

February 10, 2008

Mr. John Connolly, Director
Institute for Public Dialogue
2310 Marinship Way, #16
Sausalito, CA 94966

Dear Mr. Connolly:

The website for “Public Dialogue” and your proposal to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee for a new form of dialogue (“Public Talks”) represents a serious, innovative departure from past practice by which political conflicts are represented, defined and treated (or not) in the public arenas of the US and multilateral organizations. Various new “publics” are becoming players in the policy process, notably the wired and otherwise digitally enabled generations of young people who define and redefine issues and conflicts by the sheer volume of informal communications.

Given the number of conflicts that require institutional responses and the role of technology in the diffusion and distortion of information pertaining to those conflicts your proposal of “Challenge Documents” identifying respective arguments and factual claims could be the cornerstone of a new conflict resolution process that could order the now wildly disjointed electronic messaging that widely dispersed communicators use.

As a graduate professional school engaged in training international dispute analysts and negotiators both for international trade and political disputes we support the overture of a new process and appeal to our own decision makers to take up these ideas, give them public exposure through hearings and hone them into a formula that our government can support.

Sincerely yours,

E. Philip Morgan
Professor and Head,
International Trade Policy Program

cc: Edward J. Laurance, Dean GSIPS
Pushpa Iyer, Assistant Professor, Conflict Resolution