



Press Release
United Nations Department of Political Affairs

“On Call” UN mediation team a valuable resource, UN says

New York, 10 June 2009. An “on-call” team of mediation experts established just over a year ago at the United Nations is making valuable contributions to UN peacemaking and preventive diplomacy and should be used more widely as a resource by envoys in the field, the UN Department of Political Affairs said Wednesday.

Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs Haile Menkerios praised the initiative at a luncheon at UN headquarters today marking the culmination of the pilot phase of the United Nations Standby Team of Mediation Experts, established in March 2008 to help the UN deploy more quickly in response to crises.

“Responding effectively to peacemaking opportunities depends on getting to the field quickly with the right kind of expertise,” said Menkerios. “The Stand-by Team is helping us to do just that.”

Menkerios welcomed the support of United Nations Member States that made possible this and other recent enhancements to UN peacemaking capacity. These include recent budgetary increases for the Department of Political Affairs and the establishment in 2006 of DPA’s Mediation Support Unit, which manages the on-call Standby Team as one of its services to mediators.

Menkerios expressed strong appreciation in particular to the Government of Norway, which has generously provided the financing for the initial 15 month-pilot phase of the Standby Team and agreed to provide continued financing. He also praised the Norwegian Refugee Council, a non-governmental organization which handles administrative aspects of the team’s operations on behalf of DPA. “We are extremely grateful for Norway’s contributions and its commitment to continue supporting the development of this unique and valued tool in our peacemaking toolkit,” Menkerios said.

The Standby Team of Mediation Experts was established in March 2008. Its six initial members are experts on key issues that arise frequently in negotiations to end armed conflicts around the world, including power sharing, constitutional issues, security arrangements, human rights and transitional justice, and the management of natural resources. At Wednesday’s luncheon in New York, hosted by Security Council Report along with the Permanent Mission of Norway, departing team members were on hand to discuss their experiences in providing support to senior envoys in the field. Team members are hired for one-year appointments, and recruitment is now underway for new members for the year ahead.

During its first fifteen months, the team contributed to various peacemaking efforts around the world involving the United Nations. Its first deployments were to Kenya in early 2008 to assist in mediation of the post-electoral crisis. Team members subsequently provided support to mediation efforts in the Central African Republic, Comoros, Cyprus, Iraq, Kenya, Madagascar, Nepal and Somalia, and facilitated a dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina. Clients have included not only UN political envoys, but also peacekeeping missions, United Nations Resident Coordinators and the African Union.

Wednesday’s event at UN headquarters was intended to broaden awareness about the team and its services throughout the UN system and to its Member States.

The development of the Standby-Team is part of a broader effort being undertaken with the support of UN Member States to bolster UN peacemaking capacity by strengthening the Department of Political Affairs.

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For more information on efforts to strengthen the Department of Political Affairs, please contact Jared Kotler: kotler@un.org; For information on employment opportunities or support services from the Mediation Support Standby Team, please contact Peter Barwick: barwick@un.org.