

4. Peace negotiations in Asia

- There were 11 negotiating processes in Asia in 2020, accounting for more than a quarter of all international cases.
- The US government and the Taliban signed a peace agreement in February and subsequently began a process of intra-Afghan dialogue between the Afghan government and the Taliban, which included four women in the government negotiating delegation.
- In the region of Mindanao in the Philippines, both the institutional development of the new Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao and the reintegration of some of the 40,000 former MILF fighters progressed satisfactorily.
- The government of Papua New Guinea and the Autonomous Bougainville Government agreed to appoint former Irish Prime Minister Bertie Ahern as a facilitator of negotiations on Bougainville's political status.
- Despite the signing of a ceasefire, both the government and the NDF ended negotiations during Duterte's current term in the Philippines.
- A new peace process began in southern Thailand between the government and the BRN, the main armed group in the south of the country.
- The Union Peace Conference - 21st Century Panglong was revived in Myanmar, which held its fourth session after two years of deadlock, albeit with significant difficulties due to the absence of non-signatory groups to the national ceasefire agreement.

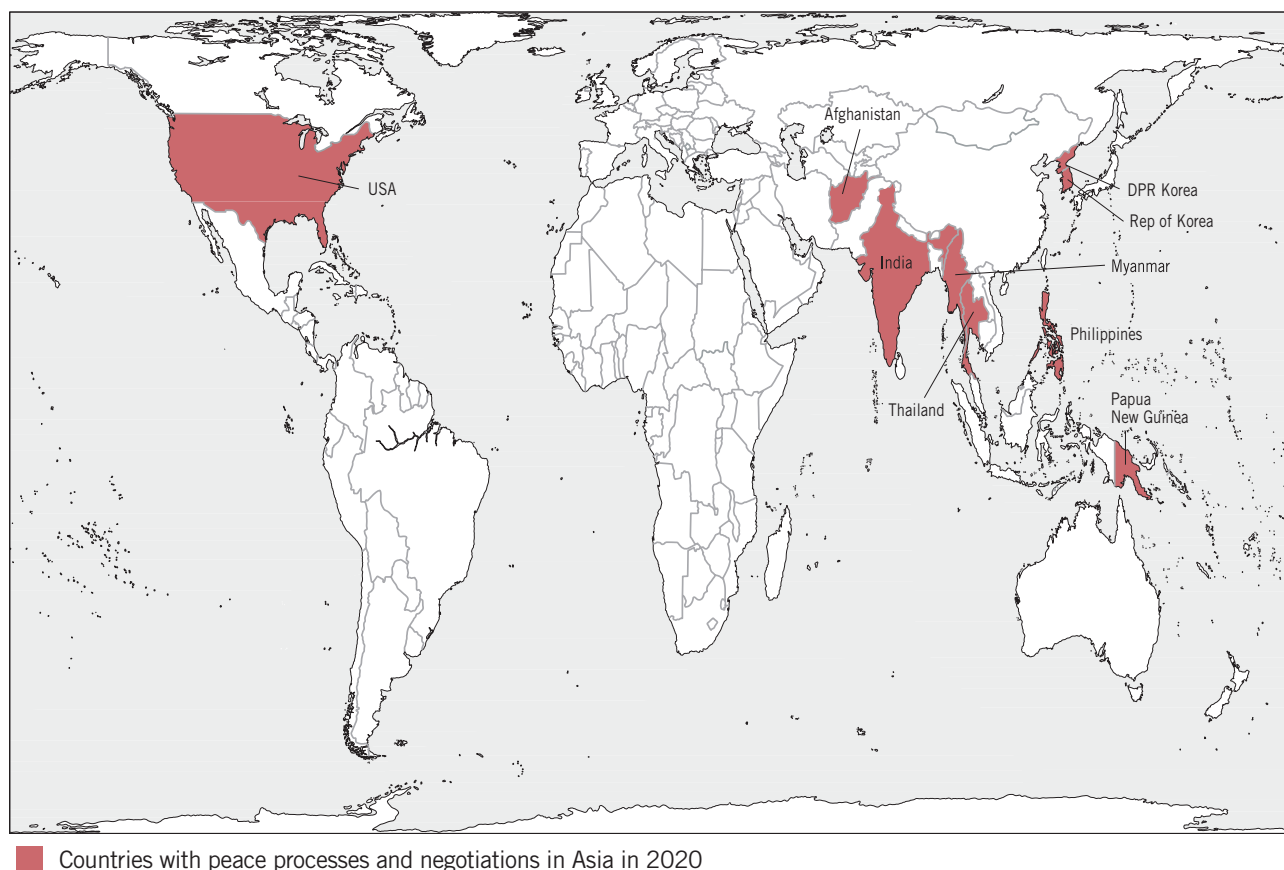
This chapter provides an analysis of the main peace processes and negotiations in Asia in 2020, both the general characteristics and trends of the negotiations and the development of each case on the continent throughout the year, including references to the gender, peace and security agenda. In addition, at the beginning of the chapter there is a map identifying the countries in Asia that hosted peace negotiations during 2020.

Table 4.1. Summary of peace processes and negotiations in Asia in 2020

Peace processes and negotiations	Negotiating actors	Third parties
Afghanistan	Government, Taliban insurgents, USA	Pakistan, China, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Russia, Germany, Norway, UN
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)	Indian government, NSCN-IM, NNPG: GPRN/NSCN (Kitovi Zhimomi), NNC, FGN, NSCN(R), NPGN (Non-Accord) and NNC/GDRN/NA, ZUF	--
Myanmar	Government; armed groups that have signed the ceasefire agreement (NCA): DKBA, RCSS/SSA-South, CNF, KNU, KNLAPC, ALP, PNLO, ABSDF, NMSP and LDU; armed groups not part of the NCA: UWSP, NDAA, SSPP/SSA-N, KNPP, NSCN-K, KIA, AA, TNLA, MNDAA	China
Papua New Guinea (Bougainville)	Government, Autonomous Region of Bougainville	Bertie Ahern
Philippines (MILF)	Government, MILF	Malaysia, Third Party Monitoring Team, International Monitoring Team, Independent Decommissioning Body
Philippines (MNLF)	Government, MNLF (faction led by Nur Misuari)	--
Philippines (NDF)	Government, NDF (umbrella organisation for different communist organisations, including the Communist Party of the Philippines, which is the political arm of the NPA)	Norway
Thailand (south)	Government, BRN	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 in 2020



4.1 Negotiations in 2020: regional trends

There were **11 negotiating processes** in Asia in 2020, **more than a quarter** of all international cases. Almost half of the negotiations in Asia took place in Southeast Asia, while there were three negotiations in South Asia, two in East Asia and one in the Pacific. There was no peace process in Central Asia. Several of the negotiations in Asia were linked to active armed conflicts, such as in Afghanistan, the Philippines (NDF), Myanmar and Thailand (south), but most were framed in contexts of socio-political tension, like in North Korea-South Korea, North Korea-US, India (Assam) and India (Nagaland), or featured armed groups that were no longer actively fighting the government, such as the MILF and the MNLF in the Philippines.

Regarding the **nature** of the negotiations, most of them were linked to issues of self-determination, independence, autonomy, territorial and constitutional change or recognition of the identity of various national minorities. Such cases include the Philippines (MILF and MNLF), India (Assam and Nagaland), Myanmar, Papua New Guinea (Bougainville) and Thailand (south). Two of the remaining four cases were focused mainly on denuclearisation and political detente on the Korean peninsula and the other two,

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in Afghanistan and the Philippines (NDF), hinged on structural and systemic political, social, religious and military reforms. The vast majority of the negotiations were internal in nature, but with a very clear international dimension, either due to the participation of foreign third parties in facilitation or mediation tasks, by holding negotiations outside the country in question, or because certain leaders of armed groups in negotiations with the state lived abroad. In Afghanistan, there were also direct negotiations between the Taliban and a foreign government (the United States) in Qatar. In two cases (North Korea and the United States and North Korea and South Korea), the negotiations were interstate.

The vast majority of the **actors participating in the negotiations** included governments and armed groups (or their political representatives), but in a quarter of the cases the dialogue took place between governments, either between states (North Korea and the US and North Korea and South Korea), or between national and regional governments (in the cases of Papua New Guinea and Bougainville or the southern Philippines, in which the main focus of the negotiations was dialogue between the central government of the

Philippines and the Bangsamoro Transition Authority of the new Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao). In some cases, the governments in question had an institutional framework specifically designed to deal with negotiating processes and peace policies as a whole, such as in Afghanistan (through the High Council for National Reconciliation), the Philippines (through the Office of the Presidential Advisor on the Peace Process), Myanmar (through the National Reconciliation and Peace Centre, the Peace Commission and the Peace Secretariat) and South Korea and North Korea (through the Ministry of Unification and the Committee for the Peaceful Reunification of Korea, respectively). Several of the **armed groups** negotiated with the government directly, such as the MNLF in the Philippines, the Taliban insurgency in Afghanistan, the NSCN-IM in India, the RCSS/SSA-South and the SSPP in Myanmar and the BRN in southern Thailand. In some cases, however, they did so through political organisations that represented them, such as in the case of the Philippines, in which Manila negotiates with the National Democratic Front (NDF) on behalf of the Communist Party of the Philippines and its armed wing, the NPA, either through coalitions that grouped together and represented various armed groups, like the Naga National Political Groups (NNPG) in Nagaland, which brings together seven insurgent organisations, and in Myanmar, where various armed groups are in talks with the Burmese government through umbrella organisations such as the Federal Political Negotiation and Consultative Committee or the Brotherhood Alliance.

Several peace processes in Asia followed parallel or complementary **negotiating formats**. In Afghanistan, the Taliban and the US government reached an agreement in early 2020 in Qatar, while in September the intra-Afghan negotiating process formally began in Doha. The national government of India negotiated bilaterally with the NSCN-IM (Nagaland) and also with the insurgent group coordinating body NNPG. In the Philippines, there were direct negotiations between the government's implementation panels and the MILF to address disputes related to implementation of the peace agreement, but also direct negotiations between the central government and the Bangsamoro Transition Authority of the new Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) on the division of responsibilities between government levels and the institutional development of the BARMM. There was also contact between the MILF and the MNLF to achieve rapprochement between them and even a possible harmonisation of their two negotiating processes. In the peace process between Manila and the NDF, the Duterte administration maintained official and formal talks with the NDF, while also intensifying the "localised peace talks" with NPA units and regional commanders, which according to some critics are trying to demobilise the NPA fighters and create strategic dissension between the NDF leadership in exile in the Netherlands and the NPA military command on

the ground. The Thai government began bilateral and direct negotiations with the BRN at the beginning of 2020, thereby ending the negotiations that it had held with Mara Pattani (a coalition of insurgent groups in the south of the country) in recent years, but kept open the possibility of including other groups in the future, while Mara Pattani claimed that the BRN is still part of the organisation. Finally, the government of Myanmar held direct and bilateral talks with various armed groups (such as the RCSS/SSA-South, the SSPP and the ALP), but also with various insurgent group coalitions, such as the Brotherhood Alliance (whose groups declared a ceasefire during the year) and the Federal Political Negotiation and Consultative Committee. The Burmese government also promoted the fourth session of the Union Peace Conference – 21st Century Panglong during 2020, which was attended by the 10 armed groups that had signed the nationwide ceasefire. Practically all the insurgent groups that have not signed the agreement were also invited, but they finally declined to attend.

Nearly half the negotiations studied in Asia were not facilitated by third parties

Nearly half the negotiations studies in Asia lacked **third-party** participation, making it the region with the highest percentage of direct and bilateral negotiations between the parties. The cases in which there was some type of third-party facilitation of dialogue were Afghanistan, the Philippines (MILF), the Philippines (NDF), Myanmar, Papua New Guinea (Bougainville) and Thailand (south), although the degree of internationalisation and complexity of the intermediation structures was very uneven among them. In some cases, facilitation of the dialogue fell mainly to a single actor, such as Norway in the Philippines (NDF), Malaysia in southern Thailand and Bertie Ahern in Papua New Guinea and the Autonomous Bougainville Government, while in others, multiple players were involved in dialogue mediation. There was a high degree of internationalisation of the peace processes in the Philippines (Mindanao) and in Afghanistan. In addition to the official mediation exercised by the government of Malaysia in recent years, the peace process in the Philippines (MILF) enjoys other international support structures, such as the International Monitoring Team (including the EU, together with countries such as Malaysia, Libya, Brunei Darussalam, Japan and Norway), the Third Party Monitoring Team (in charge of supervising implementation of the agreements signed by the MILF and the government), the Independent Decommissioning Body (composed of Turkey, Norway, Brunei and the Philippines, and which oversees the demobilisation of 40,000 former MILF combatants) and finally, the International Contact Group, made up of four states (Japan, United Kingdom, Turkey and Saudi Arabia) and four international NGOs (Muhammadiyah, the Asia Foundation, the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue and Conciliation Resources), though it plays a lesser role in implementing the peace agreement. In Afghanistan, the government of Qatar hosted the peace negotiations between the Taliban and the US government and also facilitated talks between the

Taliban and the Afghan government. However, other members of the international community (such as the UN, mainly through the UNAMA, and the governments of Pakistan, China, Saudi Arabia, Russia and Germany) participated in the peace process in some way, on some occasions promoting exploratory talks ahead of the start of negotiations between Kabul and the Taliban.

In comparative terms, **intergovernmental organisations** played a smaller role in mediating and facilitating dialogue and in observing and verifying the implementation of agreements and ceasefires. The United Nations exercised some of the aforementioned functions in Afghanistan through the UNAMA, though it also participated in the implementation of the peace agreement in Mindanao (in 2020, for example, it jointly organised the Bangsamoro Friends Forum with the government of Japan to coordinate international support to the region) and provided technical support at the beginning of the negotiating process between the government of Papua New Guinea and the Autonomous Bougainville Government on the political status of Bougainville after the independence referendum held in 2019. The EU participates indirectly in the peace process in the Philippine region of Mindanao through the International Monitoring Team, which oversees the ceasefire between the government and the MILF. Historically, the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) had mediated in the negotiations that led to the signing of the 1996 peace agreement between the Philippine government and the MNLF, subsequently facilitated the dialogue on the full implementation of the aforementioned agreement and finally sponsored cooperation between the MNLF and the MILF and promoted the harmonisation and convergence of both negotiating processes, but its role has recently become less prominent after the majority factions of the MNLF have de facto accepted the peace agreement between Manila and the MILF and have even been integrated into the structures of the BARMM. States that played notable roles include Norway, which mediated in negotiations between the Philippine government and the NDF, participated in the Independent Decommissioning Body and the International Monitoring Team in Mindanao and was involved in the Host Country Support Group together with Qatar, Germany, Uzbekistan and Indonesia, in a supporting role in the intra-Afghan peace process; Malaysia, which facilitated the peace process between Manila and the MILF and between the Thai government and the insurgency operating in the south of the country and participated in the International Monitoring Group of Mindanao; Qatar, which was very active in facilitating both the negotiations between the Taliban militias and the US government and the intra-Afghan dialogue; and China, which held meetings with the Burmese government throughout the year, the Burmese Armed Forces and various armed groups, especially those operating in areas close to the border between the two countries.

In comparative terms, intergovernmental organisations played a smaller role in mediating and facilitating dialogue in Asia

In several cases there was deadlock or even setbacks in the **evolution of the peace processes**. The political situation in the Korean peninsula deteriorated (both in inter-Korean dialogue and in relations between North Korea and the US), the peace process in Nagaland hit an impasse and the negotiations between Manila and the NDF were disrupted, which both parties ended under the current administration of Rodrigo Duterte. However, in other cases some significant progress was made. The case of Afghanistan is especially illustrative, in which a historic peace agreement was signed between the US government and the Taliban and in which direct negotiations began between the Taliban militias and the Afghan government. Signed in Doha in February, the agreement mainly stipulates a gradual withdrawal of US troops and the commitment of the Taliban not to plan or carry out terrorist attacks against US interests. This agreement facilitated the start of negotiations between the Taliban and the Afghan government, which after several delays began in Doha in September and were also facilitated by the government of Qatar. Despite the difficulties that surrounded the beginning of this negotiating process, by the end of the year both parties had reached an agreement regarding the negotiating rules and procedures. In the Philippines, very significant progress was made on implementation of the peace agreement, especially regarding the demobilisation of a significant part of the 40,000 MILF fighters and the institutional development of the new Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, whose provisional government is headed by the historical leader of the MILF. In Myanmar, the Union Peace Conference – 21st Century Panglong was revived after two years of deadlock, while the central government of Papua New Guinea and the Autonomous Bougainville Government laid the foundations for the negotiating process on the political status of Bougainville and agreed to the appointment of former Irish Prime Minister Bertie Ahern as a facilitator in this process. Finally, the Thai central government began a new peace process with the BRN, the most active group in the south of the country, after noting the wear and tear of the previous negotiating format between Bangkok and Mara Patani, a coalition of insurgent groups operating in southern Thailand.

Finally, though the promotion of the **gender, peace and security agenda** and the participation of women in peace negotiations in Asia was generally very limited, the Afghan Women Leaders Peace Summit was held, in which several women's organisations demanded 30% female participation in intra-Afghan peace negotiations and the formation of a technical committee on gender for them. The Afghan government had previously included four women in its (21-member) delegation for the intra-Afghan dialogue. In the Philippines, the NDF negotiating panel was led by a woman, Julie de Lima. Also in the Philippines, the Regional Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security was presented for the

Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, which envisages ensuring greater female participation in the implementation of the peace agreement and in the development and consolidation of the new political authority in Mindanao. Along the same lines, in Bougainville the Law of the Bougainville Women's Federation was approved, which according to the island's autonomous government provides for greater female participation in decision-making processes in the political sphere and the private sector, in addition to the promotion of gender equality in the field of human rights, sexual violence, literacy, leadership, governance and community empowerment. In the same region, several women's organisations claimed that they had beat the historical record of women attending the presidential and legislative elections held in August and September. Finally, in Myanmar, the Alliance for Gender Inclusion in the Peace Process (AGIPP) met in March with the armed groups that signed the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement to discuss gender equality and the inclusion of women in the peace and political negotiations.

4.2. Case study analysis

East Asia

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.

Despite the fact that South Korean President Moon Jae-in declared his intention to resume dialogue with North Korea and strengthen relations and cooperation between both countries on several occasions, not only was no progress made on the inter-Korean agenda in 2020, but the tension between the neighbours increased significantly compared to previous years, including the first exchange of fire in years between their armed forces in the Demilitarised Zone. In January, Moon Jae-in gave a speech calling for the resumption of dialogue between both countries, expressed his desire to meet Kim Jong-un (invited him to Seoul) and negotiate non-stop, showed his willingness to facilitate talks between North Korea and the US, outlined a plan for the reactivation of inter-Korean cooperation projects and presented some concrete proposals in this regard, such as the joint parade at the opening of the Tokyo Olympics and the presentation of a joint candidacy for the 2032 Olympic Games. According to some analysts, Moon Jae-in intends to prioritise the revitalisation of relations with North Korea in the second half of his term and aspires to replicate the political scenario of 2018, in which improvements in inter-Korean relations led to important progress in relations between North Korea and the United States and, by extension, the prospect of the denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula. Along these lines, in May, Moon Jae-in once again called to strengthen inter-Korean cooperation and proposed starting with collaboration in the control of infectious diseases. However, such a possibility was aborted by the North Korean government's insistence that there were no cases of coronavirus in his country. In this sense, Seoul expressed its fear that the border closure stemming from the expansion of the pandemic could affect North Korea's imports and increase food insecurity there. In fact, Russia acknowledged sending 25,000 tonnes of wheat to North Korea in May.

Although Pyongyang had already ruled out any dialogue with South Korea since the beginning of the year, the possibility vanished for good after Pyongyang cut off all military and political communication with South Korea in June (including the direct line between Kim Jong-un and Moon Jae-in), described South Korea as an enemy, broke off relations with its authorities and announced the remilitarisation of sections of the common border that had been demilitarised and pacified under the previous bilateral agreements reached since 2018. **Symbolic of the collapse of dialogue between the two countries was North Korea's detonation of the liaison office in the North Korean town of Kaesong in June.** Although the office had been closed since 30 January, the destruction of this four-storey building was seen

by several analysts as an attempt by Pyongyang to challenge the commitment that both countries had expressed in 2018 to achieve a new era of peace on the Korean peninsula.

Gender, peace and security

In September, the organisation 38 North noted that unlike his predecessors in office, Kim Jong-un appeared to be pursuing a policy of promoting several women to positions of responsibility and political visibility. Some of the examples mentioned by this organisation are Deputy Prime Minister of Foreign Affairs Choe Son-hui, a key figure in relations with the US and during the six-party multilateral negotiations on the denuclearisation of Korea; Hyon Song-wol, who sits on the Central Committee of the Workers' Party of Korea and is a member of the team that manages relations with South Korea; Kim Song-hye, who heads the Committee for the Peaceful Reunification of Korea (a counterpart to South Korea's Ministry of Unification); and Kim Yo-jong, Kim Jong-un's sister and, according to various media and analysts, his second-in-command. In fact, during weeks of speculation about Kim Jong-un's health status as a result of his prolonged absence from public events, various media outlets singled out Kim Yo-jong as the de facto leader of the country and successor to her brother.

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. In mid-2018, Kim Jong-un and US President Donald Trump held a historic summit in Singapore where they addressed the normalisation of relations between both countries and the denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula.

No new presidential summits were held between the leaders of the United States and North Korea during the year (such as the two that took place in February and June 2019, in Hanoi and on the North Korean side of the so-called Demilitarised Zone, respectively), nor did any technical work meetings take place (like the last one in October 2019, in Stockholm). **On several occasions throughout the year, the US said it was willing to resume the talks and South Korea repeatedly tried to facilitate them, but Pyongyang declared that not only did it not want to hold any other presidential summit, but that resuming them was no longer solely dependent on the conditions it had laid down until late 2019 (the withdrawal or relaxation of sanctions by the US and the end of military manoeuvres in the region), but now required an end to all hostilities, including rhetoric critical of the North Korean regime.** In fact, Pyongyang said that it was very disappointed with Washington's attitude after the Hanoi summit and described the negotiations between both countries since then as a waste of time.

Despite the June 2019 meeting in the Demilitarised Zone between Kim Jong-un and Donald Trump (who became the first serving US president to travel to North Korea), which came on the heels of the Hanoi summit (February 2019), the distance grew between the positions of the US (which demanded certain concrete steps towards complete, irreversible and verifiable denuclearisation) and North Korea (which demanded the partial withdrawal of sanctions and the offer of security guarantees). After the deadline for the US to respond to North Korea's demands, Kim Jong-un ended the talks with the US on the occasion of his traditional year-end speech, declaring that his country no longer felt bound to the commitments made during the negotiating process (and specifically on the moratorium on nuclear and intercontinental ballistic missile tests) and announced the imminent deployment of a new strategic weapon. Thus, in January the US national security advisor said that he had tried to contact the

North Korean government to resume the dialogue, while President Trump sent a congratulatory message to Kim Jong-un for his birthday. Similarly, South Korean President Moon Jae-in pointed out earlier this year that the door for resuming the talks was open if some of Pyongyang's demands were met. However, the North Korean government denied any possibility of progress in the talks if the sanctions were not lifted beforehand and pointed out that although the personal harmony between Trump and Kim Jong-un was good, the bilateral relations between their countries were not built on personal affinities, but on political commitments. It also criticised Seoul's attempts to establish itself as a facilitator of dialogue with the United States and urged it not to meddle in its internal affairs.

In July, Trump declared that he believed that Pyongyang wanted to hold a bilateral meeting and declared his intention to meet with Kim Jong-un if that would help to resume the talks. However, Pyongyang once again bluntly declared that it had no interest whatsoever in resuming the negotiations. According to some analysts, despite the public statements by both parties, Trump told his inner circle that he did not intend to meet with Kim Jong-un again before the US presidential election in November, while according to these same sources the North Korean government also had no intention of continuing talks with the US government until the aforementioned election.

At the end of the year, the head of the US government's negotiating team with Pyongyang publicly expressed his frustration at the lack of significant progress since the Hanoi summit (where the commitments made in the Singapore statement should have been finalised). He also held the North Korean government responsible for the breakdown in the process and said that the United States did not expect North Korea to fully comply with its disarmament commitments before the United States fulfilled its own in terms regarding the sanctions and security guarantees, but that Pyongyang should have committed to a roadmap that would culminate in its verifiable denuclearisation.

After Joe Biden's victory in the US presidential election, he pledged to maintain a common position on North Korea with the South Korean president. According to some analysts, Biden will completely abandon the personal diplomacy that Trump used with Kim Jong-un to bring positions closer and build trust between the two countries. These same analysts point out that the Workers' Party of Korea is designing a new strategy towards the US ahead of the meeting to be held in January 2021.

South Asia

Afghanistan	
Negotiating actors	Government, Taliban insurgents, USA
Third parties	Pakistan, China, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Russia, Germany, Norway, 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.

Great progress was made in the peace process in Afghanistan in 2020, both with regard to the negotiations between the Taliban and the US government and the intra-Afghan dialogue process between Kabul and the Taliban.¹ In February, Washington and the Taliban reached an agreement in which the US government committed to a gradual military withdrawal from the country in exchange for the Taliban's promise that terrorist attacks against US interests would not be planned or carried out from Afghan soil. The signing of the agreement was preceded by a reduction in violence during the previous seven days, a condition for it to be formally ratified by the parties. The agreement reached established a 14-month timetable for the withdrawal of all US troops and an initial drawdown to 8,600 soldiers in the first 135 days that had already been agreed previously.² Meanwhile, in addition to its commitment not to allow the use of Afghan territory for terrorist activities against the United States, thereby preventing the recruitment, training and raising of funds by terrorist groups, the Taliban also assumed the beginning of an intra-Afghan dialogue, though without recognising the legitimacy of the current Afghan government.³ The initial agreement planned for these intra-Afghan negotiations to begin on 10 March 2020 alongside the release of 5,000 Taliban prisoners and 1,000 prisoners held by the Taliban. However, in the

1. For further analysis on the peace process in 2020, see Villellas Arifio, M. Peace negotiations in Afghanistan in a decisive year, *ECP Notes on Conflict and Peace*, no. 8, Escola de Cultura de Pau, November 2020.
2. After the agreement was signed, NATO announced the partial withdrawal of the international troops deployed in the country as part of the Resolute Support mission, decreasing from 16,000 to 12,000 soldiers in Afghanistan. NATO, *Media Backgrounder. NATO-Afghanistan relations*, June 2020.
3. Worden, S., *U.S., Taliban Sign Historic Agreement—Now Comes the Hard Part. Can Afghans and the Taliban come together and forge a political settlement?* USIP, 2 March 2020.

first few months after the agreement was signed, many doubts arose regarding the real possibilities for intra-Afghan dialogue. The start of the process scheduled for March was delayed as violence escalated again, including attacks in the capital, Kabul, and intense armed clashes between Afghan security forces and Taliban insurgents.⁴

The delay in initiating the intra-Afghan process was mainly due to disagreements over implementing the agreement to release the prisoners. However, there were also some episodes of rapprochement, such as the **three-day bilateral ceasefire in May, coinciding with the Eid al-Fitr religious holiday**, during which the government agreed to release 2,000 prisoners after the announcement of the cessation of hostilities by the Taliban, which was reciprocated by the security forces. The issue of the prisoners and the persisting violence blocked and hindered any greater rapprochement between the parties, despite diplomatic pressure from the US. Meanwhile, the government political crisis that originated after the presidential elections in September 2019 also contributed to the climate of stagnation. President Ashraf Ghani's victory was disputed by his main opponent at the polls, Abdullah Abdullah, and was not resolved until May in a power sharing agreement whereby Ghani assumed the presidency of the country and Abdullah would be in charge of leading possible negotiations with the Taliban as chairman of the High Council for National Reconciliation. The agreement put an end to the dispute between the two and led to the inauguration of the Afghan president in March, though international support had mainly been for Ghani.

The thawing of the political crisis **allowed the intra-Afghan process to begin, which took place in Doha on 12 September in the presence of the US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and prominent representatives of the Afghan government, including Abdullah Abdullah**. Both parties sent their negotiating teams to Doha, made up of 21 members each.⁵ The government's efforts in the peace negotiations were led by two bodies. First was the government negotiating team, headed by Masoom Stanekzai, who has held different government positions, has experience in previous negotiations with the Taliban and is seen as close and loyal to President Ghani. This team was composed of people representing different Afghan political factions and warlords, while reflecting ethnic and geographic diversity. Four women are part of the team: Fawzia Kufi, Fatema Gailani, Habiba Sarabi

and Sharifa Zurmati. Alongside the negotiators at the table, the High Council for National Reconciliation supervises the process and guides the negotiating team. Led by Abdullah Abdullah, it was created as a result of the agreement to form the government. However, some analysts suggest that this body was never given enough power as a consequence of the political rivalry between Ghani and Abdullah and that it could be the scene of internal tensions that could weaken the negotiations.⁶ The Taliban's negotiating team, led by Abdul Hakim and his right-hand man, Sher Mohammad Abbas Stanikzai, was composed solely of men and brought together some of the Taliban's main religious, military and legal leaders, who had a higher profile than the members of the government team. The delegation includes the group known as "the Taliban Five", former prisoners at the US base in Guantánamo Bay that participated in the negotiations with the US government that led to the February agreement.

The women's organisations gathered at the Afghan Women Leaders' Peace Summit demanded 30% female participation and the formation of a technical committee on gender in the intra-Afghan peace negotiations

To facilitate the development of the dialogue, each negotiating team established a contact group that was to work out a code of conduct for the talks. Some analyses, such as that of the Afghanistan Analysts Network, said that even though the negotiations began in a good atmosphere, some issues immediately emerged that hindered further progress in the process. First was the place that the agreement between the US and the Taliban occupies as a frame of reference for intra-Afghan dialogue. The Taliban see it as an essential starting point for the talks, but the government, which was not part of the negotiations that led to it, does not want this agreement to be the

cornerstone on which a new process is built and put different alternatives on the table, including starting the negotiations with a consultative Loya Jirga or basing them on the "national interest of Afghanistan". Another controversial procedural issue was the Taliban's proposal that the negotiations be based on the Hanafi legal interpretation, a Sunni Islamic school to which the Taliban mostly adhere, but which would exclude non-Sunni members of the Afghan population. Although the negotiations initially began without external facilitation due to the Taliban's rejection of foreign participation, after weeks of deadlock the parties agreed that Qatar would assume a facilitating role to thaw the process.

On 2 December, both sides publicly revealed that they had reached an agreement regarding the rules and

4. See the summary on Afghanistan in chapter 1 (Armed conflicts) in Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Alert 2021! Report on conflicts, human rights and peacebuilding*. Barcelona: Icaria, 2021.

5. For a complete listing and biographies of all members of the negotiating teams see: Christine Roehrs, Ali Yawar Adili and Sayed Asadullah Sadat, *Two Parties Too Wary for Peace? Central questions for talks with the Taliban in Doha*, Afghanistan Analysts Network, 11 September 2020; Susannah George, Aziz Tassal and Haq Nawaz Khan, "Shadow politicians, clerics and Soviet-era fighters: The Taliban's team negotiating peace" *The Washington Post*, 30 September 2020.

6. Christine Roehrs, Ali Yawar Adili and Sayed Asadullah Sadat, *Two Parties Too Wary for Peace? Central questions for talks with the Taliban in Doha*, Afghanistan Analysts Network, 11 September 2020.

procedures for the negotiations and that they were initiating a 22-day recess after which negotiations would resume on 5 January. Deborah Lyons, the special representative of the UN Secretary-General for Afghanistan and head of the UNAMA, said she hoped the parties would take advantage of this interruption to conduct internal and external consultations. President Ghani said that he hoped that negotiations could be resumed in Afghanistan. The Taliban balked, as they still did not formally recognise the legitimacy of the Afghan government.

Regarding civil society initiatives to support the peace process, in October the Afghanistan Mechanism for Inclusive Peace was presented, made up of different organisations and civil society actors to provide a space for participation in the intra-Afghan process.

Gender, peace and security

Throughout the year, women's organisations continued to demand the participation and recognition of women's rights as part of the peace process and significant progress was made during the year regarding the inclusion of women in the peace process. After the peace agreement was signed between the US and the Taliban in February, the Afghan Women's Network issued a statement demanding female participation in shaping all peace agreements in the country.⁷ However, they indicated that they hoped that the signing of the agreement would open up internal dialogue in Afghan society and called for a permanent and general ceasefire. Thus, the appointment of four women as part of the negotiating delegation with the Taliban responded to the growing capacity of Afghan women's organisations to apply pressure, arguments by some actors of the international community against a government dependent on foreign aid and the timid commitment to women's rights as expressed by President Ghani. As the intra-Afghan dialogue process began, the government included four women on the negotiating team. In November, the Afghan Women's Network and the Afghanistan Mechanism for Inclusive Peace convened the Afghan Women Leaders' Peace Summit, bringing together women from different parts of Afghanistan and the diaspora. The participants prepared a declaration with different proposals to strengthen the peace process and demand an end to the violence, as well as the signing of a ceasefire agreement with verification mechanisms and international guarantors of compliance. They also demanded that the negotiating delegations involve the victims of the conflict in the process. They presented several specific demands regarding the integration of gender equality: 1) a co-mediation by a man and a woman; 2) 30% female participation at all levels; 3) the inclusion of a delegation from civil society; 4) the inclusion of women directly at the negotiating table, as observers in technical committees and in consultative

forums alongside the negotiations; and 4) the formation of a technical committee on gender with national and international experts to integrate the gender perspective in the process in a transversal way.

India (Nagaland)	
Negotiating actors	Government, NSCN-IM, NNPG: GPRN/NSCN (Kitovi Zhimomi), NNC, FGN, NSCN(R), NPGN (Non-Accord) and NNC/GDRN/NA, ZUF
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 peace process in Nagaland remained at an impasse, though there were several meetings between the armed group NSCN-IM and the government's head negotiator, RN Ravi, as well as meetings between him and representatives of the Naga National Political Groups (NNPG), which coordinate and group together seven insurgent organisations. Apart from the particular dynamics of the Naga peace process, the situation in Kashmir and the central government's position towards that conflict made it less likely that India would soften its stance with respect to issues such as the recognition of a flag and a constitution for the Naga people, major obstacles to the resolution of the conflict during 2020. Just like in 2019, the NNPG approved the signing of an agreement at various times of the year but the NSCN-IM refused, as issues that the armed group viewed as essential were excluded, such as the recognition of its own flag and constitution. There were a series of obstacles that prevented substantive progress in the talks and that strained the climate of trust between the parties during the year, with the NSCN-IM calling for the government's head negotiator to step down. In June RN Ravi, who not only leads the government's panel in the peace negotiations, but is also the governor of Nagaland, wrote a letter to the chief minister of Nagaland, Neiphiu

7. Afghan Women Network, *Women's remarks on the US-Taliban agreement*, 1 March 2020.

Rio, stating that “law and order in the state had collapsed” and that “armed gangs” challenged the state government on a daily basis. The use of this adjective caused much unrest in the Naga insurgency. Later, Ravi addressed another letter to members of the government urging them to declare whether there were members of the armed groups among their relatives. The NSCN-IM reportedly refused to meet with Ravi after these letters, which may have led to a significant loss of confidence in him and created an impasse in the negotiations.

The crisis in the negotiations worsened in August and the armed group NSCN-IM publicly revealed the content of the agreement that had been signed in 2015, accusing the government negotiator of having omitted a key word in a version of the agreement circulated to other Naga groups, including the Naga National Political Groups (NNPGs). The agreement released by the NSCN-IM included “sharing sovereign power” and “a new lasting and inclusive relationship of peaceful coexistence between the two entities” and the NSCN-IM accused the government of having erased the word “new”, which it argued defined the relationship of peaceful coexistence between two sovereign powers, robustly indicating that this occurred outside the constitutional framework. The NSCN-IM held a meeting in Delhi with government representatives but without Ravi in attendance. The negotiations focused on the question of the flag and the constitution. Alongside the deadlock of the negotiations with the NSCN-IM, the NNPG indicated that they were prepared to reach an agreement with the Indian government, which prompted the leader of the NSCN-IM, Muivah, to label them as traitors. The NNPG and New Delhi had held several meetings in which a draft agreement had been reached. In October, the government indicated that the draft agreement was finalised and that it would consult with the main Naga organisations. Subsequently, a meeting took place between RN Ravi and different Naga civil society organisations and leaders of the different Naga tribes. The NSCN-IM argued that their demand for a Naga flag and constitution of their own should be part of ongoing negotiations and not be negotiated separately, after it was revealed that the government had been conducting consultations in this regard. The NSCN-IM indicated that this was established by the Framework Agreement. In December, in a controversial speech on Nagaland Statehood Day, RN Ravi ruled out any possibility of a flag and constitution for the Naga people.

Gender, peace and security

The peace negotiations continued to exclude women without giving them any space for formal participation, despite the contributions that women’s organisations have made to building trust among the main actors in the conflict. In October, a delegation made up of seven representatives of different Naga women’s organisations, led by Rosemary Dzuwichu of the Naga

Mothers Association, met in Delhi with government representatives to demand an inclusive peace process with all Naga groups. The women also expressed the need for recognition of a Naga flag and constitution to achieve a peace agreement in the state and voiced their concern about the significant impacts of militarisation in the region. They also noted that the peace agreement should also address issues such as the region’s shortcomings in terms of infrastructure and access to education. The women’s delegation had met with leaders of the NSCN-IM and NNPG in Dimapur prior to the trip to Delhi.

South-east Asia and Oceania

Philippines (MILF)	
Negotiating actors	Government, MILF
Third parties	Malaysia, International Contact Group, Third-Party Monitoring Team, International Monitoring Team, Independent Decommissioning Body
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 the drafting and congressional approval of the Organic Law for the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, which incorporates the main contents of the two aforementioned peace agreements and was approved by Congress in 2018. Following its ratification in a plebiscite in early 2019, the peace process has hinged on the implementation of the peace agreements, the institutional development of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (governed temporarily by the leader of the MILF) and the disarmament of the MILF.

Despite many clashes between the Philippine Armed Forces and various groups operating in Mindanao (mainly Abu Sayyaf and the Bangsamoro Islamic

Freedom Fighters), the implementation of the peace agreement between the Philippine government and the MILF and the institutional deployment of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) moved ahead successfully without any significant setbacks. In mid-December, **the Third Party Monitoring Team (TPMT), in charge of supervising the implementation of the peace agreement, presented its sixth follow-up report (covering March 2019 to October 2020) and highlighted Manila and the MILF's high level of commitment to the peace process and the solid progress made on the agreement implementation process.** The TPMT, which was created in 2013 and will remain operational until an agreement is signed that certifies the full implementation of the peace agreement, stressed the substantial progress made in the political dimension of the agreement, noting that the BARMM has been successfully established as an autonomous political entity with significant levels of self-government. The report indicated that several of the institutions provided for in the agreement have been created, such as the Council of Leaders (in charge of advising the Bangsamoro government), the Philippine Congress-Bangsamoro Parliament Forum (responsible for coordinating the legislative action of both parliaments) and the Intergovernmental Relations Body (IGRB). This last body, led by the main negotiator of the MILF, current head of the MILF Implementation Panel and BARMM Education Minister Mohagher Iqbal and by Finance Minister Carlos Dominguez, met three times during 2020 to negotiate issues related to relations between the BARMM and the central government. The TPMT report also praised the performance of the Bangsamoro Transition Authority (BTA), the provisional BARMM government, headed by MILF leader Ebrahim Murad and composed of 80 people (41 designated by the MILF and 39 by Manila). The BTA's responsibilities include approving legislation related to seven priorities identified by both parties: education, administration, revenue, elections, local government, public function and indigenous peoples. So far, the administrative code has been approved (in October) and the education code has been raised for discussion and parliamentary processing. According to several analysts, the two main issues related to the rollout of the BARMM that had not yet been resolved at the end of the year were the extension of the transitional period of the BTA and the inclusion of Cotobato in the BARMM. Regarding the first point, the central government, the BTA, several governors and provincial parliaments (such as those of Maguindanao and Tawi-Tawi) had asked the national bicameral Parliament to extend the transitional period of the BTA for three years (from May 2022 to May 2025) so it could complete all the functions assigned by the peace agreement and so it could complete the demobilisation of former MILF combatants. In late November, a meeting was held between the head of the BARMM and historical leader of the MILF, Ebrahim Murad, and President Rodrigo Duterte and six of his ministers. The second issue pending resolution was

whether or not to include Cotobato in the BARMM. The city voted in favour of inclusion in the new political entity (which succeeded the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao, which had been based in Cotobato), but the city's mayor, Cynthia Guiani-Sayadi, advocated delaying its incorporation to the BARMM until the end of the transition period.

Made up of five members (four men and one woman) and led by the German Heino Marius (appointed at the end of the year by the Government Implementation Panels and the MILF), the TPMT also stressed the progress made on the peace agreement's Annex on Normalisation, which mainly has to do with the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration of 40,000 former MILF combatants. However, the report also highlighted the delays in dissolving the private armed groups in the BARMM and neighbouring areas, in the transformation of the MILF's camps, in the provision of amnesty for its former combatants and in the transitional justice and reconciliation measures. **The second phase of the demobilisation culminated in March, with 12,000 former combatants, or 30% of the total, and the third began, in which 14,000 combatants had to surrender their weapons and begin reintegrating into society.** This process is being supervised by the Independent Decommissioning Body, presided over by the Turkish ambassador to the Philippines (Fatih Ulusoy) and composed of the governments of Norway, Turkey and Brunei and by experts appointed by the MILF and the Philippine government. In February, Camp Abubakar, the MILF's historic base camp, was transferred to the Joint Peace and Security Committee to be used as one of the 11 facilities (built by the government and UNDP) in which the weapons handed over by former MILF combatants are stored. Recently, the government signed a contract with a company to set up a banana plantation near the mentioned camp.

Gender, peace and security

In late October, the BARMM presented its Regional Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security, which calls for greater female participation in implementing the peace agreement and in developing and establishing the new political entity in Mindanao. The plan is modelled after the Philippine government's National Action Plan on UN Resolution 1325 and tries to develop aspects related to women's rights incorporated in the Bangsamoro Organic Law, the law that created the BARMM, which was based on the main commitments of the peace agreement between Manila and the MILF. The plan has four pillars (protection and prevention; empowerment and participation; promotion and mainstreaming; and monitoring and evaluation) and calls for guaranteeing women's rights, gender equality and inclusive peacebuilding policies in close alliance with civil society women's organisations. The plan pays special attention to its implementation at the local level

(with the development of local action plans that have a special impact on gender equality in the communities most affected by the armed conflict) and pays special attention to intersectionality between the women, peace and security agenda and humanitarian action, guaranteeing gender-sensitive humanitarian emergency policies. Some women's organisations such as the Global Network of Women Peacebuilders welcomed the approval of the plan and highlighted that it addresses the main aspects that can guarantee gender equality and sustainable peace in the region, although they also pointed out that it has some omissions, such as disarmament and the non-proliferation of weapons (which according to the organisation is absent in 70% of the National Action Plans on UN Resolution 1325 worldwide) or the interrelation between armed conflicts and climate change.

Philippines (NDF)	
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.

Despite the fact that there were some expectations about resuming the peace negotiations at the beginning of the year and that both parties implemented two separate unilateral cessations of hostilities in March and April, the Philippine government and the NDF did not meet directly throughout 2020 and at the end of the year both parties ruled out any possibility of resuming the peace talks before the end of the

current term of President Rodrigo Duterte. At the beginning of January, the founder of the NPA and the Communist Party of the Philippines, Jose Maria Sison, praised the truce that both parties achieved between 23 December and 7 January to mark the Christmas holidays, expressed his willingness to resume the peace talks and to meet personally with Duterte in Hanoi (Vietnam) and even announced that an informal meeting could be held in the second or third week of January to prepare the resumption of the formal peace negotiations in Oslo, with the facilitation of the Norwegian government. Similarly, at the beginning of the year Duterte also said that his government was willing to resume talks with the NDF, in full harmony with the reconstitution of the government's negotiating panel (dissolved in March 2019) and with the discreet conversations that the NDF held with the government's former chief negotiator, Silvestre Bello, in December 2019. However, in the weeks following these statements by Duterte and Sison, the meeting between the two panels not only failed to take place, but both sides began to publicly express positions far removed from the conditions in which the negotiations were supposed to resume. First, Manila insisted that the meeting between Duterte and Sison should take place in the Philippines, with the government guaranteeing the security of the founder of the NPA. Meanwhile, the NDF insisted that this meeting should be held in a country close to the Philippines and not only for security reasons, but because the Joint Agreement on Security and Immunity Guarantees (JASIG), signed in 1997, required the talks to take place in a neutral country.

However, the disagreements between the two negotiating parties ran deeper than the one over where the negotiations should take place. In February, the spokesman for the Office of the Presidential Advisor on the Peace Process (OPAPP), Wilben Mayor, declared that any resumption of negotiations should take place under the protection of the Constitution, the rule of law and the democratic process, making it clear that neither the government, nor the NDF, nor any agreement between the two can amend the Constitution, and that any such amendment can only occur as part of a Constitutional Convention or a Constituent Assembly. Mayor not only criticised the fact that the NDF does not recognise or accept the Philippine Constitution, but also said that the NDF's proposed Comprehensive Agreement on Economic and Social Reforms (the item on the substantive agenda that was being discussed when the official negotiations formally ended in November 2017) was riddled with unconstitutional proposals. The OPAPP further stated that talks with the NDF require a new negotiating framework and a thorough review of the agreements reached so far. As such, the government said that the 1992 Hague Declaration could not be the document on which the entire negotiation process is built, because it calls into question the existence of a single Constitution, a

single sovereignty and a single Armed Forces. Mayor also criticised the main agreements reached so far, such as the Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law of 1998 (since it is based on the idea that only states can violate human rights) and the JASIG of 1997, since the NDF has instrumentalised it at its convenience. According to the government, most of the many NDF consultants who have been released to participate in negotiations by five different governments have gone underground, without any concessions or confidence-building measures from the NDF.

Despite the fact that both Manila and the NDF unilaterally suspended all offensive actions in March and April (the government between 19 March and 15 April, and the NDF between March and 30 April), the tension between both parties had increased notably since late April after both sides traded blame for repeated violations of the respective ceasefires. At the end of April, Duterte said that there would be no next round of negotiations with the NDF, lamenting its lack of respect for the commitments made and criticising attacks against the military carrying out humanitarian tasks in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic. Along the same lines, in mid-September the NDF ruled out any possibility of resuming negotiations during Duterte's current term of office and opened up the possibility of consulting with various opposition parties and with Vice President Leni Robredo, the leader of the Liberal Party, on how to resume dialogue with the government in a post-Duterte scenario. In December, shortly after the Philippine Armed Forces suggested to Duterte, as Commander-in-Chief, that he should not decree a ceasefire for the Christmas season, the president reiterated that there would be no other ceasefire or any negotiations under his government. Shortly afterwards, National Security Advisor Hermogenes Esperon declared that he would forward to the Electoral Commission his recommendation to prohibit the participation in the next elections of parties that support the Communist movement.

Gender, peace and security

As in previous years, several women's organisations participated in various demonstrations to demand the resumption of the peace talks between the government and the NDF, as well as to denounce and make visible the impacts of the conflict on the civilian population and on women in particular. Following the death of Fidel Agcaoili, the head of the NDF negotiating panel, in July, Julie de Lima was temporarily appointed to replace him. Julie de Lima is the oldest person on the NDF negotiating panel and the partner of Jose Maria Sison. In one of her first public statements, Julie de Lima invited Vice President Leni Robredo to discuss the conditions under which peace negotiations could resume once Duterte, in her words, is expelled from power or ends his term of office.

Myanmar	
Negotiating actors	Government, armed signatory groups of the cease fire agreement (NCA): DKBA, RCSS/SSA-South, CNF, KNU,KNLAPC, ALP, PNLO, ABSDF, NMSP and LDU; armed groups not part of the: UWSP, NDAA, SSPP/SSA-N, KNPP, NSCN-K, KIA, AA, TNLA, MNDAA
Third parties	China
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 taken 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. In 2016, State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi convened the Union Peace Conference – 21st Century Panglong, which brought the government together with the armed opposition groups, beginning a new phase in the peace process. The conference has been convened several times in subsequent years.

The peace process in Myanmar made some progress with the resumption of the Union Peace Conference - 21st Century Panglong, which held its fourth session in August, following two years of impasse, although significant difficulties were encountered due to the lack of participation by groups that had not signed the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA), serious armed clashes with the insurgent group AA and the impacts of the pandemic, which also led to a drop in violence in some periods with ceasefires announced by both the Burmese Armed Forces and some ethnic armed groups. The year began with State Councillor Aung San Suu Kyi asking all groups that had signed the NCA to assume greater responsibility and commitment to the agreement. Her appeal came as part of a Joint Implementation Coordination Meeting that took place in early January, considered the prelude to the formal resumption of the peace process. At the meeting, the parties agreed to establish more robust ceasefire and implementation agreements and to convene the Union Peace Conference - 21st Century Panglong during the first quarter of the year. In February, the first meeting was held between Myanmar's military and political leaders and the leaders of the RCSS/SSA-South at the armed group's headquarters. Described as positive, this meeting took place after the leader of the insurgent

group, General Yawd Serk, had met for the first time with the Commander-in-Chief of the Burmese Armed Forces, Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, in Naypyidaw in January. The latter was reportedly in favour of the idea of a federal union as well as a gradual reform of the Constitution and may have asked Yawd Serk for help in bringing the rest of the country's armed groups into the NCA. The armed group SSPP was in favour of signing the NCA, though it indicated that it should discuss it with the rest of the armed groups of the Federal Political Negotiation and Consultative Committee coalition. Furthermore, in February the armed group ALP asked the government to hold a national dialogue in Rakhine State. This is a mechanism provided for the armed groups that have signed the NCA to consult and contribute to a future federal union in the country.

Following the spread of the pandemic, the Union Peace Conference - 21st Century Panglong was cancelled and different initiatives were launched to try to end the armed violence. Eighteen diplomatic missions in the country called for an end to the conflicts, expressing concern about the dire situation in Rakhine and Chin States, which was subsequently joined by 21 humanitarian organisations. In May, the Burmese Armed Forces agreed to declare a unilateral ceasefire until 31 August 31, echoing the UN Secretary-General's call for a worldwide ceasefire due to the pandemic, although they excluded the Rakhine State and their fighting with the AA. The Committee to Coordinate and Collaborate with Ethnic Armed Organisations to Prevent, Control and Treat COVID-19 had previously been formed, considered an important initiative for building trust, since contact was established with armed organisations that had signed the NCA and others that had not. Some armed organisations, such as the members of the Brotherhood Alliance (TNLA, AA, MNDAA) also declared a ceasefire, and called on the government not to exclude them from its own ceasefire at the same time. The government subsequently extended the ceasefire for a month.

The fourth session of the Union Peace Conference - 21st Century Panglong was finally held in August, after not having met since October 2018. This time it was attended by 230 people, less than on previous occasions due to the pandemic. The conference concluded with an agreement of 20 principles between the Burmese government, the Burmese Armed Forces, the armed groups and the participating political parties to resolve the misunderstandings around the NCA and its implementation, as well as to establish the guiding principles for achieving a process of building a federal-democratic union. In addition, the participants agreed to continue the dialogue with the new government that was due to leave the polls in November. The 10 armed groups adhering to the NCA participated in the

conference, but the groups that have not signed it did not attend, despite the fact that they had all been invited with the exception of the AA. This absence was considered an important setback to the peace process, since one of the objectives set was to strengthen the ceasefire agreement. The absence of non-signatory organisations was motivated by the exclusion of the AA and its qualification as a terrorist group, as well as by restrictions as a consequence of the pandemic.

Gender, peace and security

Women's organisations continued to demand female participation in the peace process and were active in different forms of advocacy. The Alliance for Gender Inclusion in the Peace Process (AGIPP) met in March with the armed groups that had signed the NCA to discuss gender equality and the inclusion of women in the peace process and political talks. It also held several meetings in different states with local authorities and female civil society activists. On the International Day against Gender-Based Violence, the Women's League of Burma, a platform that brings together women's organisations with diverse religious and ethnic profiles, called for an end to the armed conflict and for the persecution of perpetrators of gender-based violence as part of the armed conflict in civil courts, as well as a guaranteed end to impunity for sexual and gender violence. It also demanded revision and changes to the draft law for the prevention of violence against women, which had been criticised significantly for its many shortcomings. After its victory in the elections in December, the NLD party appointed three representatives to hold talks with the ethnic parties, including Nang Khin Htwe Myint, the chief minister of Kachin State and one of the few women with a senior government position in Myanmar.

The peace process in Myanmar resumed with the fourth session of the Union Peace Conference - 21st Century Panglong, but the lack of participation of groups that had not signed the national ceasefire agreement blocked substantive progress

Papua New Guinea (Bougainville)	
Negotiating actors	Government of Papua New Guinea, government of the Autonomous Region of Bougainville
Third parties	Bertie Ahern
Relevant agreements	Bougainville Peace Agreement (2001)
Summary:	
The armed conflict between the government of Papua New Guinea and the Bougainville Revolutionary Army (1988-1998), which some sources consider to have been the deadliest in Oceania since the Second World War, ended with a cessation of hostilities in 1998 and the signing of a peace agreement in 2001 in Arawa (the largest city in Bougainville). Among other matters, the agreement provided for the establishment of the Autonomous Region of Bougainville (ARB), the disarmament and demobilisation of	

combatants and the holding of a non-binding independence referendum within a maximum period of 15 years after the election of the first ARB government, which finally took place in 2005. After several years of negotiations between the national and regional governments, in 2018 the Agreement's Joint Supervisory Body created the Post-Referendum Planning Working Group and former Irish President Bertie Ahern was elected chair of the Bougainville Referendum Commission, making him responsible for preparing the census and other logistical preparations for the referendum. After several delays, the referendum was finally held between 23 November and 7 December 2019, with a binary question in which voters could choose between greater autonomy or independence for the region.

During the year, the foundations were laid for the negotiating process between the government of Papua New Guinea and the Autonomous Bougainville Government to draw up a joint proposal on the political status of Bougainville, which will eventually be voted on in the Parliament of Papua New Guinea, but the progress was slowed by the impact of the pandemic, the holding of elections in Bougainville and the change of government in the region, and the complex political situation facing the Papua New Guinea government at the end of the year. Earlier in the year, the governments of Papua New Guinea and Bougainville repeated that they respected the results of the self-determination referendum held in Bougainville in November and December 2019 (in which almost 98% supported the region's independence, with over 87% turnout) and said they were willing to enter into negotiations to address the political status of the Bougainville region, in line with the provisions of the 2001 peace agreement. In late January, the Autonomous Bougainville Government organised the Bougainville Consultation Forum in the city of Buka, which formed a team of 56 representatives from various civil society organisations to promote the demands of civil society and to help the Autonomous Bougainville Government to design its negotiating strategy with Port Moresby. One of the main aspects that may shape the future of the negotiations on the status of Bougainville was the election of Ishmael Toroama as the new president of the Autonomous Bougainville Government, a former commander of the Bougainville Revolutionary Army. Although the previous president, John Momis, tried to amend the Constitution to be elected for a third term, the Supreme Court rejected the possibility. The legislative and presidential elections (the fifth since autonomous authority was granted to Bougainville) were held between 12 August and 1 September, in which 40 representatives of Parliament were elected (out of a total of more than 400 candidates) and in which Toroama defeated the other 24 candidates running by a wide margin. After his time as a combatant, Toroama also worked in the peace and disarmament process and showed his willingness to enter into sincere negotiations with the Papua New Guinea authorities.

Though several technical meetings were held between both sides during the year, a meeting took place between

Toroama and Papua New Guinea Prime Minister James Marape in Port Moresby in early November to prepare for the first meeting of the Joint Supervisory Body by the end of the month. At that meeting, **it was agreed to appoint Bertie Ahern, the former prime minister of Ireland and chairman of the Bougainville Referendum Commission**, as the facilitator of the dialogue process, and to begin formal JSB negotiations in Kopoko on 30 November. The substantive agenda for the late November meeting included economic, financial and electoral issues, the transfer of powers and the invitation for other countries such as Japan, the US, China, Indonesia and the Solomon Islands to establish delegations in Bougainville, but it mainly addressed the definition of the framework and structures for the negotiations (formally called the Post-Referendum Consultation Process). Although the technical teams of both parties did meet, in the end the formal JSB meeting between both negotiating delegations did not take place. Toroama criticised the situation and lamented that the political situation of the Papua New Guinea government affected the negotiating process, as several ministers resigned and the opposition declared its intention to file a motion of censure against Marape.

Gender, peace and security

In mid-June, the Bougainville Women's Federation Bill was passed, which according to the Bougainville Autonomous Government guarantees women's participation in political and private sector decision-making processes. The law also provides adequate funding for the Bougainville Women's Federation as the main organisation representing and working for women's rights. According to its spokesperson, the BWF will promote programmes focused on human rights, sexual violence, literacy, leadership, governance and community empowerment. Several women's organisations also noted that the historical record had been beaten for women running in the presidential and legislative elections in August and September. According to the Bougainville Constitution, three of the 40 seats are reserved for women. One woman was triumphant in the aforementioned elections, so the current Bougainville Parliament will have four women. Several analysts pointed out that Papua New Guinea is one of the countries in the world with the lowest levels of female political participation and representation. Finally, the BWF was active as an observer in the legislative and presidential elections and stated its intention to work to achieve more transparent and inclusive elections in the future.

Thailand (south)	
Negotiating actors	Government, BRN
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.

As part of the new peace process between the government and the BRN, the most active and influential armed group in the south of the country, two rounds of negotiations were held in January and March, but they were interrupted after the truce decreed by the BRN in April and did not resume all year. **After many exploratory talks between the Thai government and the BRN, including a meeting in Berlin in December 2019, the government and BRN delegations met for the first time in Kuala Lumpur on 20 January 2020, facilitated by Abdul Rahim Noor in representation of the government of Malaysia.** The government delegation was led by General Wanlop Rugsanaoh and consisted of seven people, including the minister of justice, the commander of the southern military region of the country and a member of the intelligence services. The BRN delegation was led by Anas Abdulrahman (aka Hipni Mareh), a former teacher at an Islamic school in Yala. None of the BRN members who were also part of MARA Pattani participated in these negotiations, although some MARA Pattani members said that there was coordination with the BRN. MARA Pattani is an umbrella organisation representing the main armed groups in southern Thailand, which led the negotiations with the government between 2015 and late 2019. In the same vein, Wanlop Rugsanaoh said that **the government wanted to enter into direct negotiations with the main armed group in the south and that other groups could join the negotiations later.** Anas Abdulrahman said that both the framework

and the terms of reference for the negotiations had been discussed in this first round of negotiations. In addition, the government accepted the participation and observation of foreign peace process experts for the first time, albeit on an individual basis and not on behalf of any organisation or government. Historically, the government had opposed the insurgency's demand that negotiations be mediated or facilitated by international actors. A second round of negotiations was held in early March in which the government panel said that technical and administrative issues were discussed, as well as some issues on the substantive agenda, such as the reduction of violence in the south to foster a better climate of trust between the parties. However, the government said that reaching agreements on the substantive agenda of the negotiations would require time and perseverance from both sides.

On 3 April, the same day that UN Secretary-General António Guterres made a new appeal for all parties in the world to declare a ceasefire, **the BRN declared the cessation of all its offensive armed activity for humanitarian reasons and emphasised the need to prioritise containing the COVID-19 pandemic.**

According to some media outlets, some civil society organisations such as The Patani or the Islamic Medical Association were key to the BRN's decision to declare a cessation of hostilities on humanitarian grounds. Although the Thai Armed Forces did not respond to the gesture and announced their intention to continue their actions to preserve law and stability in the south, in April there were substantially less hostilities between the parties. The BRN's humanitarian truce expired in early May, just days after a military operation killed three suspected insurgents accused of plotting attacks during Ramadan. Two days later, two soldiers were killed in the Nong Chik district (Pattani province). Although the government stated that the lower death rate during the ceasefire period could also be due to other factors unrelated to the BRN truce, Wanlop Rugsanaoh disagreed and cited Bangkok's willingness to resume peace talks in July or August. However, although the government said that it was in constant contact with the BRN, formal negotiations did not resume for the rest of the year. Wanlop Rugsanaoh claimed that the pandemic made continuing the talks impossible, but some analysts believe that the main reason why the negotiations broke down was the increase in political and social crises in Thailand as a whole and the escalation of protests in several parts of the country. In September, Wanlop Rugsanaoh met with several Muslim leaders in Pattani, who according to some media reportedly made several requests of him, such as to make Friday (an Islamic holy day in Islam) a holiday and to declare Malay an official language in the southern part of the country.