

4. Peace negotiations in Asia

- In Asia, 10 negotiating processes were reported in 2021, accounting for approximately one quarter of the total peace processes around the world.
- In comparative terms, Asia was one of the regions in which more direct negotiations took place without the facilitation of third parties.
- In approximately half of the cases analysed in Asia, a certain paralysis and even regression in the negotiations was reported.
- The withdrawal of US troops and the Taliban military advance sank the peace negotiations, causing a change of regime and the fall of the government of Ashraf Ghani.
- In Mindanao (southern Philippines), the period of the transitional government of the new Bangsamoro region (led by the MILF) was extended by three years and the third stage of the reintegration of the 40,000 MILF ex-combatants began with significant delays.
- The Philippine Government declared the NDF a terrorist organisation, which in recent decades has negotiated with Manila on behalf of the Communist Party of the Philippines and its armed wing (the NPA).
- The Government of Papua New Guinea and the Autonomous Bougainville Government formally began the process of negotiating the political status of Bougainville.
- The president of South Korea proposed signing a declaration that would end the Korean War and allow negotiations to move forward on the denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula.
- The military coup in Myanmar shut down the Panglong 21 dialogue with the insurgency.

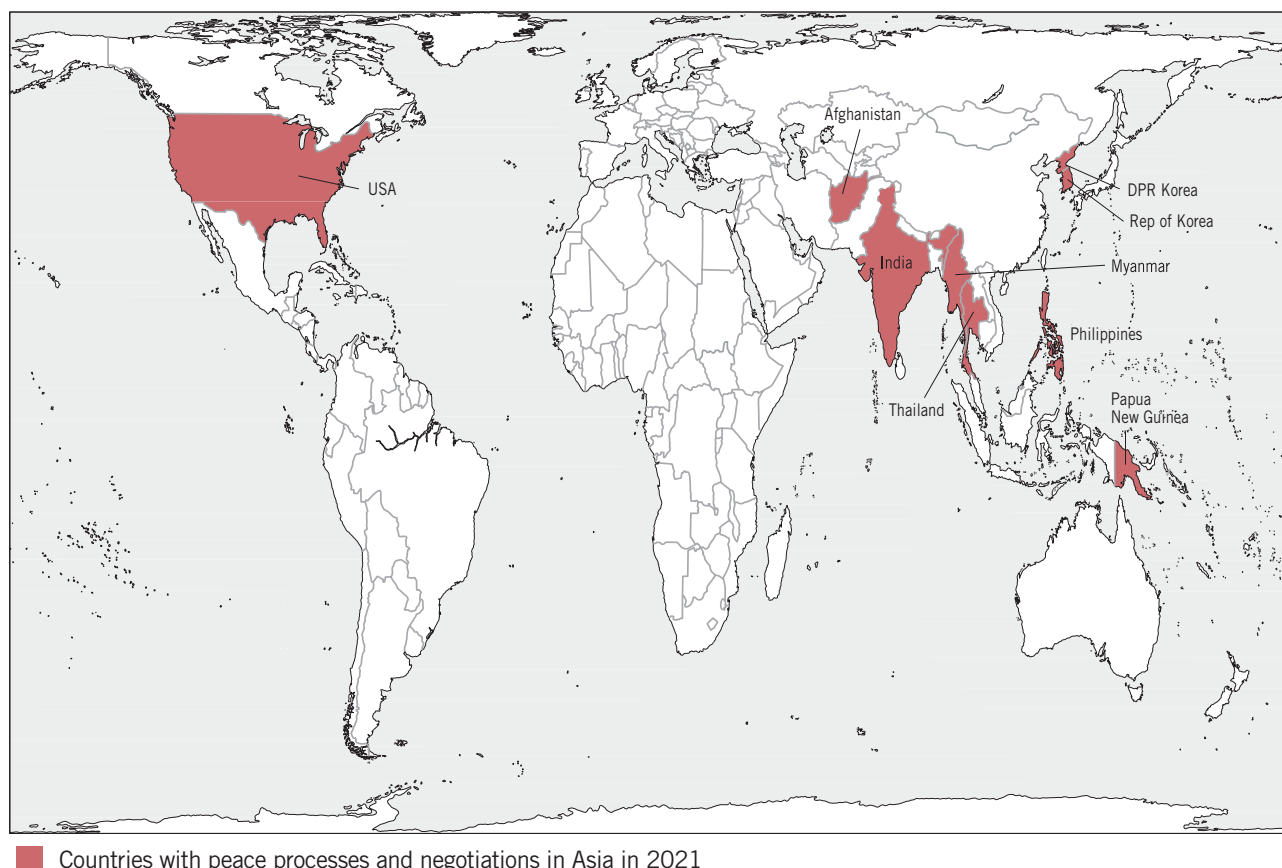
This chapter provides an analysis of the main peace processes and negotiations in Asia in 2021, both the general characteristics and trends of the negotiations and the development of each case on the continent throughout the year, including references to the gender, peace and security agenda. In addition, at the beginning of the chapter there is a map identifying the countries in Asia that hosted peace negotiations during 2021.

Table 4.1. **Summary of peace processes and negotiations in Asia in 2021**

Peace processes and negotiations	Negotiating actors	Third parties
Afghanistan	Government, Taliban insurgency, USA	Pakistan, China, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Russia, Germany, Norway, USA, UN
DPR Korea – Republic of Korea	North Korea, South Korea	--
DPR Korea – USA	North Korea, USA	--
India (Assam)	Government, ULFA-PTF, ULFA-I	--
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 that have not signed the NCA: UWSP, NDAA, SSPP/SSA-N, KNPP, NSCN-K, KIA, AA, TNLA and MNDAA	China, ASEAN
Papua New Guinea (Bougainville)	Government, Autonomous Bougainville Government	United Nations, Bertie Ahern
Philippines (MILF)	Government, MILF, Interim Government of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in- Muslim Mindanao	Malaysia, Third Party Monitoring Team, International Monitoring Team, Independent Decommissioning Body
Philippines (NDF)	Government, NDF (umbrella organisation of various 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 2021



4.1 Negotiations in 2021: regional trends

In 2021, **10 negotiating processes were reported in Asia**: four in Southeast Asia (the Philippines (MILF and NDF), Myanmar and Thailand (south)), three in South Asia (Afghanistan, India (Assam) and India (Nagaland)), two in East Asia (North Korea-USA and North Korea-South Korea) and one in the Pacific (Papua New Guinea (Bougainville)). Half these negotiations were linked to active armed conflicts (Afghanistan, the Philippines (NDF), the Philippines (MILF), Myanmar and Thailand (south)), while nearly the other half were socio-political crises (North Korea-South Korea, North Korea-USA, India (Assam) and India (Nagaland)).

The nature of these conflicts, and therefore the heart of the peace negotiations, hinged in half these cases on questions of self-determination, independence, autonomy, territorial and constitutional adjustment or recognition of the identity of various national minorities, as in the cases of the Philippines (MILF), India (Assam and Nagaland), Myanmar, Papua New Guinea (Bougainville) and Thailand (south). Two other cases focused mainly on the denuclearisation and political détente of the Korean peninsula, while in both the Philippines (NDF) and Afghanistan, countries in which the contending parties to the armed conflict had conflicting state models, structural and systemic economic and political issues (especially in the

Philippines) were addressed alongside religious and military ones (especially in Afghanistan). In addition to resolving the substantive aspects of the conflict, several peace processes stood out for the management of the pandemic and the signing of ceasefire agreements or measures to reduce and limit violence. Ceasefires or similar measures had been decreed in 2020 in response to the call for a global ceasefire by the United Nations Secretary-General in March 2020 in some countries in the region, notably Afghanistan, the Philippines and Thailand. Finally, in Afghanistan and the Philippines (NDF), part of the negotiations between the parties was related to the implementation of agreements reached in previous years: the global peace agreement of 2014 in the case of the Philippines and the agreement between the US and the Taliban, signed in Doha in February 2020. However, in Afghanistan, the military takeover of political power by the Taliban scuttled the previous negotiations.

The vast majority of the negotiations were of an internal nature and took place mainly within the country in which the conflict was taking place, but some of them had a very clear international dimension, either due to the participation of foreign third parties in facilitation or mediation (Afghanistan, the Philippines (MILF), the Philippines (NDF), Myanmar, Papua

New Guinea (Bougainville) and Thailand (south)); to holding negotiations outside the country in question (Afghanistan, Thailand); to the residence abroad of certain leaders of armed groups in negotiations with the state (Afghanistan, Myanmar, India and Thailand) or to the influence of third countries in the dynamics of the negotiations (China in Myanmar and the Korean peninsula, Pakistan in Afghanistan and Malaysia in southern Thailand). The negotiations were interstate in two cases (North Korea and the United States and North Korea and South Korea).

Over half the **actors participating in the negotiations** were governments, armed groups or their political representatives: Afghanistan, India (Assam and Nagaland), the Philippines (NDF) and Thailand (south). In the other four cases, the negotiations were mainly between governments. The two negotiations that took place on the Korean peninsula were interstate (North Korea and South Korea, and the US and North Korea); while in the other two cases (the Philippines (MILF) and Papua New Guinea (Bougainville)), the main core of the negotiations was conducted by the governments of the Philippines and Papua New Guinea and by the regional governments of Bougainville and the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao. In both cases, the autonomous governments were headed by leaders of former armed organisations, such as the Bougainville Revolutionary Army (of which Ishmael Toroama was a prominent leader) and the MILF (led in recent decades by Ebrahim Murad, who is currently the maximum representative of the transitional government that will operate in the BARMM until 2025). In addition to the southern Philippines and Bougainville, the regional governments of Assam and Nagaland also played an important role in the negotiations in Nagaland. For example, the negotiating leader of the armed group NSCN-IM met with the chief ministers of Assam and Nagaland, who in turn maintained close contact with the central government in Delhi. Similarly, the main parliamentary forces of the state of Nagaland reached an agreement to form a unity government without opposition to facilitate the signing of an agreement to put an end to the conflict that has been active in the region for decades.

Several of the **armed groups** negotiated with the government directly, like 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, but in some cases they did so through political organisations that represented them, such as in the Philippines, in which Manila negotiated with the National Democratic Front (NDF) on behalf of the Communist Party of the Philippines and its armed wing, the NPA, or through coalitions that brought together and represented various armed groups, such as in Nagaland

(the Naga National Political Groups (NNPG), which brings together seven insurgent organisations) and in Myanmar, where various armed groups negotiated with the Burmese government through umbrella organisations such as the Federal Political Negotiation and Consultative Committee.

Forty per cent (40%) of the negotiations analysed in Asia did not have any type of **third-party** facilitation or external mediation, making it the area with the highest proportion of direct and bilateral negotiations between the parties. The cases in which dialogue was facilitated by third parties in some way were in Afghanistan, the Philippines (MILF), the Philippines (NDF), Myanmar, Papua New Guinea (Bougainville) and Thailand (south), although the degree of internationalisation and complexity of intermediation structures was very uneven among those cases. In some contexts, dialogue facilitation fell mainly to a single actor, such as Norway in the Philippines (NDF), Malaysia in southern Thailand

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and the United Nations and Bertie Ahern in Papua New Guinea and the Autonomous Bougainville Government, while in other cases, the dialogue mediation space was broader. There was a high degree of internationalisation of the peace processes in the Philippines (Mindanao) and in Afghanistan (prior to the Taliban military takeover of the country). In the Philippines (MILF), in addition to the official mediation of the government of Malaysia during the negotiations that led to the signing of the 2104 agreement, the peace process had other international support structures: the International Monitoring Team, in which the EU participated, along with countries such as Malaysia, Libya, Brunei Darussalam, Japan and Norway; the Third Party Monitoring Team (responsible for supervising the implementation of the agreements signed between the MILF and the government); the International Decommissioning Body (made up of Turkey, Norway, Brunei and the Philippines, which supervised the demobilisation of 40,000 former MILF combatants); and finally, though less prominently in the implementation phase of the peace agreement, the International Contact Group, made up of 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). In Afghanistan, many international actors supported the intra-Afghan peace negotiations in some way. For example, Turkey hosted a meeting between the two sides and Russia hosted a peace conference shortly before the 1 May deadline for the complete withdrawal of US troops. Qatar also organised meetings between the Taliban and the Afghan government during the year and had previously hosted the negotiations between the Taliban and the US government, which led to the signing of the February 2020 agreement. In other contexts, some actors informally (without an explicit mandate)

tried to facilitate dialogue between the parties. In Myanmar, for example, the government asked China for support in carrying out negotiations with ethnic armed groups based in the north of the country, while the South Korean President Moon Jae-in has exerted great diplomatic effort in recent years to resume the negotiations between the US and South Korea on the denuclearisation of North Korea.

Regarding the role played by **international organisations** in facilitating peace negotiations and supporting dialogue processes, the United Nations was active in Afghanistan, the Philippines (MILF) and Papua New Guinea (Bougainville). The United Nations envoy to Afghanistan and head of UNAMA highlighted the involvement of the United Nations mission in intra-Afghan negotiations on numerous occasions throughout the year. For example, in 2021 the United Nations organised a peace conference attended by countries such as Russia, Pakistan, China, Iran, India and the US. In the Philippines, the United Nations implemented institutional development and strengthened programmes for the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao and supported the demobilisation and reintegration of former MILF combatants, in the latter case through the UNDP. Regarding the negotiations between Papua New Guinea and Bougainville, in recent years the United Nations has supported the implementation of the peace agreement (2001) and in 2021 signed an agreement with the government of Papua New Guinea to provide political and economic support to the negotiating process between both governments to determine the political status of Bougainville after the massive support for independence in the self-determination referendum held in 2019.

Regarding other intergovernmental organisations, ASEAN played a notable role in the crisis unleashed in Myanmar after the coup d'état in February, the EU was active in the Philippine region of Mindanao through the International Monitoring Team, which supervises the ceasefire between the government and the MILF, and the World Bank played a growing role in Mindanao, as it will manage the Bangsamoro Normalisation Trust Fund, whose objective is to centralise the contributions of international cooperation (international organisations, governments and other donors) aimed at implementing the peace agreement. In comparative terms with other regions, however, intergovernmental organisations were less involved in mediation and dialogue facilitation in Asia. There were also several **states** that actively participated in some peace processes, such as Norway in the Philippines, which has facilitated negotiations between the Philippine government and the NDF for years and participates in the International Decommissioning Body and the International Monitoring Team in Mindanao, and Qatar in Afghanistan, which gave its support both to the intra-Afghan dialogue and previously to the negotiations between the US and the

Taliban. Malaysia also acted as a mediator, facilitating negotiations between the Philippine government and the MILF and between the Thai government and the insurgency operating in the south of the country, while also participating in the International Monitoring Team in Mindanao.

As for the **evolution of the peace processes**, approximately half the cases analysed experienced some paralysis or even regression in the negotiations. In Afghanistan, even if there were significant meetings between the government and the Taliban, the seizure of power by the Taliban in August brought any dialogue process to an abrupt end. In the Philippines, negotiations had been inactive for some time, but the designation of the NDF as a terrorist organisation in mid-2021 nipped in the bud any chance of a resumption of negotiations under the current Duterte administration. In Myanmar, the coup d'état carried out by the Burmese Armed Forces in February froze the 21st Century Panglong Conference, temporarily suspended the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement and ended negotiations between the government and the armed groups that had signed it. In other contexts there were no such obvious setbacks, but the negotiations remained at an impasse. On the Korean peninsula, for example, there were no high-level meetings or significant progress in either the inter-Korean talks or those between North Korea and the US on Pyongyang's nuclear programme.

Similarly, in Thailand, the government and the BRN did not meet in person throughout the year. On a positive note, negotiations began over the political status of Bougainville between the autonomous government of the island and the government of Papua New Guinea. Other causes for hope included the institutional establishment of a new autonomous region in the southern Philippines as a result of the 2014 peace agreement (the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao) and the start of the third phase of the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration process for around 40,000 MILF combatants.

Finally, regarding the **gender, peace and security agenda**, women scarcely participated in peace negotiations in Asia. However, four women were included in the negotiating delegation of the government of Afghanistan in its negotiations with the Taliban in Qatar, although the subsequent seizure of power by the Taliban put an end to any progress on the agenda. Moreover, a woman (Juliet de Lima) chaired the NDF's negotiating panel in its talks with the Philippine government and another woman, Laisa Alamia, was appointed head of the body that will oversee the demobilisation of former MILF combatants in Mindanao (southern Philippines). A high proportion of women participated in the Bougainville Autonomous Government's consultations with civil society regarding the negotiations with the government of Papua New Guinea on the political status of the island and the women's organisations' demonstrations

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in Myanmar calling for the restoration of democracy. However, there was a significant setback in women's rights in Afghanistan after the Taliban took power and it was found that there were still relatively very few women in the parliament of the new Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao.

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.

Even though there was less political and military tension between the two countries and on some occasion both leaders expressed their willingness to promote inter-Korean dialogue and improve relations between their countries, there were no high-level meetings or significant progress in the talks between North Korea and South Korea during the year. Early in the year, South Korean President Moon Jae-in repeated his

desire to improve relations with North Korea as he had done several times in 2020 and urged the new US administration to resume dialogue with Pyongyang based on the progress reported during the previous Trump administration. Along the same lines, in late February Moon Jae-in suggested that the celebration of the Olympic Games in Tokyo could be a good opportunity to promote dialogue between the main regional actors. However, **the development that had the greatest political and media impact was Moon Jae-in's speech at the UN General Assembly in September, in which he proposed signing a political declaration that would put an official end to the Korean War (1950-53)**, which did not end through a peace agreement, but rather an armistice signed by North Korea, the USA (representing the United Nations Command) and the People's Volunteer Army of China (although the Chinese government did not recognise any organic link with it). According to the South Korean government, such a declaration would put an end to an anomalous situation (the two countries are still technically at war) and could open the door to the signing of a peace agreement and the establishment of peace on the peninsula. In addition, according to Seoul, such a proposal would be a very pragmatic approach to resolving the conflict, since it would allow both countries and the US to build trust and initiate a dialogue on the denuclearisation of the peninsula without having to lead to short-term military, political or institutional changes. According to Seoul, such a roadmap would also weaken the justifications and motivations for provoking military tensions between North and South Korea, including the development of nuclear weapons.

During the diplomatic rapprochement between North Korea and the US in 2018 and 2019, both Pyongyang and Seoul had been in favour of ending the war and even signing a peace agreement. The Trump administration had also expressed its agreement. However, the end of the negotiating process between the two countries during 2019 meant that the proposal was abandoned. Previously, Pyongyang had on some occasions proposed signing a peace agreement with the US, since according to some analysts, this would allow Pyongyang to demand the withdrawal of the approximately 28,500 US soldiers permanently stationed in South Korea and ask for a relaxation of the sanctions imposed on it. Some analysts say that the US government supports such a declaration to end the war because it would show its determination to halt what North Korea calls a hostile policy. However, they also point out that Washington does not currently unconditionally support signing any peace agreement that would change the terms of the 1953 armistice, as among other things it would affect the United Nations contingent deployed in the region and the design and operation of the Demilitarised Zone, around which approximately one million soldiers are stationed. Shortly after Moon Jae-in's statements at the UN General Assembly, North Korea's representative to the United Nations indicated that they could be a smokescreen to legitimise Washington's hostile attitude, but a few days later, **Kim Yo-jong, the sister of Kim**

Jong-un and main person in charge of relations with South Korea, opened the door to dialogue if Seoul ceased its provocations, double standards and hostile policy. Kim Yo-jong was also open to discussing the aforementioned declaration on ending the war, holding an inter-Korean summit and re-establishing the border liaison office that both countries created as part of the summits held in 2018, and that Pyongyang detonated in June 2020 once the inter-Korean dialogue process and the negotiations between the US and North Korea on the North Korean nuclear programme were aborted. A few days after these important statements were made by Kim Yo-jong, Kim Jong-un called for the re-establishment of communications with South Korea, which had been interrupted by Pyongyang in August in protest of the joint military exercises between the US and South Korea. According to some analysts, the rapprochement of positions between both countries is mutually convenient. Moon Jae-in, whose term was coming to an end, would like to bequeath a new stage in inter-Korean relations. The North Korean government may suspect that the next administration may not be as prone to dialogue and reconciliation as the current one and would like to use the resumption of inter-Korean negotiations to obtain economic compensation from South Korea and to get Seoul to intercede with the US to relax the sanctions against it.

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.

Despite the fact that both governments were open to dialogue and that South Korean President Moon Jae-in urged the resumption of the negotiating process of 2018 and 2019 on several occasions, there were no presidential summits or technical working meetings during the year between the North Korean and US governments. **At various points during the year, new US President Joe Biden offered Pyongyang a sincere, sustained and substantial dialogue on the denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula and stressed that his government does not have a hostile policy towards North Korea.** However, Biden also warned North Korea against any escalation of the situation, urged Pyongyang to end its ballistic or nuclear tests that violate international law and urged the international community and especially its closest allies in the region (Japan and South Korea) to fully implement United Nations sanctions against North Korea. In April, Biden made a speech before Congress in which he called North Korea's nuclear programme a threat, drawing severe criticism from Pyongyang. The Chinese government also expressed its hope that Biden's review of US foreign policy towards the Korean peninsula focus more on the resumption of dialogue than on confrontation and provocation.

In mid-June, Kim Jong-un said that his country should be prepared for both dialogue and confrontation with the US, in statements that high-ranking representatives of the US government viewed very positively. However, both the North Korean foreign minister and Kim Yo-jong (sister of Kim Jong-un and, according to some media, responsible for relations with the US and South Korea) cautioned against misunderstanding the words of the Korean head of state and mistakenly expecting an early resumption of negotiations. A few weeks earlier, the US government had appointed Sung Kim as the new US special envoy to the Korean peninsula, in charge of designing the agenda for the working meetings prior to the summits between Kim Jong-un and former President Donald Trump. According to several media outlets, North Korea welcomed the decision. According to some analysts, Pyongyang expects more incentives,

gestures and guarantees from the US before resuming talks at the highest level, but at the same time there is speculation that the serious economic and humanitarian situation in the country (which some reports consider to be the worst in recent history) is forcing North Korea to take some steps regarding its weapons programme to get some sanctions against it relaxed. These same analysts think that the US government is designing a pragmatic and incremental policy of trying to reach agreements in certain areas and that the offer of dialogue with Pyongyang without conditions does not imply any willingness to make important concessions on the aspects on which North Korea has been more insistent in recent years. These include the (total or gradual) lifting of sanctions, the withdrawal of the more than 28,000 US soldiers permanently stationed in South Korea and the cancellation of the military exercises jointly carried out every year.

South Asia

Afghanistan	
Negotiating actors	Government, Taliban insurgents, USA
Third parties	Pakistan, China, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Russia, Germany, Norway, US, 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 broke down with the return of the Taliban to power after the withdrawal of US and international troops and the military seizure of the country that led to the fall of the government headed by Ashraf Ghani. Until their breakdown, the negotiations were shaped by the prior agreement on this withdrawal, reached by the US government under the Trump administration and the Taliban, in which the Afghan government did not participate. Thus, two processes unfolded alongside each other, continuously interconnected throughout the year: the intra-Afghan negotiations between the Taliban and the Afghan government on the one hand and the review and

implementation of the agreement between the US and the Taliban on the other. The year had begun with a new round of meetings in Doha that concluded at the end of January. Known as intra-Afghan negotiations, they had begun in September 2020 and were paused by agreement of the parties for three weeks in December to hold internal and external consultations. Coinciding with the restart of the talks, the US envoy, Zalmay Khalilzad, also travelled to Qatar to meet with the Taliban and later went to Kabul, although the Afghan president refused to meet with him because it emerged that Khalilzad's proposal for an interim government would include the political opposition. In February, the Afghan government and the Taliban met again with the aim of agreeing on an agenda, but without achieving substantial progress. After the inauguration of Joe Biden as US president, Washington announced that it should review the agreement reached in February 2020 regarding the US military withdrawal from the country. A bipartisan committee of the US Congress recommended that the troop withdrawal be conditional on a peace agreement, but the Taliban demanded that the agreement on the troop withdrawal be respected, saying that there would be consequences otherwise.

In March, Ghani and Khalilzad met to try to get the situation moving and Ghani declared that any change of government in the country had to be formed from elections, in response to the US proposal for an interim government with Taliban participation. In addition, as revealed by TOLONews media, US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken also wrote to the Afghan president with a plan to reactivate the peace process by calling a conference facilitated by the United Nations, with the participation of Russia, Pakistan, China, Iran, India and the US, as well as a high-level meeting of both parties in Turkey. Blinken noted that a proposal for a 90-day ceasefire was being prepared with the aim of preventing a Taliban offensive in the spring and paving the way for a peace agreement. The letter concluded by noting that the US had not ruled out any options regarding Afghanistan, including a complete troop withdrawal before 1 May. At the Moscow conference, which was held six weeks before the deadline set for the US withdrawal, all international actors called on the parties to agree to a ceasefire. Abdullah Abdullah, the chief government negotiator, said that the government was willing to negotiate on any issue. In response to Blinken's plan, Ghani said that he would be willing to lead an interim government until elections could be held, noting that **the transfer of power through an electoral process was a red line for the Afghan government.** Taliban leader Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar repeated **that the US had not complied with the 2020 agreement and refused to participate in international conferences until the withdrawal of troops took place**, which led to the postponement of the conference that was to be held in Turkey in early April.

Finally, **on 14 April, Biden announced the full withdrawal of US troops, setting the deadline of 11**

September, postponing by four months the agreement with the Taliban to withdraw in February 2020. After the announcement, many said that a withdrawal without a peace agreement between the Afghan government and the Taliban could lead to the collapse of the government. In May, for the Muslim holiday of Eid al-Fitr, the Taliban proposed a three-day ceasefire, to which President Ghani agreed, after weeks of escalating violence. Coinciding with the ceasefire, both parties met again in Doha and agreed to keep the talks active. The Taliban, pressured by Pakistan, presented several conditions so that the meeting in Istanbul could take place: it had to be short, lasting no more than three days (it had initially been proposed to last 10 days); the agenda should not include decision-making on central issues; and the Taliban delegation would be low-profile. The leader of the Taliban negotiating team was reported to have held consultations in Pakistan with Taliban leader Sheikh Hibatullah Akhundzada in meetings that had lasted for a month. In June, the Afghan president met in Washington with Joe Biden, who assured financial support for the Afghan government and security forces, as well as a plan to evacuate from the country Afghan citizens who had collaborated with US troops and the US government. However, as The New Yorker revealed later, Biden's commitment was vague and depended on an Afghan government military plan in response to Taliban military advances. In July, the Taliban said they would present a peace plan within a month and spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said peace talks were expected to enter an important phase. Mujahid said that despite their military advantage, the Taliban remained serious about the peace talks. These statements came at a time when thousands of members of the security forces had abandoned their posts in the face of Taliban advances and the takeover of large parts of the country. In addition, various international diplomats involved in the negotiations stepped up pressure on Pakistan to try to get the neighbouring country to exert more influence over the Taliban to reach an agreement, warning that time was running out. Although meetings between the Taliban and the government were held in Qatar and Iran in July, no progress was made. In the final days before the Taliban military victory and the capture of Kabul, the US Secretary of State proposed to Ghani the release of 3,000 prisoners by both parties in exchange for a one-month ceasefire. Ghani rejected this proposal. According to The New Yorker, Khalilzad asked Ghani for a delegation led by Abdullah Abdullah and Hamid Karzai to travel to Doha to negotiate an orderly transition. Ghani replied that he was willing to leave power only if elections were held to appoint his successor, which was ruled out by the US for not considering it realistic. According to The New Yorker, on 14 August Ghani would have been willing to accept any proposal, given the information that the Taliban had already entered Kabul. Although a high-level delegation travelled to Doha to reach an agreement in extremis,

On 15 August, Afghan President Ashraf Ghani left the country after the failure of the peace process and the Taliban military advance, leading to the imposition of the new Taliban-led regime

finally on 15 August, Ashraf Ghani left Afghanistan, giving way to Taliban control of the government.

Gender, peace and security

During the course of the negotiations, women's organisations warned of the serious risk to their rights if the peace process did not reach an agreement that guaranteed their rights. Even though the negotiating government delegation in Qatar included four women (Fawzia Koofi, Habiba Sarabi, Fatema Gailani and Sharifa Zarmati Wardak), some very important meetings for the negotiating process, such as the one that took place in Moscow, continued to exclude them. Only Habiba Sarabi was part of the delegation that participated in the meeting in Moscow and in which she expressed the women's discontent for being excluded from this meeting and other spaces of the negotiations. After the fall of the Ghani government in August, the situation deteriorated enormously for women, since the new Taliban government imposed strict restrictions on their participation in the public, political, working and cultural life of the country, preventing their involvement in the new government institutions. Many female activists and politicians had to leave the country, including those who had been involved in the negotiations and in different peacebuilding initiatives.

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 experienced progress and setbacks at different times of the year, without any substantive agreement being reached. In January, it emerged that the NSCN-K group had announced in the final days of December 2020 that it was resuming the ceasefire agreement that it had unilaterally suspended in 2015 and was joining the peace negotiations. After several months without progress, in September the Indian government dismissed the government negotiator and state governor RN Ravi after trust between him and the NSCN-IM was broken the year before, which had conditioned any progress in the process that had led the armed group to harden its position on central issues linked to Naga sovereignty. In his place, the government appointed AK Mishra, until then the director of intelligence. Mishra met with NSCN-IM chief negotiator and Secretary General Thuingaleng Muivah in the city of Dimapur in Nagaland. Sources from the armed group stressed that the negotiations should start from the framework agreement that was signed between the Indian government and the insurgency in 2015. In parallel, the Chief Minister of Assam, Himanta Biswa Sarma, also met in Dimapur with Muivah, in a meeting in which the Chief Minister of Nagaland, Neiphiu Rio, also participated. The meeting took place after the Indian Home Minister and Sarma had met in Delhi. After the meeting with the insurgent leader, the Chief Minister of Assam met with the government negotiator and other members of the Assam government, without the content of the different meetings being revealed. Subsequently, in October there was a new meeting in Delhi between Mishra and the NSCN-IM, which focused on the issues of the flag and the Naga constitution. The deadlock on these two issues, which have been central to the discussions in recent years, was not broken and no progress was made in this regard. The NSCN-IM reportedly rejected the proposal that the Naga flag be considered a “cultural symbol” and refused to leave solving these issues until after the signing of a possible agreement. Meanwhile, the NNPG group, which brings together seven Naga insurgent organisations and had supported keeping RN Ravi as the government negotiator, backed the proposal that the issue of the flag and the constitution would not interfere in a possible agreement with the government. The NNPG also held meetings with AK Mishra, both in Dimapur and Delhi.

The political forces with parliamentary representation in the state reached an agreement to form a unity government without opposition, called the United Democratic Alliance (UDA), with the aim of facilitating the achievement of an agreement on the Naga issue. Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio met several times with members of the central government accompanied by the Chief Minister of Assam.

However, the peace process entered a crisis in December after 14 people were killed by the security forces. Six coal mine workers were killed during a military operation in Mon district after being mistaken for a group of insurgents, according to official sources. As a result of the protests that followed and their violent repression,

another seven civilians and a soldier died in the days that followed, in the worst escalation of violence in the state in several years. The murders of civilians once again reopened questions about the anti-terrorist legislation in force in the northeastern region of India, which grants wide powers to the security forces and has been denounced on multiple occasions by human rights organisations, given the impunity that it enjoys. After the incidents, the armed groups announced the suspension of the peace negotiations and the State Legislative Assembly unanimously approved a declaration calling for repeal of the legislation. After the protests, the Indian government tried to resume contact with the insurgent groups to resume the negotiations.

Gender, peace and security

A delegation of 29 women representing different civil society organisations delivered a petition to the state governor demanding justice for the 14 workers killed by the security forces, calling for the repeal of anti-terrorist legislation and denouncing the militarisation of the state and its consequences for the Naga civilian population. The organisations that filed the petition included the Naga Mothers' Association, which has played a crucial role in facilitating dialogue with the armed groups, and other women's organisations and different Naga tribal organisations like Angami Women Organisation, Watsu Mungdang, Sumi Totimi Hoho, Lotha Eloie Hoho, Zeliang Women Organisation, Pochury Mothers Association, Chakhesang Mothers Association, Chakhesang Women Society, Rengma Mothers Association, Tenyimi Women Organisation, Kuki Mothers Association and Global Naga Forum.

South-east Asia and Oceania

Philippines (MILF)	
Negotiating actors	Government, MILF, Interim Government of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao
Third parties	Malaysia, 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.

Both the government and the MILF recognised that the COVID-19 pandemic was having a significant impact on the implementation of the 2014 peace agreement, but at the same time they expressed their commitment to the process and reached **important agreements on the institutional development and consolidation of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) and the reintegration of former combatants**. Regarding the first aspect, in October President **Rodrigo Duterte signed the amendment to the Bangsamoro Organic Law postponing the first elections in the BARMM, scheduled for May 2022, until May 2025, thus prolonging by three years the mandate of the Bangsamoro Transition Authority (BTA)**. Made up of 80 representatives appointed jointly by the Philippine government and by the MILF but headed by the leader of the MILF, Murad Ebrahim, the BTA was established in 2019 after a referendum was held in the region and after the dissolution of the former Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao. Since the beginning of the year, both the MILF and various voices in civil society in Mindanao and even in the government have warned that the expansion of the pandemic was making it difficult to implement key aspects of the peace agreement and that the necessary conditions for holding the elections in May 2022 were not being met. Thus, the Third Party Monitoring Team supervised both the talks between the MILF and the government and the deliberations that took place in Congress for much of the year to amend the Bangsamoro Organic Law. During the negotiations that led to the 2014 peace agreement, the MILF had already advocated a longer transition period, indicating that in other cases where a peace agreement was signed, the transition periods tend to be longer.

The second most important aspect in terms of development of the peace agreement and of negotiations between the peace implementation panels of the Philippine government and the MILF was the resumption of the disarmament, demobilisation

and reintegration process for the 40,000 MILF combatants recognised in the 2014 peace agreement. The International Decommissioning Body (IDB) certified that so far the first two phases of the process had been satisfactorily completed (concluded in June 2015 and March 2020 respectively), with a total of 12,145 combatants. It also announced that **between November 2021 and January 2022, the third phase will be completed, with 14,000 combatants**, and that the fourth and final phase will begin later, with another 14,000 combatants. The IDB attributed the delay in the start of the third phase to COVID-19 restrictions. In November the head of the MILF's peace implementation panel and the group's former chief negotiator, Mohagher Iqbal, lamented that so far only between 300 and 400 former MILF combatants had joined the Joint Peace and Security Team, a body that according to the peace agreement should be made up of 6,000 troops (3,000 ex-combatants, 1,600 police officers and 1,400 soldiers) and should guarantee peacekeeping in the region. Finally, the Bangsamoro Normalisation Trust Fund was established in May, which will bring together the funds coming from international cooperation (international organisations, governments and other donors) earmarked for the implementation of the peace agreement and will be managed by the World Bank. The main objective of this fund will be the reconstruction and development of certain communities and the transformation of six MILF camps recognised in the peace agreement into productive economic zones in which the reintegration of tens of thousands of combatants can take place.

Gender, peace and security

The minority leader in the Bangsamoro Parliament, Laisa Alamia, has been appointed head of the Task Force for Decommissioned Combatants and their Communities (TFDCC), whose main objective is to help the peace implementation panel to identify and implement socio-economic priorities and development projects for former MILF combatants undergoing reintegration and their communities. In October, the NGO Oxfam published a report based on the testimony of Moro women from the civil society sector and the Bangsamoro Islamic Women Auxiliary Brigade, an exclusively female unit that provided support to the armed wing of the MILF for decades, that concluded that gender inequalities and biases clearly persist in the disarmament and demobilisation of ex-combatants and urged greater female participation in all areas of decision-making and in the normalisation process in the region. Thus, the organisation Catholic Relief Services (CRS) stated that as part of the recently created Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, only 221 women hold leadership positions at the municipal and provincial levels and only 13 of the 80 seats in Parliament are held by women (16.2%). CRS also announced the start of a leadership and participation training process with 300 women leaders and 18 women's organisations.

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.

In line with the situation in 2020, **there continued to be many clashes between the Philippine Armed Forces and the armed opposition group NPA in 2021. There were also no face-to-face meetings between the negotiating panels of the Philippine government and the NDF**, which represents the Communist Party of the Philippines and its armed wing, the NPA. Despite the fact that the president terminated the negotiations and declared the NPA and the Communist Party of the Philippines terrorist organisations in late 2017, at the beginning of the year the former head of the government's negotiating panel, Silvestre Bello, said during a conference of religious organisations supportive of peace that both exploratory contacts and informal and confidential dialogue between the parties were still active. According to Bello, both he and former Minister of Agrarian Reform Hernani Braganza should have travelled to Utrecht (in the Netherlands, the country where the members of the NDF negotiating panel have lived since the 1980s) to find common ground and explore both parties' willingness to negotiate, although in the end this trip had to be called off due to COVID-19 restrictions. In this regard, Bello said that President Duterte was willing to resume peace talks. The interim president of the NDF negotiating panel, Juliet de Lima, also confirmed that exploratory talks were being held between both parties and even pointed out that their objective was to work on an interim peace agreement, which would include the declaration of a limited ceasefire and the delimitation of

the territories in which neither of the two parties could operate in order to avoid direct confrontation.

However, **on several occasions during the year, President Duterte and senior government officials stated that the peace negotiations has definitively ended and ruled out any possibility of resuming the dialogue.** In fact, the Office of the Presidential Advisor on the Peace Process (OPAPP) issued a public statement in June to criticise and refute the calls for the resumption of dialogue by religious groups and civil society, denouncing the attitude and lack of sincerity and political will of the NDF during all the negotiations and valuing the efforts of the Duterte administration since 2016 to reach an agreement. Furthermore, in mid-July, **the government declared the NDF a terrorist organisation.** Previously, in May, it had already declared 19 leaders of the Communist Party of the Philippines as terrorists, including several people who in recent years had acted as NDF consultants in peace negotiations. According to some civil society organisations, this decision could affect a possible resumption of negotiations in the future. Along these lines, **during the year Manila declared that it would activate various international pressure mechanisms so that the government of the Netherlands will deport Jose María Sison to the Philippines. The leader and founder of the Communist Party of the Philippines and the NPA,** Jose María Sison has lived in the Netherlands since the mid-1980s. Manila claims that he is responsible for many violations of international humanitarian law. This demand made to the Dutch government was supported by various demonstrations and political influence by some Philippine organisations, such as the League of Parents of the Philippines (LPP) and Liga Independencia Pilipinas (LIPI). At the end of the year, the current vice president and presidential candidate for the 2022 election, Leni Robredo, expressed her willingness to resume dialogue with the NDF, but within the framework of the local peace negotiations that had already been promoted by the current administration.

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, ASEAN
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. 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 negotiating process between the Burmese government and the ethnic armed groups was affected by the coup d'état that took place in the country in February and was led by the Burmese Armed Forces, which seized power to prevent the formation of the Parliament resulting from the November 2020 elections.¹ Although the dialogue process with part of the insurgency known as Panglong 21 was suspended as a result of the coup, there were meetings between the new military government and different armed opposition groups at different times of the year. After the military coup, the armed groups adopted different positions with respect to the new government established by the Burmese Armed Forces and the repression and detention of a large part of the political opposition. Some groups positioned themselves alongside the political opposition and clashes were reported in areas controlled by the KIA, MNDAA and TNLA, while others were more ambiguous. In April a negotiating team from the military junta met with the armed groups UWSP and NDAA, none of them having signed the ceasefire agreement, to ask them not to get involved in the resistance against the military regime. In July, the coordinating body of the armed groups that signed the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA), the Peace Process Steering Team (PPST), formally declared the end of the peace negotiations with the government and the temporary suspension of the ceasefire agreement. According to a spokesman, the negotiations with all the armed groups were suspended, but each group could decide whether to hold bilateral negotiations with the government. In December, government representatives met with most of the members of the Federal Political Negotiation and Consultative Committee (FPNCC), which brings together the armed groups UWSA, AA, TNLA, KIA, MNDAA, NDAA and SSPP/SSA, none of them signatories of the ceasefire agreement. Neither the KIA nor the TNLA participated in the meeting. The meeting took place at the request of China, which had urged the government to negotiate with the armed groups since the coup d'état. It was also attended by a

Chinese representative. **During Chinese Special Envoy for Asian Affairs Sun Guoxiang's visit to the country, General Min Aung Hlaing requested Chinese support to carry out negotiations with the armed ethnic groups based in the north of the country.** According to the media outlet The Irrawaddy, the military junta would intend to resume negotiations with the members of the FPNCC, interrupted after the coup and which had faced obstacles in 2020, when these groups refused to participate in the 21st Century Panglong Conference.

Other notable developments included the **diplomatic efforts of the regional organisation ASEAN to try to resolve the crisis that broke out after the coup** in the country. International actors delegated to ASEAN the diplomatic efforts to approach the military regime. The European Union, United States and United Kingdom imposed sanctions on the regime. In April, ASEAN convened a regional summit in Jakarta attended by General Min Aung Hlaing in which a five-point consensus was reached to deal with the situation in Myanmar, including the decision to appoint an envoy to visit Myanmar and establish contacts with the new government and the opposition. The government was also asked for authorisation to distribute humanitarian aid. However, after the summit, Min Aung Hlaing retracted his commitments. The envoy for Myanmar, Brunei Foreign Minister Erywan Yusof, did not take up his post until August. Given the regime's refusal to allow him to meet with State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi, who was ousted by the coup, he was unable to visit the country, as this was a precondition for doing so. UN Special Envoy Christine Burgener was also unable to visit the country and in October the UN Secretary-General appointed Noeleen Heyzer to be his new special envoy. Finally, ASEAN decided to exclude Min Aung Hlaing from the regional summits, which meant that he could not participate in the one that took place in October. In December, Cambodian Foreign Minister Prak Sokhonn was appointed the organisation's envoy for Myanmar and he was expected to be able to visit the country in early January. In addition, Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen, who is ASEAN's rotating president for 2022, repeated that the situation in Myanmar should be resolved internally, although ASEAN could lend its support. In December, Hun Sen met with the Burmese foreign minister in Phnom Penh in a meeting focused on "finding ways to restore cooperation and solidarity in ASEAN" and also announced that he hoped to travel to Myanmar to meet with Min Aung Hlaing in January to start "silent diplomacy". Hun Sen was against the exclusion of Myanmar's leaders from the organisation's summits. Cambodia's internal opposition questioned whether a dictatorial government like Cambodia's could help to resolve the political crisis in Myanmar. Hun Sen also noted that he had discussed the situation in Myanmar and his possible trip to the country with Japanese Prime Minister Kishida Fumio.

1. See the summary on Armed conflict in Myanmar in Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Alert 2022! Report on conflicts, human rights and peacebuilding*. Barcelona: Icaria, 2022.

Gender, peace and security

On 8 March, the women's organisations Alliance for Gender Inclusion in the Peace Process, CEDAW Action Myanmar, Gender Equality Network, Triangle Women Organisation and Women's Organisations Network (Myanmar) made an appeal to ASEAN, the United Nations and the international community, asking for help to resolve the political crisis in the country, in a statement with the slogan "Choose to Challenge Dictatorship". They also specifically addressed ASEAN to ask it to demand that the Burmese government accept the 2020 election results, release detained persons and respect human rights in the country. In addition, various civil society organisations, including women's organisations, sent ASEAN their demand that the regional organisation exclude the Burmese government from the summit held in October to pressure the military regime to restore democracy to the country, emphasising the government's lack of willingness to negotiate.

Papua New Guinea (Bougainville)	
Negotiating actors	Government of Papua New Guinea, government of the Autonomous Region of Bougainville
Third parties	United Nations, 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.

After several delays in 2020, negotiations finally began between the government of Papua New Guinea and the Autonomous Bougainville Government on the political status of the island after nearly 98% of the population voted for independence for Bougainville in late 2019. Such a referendum was foreseen in the 2001 peace agreement that put an end to the armed conflict that devastated the island between 1988 and 1998 and caused the death of around 20,000 people, or 10% of

the population. However, also according to the peace agreement, the results of the referendum were not binding, so both governments must begin a negotiating process and consult with the population to prepare a political proposal on the political status of Bougainville that must be ratified by the National Parliament of Papua New Guinea. Although the first meeting of the Joint Consultative Body (main coordination body between both governments) was held in March 2020, the start of the negotiating process was delayed due to the expansion of the pandemic, the political crisis experienced in Papua New Guinea in late 2020 and the political situation in Bougainville, which held elections after the Supreme Court rejected former Bougainville President John Momis' bid to run for a third term. The election was won by former combatant Ishmael Toroama. In January, Toroama and the prime minister of Papua New Guinea met and issued a joint statement recognising the validity and legitimacy of the results of the referendum on independence, stating that they had agreed on the meaning of the word "independence" before holding the referendum (separation from Papua New Guinea) and promising to immediately start the consultation and negotiating process. **Three rounds of negotiations were held during the year (in May, July and December) between the governments of Papua New Guinea and Bougainville, led respectively by James Marape and Ishmael Toroama**, as part of the Joint Consultative Body and the Intergovernmental Consultations on the results of the Bougainville referendum. Throughout the year, Marape and Toroama held other informal meetings while both governments' working groups met more regularly.

At these meetings, it was agreed that **the negotiating process will be chaired by the United Nations and that former Irish Prime Minister Bertie Ahern will moderate the dialogue**. Even if Toroama had suggested a roadmap that would culminate in Bougainville's declaration of independence by September 2025, in the end the commitment ratified by both parties is limited to having a final political agreement no earlier than 2025 and no later than 2027. The government of Papua New Guinea indicated that during 2025 the National Parliament would rule on the proposal that emerges from the negotiating and consultation process and that, whatever the direction of the vote of the National Parliament, its implementation would last until 2027. Previously, by the end of 2022, a constituent assembly was supposed to have been established in Bougainville and the process of transferring powers from Papua New Guinea to Bougainville was supposed to have been completed. Even though the Autonomous Bougainville Government has demanded that these include powers over international relations and border control, Marape has pointed out that this cannot be done if the Constitution is not previously amended. By late 2024, Bougainville's constituent assembly should have decided on the draft of the new Bougainville Constitution. On several occasions during 2021, Prime Minister Marape said that despite the clarity of the 2019 referendum result, Bougainville's independence is only one of the possible

expressions of the negotiating and consultation process, calling into question the viability of the economy of Bougainville as an independent country and warning that full independence for the island could destabilise and fragment Papua New Guinea, fuelling aspirations for autonomy in a country made up of many islands in which more than 800 languages are spoken. Thus, Marape announced his intention to begin consulting with the population at the national level, drawing harsh criticism from the Autonomous Bougainville Government. Along the same lines, at the beginning of the year, the Autonomous Bougainville Government convened the Bougainville Leaders Consultation Forum, which brings together members of the Bougainville House of Representatives and various sectors of civil society for the purpose of identifying the main challenges of the region and bolstering the government's negotiating position.

Gender, peace and security

UNDP stated at the end of the year that the Bougainville Transitional Dialogues project had had almost 30,000 participants since its inception in 2019, 50% of whom were women and 30% youth. This project, which is paid for by the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund, aims to make civil society aware of the details of the negotiations between the governments of Papua New Guinea and Bougainville, convey to both negotiating teams the demands and expectations of civil society in Bougainville, raise awareness of the benefits of peace in the region and identify the challenges and opportunities of the transition process currently under way on the island.

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.

Levels of violence continued to decline in the three southern Muslim-majority provinces, but there were no face-to-face meetings or significant progress in the negotiations between the Thai government and the armed opposition group BRN. This process officially began in early 2020, after several informal talks held in Indonesia and Germany in late 2019. In January and March 2020, two rounds of negotiations were held in Kuala Lumpur in which some common ground was found and the procedural bases of the negotiating process were set, but the expansion of the COVID-19 pandemic caused the third round of negotiations scheduled for November 2020 in the Malaysian state of Kedah to be called off. **In February 2021, both parties publicly acknowledged having held a technical virtual meeting to resume the talks.** According to some sources, in one such meeting the government proposed declaring a ceasefire during the month of Ramadan (which was between mid-April and mid-May in 2021), but the BRN rejected the idea and said it preferred to address the issue during the face-to-face meeting that both parties agreed to hold in May in Malaysia, whose government is facilitating the dialogue. As such, the Thai government accused the BRN of focusing only on issues of protocol, procedure and logistics to try to buy time. In early May, the head of the BRN negotiating panel, Anas Abdulrahman (also known as Hipni Mareh), publicly declared that in the upcoming round of negotiations scheduled for May, both parties should address the substantive issues of the negotiations for the first time, such as political solutions to the conflict or a ceasefire. Anas also said that the process should be more inclusive, such as by consulting with the local population, and that the people of southern Thailand want to have greater control over their language, culture, economy and politics.

Along these lines, a few months earlier, **the Provincial Islamic Committees had presented a proposal to boost the negotiations between the Thai government and the BRN, including issues such as community police, local courts to deal with family issues, the use of the local language in all government offices and public signs and consultations with the Provincial Islamic Committees on the appointment of provincial governors and judicial officials.** According to some analysts, focusing on such issues, which are politically less sensitive than the self-determination of the Patani people and the political status of Yala, Pattani and Narathiwat provinces, could be a good starting point for resuming dialogue. Even

though both parties had told the media about the meeting in May, there is no public record of it taking place, or any other throughout the year. Some analysts say that the parties still do not have enough trust or political will, so both negotiating panels have the mandate to dialogue, but not to make significant concessions. In addition, there are groups within both the government and the BRN that are clearly hostile to the peace talks.

According to other voices, in addition to the negative consequences of COVID-19 on the negotiations, the political instability that both Thailand and Malaysia are going through also helps to explain the lack of progress in the peace process. However, other analysts believe that the negotiations will remain active as long as the BRN remains willing to explore non-violent ways to achieve its political objectives.