

Project Proposal

‘Four+4’: Conflict Assessment Forum

Centre for Just Peace and Democracy



www.cjpdonline.org
Bahnhofstrasse 13, 6020 Emmenbrücke, Switzerland
phone: + 41 41 260 2601, email: info@cjpdonline.org

FOUR + 4: CONFLICT ASSESSMENT FORUM

Background

After four years of relative peace, 2006 saw Sri Lanka again plunge into military conflict between the Government of Sri Lanka (GoSL) and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). A 2002 ceasefire, negotiated with Norway's help, remains intact on paper but is flouted on the ground with increasing regularity and frequent brutality. As a result of the escalating violence in Sri Lanka over 5,800 civilians have been killed, thousands have been abducted, hundreds were disappeared while close to 500,000 people were internally displaced (IDP) in the North and East of Sri Lanka within past two years alone. While there are growing calls nationally and internationally for international human rights monitors and other forms of humanitarian intervention, these do not address the underlying armed conflict. Until attitudes change on both sides, the immediate prospect is for worsening violence.

Following the GoSL's capture of territory in the East, a full-scale military confrontation in the North of the island seems to be on the agenda. With the killing of the Head of the LTTE Political Wing and Chief Negotiator S.P. Thamilchelvan in November 2007, the likelihood of direct negotiations seems a distant proposition. As such there is an urgent need to assess the state of the conflict in order to identify actions that can help arrest the slide into an all out war and revive negotiations.

The cycle war and peace is not new to Sri Lanka. Since the Thimpu Talks in 1986 Tamil and Sinhalese protagonists have been striving to reach a negotiated settlement to the conflict. Much academic and policy analysis has sought to unpack the factors that have led to the breakdown of successive peace efforts. What is desperately needed is some 'blue-sky' thinking that identifies possible military-political outcomes and how best these can be supported to bring about a lasting solution.

Given the Track One actors are now engaged in military confrontations, the 'conflict assessment' process is best realised by facilitating a dialogue between Track Two actors drawn from the Sinhala and Tamil civil society. Additionally one of the criticisms of 2002 peace process was the need to enhance civil society participation and strengthening activities at the regional and local level. A conflict assessment carried out by influential Track Two actors would help build trust and open channels of communication that could be activated to support any future peace process.

Aim:

To assess the conflict from the perspectives of civil society actors in order to consider possible scenarios that are likely to emerge in the foreseeable future and how these can be supported to facilitate a lasting solution to the conflict.

Objectives:

- I. Meeting of 'Four+4' Track Two actors (4 Sinhalese and 4 Tamils) for a free and frank exchange of views and to explore different scenarios in order to work towards conflict transformation
- II. In a discrete setting under the guidance of a third-party and under strict Chatham House Rules¹ the workshop will be held to arrive at constructive proposals to address the dead-lock

Methodology:

- Semi-structured interactive dialogue;
- Scenario-planning; and
- External third-party facilitation.

Output

To be decided in consultation with project partner and participants.

Anticipated Outcome

- I. An indication of the possible scenarios that are likely to emerge in the foreseeable future.
- II. Building of trust and communication channels that can be activated to support any future peace process.

^{1 1} The Chatham House Rules originated at the Royal Institute of International Affairs (also known as "Chatham House") with the aim of guaranteeing anonymity to those speaking within its walls in order that better international relations could be achieved. When a meeting is held under Chatham House rules, participants are free to use the information received, but neither the identity nor the affiliation of the speaker, nor that of any other participant may be revealed.