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Centre for Peace Mediation



Finland's Action Plan for Peace Mediation

Ministry for Foreign
Affairs of Finland

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Finland's Action Plan for Peace Mediation

Centre for Peace Mediation

Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland Helsinki 2026

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Abstract

Finland engages in and supports peace mediation as part of its foreign and security policy. In its peace mediation work, Finland can foster engagement between the parties to a conflict, offer expertise and a confidential setting for negotiations, or through use of other means assist in ending violence. When deciding whether to participate in peace mediation, Finland considers the added value it can bring, the availability of resources and the significance of the tasks and actions involved. Finland's particular strengths include water diplomacy, efforts to strengthen the role of women and youth, and support for traditional and religious actors in peace mediation. Finland's work emphasises cooperation with other states and organisations that promote peace mediation.

Keywords peace mediation, conflict resolution, inclusion, boundary waters, religious interaction

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Kieli Englanti

Sivumäärä 15

Tiivistelmä

Suomi tekee ja tukee rauhanvälitystä osana ulko- ja turvallisuuspolitiikkaansa. Suomi voi tuoda konfliktien osapuolia yhteen, tarjota asiantuntemusta ja luottamuksellisia puitteita neuvotteluille, tai muita keinoja käyttäen edesauttaa väkivaltaisuuksien loppumista. Suomi harkitsee osallistumistaan rauhanvälitykseen perustuen Suomen tuomaan lisäarvoon, käytettävissä oleviin resursseihin sekä tehtävien ja toimien merkityksellisyyteen. Suomen erityiset vahvuudet ovat vesidiplomatia, naisten ja nuorten roolin vahvistaminen ja perinteisten ja uskonnollisten toimijoiden tuki rauhanvälityksessä. Suomen toiminnassa korostuu yhteistyö muiden rauhanvälitystä edistävien valtioiden ja järjestöjen kanssa.

Asiasanat rauhanvälitys, konfliktinratkaisu, inklusio, rajavesistöt, uskontojen vuorovaikutus

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Referat

Att mäkla och bidra till fred är en del av Finlands utrikes- och säkerhetspolitik. Finland kan hjälpa parterna i en konflikt att komma närmare varandra, erbjuda expertis och en konfidentiell omgivning för förhandlingar eller på något annat sätt bidra till att få slut på våldsamheterna. Finland överväger sitt engagemang i fredsmedlingen utifrån det mervärde som Finland tillför, de tillgängliga resurserna och relevansen av uppdragen och åtgärderna. Finlands särskilda styrkor är vattendiplomati, arbetet för att förbättra kvinnors och ungas roll och de traditionella och religiösa aktörernas stöd i fredsmedling. Finland betonar samarbetet med andra länder och organisationer som främjar fredsmedling.

Nyckelord fredsmäklning, konfliktlösning, inklusion, gränsvattendrag, interreligiös samverkan

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FOREWORD BY THE MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Conflict prevention and resolution efforts are an integral part of international cooperation. Conflict management, promoting peace and upholding the rules-based international order create favourable conditions for development and a better future.

Geopolitical competition is often pursued through proxy actors, and armed groups extend their networks across borders. Meanwhile, climate change and new technologies are reshaping the nature of conflicts. Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine has brought war back to Europe. It has also contributed to new investment in hard security, with the aim of achieving and preserving peace.

Respect for international law is a cornerstone of Finland's foreign and security policy. It is now increasingly important to create space for diplomacy, reconciliation and peace mediation. Doing so requires Finland's long-term and comprehensive engagement.

When advancing peace mediation, Finland relies on its values, experience and expertise. We advance the participation of women and youth in peace processes and draw on our water expertise in conflict prevention and resolution. Cooperation between government and civil society is an essential part of our peace mediation approach. Finland is also developing new peace mediation practices involving the private sector.

It is our aim that Finland's determined work in peace mediation will deliver lasting results.

Elina Valtonen
Minister for Foreign Affairs

BACKGROUND:

This action plan is based on the 2024 Government report on Finnish foreign and security policy, which states that the Ministry for Foreign Affairs will update its peace mediation action plan. The previous action plan dates from 2011, and both the operating environment and peace mediation practices have since changed considerably.

The action plan sets out the principles and priorities of Finland's peace mediation work and the factors guiding it. In this action plan, peace mediation is understood narrowly as dialogue aimed at ending or preventing violence and as measures directly supporting this. For reasons of confidentiality, the action plan does not refer to individual projects or actors.

1 The significance and role of peace mediation

The peace mediation field has changed considerably in the 2020s. Geopolitical competition and challenges to the rules-based international order have led to an increasingly fragmented landscape of conflicts and diversified the parties involved. Conflicts have become more protracted, complex and international in scope, and the line between war and peace is more blurred than before. To manage long-term conflicts and prevent their escalation, we need new approaches to peace mediation. Peace mediation is now more closely linked with other conflict-related work such as peacebuilding, crisis management, humanitarian aid and development cooperation.

While ending armed conflict and violence remains the ultimate goal of peace mediation, in practice, the work increasingly focuses on advancing smaller and partial outcomes. Instead of comprehensive peace agreements, peace mediation efforts can lead to ceasefire negotiations, local agreements and platforms for dialogue. In line with the principles of humanitarian aid, peace mediation can also support the needs of humanitarian actors and ensure that aid reaches those who need it.

2 Peace mediation as part of Finland's foreign and security policy

According to the Finnish Constitution, Finland participates in international cooperation to protect peace and human rights and support societal development. Support for peace processes, and subsequently peace mediation, have been mentioned in Finnish government programmes since 2007. A key goal of the current Government Programme is to promote and increase Finnish peace mediation expertise also in cooperation with the private and third sectors.

Finland contributes to maintaining peace and security by supporting conflict prevention and promoting effective peace mediation. The country has a long tradition of peace mediation and has good reputation as a reliable partner worldwide.

In Finland's approach to peace mediation, all actions taken have to rely on careful conflict analysis and promote the peaceful resolution of conflicts in an effective manner. Peace mediation always involves uncertainty, and occasionally significant risks. Confidence-building measures lie at the core of peace mediation, as the work relies on mutual trust between the actors involved. Negotiation processes are rarely straightforward and the outcomes are impossible to guarantee. Peace mediation requires long-term commitment, often spanning several years, coupled with the ability to respond swiftly when needed.

3 Finland as an advocate for peace mediation

As part of its peace mediation work, Finland maintains various communication channels and facilitates dialogue to enable negotiations between conflict parties or actors with widely divergent political views. In addition to preparedness to act as a mediator, Finland can also support other mediators, offer a setting for confidential talks or assist in dialogue processes in other ways. The support provided must always be based on the parties' needs and consent. Effective action requires close coordination among the actors involved. In addition, Finland's activities must be guided by a strategic assessment of foreign policy implications, the added value that Finland can contribute and the availability of resources.

Globally, Finland seeks to strengthen the UN's operational and normative role in peace mediation. The UN must continue to play a key role in conflict resolution and prevention. Finland and Türkiye co-chair the UN Group of Friends of Mediation, which was established at their joint initiative and now has more than 60 members.

Regional organisations support and complement the UN's work. Finland values cooperation with the European Union and its Member States in peace mediation, and works together with the European External Action Service, EU Special Representatives and the European Commission. Together with Spain, Finland co-chairs the Group of Friends of Mediation of the European Union. Finland has also supported efforts to strengthen peace mediation within the OSCE and co-chairs the OSCE Group of Friends of Mediation together with Switzerland and Türkiye. These groups of friends seek to create political space for peace mediation and advance its role in the organisations' work. Finland has helped strengthen the African Union's mediation efforts through a multiannual project and stands ready to also cooperate with other regional organisations.

At the state level, Finland has entered into strategic partnerships that offer a framework for developing cooperation in peace mediation. They are based on the shared understanding that partnership in peace mediation requires commitment and long-term efforts at different levels, both in practical work and on the systemic level.

Finland promotes the participation of women, youth and vulnerable persons in peace processes.

To help achieve lasting peace solutions, Finland supports the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security and Resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security both at national and international level. Finland seeks ways to increase young people's opportunities to influence peace efforts and bolsters the role of religious and traditional actors in peace mediation.

Climate change and competition for natural resources, such as minerals and water, are increasing tensions and can lead to conflicts. Finland's long tradition in transboundary water cooperation supports its peace mediation efforts through water diplomacy. Water diplomacy helps prevent, defuse and solve water-related tensions by a combination of water expertise and diplomatic means and cooperation. It offers a way to prevent water disputes, especially by advancing the adoption and application of UN Water Conventions.

4 Finland as a peace mediation actor

To strengthen its national peace mediation efforts and expertise, Finland participates in initiatives that support peace processes and invests in peace mediation and negotiation training. It aims to be an actor that not only supports peace mediation work but also plays a key role in peace mediation processes. Finland is ready to host negotiations and discussions at different levels, and Finnish experts and institutions can support negotiation processes at the parties' request. Through joint initiatives and effective coordination, cooperation between Finnish peace mediation actors is broadened and deepened.

The Centre for Peace Mediation, established in the Ministry for Foreign Affairs in 2020, bolsters state-level peace mediation and the coordination of peace mediation activities. Within the Ministry, the Centre's work is guided by an advisory steering group for peace mediation appointed by the Minister for Foreign Affairs. The Centre for Peace Mediation identifies, assesses and carries out peace mediation projects suitable for Finland on a needs basis and in cooperation with the Ministry's regional departments. The Centre operates globally, dealing with both geographical and thematic questions.

Peace mediation is embedded in the work of the entire Foreign Service. Finland's network of missions abroad plays a key role in identifying and implementing initiatives. The network can also assist in convening dialogue and providing facilities for confidential discussions between different parties and actors. Moreover, the Minister for Foreign Affairs can appoint a Special Envoy to monitor a specific geographical area or theme.

Finnish and international civil society organisations are a key element of Finland's peace mediation framework. Cooperation between government and civil society organisations is developed continuously, with a focus on the complementarity of actors. Compared with state actors, civil society organisations and their partners can often work more deeply within communities, such as with traditional and religious actors. Confidential dialogue and informal support for peace mediation processes are often best achieved in cooperation with civil society actors. Networks of women peace mediators, water experts and religious actors are good examples of effective channels for sharing and disseminating information.

As a result of technological development and political changes, the private sector is becoming more important in peace mediation. This is also taken into account in Finland's peace mediation approach. In the field of peace mediation, technology-driven opportunities are reshaping the landscape, and Finnish technology companies have the expertise needed in an evolving international peace mediation ecosystem. The private sector is important for peacebuilding because stability is a prerequisite for economic activity. Both national and multinational private companies operate in conflict affected areas, and their business is exposed to conflict-related risks. Moreover, the private sector has competence and technological solutions which have an impact on the conflict dynamics. Added value can also be created through arrangements in which private actors provide funding for non-state peace mediation organisations.

The rapid development of AI capabilities makes it easier to process and analyse large amounts of data on conflicts, socio-political development and cultural factors. This helps peace mediators better understand complex conflict settings, produce up-to-date situational analysis, draw up increasingly effective strategies and strengthen the position of negotiating parties. AI can also pave the way for digital dialogue by creating secure environments for confidential conversations and brainstorming idea sharing. Unmanned drones will play an important part in monitoring ceasefires which contributes to building trust. The use of emerging technologies in various areas of peace mediation will offer new opportunities for the Finnish private sector in a changing peace mediation environment.

Cooperation between the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and national and international peace mediation partners makes it possible to maintain a wide network of actors. Finland plans and implements peace mediation initiatives together with its partners. By supporting the work of organisations working in the field of peace mediation, Finland promotes its goal of increasing peaceful resolution of conflicts. Monitoring developments in the peace mediation field with the aim of applying lessons learned nationally is an important dimension of Finland's international engagement. Finland's funding and active engagement are widely appreciated by its partners.

Finland deploys national experts to key peace mediation roles in international organisations. Recruitment for international peace mediation positions will continue to be systematically strengthened through cooperation between the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and CMC Finland.

5 Follow-up and assessment of Finland's peace mediation efforts

In Finland's peace mediation projects and activities, attention is paid to risks and impact assessments taking into account the highly volatile operating environment. With regard to partners, assessments are based primarily on their track record and areas of expertise. Funding and cooperation agreements specify matters concerning follow-up and reporting. In order to enhance dynamic and interactive cooperation, Finland continuously develops its dialogue with partner organisations.



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