by Corporate Services.

Headquartered in Geneva

The role of HD's headquarters in Geneva is to offer strategic guidance; to manage organisation-level risk; to set policies; to ensure quality control and the alignment of field activity with organisational strategy; to mobilize the core funding required to keep the organisation functioning effectively; and to manage a small number of functions which need to be run centrally. These include human resources policy and training, security, finance, information technology, communications, fundraising, evaluation and learning, mediation support, and policy development.

Major decisions in Geneva are taken by the Executive Director in consultation with the Senior Management Team. The other members of the Senior Management team are the Deputy Executive Director, the Director for Mediation Support and Policy, and the Operational Directors, ensuring that all central functions are responsive to the needs of field operations.

The current decentralized structure, with its limited operational role for those at the headquarters, is an adaptation to the pattern of armed conflict. It was developed in response to a world in which armed violence was taking place largely at the sub-national level. With the resurgence of global and regional threats, some operations, such as the new programme in cyber warfare, may need to be driven from Geneva. The guiding principle for any further adjustments will be the need for an organisational structure which can respond effectively to the nature of the threats the organisation is addressing.

> HD's people proactively engage in peer-to-peer learning and demonstrate excellence in both team-work and leadership.
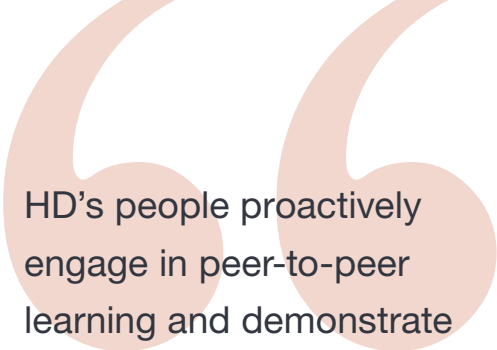
HD's people

HD's principal resource is its people. The organisation seeks to recruit and develop innovative and entrepreneurial people who combine experience, expertise and networks with creativity and professionalism.

HD's people proactively engage in peer-to-peer learning and demonstrate excellence in both teamwork and leadership. The organisation encourages its people to develop and launch entrepreneurial and creative options for peace, while operating within a firm accountability framework. HD is committed to retaining and enhancing its position as the employer of first choice in the sector, including by nurturing a workplace environment that is fair, safe and offers equal opportunities.

The HD Board

The Board has overall authority for the work of the organisation. It sets HD's strategic direction; approves the budget, programme of work and audited financial statements; and it supervises the work of the Executive Director.

The standing and expertise of the members of the Board contributes to HD's reputation, affirms its independence, and gives it access to, and credibility with, the high-level actors with which HD needs to work. The Board also helps secure political and financial support from HD's major supporters.

The Board has an Operations Committee which approves new projects on behalf of the Board, and reviews HD's confidential and high-risk activities. It also has an Audit and Finance Committee which oversees HD's financial systems and controls, including internal and external financial audits.

Measurable results

HD is a results-driven organisation, committed to demonstrating value for money in each of its projects. Over the 2019-2023 period, HD will remain at the forefront of results-based management in the sector, and will continue to develop and share innovative methods for measuring and describing the value of its work. Almost all mediation efforts follow a number of logical steps, each of which is necessary for conflict transformation, and each of which represents measurable value along the pathway to peace:

First contact with conflict actors

The organisation's peacemaking results begin with HD making contact with conflict actors. This initial contact is a major achievement in those cases where a conflict actor is hard-to-reach, or where HD is able to raise an issue which is hard-to-address by traditional diplomatic means.

Mandates or consent of the parties to mediate or facilitate

While in many cases, the parties wish to retain a level of ambiguity about their commitment to a process, in some cases HD receives a formal mandate from one or more parties. This is a valued result for HD wherever it opens the door to a viable peace process. In some cases, this kind of mandate might involve HD in advising one party on the possibility of mediation, without yet being accepted as a mediator by all parties to the conflict. HD delivers its greatest value in this stage of mediation where the mandate subsequently allows the organisation to engage all parties in a mediation process.

New channels of communication between conflict parties

Having made contact with relevant conflict actors, HD seeks to create a reliable channel for ongoing communication with and between those parties. This provides the foundation for future mediation efforts, and represents a significant step towards peace.

Trust-building and rapprochements between conflict parties

Once communications and relationships with and between conflict parties are established, HD tries to build a relationship of trust with them and undertake confidence-building measures

as interim steps, prior to considering formal or public agreements.

Interim declarations, commitments, or joint positions

Where it is possible to mediate between conflict actors, HD may be able to obtain interim declarations, unilateral commitments, or joint statements from them. This represents a valued mediation result as it adds momentum to nascent peace processes, while reducing recourse to violence in the short term. These interim commitments may provide a roadmap for dealing with contentious issues in the conflict or for a process to underpin one phase of the mediation.

> Almost all mediation efforts follow a number of logical steps, each of which is necessary for conflict transformation, and each of which represents measurable value along the pathway to peace.

Violence-reduction and humanitarian access agreements

Where the parties are willing to continue mediation, HD may be able to facilitate violence reduction mechanisms or informal agreements. These results are significant steps towards final peace agreements, allowing the parties to test the commitment of their adversaries to move away from violence and towards a peaceful resolution of the conflict.

In some cases, HD teams are able to achieve significant results in mitigating the effects of conflict by brokering agreements to enable humanitarian access to areas affected by conflict.

Peace agreements

Where HD is able to carry a project to its intended goal, the organisation's mediation leads to formal peace and conflict management settlements in which implementation can be verified and guaranteed by international institutions and stakeholders. These achievements represent some of HD's most valued peacemaking results.

Entrepreneurship and flexibility

HD's model requires unusually high levels of entrepreneurship. The organisation recruits for this, and seeks to develop it. Highly autonomous operations are vital to HD's success.

To ensure this autonomy remains aligned with HD's strategy, and to avoid growth at the expense of results, during 2019-2023 HD will continue to ensure that all its projects are aligned with three simple priorities.

The organisation will launch and sustain projects that:

- Use mediation and dialogue processes for peace,
- Access the hardest-to-reach parties, and/or
- Engage with the hardest-to-address issues.

HD will prioritise projects and assessments that match these three criteria. Conversely, HD will reject initiatives that might jeopardise the organisation's ability to access the hardest-to-reach conflict actors across the globe.

Accountability and quality assurance

The corollary of flexibility is accountability. Flexible, decentralized, autonomous programmes require even stronger accountability measures than other programmes.

To ensure that HD has the necessary level of accountability for its way of operating, over the 2019-2023 period the organisation will increase investment in those functions that serve the whole organisation. This aims to ensure HD maintains a unified professional culture with reliable management and robust operational systems.

HD projects will continue to go through periodic reviews led by HD's monitoring and evaluation team, and HD will further develop its sector-leading adaptive evaluation approaches. These methods will provide operational teams with diverse sources of analysis and perspectives, including from expert mediation advisors, peer-to-peer learning exchanges, critical peer reviews, and the independent validation of reported peacemaking results. These efforts will help assure the quality of HD's operations.

HD supports and encourages staff learning and development and, over the 2019-2023 period, the organisation will deploy and refine an intensive training and induction programme for operational staff, including project management and team management modules. During the same period, HD will also undertake a global review of all of its business processes to ensure they are as efficient as possible and that clear, robust, user-friendly systems have all the appropriate controls to ensure proper accountability.

Global reach, low profile

HD is a global organisation. During the period covered by the strategy, HD will invest to ensure that it has the expertise and capacity to engage wherever it is called upon to do so. HD will also establish a new programme on cyber warfare and on other aspects of warfare connected with information technology.

As HD grows it is at increasing risk of attracting more attention, especially if some projects are large-scale and public. HD's capacity to function as an effective mediator, however, depends on the organisation maintaining a low profile, not least because many of its processes must remain confidential if they are to work at all. HD's default mode will thus favour discretion over publicity.

A principled actor in a crowded field

HD's principles of humanity, impartiality and independence are vital to the ethos and functioning of the organisation.

The principle of humanity is intrinsically valuable. In these reductive times, where the ends almost always justify the means, it is important to be an organisation committed to the inherent value of human life and dignity. Similarly, HD cannot operate effectively unless it applies those principles rigorously, and is known to apply them rigorously. The niche in which the organisation generally operates requires engaging with extremist armed groups. If there were ever any suggestion that HD was not impartial and independent of any political agenda, HD could not sustain the minimal level of trust required to engage with those organisations.

The field of mediation is increasingly crowded, both in terms of the number of organisations operating, and in terms of their agendas. In that context, it becomes more important than ever that HD should be seen to uphold its principles, even if that puts HD at an organisational disadvantage. The conflict parties with which HD works must see, or be able to discover, that the organisation's commitment to the principles it espouses is unwavering, and that HD's personnel are trained to apply those principles in every professional context.

Partnerships

Although it often works quietly, no HD project can succeed in isolation. Even in HD's most confidential work, such as in Spain, the organisation needed to co-operate with other actors playing different roles, such as the International Contact Group and the International Verification Commission. HD has experience with some of the other actors involved in peace processes and can build on this experience. With other significant actors in the conflict space, such as the private sector, HD is just beginning to understand the risks and opportunities associated with partnership with these actors. HD needs to invest more in understanding what is possible, and what is not, and at what degree of proximity.

In 2019-2023, HD will continue to cultivate partnerships with other actors, seeking constructive collaborations in pursuit of peace. This will include co-operation with organisations such as the UN Department of Political Affairs, with which HD has a formal partnership, as well as the Secretary-General's High-Level Advisory Board on Mediation, on which the HD Executive Director serves. HD will also foster collaborations with the International Committee of the

Red Cross, the Centre of Competence on Humanitarian Negotiations, the World Economic Forum, the Geneva Graduate Institute (IHEID), private sector actors, and others.

HD will also enhance its efforts to contribute to professional standards in the field. The organisation will increase its efforts to share its insights with other mediation actors, including through the Oslo Forum, the Mediation Support Network, and the NGO mediators' network which HD founded in 2012. A reputation for discretion should not be incompatible with a reputation for collegiality.

HD's environmental commitment

HD's mission requires its staff to travel frequently, including long-haul international flights, which creates a non-negligible environmental footprint for the organisation.

HD is conscious of its environmental responsibility, and will introduce a carbon offset programme during the 2019-2023 strategy period.

Conclusion: The imperative of peace

Some 100,000 people are killed in war each year. Beyond this, war is the single biggest driver of extreme poverty in the world, and the main reason more refugees have now fled their homes than at any time since World War II. War also creates an enabling environment for terrorism. And even local and regional wars carry the risk of catastrophic escalation. For these reasons, and because weapons are becoming ever more destructive and ever more available, it is imperative that efforts to prevent and resolve armed conflict are enhanced.

But the opposite is happening. The rise of populism, the erosion of global norms, the weakening of the multilateral system, the renewed surge in arms expenditure, and the emergence of new business models relying on violence and instability – all these factors militate against peace and stability. A further surge in violent conflict is a real possibility.

HD is not, and never will be, the major actor in the war against war. It is a niche player – and its niche is to focus on places, actors and issues that traditional actors may find difficult. But given the cost and growing risks of war, and given that some conflicts can only be prevented or resolved by working within that difficult space, HD needs to be as effective as possible in its niche.

HD's strategy for the coming five years will not be to try to go wider, and to address every cause and every consequence of armed conflict. On the contrary, the organisation wants to deliver an ever better set of results within the relatively limited range of activities in which HD is truly expert. The vision HD has laid out here is one of getting better at what it does best, as the world of armed conflict around the organisation changes. The effectiveness of this strategy will be measured in terms of conflicts prevented and lives saved.

The HD Charter

Mediation for peace

HD's mission is to help prevent, mitigate and resolve armed conflict through mediation and dialogue.

In seeking to fulfil that mission, HD's Board has determined that the organisation's representatives shall comply at all times with the following standards:

- Perform the activities of the organisation in accordance with the principles of humanity, impartiality, and independence;

- Engage only where HD can demonstrate added value to a process of preventing, mitigating or resolving violent conflict;

- Support or engage in processes where all parties – including civil society and women – who could contribute to preventing, reducing and resolving violent conflict can be involved;

- Maintain strict confidentiality in their engagements with conflict parties, when so requested;

- Ensure that parties to a conflict are aware of obligations to punish the most serious international crimes, and provide access to international expertise, when needed, on issues pertaining to transitional justice;

- Strive to work collaboratively with other relevant mediators and organisations to ensure that the comparative advantage of each actor is fully utilised in the service of peacemaking;

- Actively contribute to the professionalisation of the mediation field, including through the strengthening of mediators' networks and development of policy aimed at improving mediation practice;

- Ensure that the activities of the HD Centre adhere to the highest standards of integrity, financial accountability and professional conduct;

- Accept only such financial assistance that can be reasonably expected to advance the organisation's core mission in accordance with the principles outlined in the present Charter;

- Reserve the right to withdraw from any peace process or negotiation where the HD Centre judges the parties to be acting in bad faith or making demands fundamentally inconsistent with the spirit and terms of this Charter.

HD: Why it works

Engaging with the hardest-to-reach conflict parties and the most intractable issues is often essential in any peacemaking effort, but other intermediaries may be unable to address this need. HD helps establish access to these groups and engagement on these issues, creating trusted channels of communication, and fostering conditions for successful mediation.

Conflict parties, mediators, and multilateral organisations in highly volatile situations need a trusted, independent and impartial partner to discreetly convene relevant parties and explore opportunities for dialogue and mediation. HD offers this, based on its reputation for discretion and professionalism among conflict actors and other mediators.

Peacemaking requires risk-taking and good timing. HD creates valuable peacemaking opportunities because it remains agile and adaptive, able to move quickly and globally when the moment is right.

Notes