

The Beginning of the Rules and Terms

Proposed Operating Principles for the Body Overseeing the Public Talks Process:

- 1. The Public Talks Process will be overseen by an impartial organization with the capability to supervise and distribute both sides' view of the conflict without favoritism. This organization will maintain a web site that devotes equal time and space to each side. The Dialogue Documents and supporting material will be featured on the site and the information will be distributed to appropriate audiences throughout the conflict zone and the wider world.**
- 2. Each side of the conflict will have equal access to the media and to its audiences.**
- 3. The international distribution of the Dialogue Documents through major print, broadcast or other media will be the responsibility of the overseeing body. The overseeing body will fund distribution of the dialogue documents.**
- 4. The overseeing body would not edit the content of any Dialogue Documents except to ensure that the format and terms are followed.**
- 5. The parties to a conflict must agree to the terms and conditions set by the overseeing body before the public negotiating process can commence.**
- 5. It is recommended that any masthead be reflective of the supervising organization and that that organization be viewed as the sponsor of the communication.**
- 6. Production of the documents, broadcast segments and web content would be consistent with standards common in the countries involved in the discussions so that, for instance, an insert can be prepared, printed and distributed with local papers to the broadest possible audience. The documents would be available on line at the same time they are available in print.**
- 7. Deadlines for each phase of Public Talks would be adjusted on a case by case basis so that print, broadcast and web information appear simultaneously.**
- 8. The terms described here are between two sides. The overseeing body may choose to expand this structure to three sides. Alternatively, they may elect to focus on two sides as a first phase of a conflict resolution process and focus on a third side after the first two have run their course.**
- 9. In a three sided (or more sided conflict) the overseeing body would decide the order of how this process would unfold.**

"With Agreement:" When two parties agree to Public Talks

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Overview

If both sides agree to publish their dialogue documents for public scrutiny, the participants will prepare their documents according to a template that gives each side equal space (or time, in the case of a companion broadcast). The documents will include such topics as a history of the conflict, questions for each side and the reasons certain questions are being raised.

At this point, the sponsoring organization will prepare a series of combined dialogue documents that present both sides with equal weight.

These documents would be published at intervals negotiated in advance, for example, every two weeks.

At various times throughout the process when questions are posed or negotiating issues offered, both sides will receive that information from each other simultaneously at a preset timetable of perhaps 4 to 7 days prior to the publishing deadline.

The following analysis is designed as a quick two page overview of the terms. The formal terms will be provided in much greater detail.

Format and content:

Each shared dialogue document will provide equal space for both sides. For example, the front and back covers will be split in half with one side consistently on the left and the other on the right. Content from the front page will be continued on subsequent pages. Each pair of facing pages will consistently feature one side on the left and the other on the right.

All Dialogue Documents will be sized so that they can be inserted into local newspapers or magazines or distributed on a stand-alone basis. It is anticipated that these documents would be a standard magazine size of 8 ½ x 11 inches.

The documents would also be available for review on line under the sponsorship of the supervising organization.

Visual supports

Presentation of the dialogue documents should be under the auspices of the sponsoring organization and a two-inch-deep header would reflect the identity of that organization

rather than one or both of the entities involved in the dispute.

Each side will have the option of placing a photo, map, symbol or other visual item near the top of their front page column. It is anticipated that the one or two main leaders of each side would be featured on the front page of each Dialogue Document (Note that a separate pdf is now being created that will show this format in detail)

Inside pages: Each side can use 20% of each page to feature a non-text item such as a photo, graph, news story etc. that would support their case. (Certain sections such as the “Questions and Answers” would not have any visual elements.) Each side would have the option of either using this 1/5th page, including the caption, in either one or two parts per page.

Round 1: 16 pages

Presents a history of the conflict, the primary areas of disagreement and visions for the future

The first document should be large enough for in-depth exploration of the conflict, but brief enough to hold the attention of the reader. We anticipate that this document would be 16 pages long, including covers.

Because the history of a conflict is usually one of the most contentious and revelatory issues, 12 pages of the first round of Dialogue Documents will be devoted to history as each side sees it. The history discussion will begin on the front cover, with half of the cover devoted to each side.

Questions and Answers will comprise the other four pages for this first round. Each side would have two pages whereby they would two pages for each side, and each side will be able to review the other's prior to publication. There would be two questions posed per page, for a total of four questions per side for Round 1. Each side would be permitted to decide the length of their answers, within the overall space allocated. For example, one question might be answered by a simple “No” while two entire pages could be used to answer a question that one side determines requires an in-depth response.

Round 2: 16 pages

Historical context is separated from current issues

In Round 2, the history section will be reduced to a total of 10 pages in the same format described above. At this point, each side will have seen the other's approach to the history of the conflict. The historical elements that both sides agree on begin to be separated

from the issues upon which they do not agree.

The question and answer section will continue to be a total of four pages.. The back page will feature each side's vision, Each side would have great latitude in how they wish to approach its "vision."

Round 3: 16 pages

Negotiating points are presented and explored

The total history section is reduced to a total of 8 pages and each side is encouraged to address specifically where they agree with their opponent and where they disagree. The Question and Answer sections continue in precisely in the same size and form as the previous rounds.

A new section here, consisting of four pages total, will address three negotiating points where each side seeks agreement with the other side.

The back page would again feature each side's vision for the future and would be informed by the nature of what has already taken place including beginning to state negotiating positions.,

Round 4: 16 pages

The two sides begin to reach agreement on certain points and areas of disagreement will become clearer.

In Round 4, a Negotiating Response section (6.5 pages for each side) would begin on the front page. One side's first negotiating point would be shown in bold type, followed by the other side's response to that point.

In this section, each side will respond to all three of the negotiating points requested by the other side and each subsection would end with a summary response that may or may not bring the two sides closer to each other's position.

The question and answer section would be two pages for each side.

An "Overview" section of 1.5 pages for each side, continuing to the back cover, would call for each side to address potential tradeoffs. For example, one side could accept a term offered by the other side on the condition that one of its own points is accepted.

Round 5: 16 Pages

Constituencies begin to understand the basis for compromise

As the process moves forward, the parties continue to use the format established in Round 4.

The ability of this process to depict the detailed tradeoffs needed to reach agreement is central to what makes Public Talks qualitatively different than secret diplomacy.

Historically, two sides often begin a negotiating effort by staking out vastly contradictory stands where only compromise can yield an actual agreement. In the Public Talks model, each side shows their constituencies the compromises required at each step.

While the negotiating partners will not be immune to charges by extremists that they are selling out, the majority of their constituencies will be able to understand why compromise is needed and what the trade-offs will be. This makes the ultimate agreement less vulnerable to distortion by political opponents than it would be if the agreement were revealed only in a media announcement made at the end of negotiations.

These five rounds of public discussion will move the parties toward face-to-face negotiations that are more likely to result in substantive agreements for the following reasons:

- The history of the conflict has been explored from both sides and at least some level of agreement has been achieved.
- The public has been involved in the discussions and has had the opportunity to critique each side's arguments and provide input.
- The parties themselves have been exposed to new ideas from each other and from the public that can move the negotiations in a new, more fruitful direction.
- Those afflicted by the conflict have been prepared for the trade-offs necessary for successful negotiations.
- Extremists' potential objections have been anticipated and addressed before face-to-face negotiations even start.

Round 6: Face-to-Face negotiations

Two sides agree to formal face-to-face talks.

It is important that face-to-face negotiations are conducted with some degree of transparency. Once these negotiations commence, the supervising entity will continue to provide the public with progress reports that give equal weight to each side. These updates would be briefer documents than those published during the prior phases, but would clearly delineate the areas where agreement is growing and those areas where the parties remain intransigent.

Thus, the public maintains the ability to both understand and influence the debate as it moves forward.