

4. Peace negotiations in Asia

- There were 11 negotiating processes in Asia in 2018, accounting for over one fifth of the total number of cases worldwide.
- Asia was the continent with the highest percentage of cases in which there was direct negotiations without third-party participation.
- Significant progress was made in the process in Afghanistan and the year ended with the government's appointment of a negotiating team after several direct meetings had taken place between the US government and Taliban representatives in Qatar.
- In the Indian state of Nagaland, the armed group NSCN-K rejoined the ceasefire agreement, which also opened the door to its resumption of the peace negotiations.
- In the Philippines, the enactment of the Bangsamoro Organic Law paved the way for the full implementation of the 2014 peace process and to the demobilisation of tens of thousands of MILF combatants.
- In Myanmar, two armed opposition groups joined the 2015 ceasefire agreement, which still did not include the main armed groups.
- The Korean peninsula experienced a substantial fall in tension after the historic summits that Kim Jong-un held separately with the presidents of the United States and South Korea.
- The Tibetan government-in-exile stated that there had been exploratory talks with the Chinese government to resume the negotiations, interrupted since 2010.

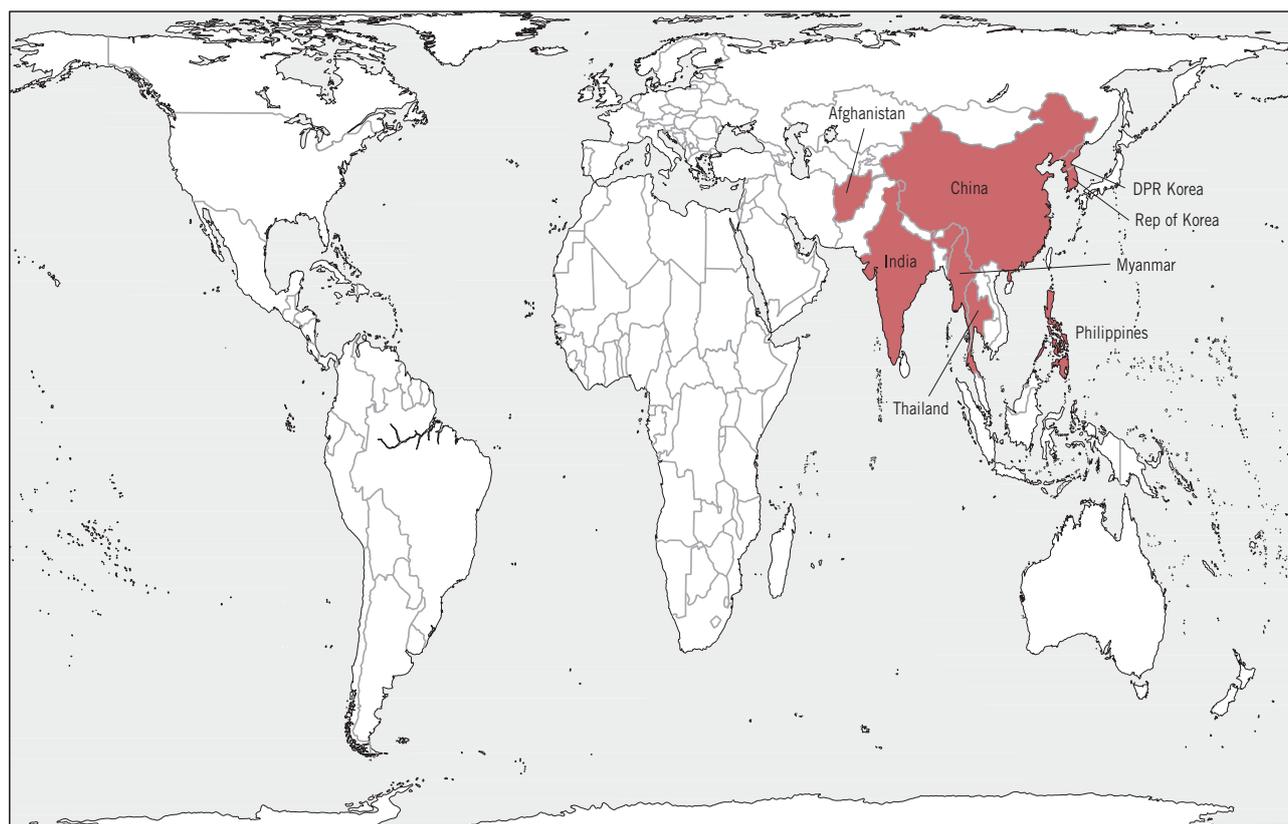
This chapter analyses the main peace processes and negotiations in Asia during 2018, including the general characteristics and trends of the negotiations and the development of each context throughout the year, including references to the gender, peace and security agenda. There is also a map at the beginning of the chapter showing the countries in Asia that hosted peace negotiations during 2018.

Table 4.1. Summary of peace processes and negotiations in Asia in 2018

Peace processes and negotiations	Negotiating actors	Third parties
Afghanistan	Government, Taliban insurgents, USA	Pakistan, China, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Russia, UN
China (Tibet)	China, Tibetan government-in-exile	--
DPR Korea – Republic of Korea	North Korea, South Korea	--
DPR Korea – USA	North Korea, USA	--
India (Assam)	Government, ULFA-PTF, NDFB-P, NDFB-RD	--
India (Nagaland)	Government, NSCN-IM, NNPG: GPRN/NSCN (Kitovi Zhimomi), NNC, FGN, NSCN(R), NPGN (Non-Accord) and NNC/GDRN/NA	--
Myanmar	Government, armed signatory groups of the cease fire agreement (NCA): DKBA, RCSS/SSA-South, CNF, KNU, KNLAPC, ALP, PNLO, ABSDF, NMSP, LDU; armed groups not part of the NCA: UWSP, NDAA, SSPP/SSA-N, KNPP, NSCN-K, KIA, AA, TNLA, MNDAA	--
Philippines (MILF)	Government, MILF	Malaysia, International Contact Group, Third Party Monitoring Team, International Monitoring Team
Philippines (MNLF)	Government, MNLF (faction led by Nur Misuari)	--
Philippines (NDF)	Government, NDF (umbrella organisation of different communist organisations, among them the Communist Party of the Philippines, which is the political arm of the NPA)	Norway
Thailand (south)	Government, MARA Patani (umbrella organisation representing several armed groups)	Malaysia

The peace negotiations in bold type are described in the chapter.
 -- There are no third parties or no public proof of their existence.

Map 4.1. Peace negotiations in Asia 2018



■ Countries with peace processes and negotiations in Asia in 2018

4.1 Negotiations in 2018: regional trends

Eleven negotiating processes were reported in **Asia** in 2018, accounting for over one fifth of the total worldwide and a notable increase over the previous year, when there were eight. The three new peace processes in 2018 involve China (Tibet), due to the resumption of exploratory talks between the Chinese government and Tibetan representatives after they were cancelled for nearly a decade; North Korea and South Korea, which convened three presidential summits and many meetings at the highest political and military level; and North Korea and the United States, whose presidents held a historic summit in Singapore and pledged to embark on an era of new relations between both countries. Although some of the negotiations in Asia were linked to active armed conflicts, such as in Afghanistan, the Philippines (NDF), Myanmar and Thailand (south), most took place amidst socio-political tension, as in China (Tibet), North Korea and South Korea, North Korea and the United States, India (Assam) and India (Nagaland), or involved armed groups that were no longer actively fighting against the government, such as the MILF and the MNLF in the Philippines. Almost half of the negotiations in Asia took place in Southeast Asia, while the other half was split evenly between South Asia and East Asia. In Central Asia, no negotiating process was reported.

The governments of the countries where the peace process took place were always included as **main actors**

in the negotiations. In some cases this was at the highest level, such as with the leaders of North Korea, South Korea, the United States and Myanmar, while in others it occurred through government mechanisms and institutions specifically created for peace negotiations, such as in Afghanistan (through the High Peace Council), the Philippines (through the Office of the Presidential Advisor on the Peace Processes) and Myanmar (through the Peace Commission). Most negotiations also included armed opposition groups, some negotiating directly with the government (such as the MILF and the MNLF in the Philippines, the Taliban insurgency in Afghanistan and the NSCN-IM in India) and others through political organisations representing them (like in the Philippines, where since the mid-1980s the government has been negotiating with the National Democratic Front (NDF), an organisation bringing together different communist organisations, including the Communist Party of the Philippines, whose armed wing is the NPA). In several cases, the negotiations took place between the government and umbrella organisations that grouped together and represented several armed groups, such as Mara Patani in Thailand, which unites five armed groups; the Naga National Political Groups (NNPG) in Nagaland, which represents six insurgent organisations; and the UNFC and the Northern Alliance in Myanmar, which represents armed organisations that have not

signed the national ceasefire agreement. There were three specific cases in which the negotiations did not involve armed groups or their political representatives: North Korea and South Korea; North Korea and the United States; and China (Tibet). In the first two, the negotiations mainly consisted of presidential summits preceded by several meetings to build trust between the parties and, later, to address the content and format of the summits; as well as many meetings after the summits (some sporadic, others more scheduled and frequent; some on a technical level, others on a high political or military level) to organise and implement the commitments made during the presidential summits. Regarding the process in China (Tibet), Beijing has made it clear on several occasions that it does not recognise the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA), commonly known as the Tibetan government-in-exile, so in the previous nine rounds of negotiations conducted until early 2010, the Chinese government negotiated directly with special envoys of the Dalai Lama, including his own brother.

In some cases the format of the negotiations was relatively straightforward, such as the presidential summits between North Korea and South Korea and North Korea and the United States and cases in which there were direct negotiations between the government and insurgent organisations, either directly (the MILF and MNLF in the Philippines) or through umbrella organisations (Mara Patani in southern Thailand). In other peace processes, however, the negotiations were more complex, either because of the fragmentation of insurgent groups or because of the multiplicity and juxtaposition of negotiating formats and processes. In Myanmar, for example, the signatories of the 2015 Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) negotiated with the government as part of the Union Peace Conference – 21st Century Panglong, but the government also negotiated directly with the UNFC (alliance of groups that have not signed the NCA) and with some of the groups that made up that coalition (in fact, some of them, like the NMSP and the LDU, joined the NCA in 2018, while others, such as the KNPP, still did not join despite holding mostly continuous dialogue with the government). Meanwhile, Burmese leader Aung San Suu Kyi met with several groups that had not signed the NCA, represented by the Northern Alliance, to sign bilateral agreements with them and thereby make it easier for them to sign the NCA. In India (Nagaland), the government negotiated directly and bilaterally with some of the main armed groups in the region, like the NSCN-IM and an NSCN-K faction that had abandoned the ceasefire agreement of 2015, but also with the Naga National Political Groups (NNPG), which represent several Naga insurgent groups. In Afghanistan, meetings were held between the Afghan government and Taliban militias, as well as between the US government and the Taliban (with several meetings in Qatar during 2018), but key conflict resolution

Asia was the continent with the highest percentage of cases with direct negotiations without third-party involvement

issues were also addressed at the same time in broader formats with greater international exposure, such as the international conference held in Geneva in November, the Kabul Process for Peace and Security Cooperation, in which the Afghan government met with several governments and international organisations, and the “Moscow format”, which brought together the Afghan government, the US Embassy (as an observer) and the governments of China, Iran, Pakistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

Nearly two thirds of the negotiations studied in Asia did not include **third-party** involvement, making it the continent with the highest percentage of direct and bilateral negotiations between the parties. In fact, the only cases where the peace process was facilitated or mediated by third parties were Afghanistan, the Philippines (MILF), the Philippines (NDF) and Thailand (south). The high degree of internationalisation of the peace processes in Mindanao and Afghanistan should be noted. In the Philippines (MILF), in addition to

official mediation by the government of Malaysia, the peace process enjoys three other international support structures: the International Monitoring Team, in which the EU participates with countries like Malaysia, Libya, Brunei Darussalam, Japan and Norway; the Third Party Monitoring Team, which oversees implementation of the agreements signed between the MILF and the Philippine government; and the

International Contact Group, formed by four states (Japan, the United Kingdom, Turkey and Saudi Arabia) and four international NGOs (Muhammadiyah, The Asia Foundation, The Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue and Conciliation Resources). Despite the transformation of the government and the MILF’s negotiating panels into peace accord implementation panels, the functions of this dialogue support structure have been reformulated and somewhat diluted. In Afghanistan, notable third parties were the UN, with its mandate to facilitate dialogue through UNAMA, and Qatar, a country where a Taliban insurgency office was opened a few years ago and which hosted several meetings between the Taliban and the US government in 2018. Other spaces of intermediation that illustrate the international community’s interest and intervention in Afghanistan are the Kabul Process, the “Moscow format” and the international conference on Afghanistan co-organised by the Afghan government and UNAMA in Geneva in November 2018, with the participation of many governments and international organisations.

Consistent with the limited role of third parties in peace processes, Asia was also the part of the world where **intergovernmental bodies** participated the least in mediating and facilitating dialogue and in observing and verifying implementation of agreements and cessations of hostilities. In fact, only the United Nations pursued any of those activities in Afghanistan, through UNAMA. The EU was indirectly involved in the

peace process in Mindanao through the International Monitoring Team, which oversees the ceasefire between the government and the MILF. Another organisation that has historically played an important role in Mindanao is the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), first by internationalising and legitimising the cause of the Moro people, then by facilitating the dialogue that led to the signing of the 1996 peace agreement between the government and the MNLF, recognised by the OIC as the legitimate representative of the Moro people. The OIC later facilitated negotiations between the MNLF and the government on full implementation of the aforementioned agreement in the Tripartite Review Process. Finally, it sponsored cooperation between the MNLF and the MILF and promoted the harmonisation and convergence of the separate negotiating processes with the state. However, given the integration of the major factions of the MNLF in the Bangsamoro Transition Commission and, therefore, their de facto acceptance of the negotiating process and the peace agreement between the government and the MILF, the faction led by Nur Misuari is the only one still demanding full implementation of the 1996 agreement, so lately the OIC has been having a less proactive role than in previous years.

The **negotiating agendas** of almost all the peace processes focused on issues related to self-determination, independence, autonomy, territorial and constitutional recognition and recognition of the identities of various national minorities, such as the Moro people in the Philippines, the Patani people in southern Thailand, the Tibetan people in China, several national minorities in some of the ethnic states of Myanmar and the state of Assam in India, as well as the Naga people in the Indian state of Nagaland. The agenda of the negotiations in Afghanistan and with the NDF in the Philippines was linked more to structural and systemic reforms in political, social and religious spheres. Another recurrent issue in several negotiating processes were ceasefires, truces and cessations of hostilities. The Burmese government stepped up its efforts to get the armed groups that did not sign the 2015 nationwide ceasefire agreement to adhere to it or to sign bilateral agreements, achieving this in some cases (such as with the NMSP and the LDU). In Afghanistan, state security forces and the Taliban insurgency agreed to the first ceasefire since the US invasion of the country in 2001. In Thailand, the government and Mara Patani agreed to establish safety zones, also known as limited ceasefires, in some districts of the three border provinces. This has been the main item on the substantive agenda of the negotiations between the parties in recent years. In the Philippines, the NDF's refusal to sign a ceasefire before the government committed to certain political and economic reforms and agreed to comply with some of its demands, such as the release of people it considers covered by the immunity agreement of signed between the parties, became one of the primary obstacles to the negotiations. In Nagaland, one of the breakthroughs of

Asia was also the part of the world where intergovernmental bodies participated the least in mediating and facilitating dialogue

the year was getting the armed group NSCN-K to return to the ceasefire agreement that it had abandoned in 2015.

Regarding the **evolution of the peace negotiations**, no final, global or structural agreement was achieved during the year, but progress was made in about half the processes we analysed. In the Korean peninsula, most analysts noted the summit that North Korean leader Kim Jong-un convened with US President Donald Trump and his three meetings with South Korean President Moe Jae-in. The joint statements signed by all three governments and the additional statements issued during the year by all three top leaders seem to suggest that significant progress was made in the denuclearisation and stabilisation of the Korean peninsula in 2018. Although details of the format, content and evolution of the discreet exploratory talks between the Chinese government and Tibetan representatives were not disclosed, there also seems to be reason for hoping that the dialogue between both sides will resume after being moribund for almost a decade. Meanwhile, in Mindanao, the approval of the Bangsamoro Organic Law by Congress and the president after several years

of legislative procedure may also herald a historic turning point in the peace process and support implementation of the 2014 peace agreement and the demobilisation of tens of thousands of MILF fighters. The Afghanistan peace process also enjoyed very significant progress, as the government offered unconditional peace negotiations and the first ceasefire between the Afghan Armed Forces and Taliban militias was carried out since 2001. The US government seemed committed to dialogue, even holding several meetings with Taliban representatives in Qatar. In other cases, even though the peace process might not have developed in line with expectations as a whole, some positive steps were still taken. In Myanmar, for example, even though the Union Peace Conference – 21st Century Panglong failed to move towards the signing of a peace agreement with the many armed groups participating in it, two new groups did join the 2015 nationwide ceasefire agreement and negotiations to join the Panglong conference moved ahead with several other groups that had not signed the agreement. There were also some positive developments in the process in the Indian state of Nagaland, such as when a faction of the NSCN-K joined peace talks with the government, reversing its previous decision to withdraw from the ceasefire agreement, and when the NNPG platform, which represents six Naga insurgent groups, decided to resume negotiations with the government following demonstrations by an insistent Naga civil society.

Finally, with regard to the **gender perspective**, none of the peace negotiations in Asia addressed the women, peace and security agenda specifically or directly and there was no significant female presence in the peace negotiations. However, some headway was made in this regard compared to previous years. In Myanmar, for

example, there was an increase in the participation of women in the Union Peace Conference – 21st Century Panglong compared to previous sessions, although the percentage of female participants (17%) was still far below the 30% demanded by women’s organisations. In this regard, it should also be noted that the agenda of the conference included topics such as female participation and discrimination and legislation to end gender violence. In Afghanistan, President Ashraf Ghani said that the 12-person team formed to carry out negotiations with the Taliban would be composed of men and women, while some statements or gestures by the Taliban movement during the year suggested that it may be softening its stance on women’s rights. The female deputy governor of the southern Thai province of Narathiwat, one of those affected by the armed conflict, urged the government to include more women in the negotiations with Mara Patani. In addition to the progress regarding greater female participation in peace negotiations, many women’s organisations played an important role in advocacy and pressure for starting, continuing or resuming dialogue in various contexts, involving demonstrations, carrying out outreach projects and submitting proposals to the negotiating parties.

4.2. Case study analysis

East Asia

China (Tibet)	
Negotiating actors	China, Tibetan government-in-exile
Third parties	--
Relevant agreements	--

Summary:

The negotiating process between the Chinese government and representatives of the Dalai Lama began in 1979, following a meeting in Beijing between Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping and the Dalai Lama’s brother, Gyalo Thondup, in which Xiaoping reportedly opened the possibility of discussing all subjects except the independence of Tibet. In the years that followed, various confidence-building measures were carried out between the parties, such as the recognition of mistakes and the promise of far-reaching reforms by Beijing, authorisation for the Tibetan government-in-exile (located in northern India since 1959) to conduct four missions in Tibet between 1979 and 1980 to learn about the situation first-hand, and even the start of exploratory talks in Beijing in 1982 and 1984. However, no negotiating process materialised between the parties in the second half of the 1980s. This was due to several issues, such as Beijing’s refusal to engage in political negotiations over the conflict and to discuss some of the Tibetan proposals on the status of Tibet, which were specified in the Five-Point Peace Plan for Tibet (1987), the Strasbourg Proposal (1988) and the Guidelines for Tibet’s Future Policy and Basic Features of Its Constitution (1991). After a visit by Gyalo Thondup to Beijing in 1992 and a visit by a Tibetan delegation in 1993, the negotiations between both sides were interrupted for almost a decade, which almost coincided with the period when Jiang Zemin was president of China. From 2002 to early 2010, nine rounds of negotiations took place between the Chinese government and representatives of the

Dalai Lama (Lodi Gyari and Kelsang Gyaltsen), in which the Tibetan party proposed the Middle Way (whereby the Tibetans would give up on independence and Beijing would grant genuine autonomy to the regions historically inhabited by the Tibetan population) and in which rapprochement was hindered by many issues, such as the concept of Greater Tibet, Beijing’s accusations that the Dalai Lama wanted to destabilise Tibet and dismember China and the Chinese government’s insistence that Tibet has been part of China since ancient times.

Expectations rose throughout the year regarding a possible resumption of Sino-Tibetan negotiations, which were interrupted in 2010 after the head of the Tibetan government-in-exile (officially called the Central Tibetan Administration, or CTA) acknowledged in April that despite the lack of any official communication with the Chinese government, exploratory talks between both sides had resumed. In fact, CTA leader Lobsang Sangay publicly declared that unofficial exploratory meetings had begun and that envoys from Beijing had on several occasions travelled to India (seat of the Tibetan government-in-exile), although he also appealed to realism, recalling that the nine rounds of talks that took place until 2010 produced no tangible results and that China had not altered its original stance. Regarding the Tibetan position, Lobsang Sangay once again declared that he was willing to renounce Tibet’s independence and focus negotiations on Beijing granting genuine autonomy to the region. The president of the CTA acknowledged his willingness to engage in possible talks with the Chinese government, but also noted that since it does not recognise the Tibetan government-in-exile, the meetings would be held between envoys of the Dalai Lama and Beijing. Later, in October, a prominent member of the Tibetan Parliament-in-exile, Youdon Aukatsang, confirmed the exploratory meetings between both parties and hoped that they would lead to the resumption of more formal negotiations as soon as possible. Youdon Aukatsang recalled that the Tibetan Parliament had unanimously approved the Middle Way, consisting of renouncing independence and demanding genuine autonomy for Chinese regions historically inhabited by a Tibetan majority, and noted that some of the items that could be on the substantive negotiating agenda would be internal security, the status of Tibetan as the main language of the region and the withdrawal of illegal settlements of non-Tibetan populations in China.

Gender, peace and security

There is no evidence that any woman is participating in the exploratory talks that the Chinese government and Tibetan representatives restarted in 2018, nor that the women, peace and security agenda was included in the issues to be addressed. In August 2018, the Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy (TCHRD) sent the Central Tibetan Administration its report of recommendations on gender equity and women’s empowerment, after having held consultations with around 30 women from different fields in June. Some of the recommendations in the document, which sought to

review and strengthen the women’s empowerment policy developed by the CTA for the first time in 2008 and revised in February 2017, included: to conduct annual or biannual reviews of the aforementioned gender equity policy, to adopt a gender-based and human rights-based approach, to develop an action plan to prevent sexual and gender-based violence and to create institutional infrastructure with a clear mandate gender equity and women’s empowerment issues and to equip the current Office of Women’s Empowerment with enough human resources to incorporate a gender perspective in all the CTA’s policies and programmes. According to this, in 2017, 45% of the people working in the CTA were women, with that percentage reaching 48% in the Department of Education and 60% in the Department of Health.

DPR Korea – Republic of Korea	
Negotiating actors	North Korea, South Korea
Third parties	--
Relevant agreements	Panmunjom Declaration (April 2018)

Summary:

Although the high points of the negotiations between North Korea and South Korea were the presidential summits held in the 21st century (2000, 2007 and 2018), there have been attempts at rapprochement to move forward on the path of reunification and cooperation since the 1970s. Thus, in 1972, both countries signed the North-South Korea Joint Statement, outlining some measures for reunification and reducing the arms race, among other issues. In late 1991, both countries signed the Agreement on Reconciliation, Non-Aggression, and Exchanges and Cooperation; a few weeks later, they signed the Joint Declaration of the Denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula. The former, which was achieved after five rounds of negotiations begun in September 1990 between the prime ministers of both countries, was considered a historic agreement and a turning point in the relationship between both countries by much of the international community, as it included commitments to mutual non-aggression, respect for the political and economic systems of each country, peaceful conflict resolution, economic cooperation and the promotion of measures for the reunification of both countries. However, the measures included in the agreement were not fully implemented, partly because of the tensions generated by the North Korean weapons programme. In 1994, former US President Jimmy Carter exercised his good offices between the leaders of both countries to contain the crisis generated by the progress made in the programme and Pyongyang’s decision not to allow inspections by the International Atomic Energy Agency and to abandon the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. In the 21st century, under a policy of rapprochement with North Korea (called the Sun Policy) promoted by Kim Dae-jun and continued by his successor, Roh Moon-hyun, in 2000 and 2007 Pyongyang hosted the first two presidential summits since the end of the Korean War, in which both countries again pledged to boost cooperation to move towards greater stability and the eventual reunification of the Korean peninsula.

Alongside the start of negotiations between North Korea and the US, during the year North Korea and South Korea engaged in the closest rapprochement in recent decades, with the historic organisation of three summits between

the leaders of both countries and the implementation of many agreements and confidence-building measures.

Following North Korean leader Kim Jong-un’s offer of immediate and unconditional talks with South Korea during his usual New Year’s address and South Korea’s announcement that it was postponing its annual joint military exercises with the US, both countries held several rounds of talks in which they reached several agreements, including parading under the same banner and competing jointly in various athletic events during the Winter Olympic Games that took place in February in the South Korean city of Pyeongchang and establishing a military communication line to facilitate the logistics of the talks. For the Winter Olympic Games, several joint cultural and athletic activities were held between the delegations of both countries, including a reception at the presidential palace hosted by South Korean President Moon Jae-in, where the North Korean delegation led Kim Jong-un’s sister, Kim Yo-jong, and Kim Yong-nam, the head of state and the highest-ranking North Korean dignitary ever to visit South Korea, invited South Korean President Moon Jae-in to a presidential summit in North Korea, though without specifying the date. In early March, a few days after this reception, Kim Jong-un received several South Korean special envoys in Pyongyang to discuss inter-Korean relations and preparations for the aforementioned summit (the date of 27 April was agreed), as well as to probe the potential beginnings of talks between North Korea and the US regarding the denuclearisation of North Korea. Subsequently, these special envoys met with US President Donald Trump, who expressed his willingness to meet with Kim Jong-un in May, and travelled to Japan and China to obtain support from both governments for both tracks of negotiations that were being discussed (North Korea-South Korea and North Korea-USA). Pyongyang’s willingness to participate in both negotiating processes was confirmed during a trip by Kim Jong-un to China at the end of the month (the first of the three that he made to that country early in the year), during Kim Jong-un’s reception of a delegation of South Korean musicians and politicians in Pyongyang in early April and in the North Korean government’s decision to suspend intercontinental ballistic missile tests and to close the Punggye-ri nuclear testing facility, as reported by the state news agency KNCA.

In these circumstances, **the summit between both presidents took place in South Korea on 27 April, making Kim Jong-un the first North Korean leader to set foot on South Korean soil. In the joint declaration to end the summit, both leaders mentioned its historical nature and committed, among other things, to the complete denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula,** the organisation of another presidential summit in North Korea at the end of the year, regular telephone communication, the organisation of meetings of families separated by the Korean War, the improvement of transport and communications between both countries and the end of propaganda on the border. There was another meeting between both leaders in the border

town of Panmunjom in late May. This secret meeting was held at the request of Kim Jong-un during a crisis in the talks between North Korea and the US and a few days after Moon Jae-in met in Washington with Donald Trump.

In the following three months, the first high-level military talks were held since 2007 and many agreements were achieved to implement the road map agreed by both countries in late April, including the restoration of cross-border communication, the withdrawal of heavy weaponry from the shared border, the gradual reduction of troops in the Demilitarised Zone (DMZ), the operationalisation of a 2004 agreement to prevent clashes in the Yellow (or East) Sea and the restoration of lines of military communication. Some confidence-building measures were also carried out, such as meetings of families separated by the Korean War and the joint parade and formation of combined teams during the Asian Games held in Indonesia in late August. In this atmosphere of cooperation between both countries, a liaison office was opened in mid-September in the North Korean border city of Kaesong to facilitate communication and cooperation between them. A few days later, between 18 and 20 September, a new summit was held between Moon Jae-in and Kim Jong-un in Pyongyang, where they discussed topics such as peace and the economic integration and denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula. Regarding this last point, although North Korea was not yet in a position to provide a timetable on its denuclearisation or an inventory of its nuclear arsenal, Kim Jong-un said he was willing to permanently deactivate the country's largest nuclear reactor in Yongbyon and to authorise international supervision as some nuclear test and missile launch facilities were being dismantled. At the summit in Pyongyang, both leaders also pledged to reopen the roads and railroads linking both countries by the end of the year and to reactivate tourist trips to Mount Kumgang (in North Korea) and reopen the Kaesong industrial complex, a symbol of cooperation between the two countries in the past.

Gender, peace and security

There is no public record that the negotiations between both governments in 2018, including the three presidential summits, included any issues related to the women, peace and security agenda, despite the fact that there were several women's organisations that demonstrated and engaged in political advocacy throughout the year to guarantee female participation in the peace process between both countries and the inclusion of a gender perspective in the negotiations. In this regard, three women's organisations (Women Cross DMZ, Women Peace Walk and Nobel Women's Initiative) issued a joint statement calling for the full

North and South Korea experienced the closest rapprochement in recent decades during the year, with the historic organisation of three summits between the leaders of both countries

and equal participation of women in the negotiating process between the two countries, in line with UN Security Council Resolution 1325. In this sense, some analysts have highlighted the role played by Kim Yo-jong, Kim Jong-un's sister, who was the only woman among the six delegates who participated in the inter-Korean presidential summit that took place in late April. Months earlier, Kim Yo-jong had also led the North Korean delegation that travelled to South Korea for the Winter Olympic Games that took place in February in the South Korean city of Pyeongchang. Kim Yo-jong was also the person who handed the letter to South Korean President Moon Jae-in inviting him to a presidential summit in North Korea, which is viewed as the beginning of the dialogue between both countries at the highest level and culminated with the three summits held during year.

DPR Korea – USA	
Negotiating actors	North Korea, USA
Third parties	--
Relevant agreements	Singapore Statement (June 2018)

Summary:
 The US and other countries of the international community began to express their concern about the North Korean nuclear programme in the early 1980s, but the tensions that it produced were mainly channelled through several bilateral or multilateral agreements: in 1985, Korea North ratified the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons; in 1991 the US announced the withdrawal of about 100 South Korean warheads under the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START); and in 1992 North Korea and South Korea signed the Joint Declaration on the Denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula, in which both countries pledged not to produce, store, test or deploy nuclear weapons and to allow verification through inspections. Nevertheless, there was a major diplomatic crisis in 1993 due to Pyongyang's decision not to allow inspections by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and to pull out of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, though it eventually stayed its hand after the talks it held with the United States and the United Nations. After a trip to the Korean peninsula by former President Jimmy Carter in 1994, in which he met with North Korean leader Kim Il-sung to resolve diplomatic tensions and seek rapprochement, the US and North Korean governments signed an agreement in Geneva (known as the Agreed Framework) in which, among other things, Pyongyang promised to freeze its nuclear programme in exchange for aid and the relaxation of international sanctions. George W. Bush's inauguration as president of the United States led to a change in policy towards North Korea. Shortly after it was included in the so-called "Axis of Evil", Pyongyang expelled several IAEA inspectors, withdrew from the Non-Proliferation Treaty and announced that it already possessed nuclear weapons. In light of this new situation, six-party multilateral talks between North Korea, South Korea, the United States, Japan, China and Russia began in 2003. Though they led to some important agreements in 2005 and 2008, this negotiating format came to an end in 2009. Despite direct contact between North Korea and the US since then, including an agreement reached in 2012 in which Pyongyang committed

to a moratorium on ballistic and nuclear tests, the tension between both countries rose after Kim Jong-un came to power in 2011 and the North Korean weapons programme intensified.

The rapprochement between the United States and North Korea culminated in the historic summit between the two countries' respective leaders, Donald Trump and Kim Jong-un, in Singapore in mid-June, which addressed the denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula and other issues. During a reception at the presidential palace hosted by President Moon Jae-in to mark North Korea's participation in the Winter Olympics in the South Korean city of Pyeongchang in February, a North Korean delegation said that it was willing to start talks with the USA. A few days later, Kim Jong-un met with several South Korean emissaries in Pyongyang to discuss the contents and conditions of such talks and said he was ready to meet directly with Donald Trump. These same emissaries travelled to Washington and obtained Trump's promise to meet with Kim Jong-un in May. US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo travelled to Pyongyang to discuss the details of the presidential summit at the end of March and again in early May. At around the same time, Kim Jong-un travelled to Beijing for the second time in a few weeks to discuss China's position on the denuclearisation of North Korea. Despite all these meetings, relations between Pyongyang and Washington soured in May, especially after the US and South Korea conducted joint military exercises, Washington questioned Pyongyang's willingness to denuclearise and the North Korean government accused the United States of seeking its unilateral disarmament and of not engaging in sincere dialogue. Thus, Donald Trump cancelled the summit with Kim Jong-un at the end of the month, but the next day the White House said it was working with a scenario in which the summit could take place. In fact, at the end of May, Mike Pompeo met in New York with North Korean delegates to continue preparations for it.

Finally, **on 12 June, the summit between Donald Trump and Kim Jong-un took place in Singapore, in which both committed to the start of new relations between the two countries, to the complete denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula, to repatriation of the remains of the US soldiers who died during the Korean War (1950-53) and to the United States' offer of security guarantees to North Korea** (in fact, at a press conference after the summit, Donald Trump contemplated the possibility of suspending the annual military exercises carried out in the Korean peninsula). In the weeks following the summit, many diplomatic meetings were held to follow up on the joint Singapore Statement, such as Kim Jong-un's official trip to China in mid-June and Mike Pompeo's trip to Pyongyang to early July, and some of the commitments made in the statement, such as the repatriation of the remains of US soldiers, were put into practice at the end of July. Many ministerial and

technical meetings were still held during the rest of the year to implement the joint Singapore Statement and to prepare for a second presidential summit scheduled for early 2019; Mike Pompeo travelled to Pyongyang on several occasions, for example. In addition, both sides made gestures to help the talks to continue. For example, the United States suspended joint military exercises with South Korea scheduled for December and North Korea conducted a military parade that did not include any intercontinental ballistic missiles able to transport nuclear warheads or other offensive heavy military equipment in early September. However, **there were several sources of tension in the second half of the year, with the United States and North Korea trading accusations.** Although neither party had set preconditions for holding the second presidential summit, which according to Trump could take place in January or February 2019, the US administration accused Pyongyang of failing to provide a timetable for denuclearisation or an inventory of its nuclear arsenal, to take specific steps supporting the assumption that they have initiated any type of disarmament and to authorise that any such measure may be subject to international

During the historic summit between Kim Jong-un and Donald Trump in Singapore, both leaders committed to the start of new relations and the complete denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula

inspection. As an example of the rising tension experienced in the second half of the year, a meeting in New York between Mike Pompeo and North Korean chief negotiator Kim Yong Chol was cancelled in November after a North Korean think tank revealed that Pyongyang was considering resuming its nuclear activities if there was no relaxation of the sanctions that the United Nations and several countries have imposed on North Korea for its nuclear and ballistic tests. In that vein, South Korean President Moon Jae- travelled to Europe in mid-October to meet with leaders from

different countries to seek support for relaxing the current sanctions imposed on North Korea. However, in line with the US position, several countries supported keeping the sanctions in place until North Korea takes concrete steps towards denuclearisation. In the second half of the year, North Korea raised its tone against the US for its overly-aggressive policy in pursuit of its nuclear disarmament. In mid-December, a few days after the US Treasury Department announced new sanctions against three North Korean senior government officials due to the human rights situation in North Korea, one of them considered the regime's second in command, the North Korean state news agency KCNA reported that the new sanctions imposed by Washington could forever block the path of denuclearisation that the country had undertaken since the presidential summit in June and provoke the worst crisis in relations between the US and South Korea in recent years.

Gender, peace and security

A few weeks before the summit between North Korea and the US, at a time of diplomatic tensions that were about

to lead to the cancellation of the summit, Women Cross DMZ and Women's Peace Walk, bringing together more than 30 women's organisations, and the Nobel Women's Initiative, led by Mairead Maguire, organised a trip to the Korean peninsula by an international delegation of more than 30 female academics and activists from various countries. The delegation organised the International Women's Peace Symposium, held meetings with representatives of the South Korean government and civil society and crossed the Unification Bridge in the Demilitarised Zone together with more than 1,000 women on the same day in late May that the leaders of North Korea and South Korea met a few kilometres away in Panmunjom. To mark the visit, the aforementioned women's organisations issued a statement requesting that some demands be taken into account during the summit between North Korea and the US, such as the replacement of the 1953 armistice with a peace treaty; the complete denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula, appealing not only to North Korea but also to other nuclear states; the conversion of the Demilitarised Zone into a Peace Park, which would involve the removal of more than one million mines in the region; the reunification of families separated by war; and the reduction of both countries' military budgets and an end to their arms race.

The peace process progressed noticeably throughout the year: the first ceasefire was agreed since the invasion of the country in 2001 and direct meetings were held between the US government and Taliban representatives

the Afghan government, the Taliban and the US government), meetings were held and statements were made throughout the year that reflected remarkable progress compared to previous years. **Several facts stood out especially: all the parties' willingness to engage in dialogue without conditions, the first ceasefire between the Afghan security forces and the Taliban insurgency since the US invasion of the country in 2001 and the addition of the United States to the dialogue as the Taliban have requested and as a prelude to an intra-Afghan dialogue as demanded by the government.**

The year began with **President Ashraf Ghani's offer of unconditional peace negotiations, including measures such as a ceasefire and prisoner exchanges.** Kabul would recognise the Taliban as a political organisation in exchange for recognition as a legitimate government. This proposal was offered as part of the Kabul Process, which brings the Afghan government together with international governments. It also came amidst serious violence and intense clashes and attacks, as well as the realisation that

the presence of actors like ISIS was pushing all parties to search for a negotiated solution. Diplomatic players like the former head of UNAMA, Kai Eide, pointed out that this was a good opportunity since the proposal did not include pre-conditions or ultimatums, adding that initial talks with the US followed by an intra-Afghan dialogue between the government and the Taliban could be an effective roadmap, with Washington's involvement in the process being a "small price" to pay.

The Taliban did not respond to Ghani's offer, but in June the **president announced a ceasefire between 17 and 19 of that month, coinciding with the Muslim holiday of Eid al-Fitr, to celebrate the end of Ramadan. The Taliban responded to the announcement two days later with a promise to cease all attacks against Afghan forces for three days**, though attacks against international forces were still allowed. The Afghan government indicated that it was willing to discuss the existence, role and future of the international military forces and the US State Department supported this by saying that it was prepared to support, facilitate and participate in the discussion. The ceasefire was very important, as it was the first since the 2001 invasion. Moreover, its observance indicated the extent of the Taliban leadership's control over its members. Some media outlets stated that during the days that the ceasefire was effective, members of the Afghan Armed Forces and Taliban insurgents fraternised in different parts of the country, even taking pictures together. In addition, Washington indicated that it had asked Pakistan for support to facilitate direct negotiations between Afghanistan and the Taliban insurgency and that multiple paths to promote peace in the country were being pursued. In July several media outlets reported that US government representatives had met with Taliban representatives at least twice

South Asia

Afghanistan	
Negotiating actors	Government, Taliban insurgents, USA
Third parties	Pakistan, China, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Russia, UN
Relevant agreements	Bonn Agreement –Agreement on provisional arrangements in Afghanistan pending the re-establishment of permanent government institutions – (2001)

Summary:

Afghanistan has been in a state of continuous armed conflict since 1979. The different parties have attempted to negotiate in all of the stages of the struggle. During the 1980s the UN worked to facilitate rapprochement between the US and the USSR. After the fall of the Taliban regime in 2001, the United Nations again facilitated the process that led to the Bonn Agreement, which marked the beginning of the country's transition. In recent years the persistence of armed conflict and the inability to stop it using military means has led the Afghan and U.S. Governments to gradually reach out to the Taliban insurgency, a process that has not been without difficulties and has not passed the exploration and confidence building stages. Different international actors such as the UN and the German and Saudi Arabian Governments have played different roles in facilitating and bringing the parties together.

The peace process in Afghanistan progressed noticeably throughout 2018 and, although formal talks were not initiated between the different actors involved (mainly

in the previous three months. The meetings allegedly took place in Qatar with the collaboration of Pakistan, which had guaranteed the travel of Taliban members to the country. These meetings verified that the Trump administration had instructed its diplomats to initiate direct talks with the Taliban, in a significant change in its policy of seeking a military victory in the Asian country. US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo also acknowledged that there would be no preconditions for dialogue and that all issues could be discussed, including the US military and NATO presence in Afghanistan. However, the breakdown of the ceasefire and the resumed fighting revealed the obstacles to the process, as the Taliban did not accept the government's proposal to extend the ceasefire for three months.

The US government took further steps to strengthen the process and appointed Zalmay Khalilzad, a diplomat of Afghan origin and former ambassador to the country, to be the Special Representative for Afghanistan Reconciliation. Khalilzad made several trips to Qatar where he **met with Taliban representatives. There was also a meeting in the United Arab Emirates in mid-December.** He called for both parties to form negotiating teams. In November, the Taliban were optimistic about the negotiating process with the United States. Although President Ghani supported direct US involvement in the negotiations, Khalilzad's meetings with the Taliban were a source of tension between both governments, since they were conducted without informing the Afghan government, which learned of them from the media. However, despite the tension following the first meetings between the US and the Taliban, during the international conference on Afghanistan in Geneva in late November, Ashraf Ghani announced that he had formed a 12-person team to negotiate with the Taliban led by Abdul Salam Rahimi, who is very close to Ghani. The president said that as a result of a possible peace agreement, he wanted the Taliban to be included in a democratic and inclusive society. However, after the meeting in the United Arab Emirates in December, the Taliban refused to meet with the government, saying that their position had not changed.

Alongside the process between the Taliban and the United States, Russia tried to maintain an active position and made an attempt to bring all the actors together in August, but both the Afghan government and the US rejected the invitation to participate in a forum to be held in Moscow with the Taliban and several international governments in September. However, in November the Russian government achieved its goal with a meeting that included a Taliban delegation and became known as the "Moscow format". The Afghan government delegated its participation in the High Peace Council and an observer from the US Embassy also attended. The meeting was attended by representatives of the governments of China, Iran, Pakistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. India, an ally of the Afghan government, sent two former diplomats unofficially. Although no real progress was

made, the mere fact that the meeting was held at all was considered a success, especially for Russian diplomacy.

Gender, peace and security

Regarding the gender dimension in the peace process in Afghanistan, President Ashraf Ghani said that the 12-person team formed to conduct negotiations with the Taliban would be composed of men and women. In preceding months, Ghani had publicly stated that women should be part of any process with the Taliban, recognising the growing role they are playing in Afghan society, where they are occupying more and more public positions. The Taliban may also be softening its position on women, as evidenced by different events that happened throughout the year. During the June truce, different photographs emerged of Taliban fighters with a civilians, including women, and even female media professionals. In July, the media reported a meeting in Qatar between Taliban leaders and a US delegation led by diplomat Alice G. Wells. Also, during the meeting in Moscow in November, Taliban representatives agreed to give interviews to female journalists. At the same meeting, Habiba Sarabi, a member of the High Peace Council and the only woman in attendance, asked the Taliban when they planned to add a woman to the talks. The Taliban delegation responded that they were willing to recognise the rights of women in Islam, education, work and property, and that the only requirement was that they wear a veil.

India (Nagaland)	
Negotiating actors	Government, NSCN-IM, NNPG: GPRN/ NSCN (Kitovi Zhimomi), NNC, FGN, NSCN(R), NPGN (Non-Accord) and NNC/ GDRN/NA
Third parties	--
Relevant agreements	Framework agreement (2015)

Summary:

The Indian state of Nagaland has suffered armed conflict and a socio-political crisis since the 1950s as a result of much of the Naga population's unfulfilled aspiration to win independence and create a sovereign state. There have been different attempts at negotiation since the 1960s, but it was not until 1997 that a ceasefire agreement was reached with the NSCN-IM group, one of the main actors in the conflict. Although the agreement has remained in force to date, the negotiations have not made significant progress on the central issues. In 2012, however, the peace process received a boost from greater involvement from the Naga government and state MPs. Alongside the negotiations with the NSCN-IM, in 2001 the government reached another ceasefire agreement with the NSCN-K insurgent organisation. However, these negotiations have also failed to make significant progress. In 2015, the Government and the NSCN-IM reached a framework pre-agreement, considered a preamble to the final resolution of the conflict. However, that same year, the ceasefire agreement with the NSCN-K was broken, and violent clashes began again.

The year 2018 ended without the signing of the expected peace agreement, even though the leading actors, and especially the Indian government, insisted that the

process was nearing its end, as in previous years. However, **significant progress was achieved in the second half of the year, when the armed opposition group NSCN-K rejoined the ceasefire agreement that it abandoned in 2015.** The year had begun with a shaky political situation due to the boycott of the legislative elections staged by several Naga civil society organisations, which called for postponing them until a solution to the conflict could be achieved through the peace negotiations. Although the political parties initially followed through with the boycott, including the Hindu nationalist party BJP, which currently controls the Indian government, they finally desisted and presented their candidates for the elections. Neiphiu Rio was elected the new chief minister of Nagaland, having already held the office on previous occasions. The main obstacle to the negotiations continued to be the issue of the integration of all the Naga territories and the definition of the status of the Naga population in the states adjacent to Nagaland. For the first time since the signing of the 2015 framework agreement, which should serve as the basis for any future final agreement, part of its secret contents were leaked, revealing that it provided for a solution whereby Nagaland would remain in the Indian federation with a special status and the territorial boundaries of the states would not be modified. The tension over the issue of the border states with Nagaland was palpable in August, when a meeting scheduled between the Indian government and the armed group NSCN-IM in the state of Arunachal Pradesh was cancelled due to protests by different parts of society there. The NSCN-IM also stated that the integration of all areas inhabited by the Naga population was an essential part of the negotiations. Before this meeting was cancelled, in June, the talks had also run into serious difficulties when the six armed groups making up the Naga National Political Groups (NNPG) abandoned the negotiations with the government following the security forces' raid of the home of one of their leaders who was in Delhi to participate in the talks. The NNPG resumed negotiations a few days later, citing the interest of the Naga people and urged on by civil society organisations. Civil society groups stressed the importance of the ceasefire and urged all parties to renew their commitment to it.

In the middle of the year, it emerged that the armed group NSCN-K was splitting and that a faction led by Khango Konyak was considering joining the talks with the government. One faction consisted mainly of Naga from India, while the other faction was primarily composed of Naga from Myanmar. The announcement was made by the group's spokesman, Isak Sumi, after Burmese Naga leader Yung Aung assumed control of the armed group, displacing Khango Konyak, in what some analysts described as a manoeuvre orchestrated by the Indian government to get the Indian Naga faction to join the process. **Finally, in December, the NSCN-K faction**

A women's organisation, the Naga Mothers Association, played a central role in ensuring that the armed group NSCN-K rejoined the ceasefire agreement after abandoning it in 2015

led by Khango Konyak and Isak Sumi decided to resume the ceasefire and join the agreement. In response to this decision, Indian government negotiator R. N. Ravi pointed out that the government had never ended the ceasefire and welcomed the armed group to the peace process, noting that New Delhi was committed to finding a global solution instead of various isolated agreements. The historical leader of the NSCN-IM, Khole Konyak, died in December and remarkably his funeral was attended by the Indian government's chief negotiator, R. N. Ravi, and many Naga political figures.

Gender, peace and security

Regarding the gender dimension of this peace process, **a women's organisation, the Naga Mothers Association (NMA), played a central role in ensuring that the NSCN-K rejoined the ceasefire agreement.** This organisation led parallel talks with the armed group for this purpose and several of its representatives have met at least three times with leaders of the armed group in Myanmar since 2015, until reaching the decision to resume the ceasefire. The last meeting took place in January at the armed organisation's headquarters. The NMA also met several times with representatives of the Indian government to demand an end to the ban on the NSCN-K. An NMA advisor noted that issues such as gender justice and the inclusion of women in the peace negotiations had also been discussed at meetings with the NSCN-K leaders. The NMA has played a crucial role in rapprochement between the parties to the conflict on several occasions in recent decades and has been one of the most active civil society organisations in promoting a negotiated solution to the armed conflict.

South-east Asia and Oceania

Myanmar	
Negotiating actors	Government, armed signatory groups of the cease fire agreement (NCA): DKBA, RCSS/SSA-South, CNF, KNU,KNLAPC, ALP, PNLO, ABSDF, NMSP, LDU; armed groups not part of the: UWSP, NDAA, SSPP/SSA-N, KNPP, NSCN-K, KIA, AA, TNLA, MNDA
Third parties	--
Relevant agreements	Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (October 2015)

Summary:

Since the armed conflict between the Armed Forces of Myanmar and ethnic-based insurgent groups began in 1948, several negotiations have take place in an attempt to end the violence. Beginning in the late 1980s and throughout the 1990s, many armed groups have reached ceasefire agreements with the Burmese Government. Although definitive peace agreements were never reached, violence did

decrease significantly as a result of these pacts. In 2011 there was a change in the Administration as a result of the 2010 elections and the new Government made several overtures to the armed insurgency that brought about the start of peace negotiations and the signing of agreements with most of the armed groups operating in different parts of the country. By mid-2012 the Government had signed a ceasefire agreement with 12 insurgent organizations. In 2013, talks began with different insurgent groups aimed at reaching a nationwide ceasefire agreement and promoting political talks. In 2015, the government and eight armed opposition groups signed a ceasefire agreement (NCA), taking the first steps towards political dialogue.

The peace process in Myanmar reported no significant progress and remained at an impasse, while armed clashes continued in several parts of the country. Despite holding the third session of the Union Peace Conference – 21st Century Panglong, which had been preceded by two sessions in 2016 and 2017, the Burmese government and the insurgent groups made no headway towards achieving a peace agreement. The Union Peace Conference – 21st Century Panglong began in 2016 to promote a negotiating process between the government and ethnic insurgent groups, with clear reference to the historic Panglong Conference of 1947. The difficulties in getting most of the insurgent organisations to stick to the ceasefire agreement and the Burmese military's control of the peace process, which was accused of pushing a strategy to divide the insurgents and undermine an inclusive peace agreement, were some of the main obstacles to a negotiated solution to the armed conflict gripping country.

The year began with the signing of the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) by two insurgent groups that until then had remained outside it. After a meeting with State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi and the commander-in-chief of the Armed Forces, General Min Aung Hlaing, in February the armed groups **New Mon State Party (NMSP) and Lahu Democratic Union (LDU)** officially signed the agreement that was originally signed by eight groups in 2015. These two armed groups had previously been part of the United Nationalities Federal Council (UNFC), a platform for insurgent organisations that have not signed the NCA, which raised many questions about its future. It also revealed the divisions and difficulties of a highly fragmented and complex negotiating process, with parallel and interlinked processes between insurgent groups that have signed the NCA and the groups that have not signed it but are in talks with the government's Peace Commission. The UNFC stressed that the lack of agreement between all the groups and the government was due to problems related to the terminology used in a possible agreement. The main problem hinges on the description of the nation, since the UNFC proposes speaking of “the establishment of the Nation of a Federal Democratic Union”, whereas the military representatives in the negotiations advocate the formula “Nation of Democratic and Federal Union”. Despite the fact that there have been at least seven meetings, no agreement was reached for all the insurgent

groups. Meanwhile, the government also maintained active dialogue with the KNPP and both sides took joint steps aimed at signing the NCA, although the bilateral ceasefire agreement was broken in October.

The third session of the Union Peace Conference – 21st Century Panglong finally took place in July. It was postponed several times for various reasons, including because the national dialogues that were supposed to take place in Shan State and Rakhine State prior to the conference had not been held. The insurgent groups said that the Burmese Armed Forces had prevented public discussions before the talks and the military said that these discussions were not a requirement for the national dialogues. Given the situation, at a meeting of the Joint Implementation Coordination Meeting, in which the NMSP and the LDU also participated, the Burmese government and the insurgents jointly decided to postpone the conference. Furthermore, the Peace Process Steering Team (PPST), comprising leaders of armed groups that have signed the NCA, formed two teams to hold informal talks with the government on political and security issues. **The ten armed groups that signed the NCA participated in the Union Peace Conference – 21st Century Panglong. The Northern Alliance coalition was also invited to attend, but without the possibility of speaking. The Northern Alliance coalition consists of the Arakan Army (AA), Kachin Independence Army (KIA), Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA) and Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA), groups that held meetings with Aung San Suu Kyi and were offered opportunities to sign bilateral agreements enabling negotiations for signing the NCA, which they rejected,** though they did express their willingness to continue the dialogue. The clashes between groups that have not signed the NCA and the Burmese Armed Forces were intense at various times of the year. During the conference, the Burmese Armed Forces presented themselves as the representatives of the people of Myanmar, demonstrating their control of the country and the weakness of State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi. The conference ended with no notable progress and with Aung San Suu Kyi calling for a strategy for peace that would enable them to agree on a framework for political dialogue, demonstrating the erratic nature of the process in recent years. However, in the final months of the year, the KNU and RCSS announced that they were temporarily withdrawing from the peace negotiations.

In September, the government convened a meeting involving over 40 actors related to the peace process, including experts, observers, former negotiators and ethnic political party representatives. In October, a meeting was held between the state counsellor, the chief of the Armed Forces and the ten armed opposition groups that signed the NCA in order to thaw the process. During the meeting, the military insisted that the armed groups demonstrate their commitment to non-secession. Groups that had not signed the NCA were not invited to the meeting, which ended with no progress other than agreement on a calendar for future negotiations.

Gender, peace and security

With regard to the gender dimension in the peace process, **there was an increase in female participation in the Union Peace Conference – 21st Century Panglong compared to previous editions. Women accounted for 17% of the delegates**, though this is still far from the 30% required by different women's organisations. The Agenda included topics such as women's participation and discrimination and legislation to end gender violence. Organisations such as the Alliance for Gender Inclusion in the Peace Process continued with their advocacy work to promote the participation of women in the peace process and the women, peace and security agenda.

After several years of procedure, Congress finally passed the Bangsamoro Organic Law, considered the cornerstone for implementing the 2014 peace agreement between the Philippine government and the MILF

Philippines (MILF)	
Negotiating actors	Government, MILF
Third parties	Malaysia, International Contact Group, Third-Party Monitoring Team, International Monitoring Team
Relevant agreements	Agreement for General Cessation of Hostilities (1997), Agreement on Peace between the Government and the MILF (2001), Mutual Cessation of Hostilities (2003), Framework Agreement on the Bangsamoro (2012), Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro (2014), Organic Law for the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (2018)

Summary:

Peace negotiations between the Government and the MILF, an MNLF splinter group, started in 1997, just months after Fidel Ramos's Administration had signed a peace agreement with the MNLF. Since then, the negotiating process has been interrupted three times (in 2000, 2003 and 2008) by outbreaks of high intensity violence. Despite this, in the over 30 rounds of talks that have taken place since the late 1990s some agreements on security and development have been reached, as well as a ceasefire agreement that has been upheld, for the most part. In October 2012 both parties signed the Framework Agreement on the Bangsamoro and in March 2014 the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro, which plans to replace the current Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao with a new public body (called Bangsamoro) with a larger territorial scope and broader self-government competences. Since 2014, the peace process has been focused on drafting and the adoption by Parliament of the Bangsamoro Basic Law, which should include the main components of the two peace agreements mentioned above.

Both the Philippine government and the MILF stated that President Rodrigo Duterte's ratification of the Organic Law for the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (OLBARM) in July is a historic milestone for the peace process in Mindanao, as it paves the way for implementation of the peace agreement signed in 2014, the replacement of the Autonomous Region

in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) with a new political structure with greater powers, resources and geographic scope and the disarmament and demobilisation of the 30,000 to 40,000 fighters that the MILF claims to have. In the first half of July, a bicameral committee worked intensively to harmonise the versions of the OLBARM, also known as the Bangsamoro Organic Law and formerly as the Bangsamoro Basic Law, drafted by the Senate, the House of Representatives and the Bangsamoro Transition Commission, which submitted a draft law in mid-2017 that was later ratified by the government. Given the difficulties in reconciling and the differences between the various drafts, and faced with the possibility that the final draft approved by Congress might not include essential aspects of the 2014 peace agreement, the MILF said several times during the first half

of the year that it would not disarm or demobilise within the expected timeframe if the final approved law did not respect the letter and spirit of the peace agreement. It also warned of the risk that its combatants' and the general population's growing frustrations over the slow pace of the peace process could end up strengthening the argument of armed groups in the region that oppose the peace negotiations, boosting their recruitment. In any case, the MILF considered the law finally signed by Duterte to be sufficiently respectful of the peace agreement and it was hailed and supported by several international organisations and many governments.

In the second half of the year, the peace process focused on the partial demobilisation of MILF troops and, especially, on the organisation of the referendum that will take place in January and February 2019 in those areas that will eventually be part of the new Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM).

A few days after the ratification of the OLBARM, MILF leader Ebrahim Murad guaranteed the complete demobilisation of the group, which according to some media sources had about 12,000 fighters, but which the group's main leaders claimed to have between 30,000 and 40,000 fighters. Murad also said that six of the largest MILF camps in Mindanao were already being turned into what he called "productive civilian communities" to help to reintegrate former MILF ex-combatants into civilian life. According to the peace agreement, 30% of the MILF's fighters will begin their disarmament and demobilisation following approval of the Bangsamoro Organic Law; another 35% after the plebiscite is held and the Bangsamoro Transition Authority is appointed and the remaining 35% after the election of a new government in the autonomous region. In early December, the Commission on Elections declared that the referendum to ratify the OLBARM will finally be held on two dates: 21 January for regions that are currently part of the ARMM (and that will automatically go on to form part of the BARMM), in addition to the cities of Isabela (in the province of Basilan, which is

already part of the ARMM) and Cotabato (in the province of Maguindanao, which is also part of the ARMM); and on 6 February for regions that would eventually join the new region, specifically six cities in the province of Lanao del Norte and 39 municipalities (barangays) belonging to six cities in the province of North Cotabato. Areas adjacent to the Bangsamoro region whose municipal government requests their inclusion or in which 10% of registered voters request their participation in the referendum will also vote in it. According to the Commission on Elections, the decision to hold a second vote in February was partially motivated to buy more time to resolve roughly 100 requests to participate in the referendum received from municipalities adjacent to the new autonomous region. According to Manila, 2.8 million people had registered by mid-December, a figure clearly higher than initially expected and one that could rise depending on the response to the municipal requests to participate in the plebiscite. More than 150,000 ex-MILF combatants are also registered. Their participation in the vote was made easier by lowering some of the requirements for identification. In the final months of the year there were many displays of support for ratifying the OLBARMM in the plebiscite, including by the governor of the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (the body that will be replaced by the BARMM), by most of the MNLF (including some close collaborators of the group's founder, Nur Misuari, who opposes it) and by many governments and international organisations that have been willing to cooperate to organise the referendum. Finally, in November the leader of the MILF paid a historic visit to the headquarters of the Philippine Army and the head of the Armed Forces visited one of the MILF's main camps.

Gender, peace and security

During the year, several women's organisations, such as the Bangsamoro Women Organisation, urged both houses of Congress to approve the OLBARMM, presenting proposals and participating in public hearings and discussions organised by the Senate and House of Representatives committees responsible for processing the law. Notable in this regard was the celebration in March of the second Bangsamoro Women's Economic and Development Summit, jointly organised by the OPAPP, the Regional Commission on Bangsamoro Women and the Commission on Elections to contribute to the discussion on the OLBARMM. At the summit, which is estimated to have been attended by some 500 women, Maisara Dandamun-Latiph, one of the members of the Bangsamoro Transition Commission, the body responsible for the first draft of the OLBARMM, guaranteed the **creation of a Bangsamoro Women's Commission to promote the rights of women in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao**. She also assured that 50% of those who will work in the regional government will be women and that a certain number of positions will be reserved for women both in the interim government

that will govern the new region until 2022 and in the Bangsamoro Council of Leaders, a consultative body that will advise government action in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao. One of the bodies co-organising the event, the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao's Regional Commission on Bangsamoro Women, has a regional Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security between 2017 and 2019 that provides for the empowerment and participation of women in all public spheres, among other issues.

Philippines (MNLF)	
Negotiating actors	Government, NDF (umbrella organisation of various communist organisations, including the Communist Party of the Philippines, which is the political wing of the NPA)
Third parties	Norway
Relevant agreements	The Hague Joint Declaration (1992), Joint Agreement on Safety and Immunity Guarantees (1995), Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (1998)

Summary:

Negotiations between the Government and the NDF began in 1986, after the fall of Ferdinand Marcos' dictatorship. Since then, many rounds of negotiations have taken place, but agreement has only been reached on one of the four items listed in the substantive negotiation agenda of The Hague Joint Declaration of 1992, namely human rights and international humanitarian law (an agreement was signed in 1998). No agreement has been reached on the other three items: socio-economic reforms; political and constitutional reforms; and cessation of hostilities and disposition of armed forces. Since 2004, the Government of Norway has been acting as a facilitator between the Government and the NDF, the political organisation that represents the Communist Party of the Philippines and its armed wing (the NPA) in the peace talks. In addition to the significant differences that exist between the Government and the NDF with regard to which socio-economic and political model is best for the Philippines, one of the issues that has generated the greatest controversy between the parties in recent years is that of the security and immunity guarantees for the NDF members involved in the peace negotiations.

Although both sides were about to resume formal peace negotiations in Oslo in late June, the government finally called them off, which sparked a rise in armed hostilities and worsened relations between them during the second half of the year. After several months of deadlock in the peace negotiations, in February representatives of the government of Norway, which is in charge of facilitating the dialogue, travelled to the Philippines to explore the possibilities of resuming the peace talks. In March, a group of more than 60 congressmen from different parties signed a joint statement urging the government to resume the peace talks, while some of the most influential civil society organisations, such as Sulong CARHRIHL and the Philippine Ecumenical Peace Platform, also urged both sides to continue with the peace talks. Shortly after these calls were made,

NPA founder Jose Maria Sison also publicly stated that the NDF was willing to resume the talks, adding that they could start whenever President Rodrigo Duterte wanted. As a result, in April Duterte announced his intention to resume the talks and established a 60-day timetable for re-establishing them, warning that this was probably the government's last attempt to achieve a negotiated solution to the conflict and stressing the importance of reaching a cessation of hostilities agreement in the course of the negotiations. After these statements, both the secretary of national defence and the chief of the Philippines Armed Forces urged the NPA/CPP/NDF to end their extortion and not to raise a coalition government again. Duterte also said that he wanted the peace negotiations to take place in the Philippines and not abroad. In this regard, he invited the main leaders of the NDF, especially Sison, to return to the Philippines, guaranteeing them safe conduct during the two-month timetable. The NDF's first reaction to the government's offer of dialogue was very positive, and it accepted Manila's challenge to shorten the timetable for the negotiations, with Sison declaring that this time both sides were determined to agree on a road map that would conclude an agreement before the end of 2018. However, both members of the NDF and Sison expressed reservations about travelling to the Philippines and declared their outright refusal to hold peace talks in the Philippines instead of a neutral place, as the parties had previously agreed.

In any case, during the informal and exploratory talks that took place in early May, both sides agreed to resume negotiations in Oslo by late June or early July, with the commitment to address issues such as an amnesty for certain prisoners and rural development reforms. The NDF also acknowledged having agreed to a cessation of hostilities in mid-June as a confidence-building measure for formal negotiations to resume. However, the day before the start of the cessation of hostilities, Sison said that it would be postponed for a week to give the government time to specify the release of NDF political advisors. The following day, the presidential advisor on the peace process, Jesus Dureza, said that Duterte had ordered the postponement of the negotiations for three months to allow time for consultations within the government on the meaning and scope of the reforms that should be discussed at the negotiating table. Manila also suspended the informal talks during that period of time, but kept communication open. Shortly after this announcement, the Department of Justice ordered the arrest of the NDF advisors that had been released to participate in the negotiations. In late June, Jose Maria Sison declared that the NDF would no longer negotiate with any government headed by Duterte and even called for his overthrow. However, Duterte quickly retorted that only the NDF's National Council could make the decision not to negotiate again with the government. Amidst these mutual accusations, the secretary of national defence and Duterte said that some of the main reasons why the government decided to cancel the negotiations were the opposition parties' lack of sincerity regarding the

cessation of hostilities, noting that on previous occasions they had used it tactically, to regroup and strengthen, and their insistence on forming a coalition government. This last accusation was denied categorically by the NDF.

In the second half of the year, the military confrontation heated up between the Philippine Armed Forces and the NPA, as did the tension between the government and the NDF.

In July, Sison said he was willing to resume talks if the government removed the NPA and the Communist Party of the Philippines from its list of terrorist organisations, if it respected the agreements signed since 1992 and if it invalidated the presidential proclamation issued in November 2017 that ended negotiations with the NDF. Duterte again offered security guarantees to Sison if he agreed to return to the Philippines to hold direct talks, but Sison rejected the offer outright. Given the circumstances, Manila announced that from then on it would hold peace talks with regional units of the NPA. The NDF categorically rejected this new approach by the government as a counterinsurgency strategy that only sought to achieve the demobilisation and surrender of its combatants and sow division between the leadership of the NDF (which has resided in Utrecht for decades) and the NPA fighters on the ground. In November, the head of the NDF's negotiating team, Fidel Agcaoli, refused to travel to the Philippines for security reasons shortly after Duterte cancelled the meeting planned with him and instead offered to meet with two cabinet ministers. In December, the government declared that the president had lost all hope of resuming talks with the NDF for the rest of his term and that he no longer had any interest in talking directly with Jose Maria Sison. In fact, at the request of the Philippine Armed Forces, Duterte said that he had no intention of ordering the suspension of hostilities that both the Philippine Army and the NPA usually observe for the Christmas holidays. Nevertheless, in early January 2019, Duterte said that he was willing to reopen the door to negotiations, though he demanded several conditions from the NDF and was especially reluctant to resume the talks with Sison, Fidel Agcaoli or Luis Jalandoni (the former head of the government's negotiating team). The secretary of national defence quickly seconded Duterte's claims, demanding that the negotiations take place in the Philippines and not abroad. Sison blasted Duterte's government and rejected the possibility that it can determine who represents or negotiates on behalf of the NDF, but also publicly announced the NDF's predisposition to dialogue. Agcaoli also urged a discreet meeting between both sides, facilitated by Norway, to explore the possibilities of resuming negotiations.

Thailand (south)	
Negotiating actors	Government, MARA Patani (umbrella organisation representing several armed groups)
Third parties	Malaysia
Relevant agreements	--

Summary:

Since 2004, the year when the armed conflict in the south of Thailand reignited, several discreet and exploratory informal conversations have taken place between the Thai government and the insurgent group. Some of these dialogue initiatives have been led by non-government organizations, by the Indonesian government or by former senior officials of the Thai State. After around one year of exploratory contacts between the Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra and some insurgent groups, at the start of 2013, formal and public conversations started between the Government and the armed group BRN, facilitated by the Government of Malaysia. These negotiations were interrupted by the coup d'état in March 2014, but the military government in power since then resumed its contacts with several insurgent groups towards the second half of the year. In 2015 negotiations between the Government and MARA Patani –an organization grouping the main insurgent groups in the south of the country– were made public. Although the insurgency wanted to discuss measures that might resolve the central points of the conflict (such as recognizing the distinct identity of the Patani people or granting some level of self-government to the provinces of Yala, Pattani and Narathiwat), the main point discussed during the initial stages of the process was the establishment of several security areas to reduce the level of violence and thus determine the level of representativeness of MARA Patani and the commitment of insurgent groups (especially the BRN) with the process of dialogue.

Although an agreement was reached in February on establishing a security zone in the southern part of the country, the central issue in the negotiations between the government and MARA Patani for the previous two years, **the peace negotiations remained virtually at an impasse since April. Not even the appointment of a new facilitator by Malaysia, the naming of a new negotiator by the government and the addition of three new groups to the MARA Patani negotiating team could thaw the frozen peace process.** Then, about two years after reaching a framework agreement on the need to establish security zones (or geographically located cessation of hostilities), in mid-February the parties announced an agreement to establish a pilot security zone in a district still to be determined. According to both parties, the security zone was not only linked to the fall or cessation of levels of violence, but also required addressing other issues such as drug trafficking, crime and the promotion of development projects in the region. Both parties also agreed on the creation of a “safe house” or coordination centre for the security zone where civil society should play an important role. In early March, a few days after this announcement, a delegation of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation visited the southern part of the country after meeting with the government and expressing support for the negotiating process. However, tensions rose in March due to the difficulties that both sides’ technical teams seemed to find in fulfilling the commitments of the agreement on security zones disclosed in February, but above all due to MARA Patani’s criticism of the combatant reintegration programme led by the Burmese Armed Forces, which according to them was significantly weakening the armed groups in the south because thousands of combatants were receiving benefits from the programme. Shortly thereafter, in

mid-April, the leader of the military junta, Prayuth Chan-ocha, announced that by the end of the month the aforementioned security zone would be established in Cho-airong District (Narathiwat Province). According to several analysts, Prayuth’s unilateral announcement provoked the anger of MARA Patani, which expected a much more formal and ceremonious announcement to signify the importance of the agreement.

There were no new rounds of negotiations or significant progress in the peace process for the rest of the year, although there were important developments regarding the people involved in it. In August, the new Malaysian government led by Mahatir Mohamad (the former prime minister, from 1981 to 2003) **appointed Tan Sri Abdul Rahim Noor, the former inspector general of the police, to be the new facilitator of the negotiations.** In October, a few days before Mahatir Mohamad made an official trip to Thailand, Bangkok announced it was replacing the head of the negotiating team, General Aksara Kerdpol, with retired General Udomchai Thammasaroraj, until then commander of the Fourth Region in the southern part of the country. Shortly thereafter, the umbrella organisation MARA Patani announced that it had admitted three new insurgent groups, though without revealing their names, and claimed to have changed its name to Mara Patani Plus. According to some analysts, these changes in the structure of the negotiations and mediation could have helped to restart the dialogue, but the prospects receded after MARA Patani announced that it would make no new demands of the Thai government until there is a new elected government after the general elections, which are expected to be held in the first quarter of 2019. Moreover, despite the fact that the new facilitator met several times with some prominent BRN military leaders, the group again refused to participate in negotiations with the current military junta, calling for the international community’s active participation in facilitating dialogue and bilateral negotiations with the government. This last aspect is consistent with analyses finding that MARA Patani has no real control or influence over the BRN’s armed cells.

Gender, peace and security

The vice governor of Narathiwat, Patimoh Sadiyamu, called on the government to include more women in the peace negotiations with MARA Patani. In the same vein, an academic called for the creation of women’s coalitions to better influence the negotiations. Peace Agenda of Women (PAOW) is a coalition of women that has supported the progress of the negotiations, but some groups of women have not joined the platform and others have been critical of its excessive emphasis on establishing security zones in the south and its inability to shed light on some poorly known sides of the conflict, such as the use of torture, extrajudicial killings, censorship and harassment of persons suspected of belonging to the independence movement.