11–12 June 2025

OSLO FORUM

Mediation in a changing world

Norwegian Ministry
of Foreign Affairs

Centre for
Humanitarian
Dialogue

OSLO FORUM

All hands on deck: Mediation in a changing world

Report contributors: Huongly Buiduong, Oscar Eschenbrenner, Eleanor Strangways, Yogesh Gattani, Nicholas Weng-Lam Chu

Photographer: Ilja C. Hendel

Designer: Rick Jones

Oslo Forum
www.osloforum.org

The Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue

114, rue de Lausanne, 1202 Geneva, Switzerland

info@hdcentre.org

t: +41 22 908 11 30 f: +41 22 908 11 40

www.hdcentre.org

𝕏 https://twitter.com/hdcentre

LinkedIn https://www.linkedin.com/company/centreforhumanitariandialogue

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

Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

7. Juni-plassen/ Victoria Terrasse, PB 8114 Dep. N-0032 Oslo, Norway

post@mfa.no

t: +47 23 95 00 00 f: +47 23 95 00 99

www.government.no/mfa

Date of printing: 10 September 2025

Contents

Photos: HD, Unsplash

Agenda overview

11 Wednesday June 2025

09:00 – 10:30	**High-level opening plenary**	
09:00 – 09:40	**Opening conversation: All hands on deck:** mediation in a changing world	
09:40 – 10:30	**Plenary discussion:** A different future for the Middle East?	
11:00 – 11:25	**High-level conversation on Syria**	
11:25 – 12:30 Parallel sessions:	Session 1	Session 2
	Syria: the road is made while walking	**Derisking disorder:** Asia's playbook for conflict prevention and management
12:30 – 13:30	**Informal buffet lunch**	
13:30 – 14:15	**High-level lecture: Bridges of dialogue: China's role in global mediation and peacemaking**	
14:45 – 16:00 Parallel sessions:	Session 1	Session 2
	Ukraine: negotiation frontlines	**Darkest before the dawn?** Mediating a future for Palestine
16:30 – 17:45 Parallel sessions:	Session 1	Session 2
	Shifting winds and Africa's peace puzzle	**Israel and its neighbours:** what role is there for mediation?
18:30 – 19:45	**The Mediator's Studio**	

12 Thursday June 2025

09:00 – 10:15 Parallel sessions:	Session 1	Session 2
	When tensions peak: mediators' next move	**Tremors and tensions:** fault lines in Myanmar's quest for peace
10:45 – 12:15 Parallel sessions:	Session 1	Session 2
	DRC: resourceful mediation	**The art of backchannel diplomacy**
12:15 – 14:15	**Informal buffet lunch**	
14:15 – 15:45 Parallel sessions:	Session 1	Session 2
	Sudan: is a political horizon possible?	**From matchmaker to marriage counsellor:** mediation during implementation
16:15 – 17:30 Parallel sessions:	Session 1	Session 2
	A calm that harms? Rethinking ceasefires	**The race to outer space:** what role for mediation?

Oslo Forum 2025 report

The twenty-second edition of the Oslo Forum took place on 11 and 12 June 2025 and brought together 140 global leaders and experts in politics, diplomacy, and mediation.

As diverse as the participants were, they were united in understanding the seriousness of the current moment, in which wars are on the rise, international order is challenged, and risks for future conflicts multiply. To confront these challenges, we need “all hands on deck” – the leitmotif of this year’s Oslo Forum.

Espen Barth Eide and Othman Hashim

Distinguished participants

The Oslo Forum 2025 was hosted by Espen Barth Eide, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Norway. Distinguished participants included:

- Uhuru Muigai Kenyatta, Fourth President of Kenya
- Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Saudi Arabia
- Sayyid Badr Albusaidi, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Oman
- Seyed Abbas Araghchi, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Iran
- Asaad Hasan Al-Shaibani, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of Syria
- Badr Ahmed Mohamed Abdelatty, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Emigration and Expatriates of Egypt
- Liu Jianchao, Minister of the International Department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China
- Noura bint Mohamed AlKaabi, Minister of State, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, United Arab Emirates
- Mohammed bin Abdulaziz Al-Khulaifi, Minister of State, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Qatar
- Burhanettin Duran, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Türkiye
- Sergiy Kyslytsya, First Deputy Foreign Minister of Ukraine
- Russ Jalichandra, Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs of Thailand
- Muhammad Anis Matta, Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs of Indonesia
- Kao Kim Hourn, Secretary-General of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations

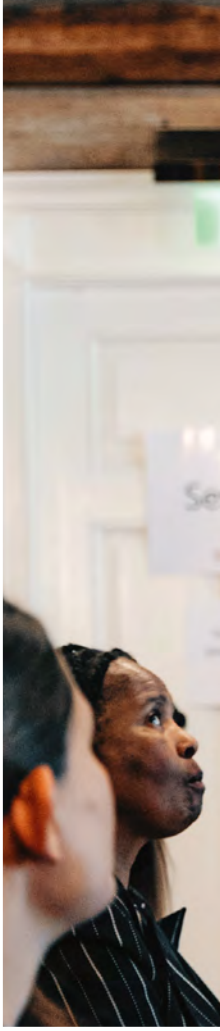
In his welcome address, Norway's foreign minister Espen Barth Eide emphasised the need to redouble efforts amidst global turbulence: "We are witnessing growing great-power rivalries and increasing isolationism. This makes the task of mediation and reconciliation more demanding than ever. This is why the Oslo Forum remains a vital platform where a broad range of people can come together and engage in dialogue."

Other ministerial guests – for a complete list, see the text box above – echoed this sentiment and spoke about mediation as a means to prevent escalation, bring conflict parties to the table, and promote cooperation.

Yet the task at hand is considerable, and the seriousness of the current moment indeed loomed large over discussions at this year's Oslo Forum.

Sayyida Halima Al Busaidi, Liberata Rutageruka Mulamula (top left), Uhuru Muigai Kenyatta and Espen Barth Eide (top right), Lyse Doucet, Badr Ahmed Mohamed Abdelatty, Sayyid Badr Albusaidi, Seyed Abbas Araghchi, Mohammed bin Abdulaziz Al-Khulaifi, Espen Barth Eide (bottom left and right)


IMPROVING THE MEDIATION OF ARMED CONFLICT
Espen Barth Eide



Comfort Ero, Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud (top left), Vijay K. Nambiar (top right), David Lanz, David Gorman (bottom left), Wang Guoyu, Renata Dwan, Natália Archinard (bottom centre), and Endre Stiansen (bottom right)

Annette Weber (top left), Teresa Whitfield, Hans Grundberg (top right), Peter Lord (bottom left), Nazih Elnaggary, Eltigani Seisi Mohamed Ateem, and Tor Wennesland (bottom right)

As the HD Executive Director David Harland said in his introduction: “Wars are increasing and they are becoming increasingly vicious, with the civilian population as the main target.”

Researchers from the Peace Research Institute Oslo, PRIO, and Uppsala University confirm these worrying trends. Never since the end of World War II have there been as many state-based conflicts as in 2024. Fatalities are among the highest since 1989 too, with Ukraine and Gaza counting as the most violent conflicts.

Another unwelcome trend pertains to the erosion of core norms of the UN Charter, forming the bedrock of an international order that has yielded significant dividends in terms of security and prosperity in past decades. David Harland in this context spoke of “broken taboos at multiple levels”.

This foremost concerns the prohibition of the threat and use of force, and, most fundamentally, the norm against territorial conquest. In recent years states more frequently use force against one another, often with

David Harland

little reprimand or consequence. Wars of aggression have made a worrying comeback. We see this in Ukraine and other places.

Norm erosion also concerns the laws of war – the Geneva Conventions as well as other treaties and customary rules that make up international humanitarian law. Conflict parties violate core tenants of IHL in egregious ways, including basic principles of proportionality, the distinction between civilians and combatants, and unimpeded access to humanitarian assistance.

Case in point, according to Uppsala University a shocking 94% of deaths in the wars in Gaza and Lebanon in 2024 were civilian or of unknown identity. Civilians also bear the brunt of armed violence in conflicts in Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Myanmar and elsewhere.

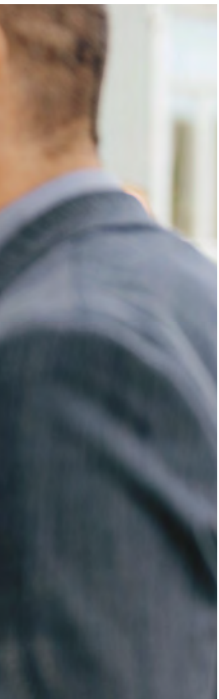
Current global turbulence also amplifies risks of future conflict, including catastrophic inter-state wars. Geopolitical tensions weaken mechanisms that enable cooperation and mitigate risks, such as in climate change, maritime security, cyber, and nuclear non-proliferation. The frequent paralysis of the UN Security Council is but the most glaring manifestation of this dynamic. Hard-fought achievements in implementing the Women, Peace and Security agenda are also under pressure.

Despite these worrying trends, there are opportunities too. This includes the current transition in Syria, prominently discussed at the Oslo Forum thanks to the presence of Syrian foreign minister Asaad Hasan Al-Shaibani.

More broadly, as states pay increasing attention to the adverse consequences of conflict, indeed of the risks that conflicts pose for their own security, they have stepped up investment into the peaceful settlement of disputes. As Espen Barth Eide said, “Mediation and diplomacy are frontline tools of global stability.” This explains the growing prominence of mediation in the foreign policies of many states, especially emerging powers.

Different discussion strands emerged at the Oslo Forum 2025, all reflecting the duality of vulnerability and opportunity that characterises international mediation today. The report considers these in turn.

Burhanettin Duran (top left), Lori-Anne Théroux-Bénoni (top centre), Dmytro Lubinets (top right), Akiko Horiba, Gorka Elejabarrieta (bottom left) and Eltigani Seisi Mohamed Ateem (bottom right)



Koumnas Panayiotis, Tony Haddad (top left), Elisabeth Schwabe-Hansen, Othman Hashim, Julie Bishop, Sihasak Phuangketkeow (top right), Hussein Sheikh Ali (bottom left), Sara Boukhary, Liberata Rutageruka Mulamula, Roxaneh Bazergan (bottom right)

Regional security orders – between destabilisation and resilience

Regional security orders are under strain due to geopolitical tensions and the destabilising ripple effects of ongoing wars.

Hamas' attack on 7th of October 2023 followed by Israel's full-scale military campaign in Gaza, which has led to the death of untold numbers of civilians as well as major humanitarian crisis, have destabilised the entire region. Major conflicts have come in its wake – most importantly the wars between Israel and Hezbollah and between Israel and Iran – as well as violent flare-ups elsewhere in the region. While it has made resolving the longstanding Israel-Palestine conflict more urgent than ever, hopes for a two-state solution and an end to the occupation have diminished.

Another example of regional destabilisation frequently mentioned at the Oslo Forum was the war in Sudan. Cross-border spill-over of the conflict has adversely affected neighbouring states, including South Sudan, Ethiopia, Chad, and beyond. The African Union has faced significant challenges in bringing the belligerents to the negotiating table and in ending the violence, prompting reflection on the organisation's capacity and revealing differing views among its member states.

Yet, regional security orders have shown resilience. In the absence of a well-functioning United Nations, regional organisations continue their efforts in maintaining peace and security, managing ongoing conflicts and preventing new ones from emerging. Mediation actors often support these efforts, creating informal spaces to develop creative solutions to regional security challenges, eventually to be pursued under the umbrella of a regional organisation.

In Southeast Asia, the conflict in Myanmar challenges ASEAN, but the organisation continues its quiet diplomacy efforts to resolve the conflict and provide humanitarian assistance. It does with broad support from member states and through mechanisms that privilege discretion, consent and compliance with international law. On the African continent, the AU faces difficulties but is still frequently seized to mitigate conflicts, including through peace operations such as AMISOM, the AU Mission in Somalia.

The value of mediation in the context of increasing conflict

The average duration of armed conflicts has increased in recent times while comprehensive settlements that end conflicts have become much less frequent. A common pattern is that conflicts become less intense over time, but without a settlement they simmer on and eventually escalate again.

Conflicts do not remain unsettled for a lack of trying. Multiple mediation initiatives are common, but, absent a conducive international context and willingness from the parties to lay down arms, these initiatives are unsuccessful in producing a sustainable settlement.

That concerning situation was perceptible at the 2025 Oslo Forum. For hardly any of the conflicts discussed did participants express optimism that a settlement is around the corner. Discussions instead focused on

Katia Papagianni, Haile Menkerios, Uhuru Muigai Kenyatta (top left), Claire Hajaj (top centre), Raji AlSourani, Andreas Motzfeldt Kravik (top right), Gorka Elejabarrietta, Helena Puig Larrauri (bottom left), Da Wei, Russ Jalichandra (bottom right)

Humaid Al Maani, Martin Griffiths (top left), Suhasini Haidar, Kao Kim Hourn (top right), Alexander Voloshin, Asif R. Khan (centre right), Manal Radwan (centre right), Maud Dlomo, Badr Ahmed Mohamed Abdelatty, Ahmed Tugod (bottom left), Liberata Rutageruka Mulamula, Comfort Ero, Frederic Gateretse-Ngoga, Lori-Anne Théroux-Bénoni (bottom right)

conflict management: preventing escalation, reducing violence, and improving the situation for the affected civilian population.

Mediation is making an indispensable contribution in these areas, and the Oslo Forum shed light on many successful examples. The ceasefire in Libya, negotiated in 2020, significantly brought down violence, even as the country remains divided.

The 2022 Pretoria agreement brought major hostilities in Ethiopia's Tigray region to a halt, massively reducing violence in what was before the world's deadliest conflicts and opening the region to life-saving humanitarian assistance. At the same time, underlying political issues in Ethiopia remain unresolved, leading to resurgent tensions.

Despite the ongoing war, Ukraine and Russia have concluded agreements on specific issues thanks to mediation from the UN, Türkiye, the UAE, Saudi Arabia and efforts of other actors, including HD. This includes the 2023 Black Sea Grain Initiative, which reinstated Ukrainian grain exports,

as well as successive agreements to exchange prisoners of war as well as bodies of fallen soldiers.

Mediation also helps to curb escalation. In Yemen, the efforts of the UN special envoy have been crucial in this regard, for example by mediating a truce after the battle of Marib in 2022. More recently, in May 2025, Oman facilitated a ceasefire between the US and the Houthis, helping to improve the safety of navigation in the Red Sea.

Mediation is impactful at the local and subnational level too. In Myanmar, temporary ceasefires between the government and armed groups, for example in Shan State, have improved the situation for the civilian population. In Colombia, the government's "Total Peace" policy has reinvigorated the peace process, reducing violence in hotspots, including in urban areas affected by organised crime and gangs.

Beyond specific gains, mediation also helps to maintain channels of communication and discreetly engage conflict parties on political solutions while the fighting is ongoing. This is essential not only to address issues around which cooperation is possible, but also to lay the foundation for a political process down the line. The current developments in Türkiye illustrate the value of long-term engagement.

All these examples show the value of mediation even as a broader settlement remains pending. These results are even more impressive as they are achieved at a very modest cost. In a recent study, the IMF estimated that investments in conflict prevention in countries that recently experienced violence, including mediation, generate returns of more than one hundred-full.

One conflict, multiple mediators – for better or worse?

The age of soloist mediators – personalities whose charisma, skill and political acumen allow them to single-handedly bring about agreements – is over. The Oslo Forum clearly showed that mediation is today a team endeavour. Most mediation processes comprise a multitude of players –

Seyed Abbas Araghchi, Sayyid Badr Albusaidi (top left), Sergiy Kyslytsya, Christian Turner (top right), Elisabeth Schwabe-Hansen, Lori-Anne Théroux-Bénoni (bottom left), Torunn Viste, Adeeb Yousif, Luigi Di Maio, Humaid Al Maani, Comfort Ero (bottom right)

Happymon Jacob, Suhasini Haidar (top left), Tim Enderlin, Adam Cooper (top centre), Tony Haddad, Mugeeb Othman, Amr A. Al Bidh (top right), Bashir Aliyu Umar, Aliyu Ibrahim Gebi (bottom left), Donatien Nshole (bottom centre), Lisa Golden (bottom right)

Siddig ElSadig, Mugeeb Othman (top left), Torunn Viste (centre left), Anders Tvegård (centre), Teresa Whitfield, Kulmiye Mohamed (top left), Teohna Williams (bottom left), Gbenga Oyebode, David Harland (bottom right)

including states, international organisations and private actors – who bring different profiles, strategies and interests.

The presence of multiple mediators complicates matters. It creates coordination challenges and makes it difficult to devise a coherent mediation strategy and unified international push towards peace. It fosters forum-shopping, as parties play mediators off against each other and abandon processes when the going gets tough. At worst, multi-actor mediation becomes part of the problem, unnecessarily prolonging conflict.

But multi-actor mediation is also a good thing. Different mediators have different comparative advantages that can be deployed to advance negotiations. They multiply entry points and sources of leverage, and they can promote more inclusive setups. Particularly promising are mediation configurations that combine actors with leverage and actors recognised as impartial and able to run an even-handed process.

Hiba Husseini, Chris Coulter, Idun Tvedt

Sudan is often mentioned as a negative example. The proliferation of mediation initiatives is indeed remarkable. None has been able to establish itself as the main show in town. This reflects international discord, but also the battlefield situation. The main belligerents – SAF and RSF – still believe they can improve their lot before going to the negotiation table in earnest. Oslo Forum participants expressed hope that the new AU leadership can galvanise parties and shepherd a unitary mediation process.

The DRC is another example of multi-actor mediation, which creates both problems and opportunities. The US- and Qatar-led initiative has been instrumental in bringing Rwanda and the DRC to the table. Participants, however, pointed to the need to link it to AU efforts to unify the region, platforms to negotiate the reintegration of Congolese armed groups, and a civic initiative led by the church to promote national dialogue. In this context, coordination among third parties is critical as well as agreements designed to build on, rather than duplicate or contradict one another.

The future of mediation

The Oslo Forum, bringing together experienced participants and providing a safe space for discussion, is a unique platform to anticipate future developments. The 2025 edition was particularly rich in this regard, owing to a shared assessment that current changes in global affairs have far-reaching implications on the conflict landscape and on mediation as a response.

An obvious trend is the increase in conflicts between states, whether in the form of direct confrontation or though proxies in internationalised civil wars. Inter-state dialogue formats are becoming more important in this context, as are state mediators capable of operating in polarised settings. This is a clear trend, which the Oslo Forum 2025 reflected in terms of participants, operational engagements, and cases.

As multilateral organisations face difficulties, inter-state dialogues frequently take place in “minilateral” formats. These bring together ad hoc groups of states, who discuss specific issues outside the confines

of formal diplomacy. This allows countries to react fast and in a flexible manner to emerging issues.

Mediators in inter-state conflicts frequently employ backchannel diplomacy, which many Oslo Forum participants believe will become more important in the future. Backchannels allow sensitive issues to be raised in a confidential setting, including by states that have strained or no relations with one another. They help address difficult issues,

unblocking “front channel” negotiations. They also carry risks, owing to limited transparency and to parties’ lacking accountability for commitments made.

Trying to reduce violence, and in the absence of conditions for broader political settlements, many mediators focus on ceasefires. Current efforts in Ukraine, Gaza, and Sudan illustrate this dynamic. The Oslo Forum thus discussed the complicated politics of ceasefires.

If well-designed and sequenced within broader political negotiations, ceasefires can be a steppingstone towards peace. There was consensus among participants about the importance of moving from short-term deals focusing on violence management to long-term solutions tackling underlying political issues.

In reality, however, ceasefires are often instrumentalised by parties in pursuit of military objectives. Ceasefires are also prone to collapse, acting as a prelude for subsequent phases of the conflict, sometimes even more violent. This is the case, for example, of the 2014 Gaza ceasefire and the 2014–15 Minsk agreements in Ukraine.

The future of mediation also concerns outer space. A dedicated session shed light on the growing contestation of outer space, owing to rising geopolitical tensions, easier access, and growing military and civilian dependence on space-based systems. This could lead to conflict, as could unintended incidents arising from overcrowding and misunderstandings.

In this context, it is crucial to build confidence among spacefaring powers and find common ground on practical measures that can mitigate the chances of Earth-based conflicts spilling into space or space incidents sparking or escalating tensions on Earth. Future discreet and informal dialogue platforms can help achieve these aims, complementing UN efforts to reduce space threats and prevent an arms race in outer space.

Author

David Lanz

Deputy Director,
Policy and Mediation Support,
Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (HD)

Words from the hosts: mediating in a changing world

*As the international affairs grow more complex and conflict dynamics increasingly unpredictable, the Oslo Forum remains a critical space for dialogue and reflection among peacemakers. In this spirit, representatives of the Forum's two institutional hosts – **Andreas Kravik**, State Secretary at the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and **Katia Papagianni**, Director of the Mediation Support and Policy Unit at the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (HD) – offer their reflections on today's shifting peacemaking landscape and the adaptability of mediation as a tool.*

Opening plenary of the Oslo Forum 2024 © Ilja C. Hendel

Q The theme of this year "All hands on deck: mediation in a changing world" calls for dialogue and resilience amidst an increasingly divided world. Conflicts are proliferating and international norms on territorial integrity are weakening. What drives Norway commitment to mediation and how is Norway adapting its mediation policy in the light of the current global situation?

Andreas Kravik: Peace diplomacy and conflict resolution are among Norway's key foreign policy priorities, essential for promoting a safer and more stable world. These efforts are closely intertwined with broader strategies to ensure our national security.

> **"In today's turbulent geopolitical climate, diplomacy and mediation are more important than ever."** *Andreas Kravik*

In today's turbulent geopolitical climate – marked by heightened tensions, weakened multilateral institutions, and mounting pressure on international law – diplomacy and mediation are more important than ever. Conflicts are increasingly complex and interconnected, and their consequences extend far beyond national borders, affecting Norway's own security.

We aim to further develop and strengthen our efforts. A key feature of Norway's approach is our readiness to engage with all relevant parties to a conflict, even where there are disagreements on key issues. This principle remains central to our peace and conflict diplomacy together with ensuring respect for international law and the promotion of multilateral solutions, including through the UN.

Q Rising geopolitical tensions increase the risks of inter-state conflicts, while the effectiveness of traditional dispute management mechanisms, such as multilateral organisations, treaties, and diplomatic channels, appears diminished. Katia, in your view, how can mediation tools be adapted to prevent escalation and contribute to reducing inter-state tensions?

Katia Papagianni: The emergence of conflict between states is indeed a major development in international politics and a challenge to the mediation field. I am confident that mediation tools can be adapted to this reality.

> **“Tools such as quiet diplomacy, backchannels and complementary efforts by different mediators are routinely utilised to manage and resolve inter-state conflicts [. . .] Backchannels unblock “front channel” diplomacy by ironing out difficult issues.”** *Katia Papagianni*

Tools such as quiet diplomacy, backchannels and complementary efforts by different mediators are routinely utilised to manage and resolve inter-state conflicts. We already see, for example, that quiet engagement by states as well as private diplomatic actors generate options for de-escalation and reduction of inter-state tensions. In other cases, backchannels unblock “front channel” diplomacy by ironing out difficult issues. Furthermore,

Katia Papagianni and Asma Ahmed at the Oslo Forum 2024 © Ilja C. Hendel

complementary engagements by different mediation actors lead to creative ideas and new ways of addressing problems.

We can of course go further. We can, for example, be more creative in shaping multi-state dialogue platforms to discuss difficult regional or even global issues with the goal of anticipating and preventing tensions.

Q Katia, despite conflict escalations around the world, several deals and temporary cessation of hostilities have been mediated this year. These negotiations addressed short-term issues, allowing lifesaving relief aid to flow in and producing fragile ceasefires. What's your take on how mediation can navigate the tension between securing a deal and ensuring that the broader, more sustainable peace goals are not sacrificed?

Katia: This is indeed an important tension in today's peacemaking field. Responding to crises and trying to reduce their intensity is in the mediator's DNA. Mediators must work to alleviate the suffering of civilians and to de-escalate conflict in the short-term. The humanitarian imperative is central to our work. At the same time, we cannot lose sight of the long-term. This is difficult. It requires that we ensure that short-term deals keep the door open for political solutions, which is often not easy to achieve.

However, mediation is the art of the possible. In some cases (by no means all), mediators do manage to work with the parties on a vision for a political solution even while they work on short-term ceasefires or humanitarian pauses. Essentially, political solutions require consistent, long-term engagement by mediators who constantly plant seeds for the resolution of conflicts, while they also trying to mitigate the consequences of conflict. The peace processes in the Philippines and Colombia are examples of this long-term, consistent engagement which over many years created the space for political discussions to take place.

Q Building trust through long-term engagement has proven crucial in mediation, often taking years or even decades. When the engagement leads to an agreement, the implementation phase often provides even more challenges. Andreas, how important is it for Norway to "walk the talk" with the parties and what difficulties does Norway face in maintaining long-term commitments in political processes?

> **“Our involvement does not end when a peace agreement is signed – on the contrary, the implementation phase is often the most testing for all parties.”** *Andreas Kravik*

Andreas: Long-term engagement and consistency are hallmarks of Norway’s efforts for peace and conflict resolution. Our involvement does not end when a peace agreement is signed – on the contrary, the implementation phase is often the most testing for all parties. This is when peace must be sustained under fragile, difficult and shifting conditions, and when external support can make a crucial difference.

We recognise that peace is a gradual process with many possible pathways. Working long-term with conflicts requires broad domestic support. Success cannot be measured only by formal agreements – steps such as humanitarian ceasefires and reductions in violence are also vital and can significantly alleviate civilian suffering.

Andreas Kravik speaks at an Oslo Forum session with Asif R. Khan and Comfort Ero, 2024
© Ilja C. Hendel

Q Andreas, you have recently travelled to Syria and met with the new authorities in Damascus, building on years of engagement with armed groups in northwest Syria. What are the key challenges and opportunities for Norway to engage with non-state actors and de facto authorities?

Andreas: Engagement with non-state actors and de facto authorities is complex and must be approached with care. Such efforts depend above all on the willingness of the conflict parties themselves to explore political solutions, and on gaining trust and confidence.

We believe that engaging all relevant actors is essential to finding lasting, diplomatic solutions. Speaking with controversial parties does not imply recognition or endorsement of their actions or behaviour. Nonetheless, the risks of legitimising such actors must be assessed continuously, alongside solid conflict and actor analysis.

Our approach – talking to all parties – is rooted in a principled commitment to dialogue and to avoiding simplistic "us versus them" thinking. This helps us gain deeper insights across contexts, which is crucial to find and address political solutions.

In Syria, Norway's long-term engagement with all sides has been critical to promoting humanitarian access and protecting civilians. For instance, we engaged with Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) in northwest Syria. Since December 2024, we have continued to support both the authorities and local actors in their efforts toward an inclusive transition.

Q We have recently seen setbacks in the gender and inclusion agenda globally, with an impact on inclusion in peace processes. Given the increasing preference for bilateral negotiations or short-term agreements, what strategies can be employed to ensure inclusivity and representation of diverse stakeholders?

Katia: There are undeniably significant setbacks in the gender and inclusion agenda globally. This means that mediators are making the most out of fewer and narrower openings in their efforts to pursue inclusive strategies.

However, it is important for us to remember that a lot of valuable mediation work takes place at the local level, where the space for inclusive approaches remains relatively wide. There, mediation is instrumental in enabling spaces for diverse constituencies, including women, youth, minority

groups and others, to influence the content of agreements and to ensure their implementation.

> **“Inclusive approaches are a lot more difficult to pursue. They require great amounts of creativity, commitment and persistence. But we do have approaches and tools that can help us in this effort.”** *Katia Papagianni*

Second, even as mediation moves to short-term agreements, mediators can still seek the insights and inputs of diverse constituencies to ensure that they and their teams have a robust understanding of the issues, including the challenges of implementing whatever is eventually agreed. Moreover, the content of agreements can be informed by a gender and inclusive lens even when widely inclusive processes have not been possible.

Vera Grabe, Chief of the Colombian government delegation for talks with the National Liberation Army, and Espen Barth Eide, Foreign Minister of Norway, at the Oslo Forum 2024 © Adrian Nielsen

Overall, inclusive approaches are a lot more difficult to pursue. They require great amounts of creativity, commitment and persistence. But we do have approaches and tools that can help us in this effort.

Andreas: Inclusion – particularly women's participation – is a core priority for Norway. Inclusive peace processes are more credible, legitimate, and sustainable. Inclusion can strengthen ownership among the population, which is essential for lasting peace. We aim to increase the number of women in roles as mediators and negotiators, and to ensure that civil society voices are heard and integrated throughout peace processes.

In many cases, we support civil society organisations, research institutions, and other actors to help enable representation. In the Colombian peace process, for example, we encouraged early the parties to ensure the inclusion of women, shared experiences from other contexts, and supported the parties to establish a gender commission.

Through partners and our own embassies, we support innovative work that we believe can lead to steps forward - such as targeted capacity building. Partners engage with a longer-term support to position women for when a negotiation process or national dialogue might commence. In addition to partners that integrate inclusion in broader mediation and dialogue efforts, we engage with local partners on issues such as de-escalation, conflict resolution, and humanitarian access.

Q Beyond resolving conflicts, international cooperation is key to addressing global challenges like climate change, AI governance, and the race in space. How do you see the role of mediation in these new, non-traditional areas of global diplomacy?

Andreas: As we navigate rapid technological developments and confront global challenges like climate change, Norway's approach to peace and conflict resolution will continue to evolve. These developments are reshaping the conflict landscape – and our response must be equally adaptive.

Still, the fundamentals of Norway's approach to peace and conflict resolution will remain consistent with the following characteristics: discretion, flexibility, efficiency, long-term commitment, and the willingness to engage with all relevant parties and a willingness to take political risk when deemed necessary. These ways of working are not only enduring –

they may become even more important in addressing the global challenges of the future.

Katia: Climate change, the application of AI on military technology and the race in space already exacerbate existing conflicts and increase the risks of future conflicts. I see mediation as a small but significant tool within bigger toolboxes needed to manage the implications of these global challenges.

Mediation creates the platforms to resolve existing tensions and to anticipate future ones. When it comes to climate change, for example, mediation is already making an enormously important contribution by supporting communities as well as states adapt to the impact of climate change on natural resources such as water, fisheries and grazing land. HD has for several years supported communities in Nigeria and the countries in the Sahel to jointly develop approaches for sharing natural resources peacefully. When it comes to AI and space, similarly, mediation offers creative formats where diplomats, scientists, and experts engage in frank dialogue about the risks ahead and generate possible solutions.

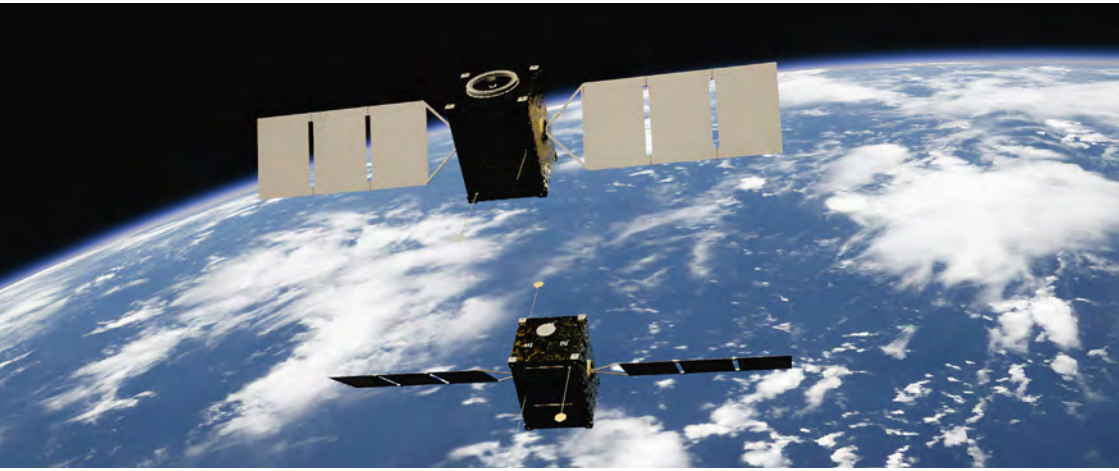
Interviewees

Andreas Kravik has served as State Secretary at the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs since 2023. An expert in international law, he previously held roles as Director in the Ministry's Legal Affairs Department, Minister Counsellor at Norway's Permanent Mission to the UN in New York, and adviser to the Office of the Co-Prosecutor at the United Nations Assistance to the Khmer Rouge Trials (UNAKRT).

Katia Papagianni is the Director for Policy and Mediation Support at the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (HD). She has worked in the field of international peace and security for over twenty years, supporting peace processes around the world with a focus on peace process design and national dialogues. Before joining HD, she held roles at the National Democratic Institute, the OSCE, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, and UNDP.

Background paper

Outer space is no longer a distant frontier – it is a central arena for military operations, geopolitical rivalry, and commercial innovation. Yet the governance structures intended to keep space safe and secure are increasingly inadequate in the face of a more congested, contested, complex, and commercialised domain. This paper examines the risks posed by this evolving landscape, from accidental collisions to the weaponisation of space, and the potential for misunderstandings and miscalculations between spacefaring powers. As geopolitical tensions rise, formal multilateral efforts to reduce space threats and prevent an arms race in outer space have proved challenging. There is an urgent need for confidential, informal mediation to build trust, reduce risks, and develop shared guardrails that can mitigate the chances of Earth-based conflicts spilling into space – or space incidents sparking tensions on Earth.



Two satellites docking in space. Photo by Kevin Stadnyk on Unsplash.

Expanding our orbit: mediating conflicts in outer space

Conflicts today are rarely contained within national borders. Geopolitical competition is rising. Multilateral institutions are struggling to respond. At the same time, the domains in which conflicts unfold are widening. Armed violence is no longer the only front – technology now plays a central role, from disinformation and cyberattacks to AI-enabled targeting. These tools don't just reflect conflict, they shape it. Outer space is no exception. It has become critical to economic development, military operations, and international politics. Yet it remains a fragile and highly contested environment where military and civilian assets coexist.

The new space race

Space has been a competitive and contested domain since the dawn of the space age, marked by the launch of the first artificial satellite, Sputnik-1, into orbit in 1957. So, what's new?

By the 1990s, space was becoming much more than just the site of US-USSR Cold War rivalry. The end of the Cold War marked the beginning of a "second space age," marked by the rise of new national players, such as China, India, and Japan, and burgeoning commercial innovation. The 1991 Gulf War was the first time that space-based capabilities played a significant role in conventional military operations, helping the US to coordinate troop movements and track opposing forces.

Today, more than 100 countries and multinational organisations operate satellites in orbit.[1] As militaries, critical infrastructure and vital services on earth increasingly depend on space systems, the outer space domain has re-emerged as a central arena of geopolitical and military competition, with some states declaring outer space to be a "warfighting" domain over which they seek to establish superiority.[2]

> **“With fragmented governance, rising tensions, proliferating actors and advancing counterspace capabilities, the risks of conflict in outer space are growing.”**

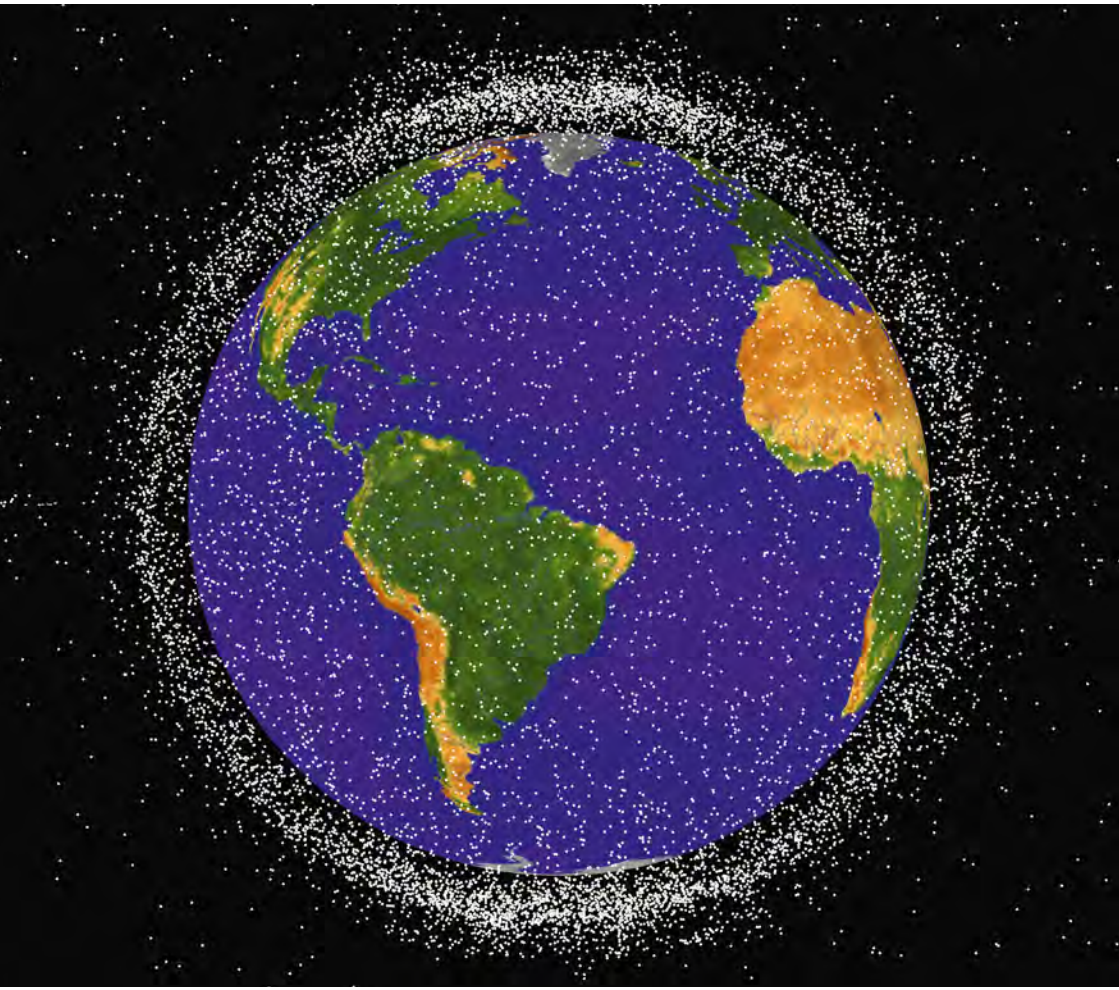
As governments eased restrictions on space technologies, commercial entities began their own journey into the space domain. Since Pegasus – the first privately developed launch vehicle – successfully placed a satellite into orbit in 1990, commercial firms have increasingly driven innovation and expanded access to space. Today, they dominate satellite launches and services, and lead the development of dual-use technologies, becoming more entangled in conflict dynamics in the process. In short, space has become more **crowded, commercialised, complex, and contested**. These “4 Cs” are explored below.

A crowded orbit

As more states and commercial actors have entered outer space, the number of active satellites has surged to over 12,000.[3] About 85% of these operational satellites are in low-Earth orbit (between 300 and 2,000 kilometres from Earth)[4] which is a crucial orbit due to its proximity to Earth, enabling faster data transmission, high-quality imaging, and frequent revisits over the same areas, making it ideal for communication and monitoring changes on Earth. The number of active satellites has quadrupled over the last 5-years and is projected to exceed 60,000 in 2030.[5] This growth is driven by two key factors. The first is that both military operations and vital services on earth (such as telecommunications, navigation, banking, weather forecasting) increasingly depend on space systems to function. The second is that access to space has become much cheaper. This has been driven largely by private industry accelerating technological advancements, particularly the rise of small satellite mega-constellations such as SpaceX’s Starlink, Eutelsat OneWeb’s ELO, Amazon’s Project Kuiper, China’s Guowang, and the European Union’s IRIS².

This growing congestion and the accumulation of debris from increased activity poses serious risks. More than one million pieces of debris large

enough to cause damage are now estimated to be orbiting Earth,[6] increasing the likelihood of close encounters and collisions. This does not merely jeopardise the safety of space assets and the sustainability of the space environment, it also creates conflict-related risks. Without space traffic coordination or a reliable means of verifying incidents, states may mistakenly assign hostile intent to an accident. Currently, communication channels between major spacefaring powers, for example China and the US, are limited and reportedly rely on possible email exchanges.[7] While



Computer generated images of objects in Earth orbit. Each dot represents an object. Approximately 95% of the objects in this illustration are orbital debris. Credit: NASA ODPO, 2019.

efforts to enhance space situational awareness and traffic coordination are underway, including at the United Nations,[8] no global framework or binding mechanisms yet exist for space traffic management or for sharing information on the space environment and activities.[9]

Commercialised space

The outer space domain is being rapidly transformed by the rise of a private and commercial space industry comprising of companies and start-ups worldwide. Commercial satellites now account for close to 89% of all operational satellites, dominating both civil and military sectors.[10] Commercial entities have significantly increased launch frequency and lowered costs of accessing space and using space-based services – SpaceX alone conducted 134 of 259 launches in 2024.[11] Beyond launch services, these entities are advancing space exploration, mining, and tourism, fuelling the rise of mega-constellations, expanding space-based applications and services (e.g. satellite-based internet), and propelling

SpaceX Satellite. Photo: © SpaceX.

the development of new dual-use technologies like debris removal and on-orbit servicing and refuelling. While commercialisation has reshaped the space domain with extraordinary potential, it also brings challenges for governance, security and long-term sustainability, including a heightened risk of collisions: around 60% of active satellites in orbit are from SpaceX's Starlink[12], which executed roughly 50,000 collision-avoidance manoeuvres in the first six months of 2024 alone.[13]

Perhaps inevitably, commercial space entities are also becoming increasingly involved in geopolitical competition and conflict dynamics. In Ukraine, they provided high-speed communications and near real-time satellite imagery – but also became targets of jamming and cyberattacks.[14] As commercial space systems and infrastructure support critical services and military operations, they risk becoming targets themselves, particularly when commercial systems are dual-use and the boundaries between civilian and military applications are blurred. Yet, no specific norms or rules currently govern their role in conflict.

Complexity and dual-use dangers

Space systems are often dual-use, serving both military and civilian functions. For example, Earth observation and remote sensing satellites used for disaster relief or environmental monitoring can also provide militaries intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance data. This operational ambiguity of many space systems can exacerbate mistrust and misperceptions among states, making it difficult to distinguish between peaceful and hostile intent particularly during times of heightened tension. This ambiguity is exacerbated by the increasing reliance of militaries on commercial space systems and infrastructure.

Adding to this complexity is the rapid development and deployment of technologies aimed at making the orbital environment safer and more sustainable. These include on-orbit servicing, refuelling, assembly and manufacturing (ISAM), active debris removal (ADR), and rendezvous and proximity operations (RPOs). However, due to their characteristics – such as the use of robotic arms to grab, tug, or repair satellites; harpoons or lasers to remove space debris; or manoeuvres by one spacecraft to closely

approach another often to inspect, repair, or interact with it – these technologies can also be repurposed to deny, disrupt, degrade, spy on, or even destroy other space objects.[15]

These dual-use capabilities increase the risk of misunderstanding and miscalculation, particularly when activities are conducted in a non-transparent manner, the operator's intent is difficult to discern, or capabilities are used to gain a strategic advantage. All major spacefaring powers, including China, Russia and the US, are developing and testing such technologies.[16] Recent US claims that five Chinese satellites conducted "dogfighting" manoeuvres,[17] which were disputed in Chinese media,[18] illustrate how these activities can fuel misperceptions and military competition. In the absence of effective communication channels and specific international norms, standards, and protocols for RPO, ISAM,

A rendezvous and proximity operations using the Canadarm2 robotic arm. Photo: © NASA Johnson.

and ADR missions, any such activity conducted by an adversary is likely to be viewed with suspicion. This distrust can even extend to commercial actors, potentially leading to a default assumption that their operations are hostile in intent.

> **“Spacefaring powers have differing threat perceptions, shaped by their geopolitical positions, security priorities, and levels of space capability. As a result, there is little clarity on redlines or limits regarding counterspace activities, meaning that any such act could spark or escalate tensions.”**

A contested space

Outer space is increasingly viewed by some states as a domain of warfare – similar to land, sea, and air – critical to military operations for navigation, communications, early warning, and situational awareness. Space access and denial have become critical components of national security and military strategies. The US Space Force’s updated doctrine released in April 2025 this year underscores this shift, calling for “space control” – including both defensive and offensive actions to secure superiority in a potential future conflict.[19]

The threat landscape has expanded to include a broad spectrum of kinetic and non-kinetic counterspace capabilities. Kinetic capabilities include direct-ascent ASAT missiles (tested by the US, Russia, China and India)[20], co-orbital weapons, and kinetic attacks on ground stations. Non-kinetic capabilities such as jamming, spoofing, cyberattacks, electromagnetic pulses (EMP), and high-powered microwaves are increasingly used to disrupt, damage or disable space systems.

Recent developments reflect growing tensions. There were reports that Russia has allegedly placed a potential counterspace weapon near a US government satellite[21], while the US has announced the Golden Dome missile defence initiative[22], reigniting concerns that space-based missile defence could undermine strategic stability.[23] Meanwhile, cyberattacks –

like the 2022 VIASAT incident[24] – and widespread GPS jamming, including in the Middle East, Eastern Europe, and parts of Asia, have caused disruptions to military operations as well as essential services that civilians rely on.[25]

Non-kinetic harmful interference with space systems is particularly concerning due to the potential for miscalculations and escalation. Because such actions typically do not result in physical destruction, they can fall below the threshold of an "armed attack". Moreover, it can be difficult to determine whether a satellite malfunction is caused by space weather, debris, accidental disruption, or intentional hostile action.[26] Spacefaring powers have differing threat perceptions, shaped by their geopolitical positions, security priorities, and levels of space capability. As a result, there is little clarity on redlines or limits regarding counterspace activities, meaning that any such act could spark or escalate tensions and even result in conflict in space or on Earth.

> **"We are facing 21st century space dynamics with a 20th century governing framework. Surprisingly, there are only few international agreements, rules and norms to limit or safeguard against growing military and commercial activity in outer space."**

Outdated governance for a new era

We are facing 21st century space dynamics with a 20th century governing framework. Surprisingly, there are only a few international agreements, rules and norms to limit or safeguard against growing military and commercial activity in outer space. Existing international rules, notably the 1967 Outer Space Treaty, provide limited restrictions on space capabilities, behaviours and activities beyond banning the placement of WMDs in outer space and calling for the "peaceful" use of outer space – a term widely interpreted as non-aggressive rather than non-military.[27] This ambiguity allows states wide latitude in outer space, with no clear definitions of what constitutes a weapon, use of force, or harmful interference. With the proliferation of actors, the growing volume and

complexity of space activities and the development of a wide spectrum of counterspace capabilities, these governance gaps and challenges are becoming more severe. Despite over four decades of UN discussions on "Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space" (PAROS), progress has stalled. Major divides remain between states over threat perceptions, governance priorities (capabilities vs. behaviour), and whether responses should be legally binding or voluntary norms.

Still, there are foundations to build on: the consensus report of the 2013 UN Group of Governmental Experts on Transparency and Confidence-Building Measures in Outer Space Activities (including China, Russia and the US), a 2014 UNGA resolution not to be the first to place weapons in outer space (backed by over 120 states, not including the US), the 2022 UNGA resolution against destructive direct-ascent ASAT tests (supported by over 150 states, not including China and Russia), and the 2024 reaffirmation of the Outer Space Treaty's WMD ban, following reports of an alleged Russian nuclear ASAT weapon which Russia has denied.[28]

Another key challenge is the institutional separation between space security and space safety, which are debated in two different UN bodies. This complicates coordinated responses to some interconnected issues, such as the risks of debris from military activities, collisions or close approaches, and the potential for misunderstandings, miscalculations, and conflict escalation.

With fragmented governance, rising tensions, proliferating actors and advancing counterspace capabilities, the risks of conflict in outer space are growing. Mediators must therefore ask: are there shared security and safety concerns among spacefaring powers? And can concrete measures be developed to manage these rising risks?

Space mediation: a tentative agenda

As states and commercial entities continue to expand their activities, we should not anticipate that the competitive and contested dynamics around outer space will change. Yet amidst this strategic competition,

states do fundamentally share an interest in maintaining the long-term security, stability, safety and sustainability of outer space to ensure continued civilian and military use. They also broadly recognise the need for some form of norms, standards, and measures, even if their views differ on what form they should take.

> **“Mediation can play an important role in reducing mistrust and misperceptions among spacefaring powers, and building common ground on space governance, particularly where states share competitive dynamics and official communication channels are limited.”**

Mediation can play an important role in reducing mistrust and misperceptions among spacefaring powers, and building common ground on space governance, particularly where states share competitive dynamics and official communication channels are limited. Tools of informal diplomacy and dialogue can help facilitate open and frank exchanges on threat perceptions, clarify intentions and redlines and identify common interests and approaches to space governance, while complementing formal multilateral discussions, but without the pressures that they might bring. One area for progress is the development and practical implementation of confidence-building and risk mitigation measures, building on the transparency and confidence-building measures for outer space activities recommended by the UN Group of Governmental Experts in 2013. Through dialogue, these measures could be updated and adapted to address today’s evolving space threats.

A good starting point would be coordinating information sharing and opening channels of communication between spacefaring powers so that tailored incident and crisis management protocols could be developed. This would minimise the risk of escalation if collisions or close approaches occur. Mediation could also help identify broadly acceptable measures on the most concerning space capabilities, activities, and behaviours, such as developing standards and risk mitigation measures around specific dual-use capabilities (e.g. RPOs and ISAM). Beyond governmental stakeholders, mediation could also help elaborate norms and best

practices around the role of commercial space actors, particularly in the context of geopolitical tensions and military activities. By fostering such dialogue in an informal setting, mediators would also be less bound by the mandates of formal multilateral discussions, and could play an important role in bridging, where appropriate, considerations of safety issues with issues of space security and stability.

With limited official dialogue channels and the politicisation of multilateral diplomacy, an approach grounded in confidentiality and informality is worth testing. Those waging war are already looking up to the skies. It's time that mediators turned their gaze upwards too.

Authors

Alisha Anand

Project Officer, AI and Emerging Technologies,
Digital Conflict, Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (HD)

Adam Cooper

Director, Digital Conflict,
Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (HD)

Edited by **Huongly Buiduong**, Project Officer, Mediation Support and Policy Unit, Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (HD) and **Oscar Eschenbrenner**, Project Associate, Mediation Support and Policy Unit, Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (HD)

Endnotes

1 Karaliunaite, Vaida. 'How Many Satellites Are in Space?' *NanoAvionics*, 4 May 2023.

2 'Space Warfighting - A Framework for Planners'. United States Space Force, March 2025.

3 Karaliunaite, Vaida. 'How Many Satellites Are in Space?' *NanoAvionics*, 4 May 2023.

4 Congressional Budget Office. 'Large Constellations of Low-Altitude Satellites: A Primer', 17 May 2023.

5 Government of the United Kingdom. 'The Future Space Environment', 16 May 2024; Goldman Sachs. 'The Global Satellite Market Is Forecast to Become Seven Times Bigger', 5 March 2025.

6 The European Space Agency. 'ESA Space Environment Report 2024', 19 July 2024.

7 Einhorn, Bruce. 'Avoiding Apocalyptic Satellite Crashes Comes Down to China Checking Its Email'. *Bloomberg*, 18 September 2024.

8 'United Nations Space Bridge on Global Space Traffic Coordination'. Conference Room Paper submitted by the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs (UNOOSA) to the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, 4 February 2025.

9 'Proposal for the Establishment of an Expert Group on Space Situational Awareness'. Conference Room Paper submitted by the United Arab Emirates to the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, 4 February 2025.

10 Erwin, Sandra. 'Orbital Congestion Reaching Critical Levels, Warns New Report'. *SpaceNews*, 30 April 2024.

11 Foust, Jeff. 'SpaceX Launch Surge Helps Set New Global Launch Record in 2024'. *SpaceNews*, 2 January 2025.

12 Faleti, Joshua. 'Look Up Space Reports: More Than 10,000 Active Satellites in Orbit'. *SpaceWatch.GLOBAL*, 21 June 2024.

13 Pultarova, Tereza. 'SpaceX Starlink Satellites Made 50,000 Collision-Avoidance Maneuvers in the Past 6 Months. What Does That Mean for Space Safety?', Space.com, 23 July 2024.

14 Ayan, Arda, and Brian Ladd. 'The Impact of Commercial Space in Times of Conflict'. *The Journal of the Joint Air Power Competence Centre*, no. 35 (15 February 2023): 53–59; Howell, Elizabeth. 'Elon Musk Says Russia Is Ramping up Cyberattacks on SpaceX's Starlink Systems in Ukraine'. Space.com, 12 May 2022.

15 Azcárate Ortega, Almudena. 'Current and future space-to-space threats by States to space systems', address at UNIDIR's Open-Ended Working Group on 'Reducing space threats through norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviours'. 14 September 2022.

16 Secure World Foundation. 'Global Counterspace Capabilities Report'. February 2025.

17 Hitchens, Theresa. '5 Chinese Satellites Practiced "dogfighting" in Space, Space Force Says'. *Breaking Defense*, 18 March 2025.

18 Deng Xiaoci. 'US Space Force General's Dogfighting Claim against Chinese Satellites Disputed by US Experts, Viewed as Budget Ploy'. *Global Times*, 23 March 2025.

19 United States Space Force, 'Space Force Doctrine Document', 3 April 2025.

20 Ching Wei Sooi. 'Direct-Ascent Anti-Satellite Missile Tests: State Positions on the Moratorium, UNGA Resolution, and Lessons for the Future'. Secure World Foundation, October 2023.

21 Mizokami, Kyle. 'A Mystery Russian Space Weapon Launched Near a U.S. Satellite – and the Pentagon Is on Edge'. Popular Mechanics, 30 May 2024.

22 Erwin, Sandra. 'Space Force Chief: "Golden Dome" Is a Missile Shield Built in Pieces, Not a Single System'. *SpaceNews*, 10 April 2025.

23 Secure World Foundation. 'Global Counterspace Capabilities Report'. February 2025; Meyer, Paul. 'Ballistic Missile Defence and Outer Space Security: A Strategic Interdependence'. *UNIDIR* Space Dossier, no. 6 (June 2020).

24 'KA-SAT Network Cyber Attack Overview'. Viasat, 30 March 2022.

25 Erwin, Sandra. 'GPS Disruption and Satellite Maneuvers Now Hallmarks of Modern Warfare'. *SpaceNews*, 25 April 2025; Helou, Agnes. 'GPS Jamming Spreads in Lebanon, Civil Aviation Caught in the Electronic Crossfire'. *Breaking Defense*, 1 April 2024.

26 Secure World Foundation. 'Strategic Stability and Space', 6 February 2015.

27 Pobjie, Erin, and Almudena Azcárate Ortega. 'Outer Space & Use of Force'. UNIDIR, *Space Security Legal Primer 1*, 9 March 2024.

28 Nichols, Michelle. 'Russia, US Clash at UN over Nuclear Weapons in Space'. *Swissinfo*, 24 April 2024.

Out now: ceasefire manuals

Ceasefires: Stopping the Violence and Negotiating Peace

Govinda Clayton, Simon J. A. Mason, Valerie Sticher, and Andreas Wenger

Editors

How do ceasefires shape – and get shaped by – political negotiations?

This book offers a practical and analytical framework for understanding the role of ceasefires in intrastate peace processes. Designed for mediators, negotiators, and scholars alike, it provides tools to identify a range of viable ceasefire agreements and to navigate their sequencing within broader political negotiations.

Drawing on rich case studies from Bosnia, Burundi, Colombia, El Salvador, Myanmar, the Philippines, Sudan, and Syria, the book blends frontline mediation experience with academic insight to offer a useful resource for anyone working at the intersection of conflict and peace.

Scan the QR code to get exclusive access to your copy for free.

Understanding Ceasefires and the Security Transition: A Video Series

A short course for conflict parties, mediators, and peacebuilders

Gain exclusive access to a series of short, practical videos that explain how ceasefires can be designed and implemented as part of broader security transitions.

The videos produced by the Ceasefire Project – a joint initiative of the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (HD) and the Centre for Security Studies (CSS) at ETH Zurich – provide a visual manual on ceasefire negotiations.

Scan the QR code to watch the full series.

From The Mediator's Studio

For deeper insight into mediation, tune in to *The Mediator's Studio* podcast. Recorded at the Oslo Forum, each episode takes you behind closed doors with compelling stories from leading peace-makers as they engage conflict parties, broker dialogue, and work to resolve tensions.

Season 7 of The Mediator's Studio is released on 16 September 2025:

UN Special Envoy for Yemen, **Hans Grundberg** pulls back the curtain on high-stakes mediation efforts in Yemen. He takes us inside tense negotiations in a frosty castle near Stockholm and recounts how he juggles the competing interests of international players. He shares candid insights into how he stays resilient and mentally grounded amid the pressure and unpredictability of armed conflict.

> **"You should never actually lie in this business because once you lie, you erode trust. Once that trust is eroded, your ability to move forward becomes very limited."** *Hans Grundberg*

Former South Korean Foreign Minister **Kyung-wha Kang** reflects on the power of diplomacy in efforts toward peace on the Korean Peninsula. From her early days as a translator for President Kim Dae-jung to leading inter-Korean talks as Foreign Minister, she shares rare insights into moments of breakthrough – and breakdown. She also draws on her years working for the UN in conflict zones.

“If we could keep the tension down, stop any accidental clashes happening. I think that's what the government should aim for at this point. And then, meanwhile, constantly send the message to the North Koreans that we want dialogue, we want peace.” *Kyung-wha Kang*

Egyptian diplomat **Nazih Elnaggary** shares hard-won lessons from a career bridging fault lines across the Middle East – and now between Russia and the West. He recounts brokering compromises among Syrian opposition groups in Cairo during Syria's civil war and mediating political tensions in Lebanon to help form a government. Now Egypt's Ambassador to Russia, Elnaggary explains how he builds understanding amid sharply divided worldviews to keep dialogue alive.

“You try to tell each party that the other side's intentions are not necessarily the best, but they're not as bad as they think they are.” *Nazih Elnaggary*

Executive Director of Inter Mediate **Claire Hajaj** works behind the scenes to support dialogue in some of the world's most protracted crises. She explains how each negotiation builds on past failures and shares insights from working with political leaders in Afghanistan and Myanmar. She also explores the growing challenge of mediating in contexts where criminal violence, rather than ideology, holds sway.

“Mediation or negotiating a peace process is like walking a tight rope. It's an incredibly intimate, exposing, politically risky, lonely venture.” *Claire Hajaj*

The fourth President of Kenya, **Uhuru Kenyatta**, shares his unique perspectives on mediation efforts both during his tenure as head of state and within regional peace initiatives, including in Eastern DRC and Ethiopia's Tigray region. He highlights the challenges posed by frequent changes in mediators and the importance of collaboration to build on prior progress and address root causes. President Kenyatta also candidly discusses the 2007–2008 electoral violence that shook Kenya and his leadership, and the path forward toward lasting peace.

> **"For mediation to work, all of us must read from the same page. There cannot be, on the same subject, talks going on in ten different rooms. If we are to succeed, we need the ten rooms to converge into one."** *Uhuru Kenyatta*

Photos: Ilja C. Hendel and Stine Østby

Uhuru Muigai Kenyatta and podcast host, Adam Cooper

Participants

Badr Ahmed Mohamed Abdelatty

Minister of Foreign Affairs, Emigration and Expatriates of Egypt

Mohammed Abulahoum

Head of the Preparatory Committee for the Yemen Peace Conference

Babatunde Tolu Afolabi

Regional Director, Anglophone and Lusophone Africa,
Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue

Amr A. Al Bidh

Special Representative of the President of the Southern Transitional Council, Yemen

Humaid Al Maani

Head of Diplomatic Academy, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Oman

Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud

Minister of Foreign Affairs of Saudi Arabia

Sayyid Badr Albusaidi

Minister of Foreign Affairs of Oman

Noura bint Mohamed AlKaabi

Minister of State, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, United Arab Emirates

Mohammed bin Abdulaziz Al-Khulaifi

Minister of State, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Qatar

Cyril Almeida

Pakistan Correspondent, The Economist

Asaad Hasan Al-Shaibani

Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of Syria

Ahmed Alshami

Economic and Political Consultant

Hamood Khaled AlSofi

Ambassador, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Yemen

Raji AlSourani

Director, Palestinian Centre for Human Rights

Seyed Abbas Araghchi

Minister of Foreign Affairs of Iran

Natália Archinard

Deputy Head of Science, Space and Arctic Section,
Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, Switzerland

Ali Hussein Othman Ashal

Member of Parliament, Islah Party, Yemen

Eltigani Seisi Mohamed Ateem

Chairman, National Forces Movement, Sudan

Zuhra Bahman

Country Director for Afghanistan, Search for Common Ground

Nahum Barnea

Chief Political Columnist, Yedioth Ahronoth Daily

Roxaneh Bazergan

Director of Political Affairs, Office of the Special Envoy of the United Nations Secretary-General for Yemen

Julie Bishop

Special Envoy of the United Nations Secretary-General on Myanmar

Are Gellein Blikeng

Head of the Middle East and North Africa Programme,
Norwegian Centre for Conflict Resolution

Signe Brudeset

Director General, Department for Regional Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Norway

Karyn Chan

Assistant Director, Strategy Unit, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Singapore

Adam Cooper

Director, Digital Conflict, Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue

Chris Coulter

Executive Director, Berghof Foundation

Da Wei

Director, Center for International Security and Strategy, Tsinghua University

Luigi Di Maio

Special Representative of the European Union for the Gulf region

David B. Diciano

Presidential Assistant, Office of the Presidential Adviser on Peace, Reconciliation and Unity, the Philippines

Maud Dlomo

Deputy Director-General, Department of International Relations and Cooperation, South Africa

Lyse Doucet

Chief International Correspondent, BBC

Burhanettin Duran

Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Türkiye

Renata Dwan

Senior Consulting Fellow, International Security Programme, Chatham House

Espen Barth Eide

Minister of Foreign Affairs of Norway

Ayesha El Bereir

Political Affairs Officer, Office of the United Nations Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa

Gorka Elejabarrieta

Senator, Euskal Herria Bildu, Spain

Nazih Elnaggary

Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Egypt to Russia

Siddig ElSadig

Secretary General, Civilian Democratic Revolutionary Forces (Somoud)

Tim Enderlin

Head of the Peace and Human Rights Division,
Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, Switzerland

Comfort Ero

President and CEO, International Crisis Group

Jeffrey Feltman

Visiting Fellow, Brookings Institution;
Senior Fellow, United Nations Foundation

Lara Friedman

President, Foundation for Middle East Peace

Frederic Gateretse-Ngoga

Senior Advisor for International Partnerships, African Union Commission

Aliyu Ibrahim Gebi

Coordinator, Fusion Cell on Dialogue and Peace Process, Defence Headquarters, Nigeria

Hamed Ghaleb

Special Secretary, Vice President of the Presidential Leadership Council, Yemen

Lisa Golden

Director, Section for Peace and Reconciliation, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Norway

David Gorman

Regional Director, Eurasia, Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue

Romain Grandjean

Regional Director, Middle East and North Africa, Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue

Martin Griffiths

Executive Director, Mediation Group International

Hans Grundberg

Special Envoy of the United Nations Secretary-General for Yemen

Tony Haddad

Advisor to the President of Lebanon

Mariann Ruud Hagen

Senior Advisor, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Norway

Suhasini Haidar

Diplomatic Editor, The Hindu

Claire Hajaj

Executive Director, Inter Mediate

Nafees Hamid

Research and Policy Director, XCEPT, King's College London

Amos Harel

Defence Analyst, Haaretz

David Harland

Executive Director, Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue

Tania Hary

Executive Director, Gisha – Legal Center for Freedom of Movement

Othman Hashim

Special Envoy of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations Chair on Myanmar

H. A. Hellyer

Senior Associate Fellow, Royal United Services Institute;
Senior Fellow, Center for American Progress

Akiko Horiba

Senior Officer, Nippon Foundation

Hiba Husseini

Managing Partner, Husseini & Husseini Attorneys and Counsellors at Law

Happymon Jacob

Director, Council for Strategic and Defense Research

Raissa H. Jajurie

Minister of Social Services and Development and Member of Parliament, Bangsamoro Transition Authority, the Philippines

Russ Jalichandra

Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs of Thailand

Jiang Tianjiao

Associate Professor, Development Institute, Fudan University

Heidi Elburgi Johansen

Special Representative for Yemen, Section for Peace and Reconciliation, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Norway

Hilde F. Johnson

Senior Advisor, European Institute for Peace

Uhuru Muigai Kenyatta

Fourth President of Kenya; Facilitator of the EAC-Led Nairobi Process

Asif R. Khan

Director, Policy and Mediation Division, United Nations Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs

Saeed Khatibzadeh

Deputy Foreign Minister and President of the Institute for Political and International Studies, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Iran

Kao Kim Hourn

Secretary-General of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations

Seda Kirdar

Chief of Section, Directorate of International Mediation,
Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Türkiye

Andreas Motzfeldt Kravik

State Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Norway

Sergiy Kyslytsya

First Deputy Foreign Minister of Ukraine

Daniel Levy

President, U.S./Middle East Project

Alexandre Liebeskind

Regional Director, Francophone Africa, Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue

Liu Jianchao

Minister of the International Department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China

Joanne Liu

Professor, School of Population and Global Health, McGill University

Peter Lord

Senior Advisor for Sudan, Bureau of African Affairs,
United States Department of State

Dmytro Lubinets

Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights, Ukraine

Sohail Mahmood

Director General, Institute for Strategic Studies Islamabad

Pravina Makan-Lakha

Senior Advisor on Women, Peace and Security, ACCORD

Muhammad Anis Matta

Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs of Indonesia

Naz Khatoon Modirzadeh

Professor of Practice and Director of the Program on International Law and Armed Conflict, Harvard Law School

Kulmiye Mohamed

Head, Office of the United Nations Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General for Sudan

Liberata Rutageruka Mulamula

Member of Parliament, National Assembly, Tanzania

Thant Myint-U

Honorary Fellow, Trinity College, University of Cambridge

Vijay K. Nambiar

Former Special Advisor on Myanmar and Chef de Cabinet of the United Nations Secretary-General

Niu Qiyang

Co-Head, China Programme, Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue

Donatien Nshole

Secretary-General, National Episcopal Conference, Democratic Republic of the Congo

Kari Osland

Director, Norwegian Institute for International Affairs

Mugeeb Othman

Advisor to the Prime Minister of Yemen

Gbenga Oyebode

Co-Founder and Of Counsel, Aluko & Oyebode

Koumnas Panayiotis

Head of Analysis, Cypriot Intelligence Service

Katia Papagianni

Director, Policy and Mediation Support, Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue

Geir Otto Pedersen

Special Envoy of the United Nations Secretary-General for Syria

Sihasak Phuangketkeow

Secretary General, Asia Peace and Reconciliation Council;
Former Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs of Thailand

Daniel Porras

Corporate Counsel and Director of International, Government and Regulatory Affairs, Rogue Space Systems Corporation

Helena Puig Larrauri

Co-founder and Strategy Lead, Build Up

Isidro L. Purisima

Deputy Presidential Adviser on Peace, Reconciliation and Unity, the Philippines

Manal Radwan

Senior Advisor, Cabinet of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Saudi Arabia

Mohamed Abdi Rage

Advisor, Intergovernmental Authority on Development

Majid Takht Ravanchi

Deputy Foreign Minister for Political Affairs of Iran

Kristina Lie Revheim

Special Representative to the Philippines, Section for Peace and Reconciliation, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Norway

Guillem Riutord Sampol

Head of Division, Peace, Security and Defence Partnerships,
European External Action Service

Einar Rystad

Special Representative for Somalia, Section for Peace and Reconciliation, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Norway

Alejandro Sánchez

Secretary of the Presidency of Uruguay

Dahlia Scheindlin

Political Scientist and Columnist, Haaretz

Abda Sharif

Ambassador of the United Kingdom to Yemen

Hussein Sheikh Ali

National Security Advisor of Somalia

Jana Simon

Author, Die Zeit

Endre Stiansen

Special Representative for the Horn of Africa, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Norway

Atsushi Sunami

President, Sasakawa Peace Foundation

Ouseph Tharakan

Co-Director, Humanitarian Programme, Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue

Lori-Anne Théroux-Bénoni

Strategic Advisor to the Executive Director, Institute for Security Studies

Henrik Thune

Senior Advisor, Norwegian Center for Conflict Resolution

Torunn L. Tryggestad

Deputy Director, Peace Research Institute Oslo

Ahmed Tugod

Secretary General, Justice and Equality Movement, Sudan

Christian Turner

Political Director, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, United Kingdom

Idun Tvedt

Deputy Director, Section for Peace and Reconciliation, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Norway

Anders Tvegård
United States Correspondent, Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation

Bashir Aliyu Umar
President, Supreme Council for Shariah, Nigeria

Torunn Viste
Special Representative to the Middle East, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Norway

Alexander Voloshin
Chairman of the Board of Directors, Skolkovo School of Management;
Former Chief of the Presidential Administration, Russia

Peter M. Wagner
Director and Head of Service, Service for Foreign Policy Instruments,
European Commission

Wang Guoyu
Dean and Professor, Academy of Air, Space Policy and Law,
Beijing Institute of Technology

Annette Weber
Special Representative of the European Union for the Horn of Africa

Teresa Whitfield
Independent Consultant

Richard Wilcox
Director, Private Partnerships, United Nations World Food Programme

Teohna Williams
Senior Advisor on Protection of Civilians, United Nations Peacekeeping Mission
in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

Ye-Min Wu
Regional Director, Asia Pacific, Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue

Adeeb Yousif
Founder and Executive Director, People-to-People;
Former Governor of Central Darfur State, Sudan

The Oslo Forum Team

Christina Buchhold

Oslo Forum Manager, Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue

HuongLy BuiDuong

Project Officer, Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue

Nicholas Weng-Lam Chu

Project Associate, Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue

Ingrid Østensen Ernø

Senior Adviser, Section for Peace and Reconciliation,
Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Oscar Eschenbrenner

Project Associate, Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue

Yogesh Gattani

Project Associate, Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue

Heljar Havnes

Foreign Service Trainee, Section for Peace and Reconciliation,
Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Beathe Øgård

Foreign Service Trainee, Section for Peace and Reconciliation,
Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Eleanor Strangways

Oslo Forum Intern, Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue

Vilde Michelsen Værøyvik

Oslo Forum Coordinator, Section for Peace and Reconciliation, Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Jérémy Vallot

Administrative and Logistics Associate, Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue

www.hdcentre.org | www.osloforum.org

IMPROVING THE MEDIATION OF ARMED CONFLICT