



CENTER FOR CONFLICT AND
HUMANITARIAN STUDIES

Finland's Role in Peacemaking

Center for Conflict and Humanitarian Studies

28.10.2020 at 4:00pm

Lecture by H.E. Mr. Pekka Haavisto, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Finland

H.E., Mr. Pekka Haavisto, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Finland, on Wednesday 28 October delivered a lecture entitled 'Finland's Role in Supporting Peace Efforts Around the World' at the



Center for Conflict and Humanitarian Studies (CHS) in Doha, Qatar. The lecture was introduced by Professor Sultan Barakat, Director of CHS. Dr. Sultan remarked on the establishment of the center as a research hub and an intellectual space dealing with matters of conflict mediation and humanitarian action within which reflection on conflict responses in the region could take place.

In his lecture, H.E., Mr. Pekka Haavisto, spoke about the importance multilateral cooperation, especially now given the worldwide Covid-19 pandemic which could act as a risk multiplier for escalating conflicts, climate change, extreme poverty, the increasing threat of cybercrime and the deterioration of human rights. He highlighted that in order to maintain peace and security, foster sustainable development and preserve democracy, rule of law, and human rights, states should encourage multilateral cooperation.

The Minister continued by emphasizing Finland's efforts at promoting conflict prevention and mediation and gave attention to the UN Group of Friends of Mediation that Finland co-chairs and which has 60 members, including Qatar. H.E., Minister Haavisto stressed that Finland's role is to support conflicting parties as they are owners of their conflict and can, therefore, build lasting peace. He stated that conflict prevention, mediation and subsequent peacebuilding are

priorities for Finland, at the national and international levels, and that this was illustrated by the Ministry when it created a Centre for Mediation.

The second point of conflict prevention and mediation was focused on water diplomacy and the role of new technologies targeted at mediation. He spoke of the dangers of climate change and its link to the rise of conflict and forced migration making it a security threat, particularly associated with the availability of water resources. On the topic of new technologies, the minister encouraged the use of technology for positive contributions in the mediation process.

He then shed light on the role of civil society as the key to a lasting and sustainable peace by emphasizing inclusivity of various groups such as women and youth. In his view, this is important as the world's population is predominantly made up of young people, yet they are continuously being left out of state-level discussions on peacemaking. He emphasized that this is unfortunate as youth are increasing their activism against threats and contributing to the creation of international activist links via social media, and because young people are not only victims or perpetrators of conflict, but have positive potential to prevent further conflicts.

Moving on, he focused on the participation of women as a necessity for sustainable peace. However, their role in peace processes still remains limited despite the challenge of continued sexual and gender-based violence taking place in conflicts worldwide. H.E., Mr. Haavisto is firm in his commitment to the requirement of women's involvement as it is imperative for a variety of views to be represented and is beneficial for the creation of an inclusive future based on lasting peace. He illustrated this by praising the regional network of women mediators, the various projects in which women are taking part in Libya and Syria and the role Finland plays in supporting these efforts. Special attention was given to the 20th anniversary of UN Resolution 1325 as it is a substantial milestone, and to the Women, Peace and Security agenda which remains relevant.

Finally, the lecture was concluded by placing emphasis on the donor community that should, now more than ever, be committed to providing support to Afghanistan, especially as the peace process is ongoing and particularly in remote and Taliban-controlled regions. Speaking about these regions, he recalled his field work in 2002 in which he witnessed the survival of Afghans through their local innovation. Providing remote areas, which tend to be overlooked, with aid would dismantle local tensions and bring people together, the Minister said.



The lecture was followed by a moderated discussion between H.E., Mr. Pekka Haavisto and Professor Sultan Barakat, Director of the Center for Conflict and Humanitarian Studies. Their discussion ranged over various topics, including how to overcome bitter feelings following conflict, with examples given of the Finnish people's resilience and reconciliation in the wake of their civil war and encroachment on their territory by their neighbours during the Second World War.



During the discussion, importance was placed on the need for interacting with all sides and groups during the peace process as well as on the competition between state actors in the mediation field. He expressed his view that small state mediators should concentrate on areas where their capacity and qualities are needed such as in capacity building of civil society, entailing that they would not own the entire process but rather form an important component of it.





In a question and answer session with a live audience which included H.E., Ms. Lolwah Al Khater, Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs, and H.E., Dr. Ahmad Al Muraikhi, Special Adviser to UN Secretary General, questions were raised on topics including on how to mediate in contexts such as Palestine where an entire people was robbed of its land, the importance of preventing conflicts in hotspots around the world rather than on putting out the fires of conflict, the importance of combatting hate speech and increasing tolerance and respect for all people while not impeding freedom of expression, the current Gulf Crisis which could

learn from Nordic cooperation, and finally on the role religious leaders could play in advocating for peace by emphasizing certain values native to all religions.