

# Executive summary

**Peace negotiations 2023: analysis of trends and scenarios** is a yearbook that analyses the peace processes and negotiations that took place in the world during 2023. The examination of the development and dynamics of negotiations worldwide allows to provide a comprehensive overview of peace processes, identify trends and comparatively analyse the various scenarios. One of the main objectives of this report is to provide information and analysis to those who participate in peaceful conflict resolution at different levels, including parties to disputes, mediators, civil society activists and others. The yearbook also aims to grant visibility to different formulas of dialogue and negotiation aimed at reversing dynamics of violence and channelling conflicts through political means in many contexts. Thus, it seeks to highlight, enhance and promote political, diplomatic and social efforts aimed at transforming conflicts and their root causes through peaceful methods.

Methodologically, the report draws mainly on the qualitative analysis of studies and information from many sources (the United Nations, international organisations, research centres, media outlets, NGOs and others), as well as on experience gained during field research. The report also cross-cuttingly incorporates a gender perspective in the study and analysis of peace processes.

The report is divided into six chapters. The first presents a summary and map of the 45 peace processes and negotiations that took place in 2023 and provides an overview of the main global trends. The next five chapters delve into the peace processes and negotiations from a geographic perspective. Each of them addresses the main trends of peace negotiations in Africa, America, Asia and the Pacific, Europe, and the Middle East, respectively, and describes the development and dynamics of each case in those regions. At the beginning of each of these five chapters, a map is included indicating the countries where peace processes and negotiations have occurred in 2023.

## Peace processes and negotiations in 2023

AFRICA (18)	ASIA AND THE PACIFIC (10)	EUROPE (6)
Cameroon (Ambazonia/North West and South West)	DPR Korea – Republic of Korea	Armenia – Azerbaijan (Nagorno-Karabakh)
CAR	DPR Korea – USA	Cyprus
Chad	India (Assam)	Georgia (Abkhazia, South Ossetia)
DRC	India (Nagaland)	Moldova (Transdnistria)
Eritrea – Ethiopia	Myanmar	Russia – Ukraine <sup>2</sup>
Ethiopia (Oromia)	Papua New Guinea (Bougainville)	Serbia – Kosovo
Ethiopia (Tigray)	Philippines (MILF)	
Ethiopia – Egypt – Sudan	Philippines (MNLF)	
Libya	Philippines (NDF)	
Mali	Thailand (south)	
Morocco – Western Sahara		
Mozambique		
Senegal (Casamance)		
Somalia		
Somalia – Somaliland		
South Sudan		
Sudan <sup>1</sup>		
Sudan – South Sudan		
	AMERICA (6)	MIDDLE EAST (5)
	Colombia (ELN)	Iran (nuclear programme)
	Colombia (EMC)	Israel – Palestine
	Colombia (FARC)	Palestine
	Haiti	Syria
	Venezuela	Yemen
	Venezuela – Guyana	

## Negotiations in 2023: global overview and main trends

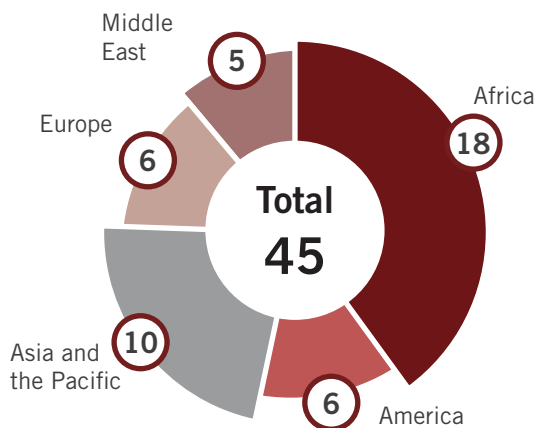
During 2023, a total of 45 peace processes and negotiations were identified on a worldwide level. Most of the cases analyzed were concentrated in Africa, which hosted 18, equivalent to 40% of the total. Asia and the Pacific was the region with the second-highest number of cases, with a total of 10, representing 23% of the

negotiations in 2023. The rest of the negotiations were distributed between America and Europe, with six cases each (13%), and the Middle East, with five (11%).

There was a rise in the number of peace processes and negotiations worldwide, in keeping with the

1. In 2019, the three peace and negotiating processes that had been taking place in Sudan in the previous year were reduced to one due to the end of the national dialogue between the government and the opposition following the formation of a transitional government, as well as the merger of the cases of Darfur and the “Two Areas” (South Kordofan and Blue Nile) into a single peace process. In 2023, the negotiations were focused on resolving the national armed conflict between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces.
2. Russia-Ukraine is included due to the humanitarian dialogue, Ukraine’s dialogue with international actors about parts of its peace plan and the initiatives promoted by various governments, though political and military negotiations between the warring parties were not resumed in 2023.

**Graph 1.1. Regional distribution of peace negotiations**



upward trend of the previous two years (37 processes in 2021, 39 in 2022), though the levels of 2018 and 2019 were not reached (49 and 50 cases, respectively). However, this increase was not accompanied by lower levels of violence and global armed conflict. On the contrary, the total number of active armed conflicts also increased during the year (36 armed conflicts in 2023, compared to 33 in 2022) and violence got worse in Israel-Palestine and in high-intensity conflicts such as those in Sudan, Mali, Western Sahel, the DRC, Somalia, Myanmar, Pakistan and elsewhere. In addition, there were other conflicts trending similarly in 2023 to the previous year but with high levels of violence, such as in the Lake Chad Region (Boko Haram), Ethiopia (Oromia), Russia-Ukraine and Syria. The increase in the number of processes took place mainly in Africa (18 cases in 2023 compared to 15 in 2022, 12 in 2021 and 13 in 2020). The three new processes in Africa were negotiations between the federal government of Ethiopia and representatives of the armed group Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) in Tanzania; the resumption of talks between Ethiopia, Egypt and Sudan over the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) dispute; and the relaunch of international contacts and initiatives to promote dialogue and reconciliation between Somalia and Somaliland. In the Americas, two more cases were identified than the previous year, as a new peace process began in Colombia between the government and the armed group Estado Mayor Central (EMC) and talks started between the governments of Venezuela and Guyana regarding their territorial dispute over the Essequibo region. Finally, in the Middle East, after the events of 2023 and the crisis in Gaza, we analyse the case of Israel-Palestine again in this edition of the report to address the mediation attempts and diplomatic initiatives to resolve the crisis. The 2022 edition had stopped analysing it due to the chronic standstill of the negotiations, which had

***There were 45 peace and negotiating processes around the world in 2023***

***Dialogue and negotiating processes were under way in 19 of the 36 active armed conflicts during 2023, accounting for 53% of the cases***

been suspended since 2014.

Dialogue and negotiating processes were under way in 19 of the 36 active armed conflicts during 2023,<sup>3</sup> accounting for 53% of the cases. This was a smaller proportion than in the previous year, when 58% of the conflicts had negotiations. The dip was visible in Africa, where the number of conflicts with negotiations fell from 65% in 2023 to 55%, and in Asia and the Pacific, where it decreased from 55% to 44%. In contrast, in the Middle East it rose from 40% to 50%, even if one of the cases, Israel-Palestine, included diplomatic initiatives and attempts at mediation with a brief pause in hostilities in November, though neither a ceasefire nor a resumption of the formal negotiating process were achieved. Overall, the high proportion of armed conflicts with negotiations showed that there were many contexts in which the warring parties explored and opened avenues for negotiation alongside the fighting.

In any case, most armed conflicts were prolonged, in which the similarly long-lived negotiating processes faced serious difficulties in moving towards resolving them.

National governments were involved as one of the **negotiating parties** in all the peace processes and negotiations. These governments negotiated or maintained contact with various kinds of actors directly or indirectly, depending on the characteristics of the context, which in general terms included armed groups (directly or through political representatives, and in some cases through coalitions of armed groups), as was the case in most negotiations in Asia; a combination of armed groups and political and social actors, prevalent in Africa; or representatives of political/military bodies seeking secession or recognition as independent territories, which was true of most cases in Europe. To a lesser extent, cases involving opposition governments and political and social actors were also identified, such as in some of the processes in the Americas. Parallel or complementary negotiations were conducted in a significant number of contexts, linked to armed conflicts and socio-political crises in highly complex scenarios of actors and disputes.

Regarding the **third parties involved in the peace and negotiation processes**, although in many cases it is possible to clearly identify the actors involved in mediation, facilitation and accompaniment activities, on other occasions these tasks are carried out discreetly or not publicly. At least one third party was involved in the vast majority of the negotiating processes (40 out of 45, or 89%), in a proportion similar to that of previous years (90% in 2022). For another year, there was third-party support for processes under different formats, both in internal (30 of 34, equivalent to 88%), and international

<sup>3</sup> Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Alert 2024! Report on conflicts, human rights and peacebuilding*. Barcelona: Icaria, 2024.

## Armed conflicts and peace processes in 2023

Armed conflicts with peace negotiations (19)	Armed conflicts without peace negotiations (17)
<b>AFRICA (10)</b>	<b>AFRICA (8)</b>
Cameroon (Ambazonia/ North West and South West) (2018)	Burundi (2015)
CAR (2006)	DRC (east – ADF) (2014)
DRC (east) (1998)	DRC (west)
Ethiopia (Oromia) (2022)	Ethiopia (Amhara) (2023)
Ethiopia (Tigray) (2020)	Lake Chad Region (Boko Haram) (2011)
Libya (2011)	Mozambique (north) (2017)
Mali (2012)	Somalia (Somaliland-SSC Khatumo) (2023)
Somalia (1988)	Western Sahel Region (2018)
South Sudan (2009)	<b>ASIA (5)</b>
Sudan (2023) <sup>4</sup>	Afghanistan (2001)
<b>AMERICA (1)</b>	India (CPI-M) (1967)
Colombia (1964)	India (Jammu and Kashmir) (1989)
<b>ASIA (4)</b>	Pakistan (2001)
Myanmar (1948)	Pakistan (Balochistan) (2005)
Philippines (NPA) (1969)	<b>EUROPE (1)</b>
Philippines (Mindanao) (1991)	Türkiye (southeast) (1984)
Thailand (south) (2004)	<b>MIDDLE EAST (3)</b>
<b>EUROPE (1)</b>	Egypt (Sinai) (2014)
Russia – Ukraine (2022) <sup>5</sup>	Iraq (2003)
<b>MIDDLE EAST (3)</b>	Israel – Hezbollah (2023)
Israel – Palestine (2000)	
Syria (2011)	
Yemen (2004)	

\*The year the conflict began appears between parentheses

negotiations (15 of 17, also equivalent to 88%). The vast majority of international negotiations had third-party support, which was true of 80% of all peace processes between states. Internal and international dimensions coexisted in some peace processes (five), all with third-party support. At the regional level, while all negotiations that took place in Africa, the Americas, Europe and the Middle East had third-party support, only 50% of the processes in Asia and the Pacific involved third parties. Interstate negotiations between North Korea and South Korea and between North Korea and the United States, as well as internal negotiations in the Philippines (MNLF), India (Assam) and India (Nagaland) took place without third-party support.

In practically all the cases that had a third party (36 of the 40, equivalent to 90%) there was more than one actor performing mediation or facilitation tasks. Thus, in the vast majority of cases there was a set of

actors engaged in mediation, facilitation and support for the dialogue, in some cases with collegiate, complementary and coordinated formulas, and in others, and increasingly, with fragmentation or problems of coordination or competition. In contrast, only one third party was observed in other cases, such as Norway in the process in the Philippines (NDF), the United Nations in the process in Papua New Guinea, Malaysia in Thailand (south) or the UN in the dispute over Iran's nuclear programme. In an international context of multiplicity of mediating actors, these were of diverse types, highlighting intergovernmental organizations –such as the UN, EU, AU and the IGAD, mainly– and state governments, religious organisations and civil society actors, including specialised centres. Intergovernmental organisations played a predominant role, except in Asia and the Pacific, where comparatively they were hardly involved in mediation and facilitation efforts. The United Nations was the main intergovernmental organisation

4 In previous years, two distinct armed conflicts were identified in Sudan: Sudan (Darfur) (2003) and Sudan (South Kordofan and Blue Nile) (2012). Both conflicts, characterised as internationalised internal and motivated by issues of self-government, resources and identity, are analysed in this edition together within the Sudan armed conflict (2023). This is due to the fact that the dynamics of the armed conflict that began in April 2023 between the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) and the paramilitary group Rapid Support Forces (RSF) affect a large part of the country and particularly the regions of Darfur, South Kordofan and Blue Nile. Furthermore, irregular armed actors from these regions are also actively involved in the hostilities.

5 Russia-Ukraine is included due to the humanitarian dialogue, Ukraine's dialogue with international actors about parts of its peace plan and the initiatives promoted by various governments, though political and military negotiations between the warring parties were not resumed in 2023.

## Internal and international peace processes and negotiations with and without third parties in 2023

Peace processes	INTERNAL					INTERNATIONAL	
	Direct negotiations without third parties (3)	Negotiations with third parties (30)	National dialogues without third parties (1)	National dialogues with third parties (0)	Other formats (0)	Direct negotiations without third parties (2)	Negotiations with third parties (15)
<b>AFRICA</b>							
Cameroon (Ambazonia/ North West-South West)		x					
CAR		x					
Chad <sup>i</sup>		x	x				
DRC <sup>ii</sup>		x					x
Etiopia (Oromia)		x					
Ethiopia (Tigray)		x					
Eritrea – Ethiopia							x
Ethiopia – Egypt – Sudan							x
Libya		x					
Mali		x					
Morocco – Western Sahara							x
Mozambique		x					
Senegal (Casamance)		x					
Somalia		x					
Somalia – Somaliland <sup>iii</sup>							x
South Sudan		x					
Sudan <sup>iv</sup>		x <sup>v</sup>					
Sudan – South Sudan		x					x
<b>AMERICA</b>							
Colombia (ELN)		x					
Colombia (EMC)		x					
Colombia (FARC)		x					
Haiti		x					
Venezuela		x					
Venezuela – Guyana							x
<b>ASIA AND THE PACIFIC</b>							
India (Assam)	x						
India (Nagaland)	x						
Korea, DPR – Korea, Rep. of						x	
Korea, DPR – USA						x	
Myanmar		x					
Papua New Guinea (Bougainville)		x					
Philippines (MILF)		x					
Philippines (MNLF)	x						
Philippines (NDF)		x					
Thailand (south)		x					

i. Two previous initiatives are being implemented in Chad: the Doha peace agreement between part of the Chadian insurgency and the government and the commitments made in the National, Inclusive and Sovereign Dialogue (DNIS). There is also a consultation process for the part of the insurgency that did not sign the Doha agreement facilitated by the Community of Sant'Egidio.

ii. There are two peace negotiations at the same time in the DRC, involving the Congolese government and the Rwandan government (Luanda process) and the Congolese government and different armed groups in the eastern part of the country (Nairobi process), both with third-party participation.

iii. Although the Republic of Somaliland is not officially recognised as an independent state, this peace process is considered international because the region enjoys de facto recognition as an autonomous administration independent of Somalia.

iv. In 2019, the three peace and negotiating processes that had been taking place in Sudan in the previous year were reduced to one due to the end of the national dialogue between the government and the opposition following the formation of a transitional government, as well as the merger of the cases of Darfur and the "Two Areas" (South Kordofan and Blue Nile) into a single peace process. In 2023, the negotiations were focused on resolving the national armed conflict between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces.

v. This refers to the negotiations to resolve intercommunity disputes in the Abyei region and border areas.

Peace processes	INTERNAL					INTERNATIONAL	
	Direct negotiations without third parties (3)	Negotiations with third parties (30)	National dialogues without third parties (1)	National dialogues with third parties (0)	Other formats (0)	Direct negotiations without third parties (2)	Negotiations with third parties (15)
<b>EUROPE</b>							
Armenia – Azerbaijan (Nagorno-Karabakh) <sup>vi</sup>		x					x
Cyprus		x					
Georgia (Abkhazia, South Ossetia) <sup>vii</sup>							x
Moldova (Transdniestria)		x					
Russia – Ukraine							x
Serbia – Kosovo <sup>viii</sup>							x
<b>MIDDLE EAST</b>							
Iran (nuclear programme)							x
Israel – Palestine							x
Palestine		x					
Syria <sup>ix</sup>		x					x
Yemen <sup>x</sup>		x					x

vi. In 2023 the dialogue process had two levels. The first were the international negotiations between Armenia and Azerbaijan on normalising their relations, territorial integrity, the delimitation of borders, transport routes and other issues. The second negotiations were between Azerbaijan and representatives of Nagorno-Karabakh, though they were unsuccessful. Azerbaijan's military offensive in 2023 dismantled the structures of the self-proclaimed republic of Nagorno-Karabakh and provoked the exodus of its Armenian population.

vii. The nature of the peace processes of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, as well as Russia's role in those conflicts, is subject to interpretation. Georgia considers Russia an actor in the conflict and a negotiating party, while Russia considers itself a third party.

viii. The peace process between Serbia and Kosovo is considered international. Although Kosovo's legal status is still controversial, it has been recognised as a state by over 100 countries. In 2010, the International Court of Justice handed down a non-binding ruling stating that Kosovo's independence did not violate international law or UN Security Council Resolution 1244.

ix. In Syria, there are parallel negotiating processes involving third parties, some of which are also considered actors in the conflict and interested parties in the negotiations.

x. Intra-Yemeni negotiations remained active in 2023 at the request of the UN, though contacts between the Houthis and Saudi Arabia played a greater role during the year.

that participated by supporting peace processes. It was present in different formats and served various support functions in 24 of the 45 processes identified during the year and in 24 of the 40 that involved at least one third party (53% and 60%, respectively).

Other international and regional organisations also played a prominent role, especially regional organisations in their geographical areas of operation. Furthermore, together with intergovernmental organisations, a significant number of states became involved as third parties in negotiating processes, often amidst the projection of national interests in an international dispute for hegemony between powers. In line with the trend seen in previous years, in 2023 Middle Eastern countries like Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Oman and Egypt played a significant role not only in the region itself, but also in other peace processes in Africa.

With regard to the **negotiating agendas**, one must consider the particular aspects of each case and bear in mind that the details of the issues under discussion did not always become known to the public. Once again, **the search for truces, ceasefires and cessations of hostilities** was one of the central subjects of discussion in various peace processes. It was a crucial issue in the Palestinian-Israeli context in the first half of the year, then after the significant escalation of

violence starting in October, which activated several different diplomatic initiatives as the weeks passed and alarms about the serious humanitarian crisis and the commission of genocide in Gaza. A ceasefire was also important in the discussions about the future of Yemen, where a de facto cessation of hostilities was maintained during 2023, despite the breakdown of the UN-backed truce agreement. The ceasefire agreements were central to the negotiating processes with both the ELN and EMC. These agreements then led to the establishment of mechanisms to verify compliance. In Africa there were cessations of hostilities and ceasefire agreements in different contexts, like in the Ethiopian regions of Oromia and Tigray, Senegal (Casamance), Sudan or the DRC, in relation to the armed groups in the east of the country and especially M23. In contrast to 2022, in the second year of Russia's invasion, the governments of Russia and Ukraine did not resume negotiations regarding a possible ceasefire and remained at loggerheads.

Other important issues were related to **autonomy, self-determination, independence, administrative-territorial set-up and recognition of the identity** of different minorities. This was true of the processes in Cameroon, Ethiopia (Oromia), Ethiopia (Tigray), Mali, Senegal (Casamance), South Sudan, Morocco-Western Sahara, India (Assam and Nagaland), the Philippines (MILF and MNLF), Myanmar, Papua New Guinea

(Bougainville), Thailand (south), Armenia-Azerbaijan (Nagorno-Karabakh), Cyprus, Moldova (Transnistria), Serbia-Kosovo and others. Most of the negotiations around these issues faced significant obstacles, given many governments' refusal to accept formulas for decentralisation and the recognition of sovereignty. Issues related to the **governance** of countries and political transitions, the distribution of power and elections were also addressed. In Africa, governance issues were present in ongoing negotiations in various contexts, including Chad, Mali, the CAR, Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan and Libya. As in previous years, other topics in the negotiations included **security sector reform and the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) of combatants**. These were widely present in negotiating processes in Africa, such as in Chad, Ethiopia (Tigray), Mozambique, Mali, the CAR, the DRC, Senegal (Casamance), Sudan, South Sudan and Libya. In Sudan, disagreements between the military parties over reforming the security sector, especially regarding the deadlines for integrating the RSF into the unified national army and establishing the command structure, spiked tensions and led to fighting between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the RSF paramilitary group.

Regarding the **evolution of peace processes and negotiating processes**, in 2023, most dialogue and negotiating processes suffered setbacks and serious difficulties. The setbacks were largely due to escalations in violence, especially in Mali and Sudan in Africa. In Mali the resumption of clashes in the north of the country between the Malian Armed Forces and the armed groups that signed the 2015 Algiers Peace Agreement put its continuity at risk. In Sudan the start of a new armed conflict between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the paramilitary group Rapid Support Forces (RSF) broke off the negotiations aimed at achieving a political transition and establishing a civilian government in the country. In Asia and the Pacific relations between South Korea and North Korea deteriorated significantly during the year, to the point that both countries suspended the 2018 agreement in which both countries had committed to improving their bilateral relations and actively negotiating in favour of reunification. In Europe there was a great setback when Azerbaijan's military offensive eliminated the option of a negotiated solution to the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh, forced the exodus of the Armenian population from the enclave and added a new regional and global benchmark for the use of force to settle disputes. In the Middle East, various initiatives to resolve the crisis in Gaza, which witnessed an unprecedented level of violence, failed to achieve a permanent ceasefire by the end of the year and the situation continued to deteriorate in December.

Many negotiating processes also faced serious problems and in some cases ran aground in 2023. In Africa, the processes in Eritrea-Ethiopia, Ethiopia (Oromia), Ethiopia-Egypt-Sudan, Libya, Morocco-Western Sahara, the DRC, South Sudan and Sudan-South Sudan were beset by many difficulties, impasse and crises. In the Middle East, the negotiating process in Syria continued with no prospects for a political solution to the armed conflict, which reported an escalation in violence at the end of the year. Furthermore, the situation in Gaza had regional repercussions, spreading uncertainty and greater difficulties in other contexts. Thus, by the year's end, the relatively positive prospects in the Yemeni negotiating process were in question due to the regional impact of the crisis in Gaza and the escalation in the Red Sea. Overall, it was not possible to reactivate high-level negotiations in the scenarios in Morocco-Western Sahara, Russia-Ukraine and Cyprus during the year. Despite the setbacks and problems in many negotiating processes, others enjoyed rapprochement and progress, such as in Mozambique, Senegal (Casamance), Ethiopia (Tigray), the Philippines (NDF, MILF, MNLF), Thailand (south) and India (Assam).

In this landscape of obstacles, the rise in polarisation, division and geopolitical confrontation worldwide hampered peacebuilding efforts and increased military approaches to the crises. Conflicts with a great capacity for spillover that were also caught in dynamics of geopolitical confrontation, such as the Russia-Ukraine and Israel-Palestine conflicts, as well as the responses to them, revealed challenges such as growing global militarism, double standards, international divisions in responses, the increasing use of force to settle disputes and the weakening of the multilateral system.

Finally, regarding the **gender, peace and security agenda**, the analysis of the different peace processes in 2023 confirms, like in previous years, the obstacles that women face in participating in formal processes and the difficulties in incorporating a gender perspective in negotiation. **No specific mechanisms of participation were designed for women in most negotiations and gender issues and recognition of the rights of women and the LGBTIQ+ population were left out of much of the negotiating agendas. There were several processes in which women had the opportunity to participate, though with many limitations**, such as the cases of Somalia-Somaliland, the Philippines, Colombia (ELN), Colombia (EMC), Colombia (FARC), Haiti, Cyprus, Georgia, Moldova. Women's civil society organisations from Sudan, Serbia-Kosovo, Cyprus, Yemen and elsewhere demanded dialogue and inclusion in the negotiating processes.

## Main agreements of 2023

Peace processes	Agreements
Colombia (ELN)	In June, the government of Colombia and the ELN reached a temporary bilateral nationwide ceasefire agreement by which they committed to putting an end to offensive actions. The agreement was initially valid for 180 days and was planned to begin on 3 August 2023. The agreement also provided for the formation of a Monitoring and Verification Mechanism.
Colombia (EMC)	In October, the government of Colombia and EMC reached a temporary bilateral nationwide ceasefire agreement that allowed peace negotiations to officially begin. The ceasefire was initially agreed to be valid from 16 October 2023 to 16 January 2024 and the protocols of the Oversight, Monitoring and Verification Mechanism were also agreed.
Philippines (NDF)	After six years of impasse in the negotiating process, in late November the government of the Philippines and the NDF signed the Oslo Joint Communiqué by which they committed to resolving the armed conflict peacefully and to establishing a negotiating framework that would lead to a peace agreement.
Israel – Palestine	After Qatar's mediation, supported by Egypt and the USA, the Israeli government and Hamas reached an agreement to temporarily suspend hostilities that remained in force between 24 and 30 November 2023. The initial agreement was planned to last for four days, during which the release of 50 hostages captured by Hamas was scheduled to occur in exchange for the release of 150 Palestinian prisoners. The mechanism, which was designed to encourage an extension of the agreement beyond this initial period, also provided access to humanitarian aid and fuel in the Gaza Strip. The agreement was extended, first for 48 hours, then for another 24, and led to the release of over 100 people held by Hamas (86 Israelis and 24 foreigners) and the release of nearly 240 Palestinian women and children, many of them detained by Israel under the controversial label of "administrative detention". The exchange was assisted by the International Committee of the Red Cross.
Senegal (Casamance)	In May, a peace agreement was signed with a faction of the Movement of Democratic Forces in the Casamance MFDC faction, called the Diakaye faction. The signing ceremony was attended by the envoy of President Macky Sall; the mayors of Ziguinchor, Bindiona and Douloulou, the commander of the Diakaye faction, Fatoma Coly; and members of the international community. For the past three years, civil society organisations based in Ziguinchor devoted to peacebuilding in the Senegambia region under the Sub-regional Coordinator for Civil Society Organisations for Peace in Casamance (COSPAC) have been mediating between the parties. The agreement provides for the disarmament and reintegration of combatants, the implementation of development projects in the Casamance region, the delivery of birth certificates to people who did not have access to them due to the instability and measures to ensure the peaceful return of all refugees.
Serbia – Kosovo	The president of Serbia and the prime minister of Kosovo gave verbal support to the Agreement on the Path towards the Normalisation of Relations between Kosovo and Serbia on 27 February, as well as its implementation annex (Ohrid Agreement) of 18 March, both proposed by the EU and supported by Kosovo and Serbia as part of the dialogue process facilitated by the EU. The February agreement, with 11 articles, included issues such as the parties' commitment to mutual recognition of their respective national documents and symbols, without requiring Serbia to formally recognise Kosovo as a state; Serbia's non-objection to Kosovo's entry into international organisations; both parties' pledge to establish ways to ensure an "appropriate level" of self-government for the Kosovo Serb community; an obligation to implement previous agreements; and the continuation of EU-facilitated talks to reach a legally binding agreement for the comprehensive normalisation of relations. The March annex included content and procedural aspects. Despite the verbal support for the agreement and the annex, difficulties arose very quickly, hand in hand with disagreements on substantive issues.
Sudan	The warring parties (SAF and RSF) agreed to and signed the Declaration of Commitment to Protect the Civilians of Sudan on 11 May. It was the result of the "pre-negotiation talks" promoted and mediated by the US and Saudi Arabia in the city of Jeddah (Saudi Arabia) on 6 May. However, despite the achievement of this declaration, the parties to the conflict continued to commit violence against the civilian population.
Sudan – South Sudan	At the intercommunity level, agreements were reached between communities in the Abyei region during the year. First, the Dinka Ngok and Dinka Twic communities agreed to an end to hostilities, a ceasefire, the deployment of security forces in the disputed areas to create a buffer zone and freedom of movement between the areas affected by tensions in the southern part of the Abyei area and the northern part of Warrap State (South Sudan). Second, the Dinka Ngok and Miseriya communities signed an agreement that included a cessation of hostilities, freedom of movement, the need to reactivate the joint community peace committee and the continuation of the peace talks. The agreement was reached as part of a peace conference between the parties between 20 and 23 March in Todach (Abyei area).
Venezuela – Guyana	In mid-December, shortly after the escalation of the diplomatic crisis that was caused by the Venezuelan referendum on the disputed territory of Essequibo, the presidents of both countries met in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and signed the Joint Declaration of Argyle for Dialogue and Peace, by which they committed not to threaten each other or use force against each other, to refrain from escalating the conflict and to cooperate to avoid incidents on the ground (and, if they occur, to immediately communicate with each other, and also with CARICOM, CELAC and the president of Brazil). President Maduro and President Ali also committed to establishing a joint commission of foreign ministers to address mutually agreed upon issues, to continue the dialogue on the dispute and to meet again in Brazil in the next three months. Finally, it was agreed that any dispute between the two countries would be resolved in accordance with international law, including the 1966 Geneva Agreement. At the same time, however, Guyana clearly expressed its commitment to the process and procedures of the International Court of Justice to resolve the border controversy.

## Regional trends

### Africa

- Throughout 2023, there were 18 peace processes and negotiations identified in Africa, which accounts for practically 40% of the 45 peace processes worldwide.
- The resumption of clashes in northern Mali between the Malian Armed Forces and the armed groups that signed the 2015 Algiers Peace Agreement put its continuity at risk.
- In Mozambique, the disarmament and demobilisation of former RENAMO combatants provided for in the 2019 peace agreement was completed.
- Progress was made in the implementation of the 2022 peace agreement between Ethiopia and the political and military authorities of Tigray, although atrocities continued to be committed by Eritrean forces and the Fano militias against the civilian population.
- Amidst the violence in the Ethiopian region of Oromia, peace talks began between Ethiopia and the armed group OLA in Zanzibar (Tanzania), facilitated by Kenya.
- Ethiopia, Egypt and Sudan resumed the talks on the dispute over the Great Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD), but no progress was made in the different negotiating rounds.
- The agreement between Ethiopia and Somaliland over the possible future official recognition of Somaliland threatened to destabilise the Horn of Africa and frustrated the dialogue between Somalia and Somaliland.
- The escalation of the offensive by the Congolese armed group M23 in October, supported by Rwanda, caused a spike in tension between the DRC and Rwanda, while regional initiatives for a negotiated solution failed.
- The start of a new armed conflict in Sudan between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the paramilitary group Rapid Support Forces (RSF) broke off the negotiations aimed at achieving a political transition and establishing a civilian government in the country.

### America

- In America there were six negotiations during 2023, 13% of the world total.
- In Haiti, CARICOM led negotiations between the government and opposition political and social organisations to try to forge a more inclusive transition, organise new elections and address the political and security crisis.
- Peace negotiations between the government of Colombia and the ELN continued amid significant

obstacles, but with notable results, such as a ceasefire agreement and the ELN's commitment to put an end to kidnappings for ransom.

- For the first time in a peace process in Colombia, a woman was named the head of the government's negotiating delegation, with Vera Grabe leading the negotiations with the ELN.
- Alongside the direct talks between the governments of Venezuela and the United States, Caracas and the Unitary Platform reached two important agreements in Barbados in mid-October, facilitated by Norway.
- The presidents of Venezuela and Guyana met directly at the request of CARICOM, CELAC and the government of Brazil to address the escalation of the historical territorial dispute over the Essequibo region.

### Asia and the Pacific

- In Asia and the Pacific there were 10 negotiation processes, 23% of the total cases in the world
- After a six-year hiatus, the Philippine government and the NDF signed a joint statement in November pledging to try to resolve the armed conflict through dialogue.
- The Philippine government entered into negotiations with the two main factions of the MNLF regarding the full implementation of the 1996 Peace Agreement, the participation of the MNLF in the government of the Bangsamoro region and the reintegration of MNLF fighters.
- In southern Thailand, the government and the BRN signed a road map, the BRN accepted that other armed groups may participate in the negotiations, Malaysia appointed a new facilitator and the government appointed a new negotiating team.
- The government of Myanmar and the armed group MNDAA reached a ceasefire agreement in December that failed to end the most serious escalation of violence in the country since the 2021 coup.
- North Korea and South Korea closed the door to any dialogue on the reunification of both countries.

### Europe

- In 2023, six of the 45 peace processes in the world (13%) took place in Europe.
- In 2023, Russia and Ukraine did not resume the political-military negotiations that broke down in April 2022 and talks only continued on limited matters.
- An Azerbaijani military offensive in Nagorno-Karabakh forced almost its entire population to flee and the enclave was reintegrated by force into Azerbaijan.
- Despite the progress made in early 2023, the talks between Kosovo and Serbia ran into serious



problems due to profound disagreements about substantive issues and to the deteriorating security situation in northern Kosovo.

- In most of the negotiating processes in the region, women's organisations and female activists and experts demanded and recommended women's greater participation in dialogue mechanisms, in the face of long-stalled processes and the deteriorating regional geopolitical context.

## **Middle East**

- The Middle East was the scene of five peace processes and negotiations in 2023, accounting for 11% of all cases worldwide.

- The difficulties in reviving the deal on the Iranian nuclear programme became clear throughout 2023 amidst an impasse in the negotiations and rising tensions between the parties involved.
- In 2023, a series of factors encouraged expectations of a historic opportunity to address the Yemeni conflict, but by the end of the year the prospects were in doubt due to the regional impact of the Gaza crisis and the escalation in the Red Sea.
- Thirty years after the Oslo Accords, the Palestinian-Israeli issue returned to the centre of international attention and various initiatives had not achieved a permanent ceasefire by the end of the year.
- In Syria, the different negotiating formats between multiple local, regional and international actors yielded no progress towards a political solution to the conflict.

