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## **1. Proposed Operating Principles for the Body Overseeing the Public Talks Process:**

1. The Public Talks process will be managed by an impartial organization with the institutional capability, capacity and qualifications to direct the process.
2. 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 also be responsible for distributing the documents to audiences throughout the conflict zone and the wider world.
3. The overseeing body will be responsible for funding 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 overseeing body may choose to expand this structure to three parties. Alternatively, they may elect to focus on two parties as a first phase of a conflict resolution process and focus on a third party after the first two have run their course.

## **2. Overview of the Process**

**"With Agreement": When two (or more) parties agree to Public Talks**

## Overview

Once all or some parties to a conflict agree to engage in the Public Talks process and have signed the rules for engagement (see item no. 5), then the next step is to create the Dialogue Documents. Each party will prepare their document according to template guidelines and then submit it to the overseeing body. The documents will include such topics as a history of the conflict, questions for each side, interests and positions and the reasons certain questions are being raised. Each party will be guaranteed equal space and/or time (in the case of a companion broadcast) for the presentation of their position within the final published document(s).

Once the parties have submitted their documents, the overseeing body will:

- A. Prepare a combined Dialogue Document that presents both sides with equal weight; or
- B. Publish the two (or more) submitted Dialogue Documents exactly as they are submitted with little or no editing, permitting template guidelines have been followed.

The Dialogue Documents will be published at intervals negotiated in advance, for example, every two weeks. The Dialogue Documents will be featured on a website maintained by the overseeing body. During the Public Talks process each party of the conflict will have equal access to the agreed upon media outlets and its audiences.

Production of the documents, broadcast segments and web content will be consistent with standards common in the countries involved in the conflict. Ideally an insert will be prepared, printed and distributed with local news-media to broadcast to the largest possible audience.

The documents would be available online at the same time that they are available in print.

Presentation of the dialogue documents should be under the auspices of the overseeing body with the header that reflects the identity of that organization rather than one or both of the entities involved in the dispute. Each side will have the option of inserting visual aids such as a photo, map, symbol or other item in their respective documents.

### **3. Detailed Description of the 6 Rounds of Public Talks (*Public View*)**

#### **Round 1: History**

*Round 1 presents a history of the conflict and the primary areas of disagreement.*

The first document will 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 will be roughly thirteen pages long, including covers.

Because the history of a conflict is usually one of the most contentious and revelatory issues, eleven pages of the first round of Dialogue Documents will be devoted to the history of the conflict as each side sees it.

A question and answer section will comprise the remaining two pages of the first round. Each party will have the option to pose a total of four questions in Round 1.

#### **Round 2: Current Views**

*In Round 2 parties will further discuss their views of the conflict, with special focus on perceptions.*

Each party will have seen each other's view of the history of the conflict and more discussion will be encouraged to further the understanding of the current situation between the parties. For the next nine pages, each party will discuss not only what they think, but also what they feel about the conflict, what areas are most "heated" and the general feel of the situation as it stands currently, not just historically. This can be very free-form, allowing each party to voice what they feel needs to be heard by the other party(s).

The remaining four pages will comprise the question and answer section. Each side will 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 party determines requires an in-depth response.

### **Round 3: Interests**

*Round 3 will highlight the interests that are behind the stated positions of each side.*

The previous two rounds have given each party an opportunity to express their historical views, their positions and their feelings about the current situation. One of the most vital aspects of conflict resolution is to identify the underlying interests that are not being met in a conflict situation and then bring these to the foreground. A solution is not necessarily accomplished by a compromise on positions, but rather by the degree to which a solution takes care of the underlying interests.

The next X pages will be a “facilitated discussion” wherein each party will identify the underlying interests behind their positions. Each party will be asked to state their positions and list as many interests that are behind those positions. For example, if a party’s position states that their armed forces must remain at the national border of their adversary, then their interests might include the need for security, prevention of terrorism, etc. Interests are often identified by asking a simple “why?”. For example the question “Why must your armed forces remain at the border?” can elicit many interests that lie behind that position.

The more each party understands their own interests as well as their counterparts’, the more solutions can be generated and the situation often shifts away from the perception that the result can only be zero-sum.

The question and answer section will again be a total of four pages. Each party will be allowed four questions and the format will mirror the previous section.

### **Round 4: Perceptions**

*In Round 4 the parties will have an opportunity to briefly discuss the information that has been presented with an emphasis on understanding how the other party perceives the situation.*

The first three pages will be open to free-form discussion of what has been stated up until this point. History, perceptions and views have been brought out and can now be commented on in a unified manner.

The main emphasis of this round will be the next X pages “facilitated discussion” wherein each party will be asked to summarize how the other side perceives the conflict, their view of history and their feelings about the current situation. This is a form of reflective listening (without explicitly saying so) and is perhaps one of the most important elements in de-escalating conflict and allows the parties to feel that they have been heard by their adversary. This will allow the discussion, whether public or private, to continue moving forward.

The question and answer section will again be a total of four pages. Each party will be allowed four questions and the format will mirror the previous section.

### **Round 5: Vision for the Future**

*In Round 5 each party will take their understanding of their interests and formulate them into a vision for the future.*

At this point, each side will have seen the other's approach to the history of the conflict and may also have a better understanding of their adversary's perception. It is important to be motivated by looking to the future, rather than by the past which often encourages a revenge mentality. In this vein, round 2 will feature each side's vision for the future.

Each side will have great latitude in how they wish to express their vision for the future. By presenting their vision, each party has an opportunity to outline their interests and explain how their vision will meet these interests. This exercise can serve to change the perception of the situation from being stuck with few solutions to one that can incorporate many options. Additionally the public will see a common humanity expressed in the underlying interests of each party thus garnering more public support for the resolution process.

The question and answer section will again be a total of four pages. Each party will be allowed four questions and the format will mirror the previous sections.

### **Round 6: Agreement to meet for Face to Face negotiations**

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

The first 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 understanding has been achieved;
- The parties themselves have been exposed to new ideas from each other 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.

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. The public therefore maintains the ability to both understand and influence the debate as it moves forward.

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*Results of previous rounds: Constituencies begin to understand the bigger picture of the conflict, see the humanity of each side and are more willing to accept an agreement.*

The ability of this process to depict not only the detailed trade-offs needed to reach agreement, but the commonality of interests that lie beneath the positions 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 positions where only compromise can yield an actual agreement. **In the Public Talks model, each party shows their constituencies the specific interests that lie behind those positions that, when satisfied, lead to an agreement often without compromise.**

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 what action is needed and what trade-offs will occur for the creation of a durable agreement. 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.

#### **4. Internal Guidelines for Preparing the Dialogue Document (Not for Public View)**

*These Guidelines are internal-only because they contain the details of how the DDs will be written in terms of page numbers, header sizes, column widths, etc. This information is neither necessary nor important for public view.*

##### **Format and content:**

*(The information below are general guidelines and essentially the creator of the proto-type DDs should use their own graphic design knowledge to inform their decisions on how the document should be formatted to ensure an easy-to-read, easy-to-use and visually pleasing style)*

Each shared dialogue document will provide equal space for both sides.

- 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 online under the sponsorship of the overseeing body.

##### **Visual supports**

Presentation of the dialogue documents should be under the auspices of the overseeing body 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.

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.

## **5. Potential Rules and Terms for Engagement in the Public Talks Process**

The following rules and terms are potential and/or examples of points of agreement that will be signed off on by the parties to a conflict before they engage in the PT process (This agreement could either be a milestone in the conflict or be a potential stumbling block to the entire process). The creation of this agreement would be between the overseeing body and the parties to the conflict.

The Parties agree:

- not to create simultaneous Dialogue Documents while engaged in the PT process;
- not to use their own media outlets for promoting their cause during the PT process;
- to submit their DDs in the format of the template provided;
- to allow the DD to be published in x,y,z media outlets;
- to not negotiate in private during the PT process;
- etc.

(This agreement could very potentially be a sticking point in the whole process and could hold up the whole engagement if not handled skillfully; therefore I'd recommend the least amount of points of agreement as possible.)