

UN Senior Mediation Expert (F)

Joint Mediation Team

Background

You are originally from the UK, but throughout your childhood you traveled all over the world due to your father's military career. This upbringing led you to join the UN immediately out of graduate school. In your early career you worked with UNDP and were stationed at the Danaan field office where you witnessed the beginning of the civil war. After spending five years in Danaan, you were stationed in South Asia and continued to work with UNDP on the women, peace, and security agenda. You joined the UN Department of Political Affairs (UNDPA) over ten years ago to support programming on women's participation in peace and post-conflict processes.

You are now serving as a Senior Mediation Expert for the UN-ROEI joint mediation team. The primary purpose of your role is to support the Lead Mediator in bringing the parties to agreement.

While a final date and time has not been set for the formal peace talks to begin, the parties have agreed to meet in person at some point in time to discuss the power sharing provisions of the peace agreement. This meeting will take place in Abayo (the capital of Trumont) and will include the Joint Mediation Team, the parties, and members of the Contact Group as observers. This structure has been tentatively agreed upon by the parties, but is not set in stone. The Lead Mediator is generally against making any changes to the structure and/or configuration of actors present at the talks; any changes would require agreement by the parties (and Contact Group).

What you hope to accomplish

As a UN representative, your mandate is first and foremost to secure a peace agreement in Danaan by supporting the Lead Mediator as a member of his senior staff. The UN has tried to establish a ceasefire in Danaan on several occasions but all attempts have failed. You are under a lot of pressure from your superiors to see this agreement through and to restore the UN's reputation in the region.

You believe that an inclusive peace process is needed to achieve sustainable peace in Danaan. Unlike other members of the Joint Mediation Team, you are thinking about the long game; the Lead Mediator and ROEI Special Advisor seem to be focused on immediate results.

Based on your experience, you know that women's inclusion leads to more sustainable peace and that, in divided societies, the successful implementation of a peace agreement is dependent on whether it takes into account all voices across all sectors of society. You believe that civil society, and women in particular, can bring important and useful knowledge relating to the power sharing components of this draft agreement. Women often experience war in different ways than men and can bring different yet important perspectives into the process. When women are included, they frequently advocate for other excluded groups and address development and human rights issues related to the underlying causes of the conflict. Both of these approaches help societies to reconcile and ultimately build a more robust peace.

But bringing civil society voices into the process at this point could be tricky. The biggest challenge will be getting the ROEI Special Advisor and Lead Mediator on board. The Lead Mediator has pushed back

on your attempts to promote inclusion thus far. You have a few ideas for how civil society could be brought in to allow their voices to be heard but this would require some changes to the structure of the talks (see addendum). Members of the Contact Group could be useful allies, if they agree with your position, since they have the ability to apply pressure on the Lead Mediator.

Capacity to Create Change

The UN field offices in Danaan have connected you to a number of civil society groups operating across the country. You also have the international legitimacy and support that comes with being a Senior Mediation Expert representing the UN. You have access to international partners, such as the US and the UK, who both have a vested interest in the peace agreement. You can, for example, leverage the fact that both countries have National Action Plans that call for greater women's inclusion in peace processes, and encourage both envoys to exert pressure on the parties and mediation team for inclusion.

As a member of the mediation team, you are also a gatekeeper to the Lead Mediator. Anyone without a prior relationship to the Lead Mediator must meet with you or the ROEI Special Advisor first, so you can vet them and decide if the Lead Mediator should meet with them. The Lead Mediator only has relationships with the Contact Group, the negotiating parties. He is also familiar with the ROEI Commission on Gender representative from previous peace processes.

Relationships with Other Roles

The Lead Mediator believes your suggestions for more inclusivity could lead to a breakdown in the talks and prefers to avoid those discussions. You want to have a positive working relationship with the Lead Mediator, as he has excellent connections and can help further your career; however, you will not compromise your values just to appease him. He has a more established relationship with the ROEI Special Advisor and this often makes you feel like an outsider.

You previously met the Executive Director of 4Peace and, at that time, you believed she could be a powerful player in the peace process. However, within three weeks of your arrival in Danaan, six different women groups told you that 4Peace does not represent all women.

You also have a contact at the international NGO Open Hands. She is working with many of the Danaanian refugees and IDPs. She has asked you to meet with a representative from the Women's Peace Committee, an organization in one of Danaan's IDP camps and you are eager to do so.

You met with the ROEI Commission on Gender representative when you arrived in Danaan. She could be a good partner for strengthening buy-in on greater women's inclusion in the peace process.

You have met with members of the Contact Group on a number of occasions to set-up resources and structures for these peace talks. You also brief them regularly.

You have gotten to know both of the negotiating teams; the Joint Mediation Team met with both delegations privately as you prepared the draft agreement. In those meetings, both delegations expressed very polarizing demands. You did your best to find areas of compromise, but you know that both sides will find the draft agreement problematic. Your hope is that the draft can be a starting point of conversation for both sides. You have not yet discussed the idea of women's inclusion with the parties.