

Minutes of the internal MSN Meeting, 29/30 March 2017

Washington DC, USA

Present

ACCORD (Irene Limo), Berghof Foundation (Luxshi Vimalarajah, Marike Blunck), Carter Center (John Goodman, Jennie Lincoln), CINEP (Fernando Sarmiento Santander, Laura Henao Izquierdo), Conciliation Resources (Sophia Close), CMI (Ville Brummer), CPCS (Erik Nilsson), Folke Bernadotte Academy (Eldrige Adolfo, Camilla Riesenfeld), HD Centre (Mame Khady Diouf, Neha Sanghrajka), Initiative for Quite Diplomacy (John Packer), MSP (David Lanz), Search for Common Ground (Sean O'Reilly), SERAPAZ (Miguel Alvarez Gandara), UN MSU (Roxaneh Bazergan), USIP (Ginny Bouvier), MSN Secretariat (Jonas Baumann, none voting)

Chair

Jonas Baumann (MSN Secretariat)

Minutes

MSN Secretariat (Jonas Baumann)

1. Round of Updates from Organisations

The MSN members share news in terms of upcoming publications, trainings and events.

2. Next MSN Meeting (Host, Date, Topic)

Various members express that a full week and two locations as this year is difficult to sustain (financially, time commitment), and the general suggestion is to switch back to shorter meetings. On frequency, members agree that the basic rhythm of a meeting roughly once a year should be sustained.

Conciliation Resources and CINEP both put forward a proposal to organise and host the next meeting. After bilateral talks, they jointly propose CR as the host for the next meeting, with CINEP as the host for the year after. The two meetings would be linked thematically around the topic of “transition from war to peace”. CR offers to host the meeting in late winter/early spring 2018 in Belfast and/or London.

This suggestion is unanimously approved.

3. MSN Membership: Attendance Requirement Exceptions

The secretariat recalls the MSN rule stating that membership in MSN is terminated if an organisation does not participate in three successive meetings, unless members decide on an exception. This year, two organisations require this special exception: FTI and CMA.

The secretariat reads out the statement provided by the absent organisations stating their reasons and explanations.

Members unanimously approve the exception for FTI and CMA. Concerning CMA, the secretariat is tasked to follow up with its director regarding their continued engagement in MSN and the status of their structure.

4. Membership Applications

Two organisations applied for membership: Institute for Integrated Transition (IFIT, Spain), Clingendael Academy (Netherlands).

The secretariat recalls that IFIT's application was already tabled at last year's meeting during which a decision was postponed in order to give members more time to inform themselves on IFIT. Members express concern related to IFIT's application. Notably it is stressed that IFIT's key competency is transitional justice, rather than mediation support. Further, various members express doubts as IFIT's application tends to over-state the level of existing cooperation with MSN members.

The present members unanimously reject the application from IFIT.

The application by Clingendael Academy leads to a prolonged discussions. While members have little concern that Clingendael Academy fulfils the membership criteria and is doing valuable work notably in the area of training, the issue of geographical balance is raised. Further, given that the maximum number of 25 members will soon be reached, members engaged in a debate over structure, nature and character of the MSN.

The present members unanimously approve the application from Clingendael Academy, with four members abstaining. Members further unanimously decide on a temporary halt of new applications and task the secretariat together with the host of the next meeting to table and facilitate a discussion on MSN membership criteria.

5. MSN Newsletter

The Secretariat enquires whether the existing structure of the newsletter and information sharing from the secretariat is appropriate. Members express their approval, and notably stress the appreciation for sending out reminders/request for information sharing.

6. MSN Discussion Points

The Secretariat reminds members that the final draft of the MSN Discussion Points resulting from the Siem Reap meeting on temporary impasses in peace process, authored by Erik Nilsson and Teresa Ma, was sent out to members shortly before the MSN meeting. Members have until Monday, 3 April to raise any issues, after which the secretariat will begin the printing.

The Secretariat briefs members that for the publication resulting from this meeting, Ginny Bouvier (USIP) has volunteered as lead author, while the Jonas Baumann will continue to serve as editor in his function as secretary of the MSN. They will approach further people for co-authorship. As a theme, various options are discussed, members tend to favour a MSN Discussion Points as a commentary on the UN DPA Guidance on Gender and Inclusive Mediation Strategies which was launched during the MSN meeting.

Erik Nilsson (CPCS), Laura Henao Izquierdo (CINEP) and John Goodman (Carter Center) volunteer to review the publication. There will also be a round of final consultations (must have changes) with the entire membership.

7. MSN Secretariat Working Paper: Role and Impact of MSN

The discussion on this agenda item is postponed in order to link it with the planned discussion on MSN membership. The secretariat encourages members to continue to provide input on a bilateral base.

8. MSN Trust Fund

The secretariat reminds members of the importance of the MSN Trust Fund, which ensures that organizations that do not have the financial means to pay for travel and accommodation can participate in meetings. Members are asked to consider contributions to the fund, especially if they have money left at the end of the budgetary cycle. Any questions related to the fund can be directed to the MSN secretariat.

The Secretariat in particular thanks FBA for their continued support of the MSN Trust Fund, and UN MSU who sponsored two participants for this year's meeting outside the Trust Fund (due to UN regulations they are unable to provide funds directly to the trust fund). UN MSU mentions that there might be a possibility to do so again for next year's meeting.

The secretariat will continue to coordinate with members on this matter.

9. Other Agenda Points

None

For the minutes: Jonas Baumann, Zürich, Switzerland, 5 April 2017