Political Party Dialogue:
A Facilitator's Guide

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Foreword

Whenever I walk down the Esplanade of Solidarność 1980 in front of the European Parliament in Brussels, my memory returns to those hot summer days of 1980. The so-called 'Decade of Solidarity' began in my homeland, Poland, steering the country's political system and economy onto the path of transition and sparking off irreversible political changes in Europe. The transformation made it possible for Poland to re-enter the global scene by joining NATO and the European Union. These changes would never have been possible without well-conducted political party dialogue.

In the 1980s in Poland we used to say very often that 'there is no freedom without Solidarity'. And for us Solidarity meant much more than the name of the social protest movement under which we prepared the first attempt at a mass and peaceful contestation of the repressive communist regime. We also understood the word as one of the pillars of dialogue; as a conciliatory way of thinking and conducting actions to give courage and strength to fight for freedom and then, once freedom was secured, to benefit from it with dignity and respect.

In 1989, the overturning of the regime in Poland created the field for a completely new level of dialogue. In its heyday, Solidarity had 10 million members, or one-quarter of the population of our country. The whole spectrum of political beliefs was of course represented, from conservatives to social democrats and liberals. We had all united to achieve the common goal. But it should be noted that, while the connectedness abolishes divisions, differences, private interests and social hierarchy, it does not make our opinions identical. On the contrary, the strength of solidarity lies in maintaining diversity.

Once the efforts of us—the people of Solidarność—bore fruit, it was necessary to define the political landscape from scratch. Inter-party dialogue was crucial in this process, and it required a lot of effort and extensive consultations. This resulted first and foremost in a coalition that enabled the creation of the first non-communist cabinet. Then in 1991, in Poland's first free elections since World War II, as many as 29 parties entered the parliament. When I took over as Prime Minister in October 1997, the scene was even more diverse. Formally, the Parliament consisted of five entities only. But ours, Solidarity Electoral Action (AWS), was a coalition of 44 smaller parties, NGOs and other organizations. Thus the big lesson of dialogue began already with negotiating the strategy and programme of the AWS itself. And then the two entities that eventually formed the governing coalition might not have seemed to be the most natural match. The AWS—our centre-right coalition—stemmed from trade unions, while the Freedom Union (UW) party was liberal when it comes both to the economy and to the moral world view. Yet we embarked on fruitful inter-party dialogue and, remarkably enough, the governing coalition agreement between these two post-Solidarność partners was later successfully used as reference in several other countries that underwent political reforms.

Facilitating dialogue and seeking consensus was at the core of my activities as President of the European Parliament and continues to play an important role in my work as a member of the European Parliament (MEP). Today we are 754 MEPs from 27 member states, united in seven political groups. We represent different regions, have different interests, including national interests within the same political group, and thus present different points of view. The European Parliament is the only parliament in the world which does not have a constant majority. Each time and for each case—be it a piece of legis-

lation or position on a political issue—support and agreement must be constructed on an ad hoc basis. In our roles we are obliged to build bridges and foster agreements—to seek broad consensus.

Needless to say, efficient dialogue among members and their parties is paramount to achieving this goal. We must remember that in our work, when discussing the economy, when solving crises, when combating terrorism, when tackling social issues, data protection, climate change or energy security, we do so to serve the entire European community and all its citizens. This is what I had in mind while convincing the Irish people and Czech leaders to ratify the Lisbon Treaty. This is when the slogan, so precious to millions of Poles, resounded in its new, wider form: 'There is no Europe without solidarity'. And this European notion of solidarity should reach far beyond the EU's borders. It is for this belief of mine that, as the President of the European Parliament, I was strongly engaged in supporting the democratic transitions in the EU's neighbourhood. Here too, solidarity and openness to discuss presented themselves as two of the prerequisites for democratic progress and successful transition.

Whether in the Poland of the 1980s and 1990s, in the European Parliament, or during numerous parliamentary missions to countries in transition such as Egypt, Libya, Moldova, Macedonia, Tunisia or Ukraine, I have always believed that successful political party dialogue must be built on three pillars: a firm system of values, a conciliatory approach and a willingness to maintain continuity in the efforts to improve the situation of the citizens, even if these efforts should require difficult and unpopular reforms. Comprising freedom, justice, responsibility, respect for the dignity of each citizen and, of course, solidarity in every dimension, the common system of values should serve here as an umbrella.

Despite all the differences within the European Parliament, our positions on human rights are always adopted with a large majority of votes simply because we share the same value system across the Parliament's political spectrum. It gives us the strongest possible foundation to build on. The conciliatory approach means that partners focus on principal issues without wasting energy on sharp divides over details. And, when they do differ, they apply Voltaire's dictum 'I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it'. Finally, continuity means that parties stand ready to respect the achievements of their predecessors and to continue serving the common interest. They have a moral right to expect this kind of respect from their successors.

When the people of Central and Eastern Europe fought for their freedom and later on, while undergoing political transition and setting the tables for democratic dialogue, they received massive assistance and support from the other side of the Iron Curtain. I am confident that the book you are holding will likewise provide useful inspiration and guidance. In its well-balanced design it describes the mechanisms and stages of inter-party dialogue, it tackles practical issues, it presents strategies of setting up inclusive dialogue and, very importantly, it accompanies theories with a study of practical tools and real-life examples. I am sure it will contribute to an even deeper and constructive exchange of views based on the principal belief that dialogue, just like all other democratic deeds, serves the ultimate goal—the good of every single citizen.

Jerzy Buzek
Member of the European Parliament
Former President of the European Parliament
Former Prime-Minister of Poland

Preface

Multiparty politics is about competition—but, equally important, it is about seeking shared solutions for the benefit of a country and its citizens. Effective and inclusive dialogue between political parties is an essential element of democratic politics. Conflicts, interparty strife and polarized relations between political parties can block a country's development. On the other hand, a basic level of trust and cooperation between political parties can pave the way for peace, stability and sustainable growth.

This holds true in any society, but is all the more critical in countries that are undergoing major shifts. Political dialogue can build trust and the political will for change, both of which are critical in countries on the path to democracy where difficult decisions need to be made. Many young democracies have experienced radical shifts in their political culture and power relations, as well as significant institutional changes. They often have weak legal and political systems, while fundamental reforms are often both much needed and highly contested.

This is where dialogue between political parties is essential to avoid zero-sum politics or stasis in situations where reform is much needed. Cooperation between political parties is also vital to ensure that democracy becomes deeply rooted, going beyond electoral competition.

This Guide is based on the notion that the democratic process rests on two pillars of equal importance: political competition and cooperation. Political parties and organizations, as key aggregators of citizens' expectations, as mediators between citizens and the state and as principal players in the democratic game, need to have the capacity to both compete and cooperate. Political cooperation between parties is as integral to the health of a democracy as any of the political goals they pursue individually.

Political parties' performance, electoral success, and ultimately their very legitimacy in the eyes of citizens will depend on their ability to deliver for citizens. In order to do this, they need to translate the mandate they received from their members and supporters into articulated and convincing policies and put these into action. More often than not this requires the building of alliances, seeking consensus and broad communication with other political actors.

Dialogue among political parties usually takes place within democratic institutions such as national parliaments. Yet parliamentary dialogue alone cannot always meet the need for genuine exploration of consensus or compromise, particularly in cases of deep divisions or a crisis of the functioning of the country's democracy itself. Correspondingly, this Guide focuses on the need for more dynamic spaces of dialogue between political parties.

Enhanced dialogue between political parties should also go beyond the political elite and accommodate gender equality, the inclusion of youth, minorities, civil society organizations and other non-traditional actors like citizen movements in a political decision-making process.

With this publication, International IDEA, the NIMD and the Oslo Center for Peace and Human Rights provide dialogue facilitators and political parties with a practical tool for political party dialogue. Building on case studies from different countries around the globe, the Guide will enable actors to: assess the general conditions for political party dialogues; build trust; convene and organize dialogues; set

their goals and prepare their agenda; facilitate their
smooth evolution through various stages; ensure
meaningful results and; last but not least, foster the
implementation of the understandings and agree-
ments reached.

It is our hope that this Guide provides positive
incentives for creative, open-minded and
collaborative problem solving—which is
exactly what a genuine dialogue is about.

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Acknowledgements

Executive summary

Political parties play a crucial role in modern representative democracy. They act as initiators of reform, gather demands from society and turn these into policies, recruit people for executive and legislative positions and exercise control over government. In performing these roles, competition between political parties is inevitable,

While contests over power can be bitter, political discussion over reform and development can also lead to fruitful dialogue and agreement between parties. After all, meaningful dialogue allows political parties to arrive at legislative majorities or accommodate important minority views.

Although cooperation and dialogue usually take place in existing democratic institutions such as national parliaments, in some contexts there is a need for the creation of mechanisms outside of parliament. These dialogue mechanisms offer a complementary, and often confidential, space in which parties can meet as colleagues with alternative interests, as opposed to enemies with whom to compete. Away from the public eye, political parties can more easily overcome conflicts or concerns, and create the preconditions for inter-party cooperation.

Political party dialogue platforms have emerged in recent years in countries from Nepal to Ghana and from Mozambique to Peru. They have proved to be crucial mechanisms by which parties can build consensus, seek the common good and take the lead in developing agendas that represent a shared long-term vision for the country. These platforms also make it easier for parties to engage with other stakeholders and representative groups, to enrich and implement their views and to ensure that any agreements made can be kept under constant review. Inter-party dialogue has therefore been able to help resolve conflict in young democracies and broker fundamental reforms in more established democracies.

In spite of their rapidly emerging popularity, little has thus far been written about how political party dialogue platforms actually work. Politicians and dialogue facilitators alike have had to invent structures as they go, too often drawing only on their own intuition rather than building on the best practices of their peers elsewhere. This Guide aims to fill that gap by gathering the experiences of a large number of individual dialogue practitioners. It reflects the views and voices of those that have been involved in running dialogue processes. The 23 facilitators who were interviewed for this Guide together have more than 200 years of experience in dialogue facilitation in some 25 countries, involving a total of over 150 political parties and movements. Therefore, in many respects, this Guide is their account of how political party dialogue works.

The content of this Guide is divided into three main components and a case studies section. Part I defines inter-party dialogue and what it aims to achieve. Inter-party dialogue can help parties move beyond short-term electoral or personal interests and build consensus on areas of national importance. As consensus building is about equity between parties, it tends to avoid situations where decisions are made that imply clear winners or losers.

Actors outside the political parties often facilitate the setting up of these inter-party dialogue mechanisms. The main role of a facilitator is to serve as an impartial broker between political parties, while dealing with inter- and intra-party power

dynamics and diverging party interests. Because of the complexities that come with working with political parties, facilitators require good political instincts, as well as the right personality to engage with high-level, political actors. This Guide is enriched with practical lessons, tips, and potential profiles for those aiming to initiate and facilitate an inter-party dialogue platform.

The Guide describes how dialogue processes do not always follow a 'logical flow' and, especially if they have a long time frame, hit both high points and hard times. Much depends on context. Before initiating an inter-party dialogue, facilitators should have a deep understanding of the political environment and infrastructure in which political parties operate, and respect the 'do-no-harm' principle. A variety of assessment tools can be used to analyse and keep track of the political context and developments.

In contexts dominated by deep-rooted fears and suspicion between political adversaries, building a minimum level of mutual trust and confidence is an important first step, as well as a foundation for sustained and meaningful dialogue. Building trust often begins with politicians getting to know each other better.

Part II discusses practical issues from the field. What form should a dialogue platform take? How can a facilitator ensure that it runs smoothly and efficiently? Guiding principles are crucial to define when creating legitimate and meaningful inter party dialogue processes that impact positively on inter-party relations and wider society. Important principles such as joint ownership, sustainability and inclusivity can, however, be challenging to apply on the ground when political competition is

at its highest. Facilitators need to pay continued attention to the application of these principles. As practice shows, facilitators can also help in setting their own ground rules about how political parties should conduct themselves before engaging in dialogue with other parties.

There are few limits to what can be discussed during a dialogue, as long as the participants agree on the relevance of the topics. Consultative goal and agenda setting are tools that can be used for this purpose. One essential element in assessing the timing and dynamics of a dialogue between political parties is its relation to elections and the electoral cycle.

When parties agree to get together on a more structured basis, they may wish to organize their interactions and relations by means of a permanent support body. Facilitators can present and discuss a variety of inter-party dialogue structures that have been used in other countries. Depending on the political context, these dialogue structures can range from very informal, loosely organized platforms to formal, institutionalized political party organizations with secretariats and funding structures.

In an ideal situation, political parties enter a dialogue as equals—not necessarily in terms of actual political power but in having the same knowledge, ability and understanding of what the dialogue entails before they join. Dialogue and preparation within each individual party are preconditions for effective inter-party dialogue.

Part III deals with inclusive dialogue. Because it involves two or more parties, setting up a political party dialogue process is by definition a multiparty undertaking. This can mean reaching out to all

registered political parties but in reality often involves choices about inclusion and exclusion. Using transparent criteria can help in creating a sense of fairness. This Guide presents examples of such criteria that have been used in different countries.

Each party needs to discuss internally who will take part in the dialogue platform. A party's choice of participants can be based on a person's position within the party organization or on his or her personality, but in practice it is usually a combination of both. Facilitators need to know 'who is who' within the parties and respect party hierarchies. Political party dialogue is often an exercise between individual politicians, but the outcomes need to be distributed and shared both within and outside the party in order to have a wider impact.

The advantage of a dialogue over a regular political debate is that it often has the ability to go beyond the political elite to bring in both women and men as well as minorities in a political decision-making process. Further, the inter-party dialogue process and its results need to be shared and validated by citizens, by way of informing civil society and the media. At the same time, dialogue has to be of a workable size in order for it to be effective. A facilitator can play a positive role in balancing between the inclusion and exclusion of these groups.

The Guide concludes by describing how to obtain the right results for a political party dialogue. Facilitators will always need to examine the feasibility of obtaining future results, as an inter-party dialogue does not end with the signing of agreements or joint statements. Instead, every dialogue should continue with an emphasis on actual implementation in society.

Finally, a practitioner's guide should provide real-life cases and practical tools. This Guide does so by regularly using examples and real-life stories, as well as quotes from practitioners. Appendix I includes succinct case studies from Bolivia, Ecuador, Mozambique, Nepal and Uganda. Appendix II provides a comprehensive questionnaire that will help ensure that facilitators ask the right questions when establishing and running a political party dialogue mechanism in the field.

In a world where democracy is increasingly considered the only sustainable way to deal with issues of conflict, inclusion and exclusion, political party dialogue mechanisms provide a tested tool to balance political competition with political cooperation. The best practices that this Guide describes will help both new and experienced practitioners improve and expand political party dialogue as an innovative mechanism for democratization worldwide.

About this Guide

In recent years, several studies have focused on the relevance and success of inter-party dialogue mechanisms in building increased levels of inter-party trust, and as a means to realize political reform objectives (see e.g. Carothers 2006; and Power and Coleman 2011). While there is no blueprint for inter-party dialogue processes, their common features—including the ways in which they are established, the manner in which they operate and their inevitable successes and failures—deserve to be documented.

Through this publication, the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA), the Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (NIMD) and the Oslo Center for Peace and Human Rights (Oslo Center) hope to assist and enable facilitators actively engaged in facilitating dialogue processes between political parties.

Specifically, this Guide complements and builds upon *Democratic Dialogue: A Handbook for Practitioners* (jointly published by International IDEA, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Organization of America States (OAS) and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) in 2007) by moving from the general theme of democratic dialogue towards the specific features of political party dialogue processes.

Audience
This Guide is designed primarily for political party dialogue facilitators in the field as well as the political parties they aim to assist—in other words, practitioners and politicians actively or potentially engaged in organizing, convening or accompanying dialogue processes between political parties.

Politicians and facilitators with knowledge of dialogue mechanisms often do not have the time or resources to document the internal operating structures and the practical and sometimes political dilemmas they face. This Guide has therefore been written primarily with the needs of this audience in mind and draws most of its recommendations from practice in the field.

In doing so, this publication will equally assist young facilitators who are keen to expand their knowledge about the problems they are likely to face, and experienced facilitators who may benefit from comparing their own instinctive responses in some situations with those generated in other countries.

Finally, political parties are the principal actors and core beneficiaries of successful political party dialogue processes. Inter-party dialogue mechanisms are designed to support political parties. International IDEA, NIMD and the Oslo Center hope that this Guide will inspire political parties to make effective use of dialogue processes and, ultimately, embrace political party dialogue as a democratic practice.

Methodology
This Guide is based on global, comparative knowledge from the field. For the content development and information-gathering process, International IDEA examined different political party dialogue processes. This included comprehensive accounts of practices supported by IDEA in Bolivia, Ecuador, Peru and Nepal, as well as experiences of NIMD dialogue facilitators working in Ecuador, Burundi, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Tanzania, Uganda and Zimbabwe.

Practices in 25 countries have informed the contents of this Guide. The country cases are based on discussions with a wide range of seasoned dialogue facilitators from across the globe between October 2011 and November 2012. Information was also collected through desk-based research and interviews with a wide variety of dialogue facilitators, political party representatives and experts. This Guide is therefore mostly their narrative.

How to use this Guide
Despite its length, the Guide is organized into short chapters that allow readers to focus on individual topics or problems. Further, each chapter includes a short bullet-point summary highlighting key findings and recommendations. However, it should be noted that reading the summaries alone does not provide sufficient understanding of the complexity of dialogue situations.

The range of individual chapters also means that some issues are touched upon at multiple stages. This reflects the fact that no element of political party dialogue can be addressed as a stand-alone issue, but must always be seen as part of a wider process. For example, the type of dialogue structure that parties wish to use (discussed in chapter 8) depends on a number of factors. These include the political context and goals of the dialogue (chapters 3 and 5), the level of inter-party trust and commitment (chapter 10), the number and kinds of party participants (chapters 13 and 14), and the level of gender balance and diversity within the platform (chapter 15).

Limitations
This Guide does not aim to provide either a final definition of the term 'political party dialogue' or an exhaustive overview of all possible scenarios. Instead, it limits itself to suggesting possible options for dialogue, while emphasizing the weaknesses and flip sides of other options. This has been done in order to give the reader a chance to think about what would be his/her own preferred choice in a given situation.

The topics discussed in this Guide should be considered building blocks for a practical decision-making framework. By offering concrete considerations that can be used by facilitators in the field, it goes beyond the scope of a theoretical paper.

While the Guide is based on contemporary experiences, it is hoped that, as political party dialogues develop, feedback on this Guide will be received over time. This feedback would also allow the basic framework offered by this Guide to be further strengthened and expanded in the years ahead.

PART I: Political party dialogue: general characteristics

Chapter 1: Defining political party dialogue

Dialogue is not a modern invention. Throughout history and in most societies, bringing people together to overcome differences and solve problems has been a particularly prestigious assignment usually given to experienced individuals, elders or people respected for their good judgement and wisdom. Elements of 'dialogue methodology' have been and continue to be applied in traditional societies, based on ancestral procedures and customs (e.g. jirgas, shuras and village councils). Their validity is also recognized in transitional justice, conflict management and reconciliation processes (International IDEA 2008b).

Political party dialogue, however, is obviously a more recent concept as it relies on the relatively newer entities of political parties. Nevertheless, in many societies political party dialogue is based on older notions of dialogue as described above.

In spite of the existence of similar traditions, there is no clear-cut definition of what constitutes political party dialogue. In the broadest sense, it covers any kind of dialogue that takes place between political parties. It usually takes place in already existing spaces, including national and local parliaments, parliamentary commissions and caucuses.

However, political party dialogue mechanisms can also be specially created in order to offer a protected space in which political parties can openly communicate with each other, overcome conflict, build a base for cooperation and work together on political reform measures, as well as party-specific or election-related issues (Carothers 2006: 203).

This interpretation of the term 'political party dialogue mechanisms' typically implies a more formalized and institutionalized form of dialogue and, the

dialogue is often facilitated or supported by impartial actors outside the political parties.

Terms with a similar meaning to political party dialogue include 'democratic dialogue', 'multi-stakeholder dialogue', 'political dialogue' and 'inter-party dialogue'. The different types of dialogue mechanisms have many commonalities in terms of process, procedures, structures or general 'do's and don't's' with regard to principles and values such as impartiality or inclusivity.

At the same time, political party dialogue refers specifically to dialogue primarily between political parties, whereas other forms of dialogue might also occur between a wider set of actors. The main distinguishing feature of political party dialogue is therefore the type of participants involved. This clearly has wide implications for the structure, content and impact of this type of dialogue. Different organizations tend to use different words when referring to political party dialogue. In this publication, 'political party dialogue' and 'inter-party dialogue' will be used interchangeably.

Box 1.1.

Political parties

A political party is an organization of people with particular political beliefs that competes in elections to try to win positions in local or national government.[1]

Political parties' main functions in a democratic society include the integration and mobilization of citizens; the articulation and aggregation of interests; the formulation of public policy; the recruitment of political leaders; and the organization of parliament and government (Bartolini and Mair 2001).

Political parties come in many shapes and forms and are not a homogeneous group: each party has its own agenda, historical background and culture, and will differ in size, support base and structures from its political opponents. In some countries, the label 'political party' is deliberately avoided or it is replaced by other names such as 'political movement'. For instance, the Movimiento al Socialismo (Movement for Socialism, MAS) in Bolivia is officially a political movement. A lack of public faith in the functioning of traditional political parties or a general crisis of political parties can create a great deal of sensitivity about the term 'party' and become reasons for using other terms, such as political organization, group or movement. It is also possible that they are considered as special entities in their own right and may reject the proposition that they are political parties in the traditional sense of the word. Still, whether they are called political parties, political movements, groups or organizations, they will most of the time be expected to perform similar functions in society.

1.1　Competition and cooperation between political parties

Political parties and politicians compete for power and influence. They actively participate in the political life of a country with the ultimate objective of reaching a position of decision-making power in the public sector (European Commission for Democracy through Law 2008/2009). As a result, the emphasis on political *competition* amongst both parties and party assistance providers tends to be very strong.

However, political competition alone does not always create a political climate in which parties can work together in a peaceful manner to deliver socially inclusive and sustainable development for the people they represent. Relying solely on the element of inter-party competition is like balancing on one leg: do it for too long and you will fall.

The second 'leg' that is required is political party *cooperation* (see figure 1.1). This refers to the action or process by which political parties work together, towards the same ends. While competition between political parties that takes place within the frameworks of internationally agreed election standards is often rewarded—for instance, when national elections are declared 'free and fair'—no such quality stamp exists for countries with good working political cooperation mechanisms (see e.g. the Declaration on Criteria for Free and Fair Elections 1994).

Figure 1.1.

The balance between political cooperation and competition
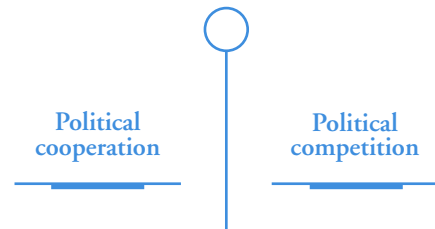
The dynamics of cooperation in political competition are crucial to sustainable democratic reform and the promotion of common ground in democratic consolidation.

Mechanisms for competition (such as elections) and mechanisms for cooperation (such as dialogues) can be thought of as 'joints' that allow both legs to move forward.

Balancing the use of political competition and cooperation and their mechanisms is essential for sustainable democratic development and for providing meaningful choices to citizens. However, what is considered as the most appropriate balance between competition and cooperation is context-specific and dependent on a variety of factors, including a country's state of democracy (e.g. young or established democracies), its institutional settings (e.g. design of the electoral and political system) and the political party landscape (e.g. dominated by two or multiple parties).

1.2   Some examples of cooperation mechanisms
How can political parties use different avenues for political party cooperation effectively? This question constitutes a challenge for political parties and politicians alike, due to the many possible ways in which a political party can work together with other parties to achieve its political goals. Five cooperation mechanisms are outlined below.

1. **Political party (grand) coalition**. This usually involves two or more political parties forming a government or collaborating to win a vote (e.g. by passing legislation in parliament). Such coalitions can be forged either in the pre-election or in the post-election phase.
2. **Parliamentary (select/standing) committee**. Under this mechanism, small groups of parliamentarians from different parties are given the power by parliament to act or formulate recommendations on policy issues, legislation or the work and expenditure of the government.
3. **Parliamentary caucus**. A (usually informal) organization of a party's members of parliament (MPs) who share common interests and come together to attempt to influence the political agenda on specific issues. These bodies often have cross-party membership and have no formal reporting or accountability obligations.
4. **Institutionalized political party dialogue**. A sustained dialogue between political parties from across the political spectrum, not necessarily limited to parliamentary parties, but often focused on issues of common interest to parties as institutions (e.g. multiparty dialogue platforms).
5. **Informal political party dialogue**. This refers to any kind of dialogue that takes place between two or more politicians from different political parties held in a non-structured manner, and

without an organizational mechanism (e.g. in informal meetings or by chance in parliamentary corridors) (for more information and definitions see McLean and McMillan 2009).

These five examples show that political cooperation can be exercised in a number of ways. Parties can choose to work together in the short term, often around elections, or to commit themselves to temporary or longer-term partnerships through inter-party collaboration or coalition building. Even when parties decide to join forces in a coalition or merge, the element of political competition remains, be it between the different political parties or internally, between different party factions.

Table 1.1 draws attention to the fact that political parties can use and benefit from political party dialogue as a tool or mechanism to build inter-party coalitions, collaborate on a range of issues, or cooperate on an ad hoc basis both within and outside democratically elected institutions. In transitional democracies or post-conflict countries, inter-party dialogue can also be instrumental in mitigating tension and conflict.

Table 1.1.

Using dialogue to support political cooperation, collaboration and coalition building

Ways in which parties can work together within and outside democratically elected institutions	Parties' commitment to work together	Time frame	Formalization	Level of (relative) trust	Number of topics	Cooperation structures	Instrument/ mechanism
Party merger	Full commitment	Indeterminate/ forever	Fully formalized	Highest level of trust	All topics in party programme agreed upon	One organizational structure	Political party dialogue
Coalition building (e.g. through long-term alliances)	Very strong commitment	Long term ('as long as necessary to stay in power')	Very formal	High level of trust	Comprehensive/ all-inclusive	Comprehensive structures and procedures	
Collaboration (e.g. through commissions, caucuses or multiparty platforms)	Strong commitment	Temporary	Relatively formal	General level of trust	Multi-issue	Some structures and procedures	
Cooperation (e.g. through temporary alliances or meetings)	Commitment	Short term/ ad hoc	Informal	Specific trust	Single issue	Minimal structures and procedures	

1.3 Spaces for dialogue within and outside parliament

Dialogue between political parties takes place in different spaces, both within and outside democratically elected institutions. In most democratic countries parliaments (here meant to include all types of legislatures or assemblies) are the key designated space for public debate on political matters at the national, regional and local level.[2]

These parliaments are spaces especially designed to offer a country's citizens access to the way their party representatives perform their oversight, representative and legislative roles. In most democracies the floor of parliament is the primary dialogue and debating platform for political affairs.

Since most parliamentary business is transacted in committees, parliamentary committees can present good avenues for party dialogue given their multi-party composition. In some countries, for instance Kenya, the speaker of parliament can also convene special forums on issues for debate in the house that require consensus building. During these informal sessions, members usually build consensus around thorny issues before the actual debate in parliament.

'As the central institution of democracy, parliaments embody the will of the people in government, and carry all their expectations that democracy will be truly responsive to their needs and help solve the most pressing problems that confront them in their daily lives. As the elected body that represents society in all its diversity, parliaments have a unique responsibility for reconciling the conflicting interests and expectations of different groups and communities through the democratic means of dialogue and compromise. As the key legislative organ, parliaments have the task of adapting society's laws to its rapidly changing needs and circumstances. As the body entrusted with the oversight of government, they are responsible for ensuring that governments are fully accountable to the people.'
Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU)
'Parliament and Democracy in the Twenty-first Century: A Guide to Good Practice' [2006]

Nevertheless, in some contexts constructive political party dialogue cannot take place in the parliament itself. Even when opportunities for dialogue exist, political parties may feel that the parliament does not enable them to engage in open, meaningful inter-party dialogue. For example, political parties may wish to discuss issues as institutions rather than as groups of MPs. Relations between the main political adversaries may also be too polarized for meaningful dialogue to occur in a public setting.

In these instances, parties may find it useful to set up complementary dialogue mechanisms outside the existing parliamentary domain.

Words that describe a more formalized or institutionalized political party dialogue mechanism include 'dialogue platform', 'forum', 'council' and 'liaison committee'. This Guide uses dialogue 'mechanism' as an umbrella term, and refers to 'platforms' in cases where the political party dialogue is characterized by a certain degree of institutionalization.

Some experts argue that the need for a new space for dialogue outside of parliament is not always obvious, and that taking parts of the public debate and dialogue away to a separate place outside the democratic arena requires some justification (see e.g. Carothers 2006: 205).

Because inter-party dialogue is most effective when it strengthens—rather than undermines—democratic and political institutions, it is important to explore and explain the underlying reasons why political parties may wish to use a complementary space to engage with each other. These reasons may relate to the general functioning of parliament as a platform for debate; the power relations between parties in parliament; or the weak link between MPs and the party organizations they represent.

Parliament as a debating platform

While parliament is a public arena, an inter-party dialogue platform is generally seen as more or less confidential in nature and this tends to change the nature of the conversation. Parties use parliament to publicly debate different policy options, present their own party platforms and gain support from (potential) voters. As a result, debates tend to focus more on distinguishing themselves from other parties than on openly discussing policy issues or on elucidating problems. This practice is sometimes exacerbated by parliamentary rules and procedures, such as provisions that limit an MP's speaking time, which forces politicians to make their points in a limited amount of time while trying to contrast themselves with other parties, instead of having the space to expand on substantive arguments, explore alternative positions or seek common ground.

This practice also underlines the subtle yet significant distinction between debate and dialogue. While debates in parliament are usually signified by attacks and interruptions as they operate within the constraints of the dominant public discourse, in a dialogue context participants are encouraged to question the dominant public discourse, and to explore various options for problem definition and resolution.[3]

'In parliament political parties only get to see the tip of the iceberg: most of what another party thinks and could potentially agree with lies under the surface.'
Hermenegildo Mulhovo
Dialogue facilitator, NIMD Mozambique

Party power relations in parliament

The division of parliamentary seats and the balance of power can strongly influence inter-party relations, and this affects opportunities for dialogue in parlia-

ment, especially when parliamentary decisions are based on voting. For instance, in the case of a majority party situation (or a stable majority coalition), bills in parliament do not need the consent of the opposition in order to be passed. This can lead to a situation in which a ruling party or coalition ignores the voice of its opponents and, by extension, the opinions of the members of society they represent.

In contrast, in cases where there is no clear political majority the need for dialogue and compromise in parliament is more pressing, as inter-party coalitions and alliances are required for effective decision making. In these cases it will be more likely that (some) parties meet and discuss common issues of concern in commissions or corridors, explore each other's positions and identify potential spaces for negotiation and compromise.

The weak link between parties and parliament
MPs in many countries are the main representatives of the electorate, having been chosen through popular elections. Many political party dialogues, especially those that concern such issues as public policy making, therefore have at least an important number of MPs that take part on behalf of their parties. However, it is not always safe to assume that these party MPs are the best representatives in dialogue between political parties. This is because the interests of political parties as *institutions* are often best represented by party leaders outside parliament. In reality, MPs (especially those in parliamentary systems with single-member districts) must answer to their party as well as their constituencies and may therefore sometimes ignore party interests. In some cases this may be facilitated by a general lack of internal party discipline (e.g. when an MP openly ignores or votes against the official party line) or rifts within a party.

In these situations, political parties may be more likely to opt for an inter-party dialogue process outside of parliament. However, in doing so it is essential to engage MPs in the dialogue from an early stage and to find a right mix between both parliamentary and constituency representatives and overall party cadres (see also chapter 12 on internal party communication and preparation).

1.4   Creating different inter-party dynamics
Ideally, a political party dialogue platform complements the parties' work in parliament. This implies that the dialogue should aim to add value to the different functions of parliament, for example by helping to prepare policies or legislation that will then be debated and decided upon in parliament, or by strengthening the political parties' capacities for effective parliamentary participation. Such dialogue can also be crucial in building consensus around sensitive policy measures or bills in parliament.

An inter-party dialogue platform should preferably function as a space that is separate from parliament, with different structures and procedures that create better inter-party dynamics and allow for dialogue rather than debate. For instance, while parliament is a place where democratic decision making takes place through majority vote, a dialogue platform can stimulate parties to use alternative ways of reaching decisions (e.g. by building consensus).In a dialogue process, political parties are under less pressure to attract voters by giving contrasting positions or political alternatives than they are in parliament. Instead, the incentive structure is different, creating more space for exploration.

A dialogue platform can also take a different approach to existing inter-party power relations, for example by inviting one representative from each party, as opposed to proportional representation based on the division of seats in parliament. The platform might also adopt different procedures, such as allowing parties more time to speak, holding in-depth discussions on technical matters, inviting experts or exploring a variety of options, even if some of them deviate from the official party line.

While political party dialogue outside democratically elected institutions can help to improve inter-party dynamics and play a positive role in inspiring national (reform) processes, it should not be seen as a parallel decision-making process or as a mechanism to circumvent democratically elected institutions. Inter-party dialogue works best if it is used in continuous coordination with formal institutions to jointly strengthen democratic reform processes (see also the case study on Nepal in Appendix 1 of this Guide).

1.5   Strengthening the role of political parties

A democratic country needs strong political parties if it is to function well. Weak political parties (e.g. those that lack functioning party structures or are regarded as 'electoral machines' rather than programmatic parties) are often less capable of conducting an effective inter-party dialogue, be it in or outside parliament. They may find it hard to formulate a party position that is based on a political vision, or may find it difficult to explain the policy stands internally and ensure the support of a majority of party members. Party characteristics that help it to effectively engage in a dialogue include (but are not limited to) the active use of internal dialogue and consultation mechanisms, and the capacity to conduct research and technical analysis, formulate party programmes and policies and plan strategically.

Any inter-party dialogue benefits from strong, democratically functioning political parties. At the same time, political parties can use inter-party dialogue processes to examine themselves as institutions, and address many of the common challenges they face (e.g. finding ways to improve party legislation or to strengthen the parties' organizational structures so that they can successfully perform their functions in society).

1.6   Other actors involved in the dialogue

Inter-party dialogues are not meant to take place in isolation and are often part of broader democratic dialogue processes, for instance, linked to peace-building efforts or political and socio-economic reform processes. Referring only to political parties would therefore oversimplify the dynamics of most political party dialogue processes.

Depending on the context, goals and set-up of the political party dialogue, many other societal actors can be involved. Common actors include the office of the head of state; national and regional legislatures; the executive arm of government and government ministries; electoral management bodies (EMBs); civil society organizations (CSOs); political party registrars; and women's, youth or minority groups. Other actors that might become involved include national development planning agencies; sub-national or local government bodies; social-economic councils; peace-building or reform committees; academic think tanks; citizens' move-

ments; representatives from the private sector, religious institutions; traditional authorities; and media organizations. For example, exchanging party views on certain constitutional provisions may require the presence of someone from the constitutional review committee, while discussing a minimum health agenda may require close consultations with experts from the health ministry and vital interest groups.

A good understanding and appreciation of the different actors' roles, contributions and agendas will help make a dialogue more effective, and a constructive relationship between these different actors is crucial for making a dialogue work.

While a thorough exploration of the roles of all actors that may be part of a political party dialogue goes beyond the purpose of this Guide, the involvement of some actors such as EMBs, CSOs and the media are discussed in more detail in chapters 6 and 17.

1.7   Dialogue facilitation

Political parties are the main initiators of, participants in and beneficiaries of an inter-party dialogue. However, when inter-party relations are marked by tensions and none of the parties is confident or willing to take a first step, impartial intermediaries may step in to initiate and facilitate the dialogue.

Trusted actors can help parties in designing their dialogue process, taking up the dialogue-convening role or providing additional financial or technical support. They are often the driving force behind an inter-party dialogue process.

The involvement of impartial conveners is most common in polarized, politically tense contexts, where political parties may find it hard to initiate and manage a dialogue process on their own (e.g. because it might be perceived as part of one party's political agenda).

In practice, political parties that are considering setting up an inter-party dialogue process may face a number of scenarios:

1. All parties are open to dialogue and wish to hold an inter-party dialogue without the assistance of an impartial facilitator.
2. All parties are in favour of an inter-party dialogue, but wish to involve an impartial facilitator to help them guide the process.
3. Only one or some political parties want a dialogue process, while others are opposed (e.g. when opposition parties want a dialogue but the ruling party refuses it, or when parliamentary parties are reluctant to engage in dialogue with non-parliamentary parties).
4. None of the political parties wish to enter into a dialogue with each other (e.g. in conflict or post-conflict situations where political parties still view each other as enemies, or other highly polarized situations).

In scenarios 2 and 3, a third actor can initiate a dialogue process at the request of one or more political parties, and provide a neutral ground or 'safe space' to come together. Facilitators can include domestic institutions, like a national democracy centre, a think tank or academic institution; or international players such as the United Nations (UN), non-governmental organizations (NGOs) or international political party foundations. All political parties should consider the dialogue facilitator to be capable and impartial.

The key principle and leading assumption is that impartial assistance is best provided when requested by more than one political party. However, in scenario 3 or 4, such an interlocutor might also act in a more proactive fashion and initiate the dialogue without the parties' prior request, for example because it is part of its organizational mandate to promote peace and democracy. National think tanks or academic institutions might also call upon international organizations to act in a facilitating role.

In all contexts, the key responsibility of any dialogue facilitator is to serve all political parties in conducting their dialogue in the best possible way. The next chapter explores the role of the facilitator in more detail.

Findings
- Political competition and cooperation need to go hand in hand.
- While parliaments are an important space for inter-party dialogue, their general functioning or tensions between political parties can limit this space.
- Political party dialogue mechanisms typically imply a more organized way of holding a dialogue between political parties.
- These mechanisms can be used to build consensus around contentious political issues inside and outside parliament and to mitigate tensions in highly polarized contexts.
- Inter-party dialogue mechanisms depend upon strong democratically functioning parties in order to function well, but can also help parties to perform better.
- Inter-party dialogue never takes place in isolation and many other societal actors can become involved depending on the context, goals and set-up.
- Dialogue facilitators can serve political parties in conducting their dialogue.

Recommendations
- Find out what types of inter-party cooperation mechanisms are in place.
- Define the role of parliament as an inter-party platform for dialogue and debate.
- Explore the underlying reasons why political parties may wish to use a complementary space to engage with each other.
- Explain how inter-party dialogue can be used to inform parliamentary debate.
- Engage both parliamentary/constituency representatives and party cadres.
- Assess how political parties can use inter-party dialogue to look at themselves as institutions, and to address common weaknesses and challenges.
- Identify the link between political party dialogue and broader democratic dialogue or reform processes.
- Consider how dialogue can help to build inter-party trust and mitigate tensions.
- Confirm the demand for dialogue facilitation among the different parties.

Chapter 2: The role of a facilitator

Good facilitation is vital to the success of any political party dialogue. Facilitators are the people who in many cases take the first step in bringing parties closer together. A facilitator (many times supported by a facilitation team) is often both the strategic driver and the logistical back office behind a dialogue as well as the primary point of contact for political parties throughout the entire dialogue process.

This means that facilitation is far from an easy exercise. Navigating through the complex web of political interests and views, varying expectations, altering wishes and demands, all within the framework of a continuously changing political context, requires a unique set of talents and capabilities.

Facilitators can play an important role in risk mitigation and safeguarding the democratic legitimacy of the platform and its outcomes. They can for example help parties avoid letting dialogue rules shut out other types of political organizations, being seen to function as elite platforms that take decisions behind closed doors, or creating too high expectations by making promises they cannot keep.

Three main skills and competencies required when working with inter-party dialogue processes are impartiality, political sensitivity and the ability to create party ownership (because, ultimately, the parties are responsible for making the dialogue work). In addition, facilitators should have the intention to foster sustainable and inclusive inter-party dialogue, with an eye to ensuring the dialogue's democratic legitimacy.

This chapter discusses these different facilitator skills and guiding principles and concludes with the important step of parties agreeing on the role of the facilitator.

2.1 Impartiality versus neutrality

The main point of departure for dialogue facilitators is that their engagement stems from a position of political independence and impartiality (Griffiths and Whitfield 2010: 18). This means that a facilitator has to be a trustworthy broker between political parties and should never be perceived to be siding with specific parties or meddling in their internal affairs.

A trusted facilitator does not necessarily need to be neutral in the sense of not being allowed to have or voice his or her personal opinion. However, a facilitator must always behave impartially throughout the course of the dialogue. One of the main differences between neutrality and impartiality is that even if facilitators (or the organizations that employ them) have their own personal political preferences or affiliations, these do not reflect on the dialogue process.

In other words, there is a difference between having personal views and taking these views to the dialogue table. This distinction is especially important when working with political parties, because political relations between political parties and facilitators are in most cases unavoidable. For instance, a facilitator is usually a voter; holds liberal or more conservative political views; and may have friends or family who are politically active or have worked for civic organizations affiliated with a specific political ideology.

At the same time being impartial is not necessarily the same as being non-aligned (i.e. not allied or affiliated with any of the political parties). For instance, facilitators may previously have worked for a political party but are considered impartial because their main goal is to make the dialogue work equitably. In certain instances, the fact that a facilitator

has had a working relationship with a party may be of use when it comes to engaging that party in the dialogue process.

In practice, this means adopting a pluralistic approach to political party dialogue from the outset. All parties, no matter what their size or their representation in parliament, should feel equal. Similarly, no party should feel smaller or less significant due to the way it is treated by the facilitator.

'It is essential for a facilitator or institute to remain steadfastly non-partisan in the conception and implementation of the dialogue process.'
Dialogue facilitator
Africa[4]

Being a strong and trusted facilitator ultimately comes down to personal skill. However, practitioners will also have to act in a way that underscores their impartiality, for example by communicating and sharing information in a transparent and open manner; ensuring that all parties are kept in the loop and do not feel blind-sided or misinformed; and guaranteeing confidentiality to ensure that what parties say does not end up in the media.

Finally, a facilitator needs to be able to resist the temptation to side with parties that are more reasonable or more open to compromise: hardliners are equally necessary to make a dialogue work, even in cases where a party's past actions can play on one's conscience. As one practitioner working in a conflict-prone environment advised, it may help to ask yourself what you would rather face: a situation that is similar to the past, with continued violence and human rights violations, or a changed, brighter future.

2.2   Political sensitivity

Good facilitators require an effective political antenna. In other words, in order to operate successfully in sensitive, political environments, facilitators need to be able to recognize and respect the parties' various interests and identify potential areas of conflict and opportunities for compromise at an early stage. This, in turn, depends upon the facilitator's own refined political instincts.

In all stages of a dialogue process, facilitators need to be able to consider the ever-changing political environment, and evaluate how political developments can affect inter-party relations and the overall goals of the dialogue. This requires not only the right personality but also thorough preparation. No facilitator should get engaged in a dialogue without knowing what the dialogue is about; what the central and underlying issues are; who is who within each political party; and how the various parties are organized.

When seeking opportunities for consensus building, it is important to be aware of the parties' main positions and interests, and to understand what drives them, as well as which points are non-negotiable and where they may be willing to compromise. Facilitators are therefore often advised 'to think with the mind of a politician'. This could mean attempting to foresee political consequences, understanding how the dialogue outcome will affect the political environment or predicting the ways in which decisions will be implemented.

Even though a facilitator is impartial, he/she is more than a mere logistical organizer or a technical moderator of discussions. A facilitator is part of a political process and, as such, plays a political role. This is an important point to realize, as it determines what kind of person is suitable for the dialogue facilitation role.

'The process of personal engagement with parties is highly dynamic; one week you can be on the "right side" while the next week you are out of the picture. It is a continuous process of identifying, weighing, measuring and balancing ever-changing party interests and wishes.'
Eugene van Kemenade
Dialogue facilitator, Burundi

A strong facilitator should not only have a political antenna but also act politically without losing his or her impartiality. This way of acting is sometimes referred to as 'political programming' and, as recent studies highlight, is central to effective party and parliamentary assistance.

Political programming relates to a facilitator's ability to apply more political forms of analysis (such as 'drivers of change': see e.g. Overseas Development Institute 2009) in the design, delivery and implementation of projects to achieve 'political' outcomes and to engage with politicians directly. This includes analysing political dynamics and developments, and understanding how they influence each of the parties in the dialogue (see chapter 3 for more information on political assessments). Political programming also refers to acknowledging that effective interventions often imply behavioural change alongside institutional change, and may require changes in the balance of power (e.g. efforts to work towards more equitable competition between parties at elections: see e.g. Power and Coleman 2011).

Facilitators also need to be flexible when working with political parties. In a dynamic political context with lots of interests at stake, it is important to remain responsive to political developments and to find a right balance between norms and flexibility. For instance, if parties are supposed to meet for a dialogue but a political crisis breaks out, it may be better to change the dialogue agenda or postpone the meeting or dialogue.

Despite this political role and its commensurate qualities, it would be unrealistic to expect that only one type of personality can be a facilitator. Among the dialogue facilitators consulted for this publication, a great variety of characters and respective dialogue approaches emerged: some facilitators played a more activist role by stating their opinions very clearly to the parties and in public in order to influence the game of politics. Others were softly spoken and hardly visible to the outside world, while playing an influential role in the background.

In summary, therefore, just as different political contexts require varying types of dialogue structures, they often also require different types of facilitators. The challenge is then to find the right facilitator to fit both the dialogue and the context.

'Sometimes parties ask you to do things or give an opinion, but I'm really just an advisor. I would only do so when the parties have an opinion that I think is fundamentally wrong for the dialogue, such as bringing out a statement against the president. That would make the dialogue forum an opposition platform.'
Kizito Tenthani
Executive Director, Centre for Multiparty Democracy—Malawi (CMD-M)

2.3   Creating party ownership

Political parties are the natural and primary owners of any inter-party mechanism. This ownership principle lies at the heart of any political party dialogue mechanism. While varying degrees of party ownership exist, the term generally implies that parties themselves should lead and steer the process, define the content of discussions and take responsibility for the implementation of agreements.

Joint ownership of the dialogue also implies that parties will decide who they wish to confide in, whether or not to enter into a dialogue with the other parties and whether to make use of an impartial facilitator (or else appoint a facilitator internally).

Once a facilitator is engaged in the dialogue process, his/her main role is to find ways to further stimulate and strengthen the local ownership of the political party dialogue mechanism. This means that he/she should always act on behalf of the parties and in their interests.

In practice, parties have very different views and interests and it is up to a facilitator to strategically engage with all parties (both individually and collectively) with a pertinent view on the common interest of the dialogue platform and to propose a framework that allows for a meaningful dialogue.

For example, dominant parties may wish to exclude smaller parties, parties represented in parliament may want to exclude those which are not and parties that are not represented in parliament may want to participate individually. These different demands and wishes often mean that it is up to the facilitator to engage with the various parties individually and to formulate a middle ground proactively (see chapter 13 for more information about deciding which parties to invite to a dialogue).

In practice, such 'shuttle diplomacy' requires a very proactive facilitator, rather than parties deciding everything themselves. It is also often too sensitive in political terms for parties to decide upon such matters without an intermediary proposing constructive compromises.

> *'The level of buy-in also depends on who is sitting around the table. The question is: who can protect and safeguard the dialogue process? This depends very much on the moment and time. For example, in a political crisis situation it is necessary to work with someone from within the party who can also take decisions.'*
> Pepijn Gerrits
> Director of Programmes, NIMD

One ground rule for building ownership is never to impose activities or agenda items but instead to propose, gather needs and feed the dialogue process. NIMD's partners, for instance, organize a minimum of two so-called round tables per year with each of the inter-party dialogue platforms it supports. One of these round tables is meant to set the agenda for the coming year, while the other is meant to evaluate and update the goals that were set.

A facilitator can further assist parties by providing input and comparative experiences. This not only helps to ensure that discussions between parties are evidence-based, but also serves as fuel for discussion and a lively exchange of ideas and opinions.

A facilitator's personal skills and sensitivity can also help to create ownership (e.g. by being respectful of cultural differences). For instance, one Malawian facilitator shared an experience that involved a dialogue being organized in a village at a time when a funeral was being held. Even though this disturbed

her planning, it was important to accept this and not to rush ahead.

A facilitator should always beware that political parties must at all times maintain the ownership over the process and problems under discussion, and that it is ultimately their responsibility to find and carry out solutions.

Box 2.1.

External pressure

In cases where dialogues are dependent on external support (e.g. from national or international donors or party support organizations), parties and facilitators may find that many of these non-party actors bring in their own opinions and viewpoints. While contributions from outsiders can be very valuable to the dialogue, in some cases they can pose a risk to the parties' ownership. The seriousness of this depends on the manner in which outsiders exert pressure and how they use their advantage.

For instance, it makes a difference if external actors make their support conditional upon the inclusion of certain agenda topics or participants (e.g. by only funding an inter-party dialogue process if it also addresses anti-corruption measures or if it also includes women and young people) or if they go one step further and deliberately push for specific political reform measures or dialogue outcomes (e.g. proposing an 'ideal' political party law or constitution without the prior request or active engagement of parties).

While it may be tempting for facilitators to lend support to certain outside initiatives, for instance those that promote human rights principles or a sympathetic political viewpoint, introducing outsiders' priorities can make it difficult to ensure that parties will be serious in taking part in such a dialogue. A facilitator should therefore be capable and strong enough to resist outside pressure or perspectives when such perspectives are not conducive to the dialogue.

Instead, the facilitator needs to mediate and balance the expectations of external actors with those of internal actors in a way that ensures that whatever the dialogue does is mutually beneficial. One way of doing this is to invite these external organizations or actors to explain the rationale for their support to the parties themselves. Another way is to develop and commit political parties to an *internal agenda of reform* at a relatively early stage.

2.4   Promoting sustainable dialogue

Another relevant principle when setting up and facilitating dialogue mechanisms and processes is encouraging the long-term sustainability of political party dialogue and its outcomes. This principle builds on the ownership issue mentioned above: without strong ownership, it will be hard to sustain a dialogue between political parties.

While dialogue processes can be formed around achieving a specific, tangible goal (e.g. party law drafting or a reform output) and be dissolved as soon as these goals have been realized, there is much to be said for encouraging the establishment of long-term, ongoing dialogue mechanisms between political parties.

Generally, in theories of historical institutionalism the law of 'increasing returns' shows that investing more and more in one institution creates path development and higher losses in the event of the institution breaking up. This first of all suggests that creating a sustainable political party dialogue mechanism is important from a financial and personnel investment point of view in order, for example, not to lose money that has been invested in the structure or lose the facilitators' and parties' institutional knowledge.

It also implies that the sustainability of the dialogue depends and builds on perceived successes; the more positive results come out of the dialogue (be they intangible, like increased levels of inter-party trust, or concrete reform proposals) the more chance there is that political parties will stay committed and the public will remain supportive.

Sustainable dialogue mechanisms can help political parties to embrace inter-party dialogue as a *democratic practice* and a way of upholding good inter-party relations. By this is meant that parties will consider entering into a dialogue with other parties as a reflex rather than the exception (see also box 2.2, 'Peaceful, inclusive political dialogue: an expression of democracy').

By showing their willingness to reach out to other parties through dialogue, political parties can serve as role models for society and contribute to creating a culture of dialogue (e.g. versus a culture of violence). This way inter-party dialogue can also serve

as a conflict prevention and resolution mechanism. Sustainable dialogue furthermore helps in ensuring the actual *implementation* of the policies or reform measures that parties reach consensus on. Parties need to continue to show their joint commitment to achieving the dialogue outcomes and they can use their dialogue to oversee the implementation phase, for example, by monitoring and evaluating the parties' adherence to an agreed code of conduct. This longer-term commitment is especially relevant because political change tends to take much time (often decades rather than years) and is a continuous, never-ending process.

In practice, the sustainability of a dialogue mechanism often requires creating a more institutionalized *structure* for bringing parties together (see chapter 8 on designing organizational structures). Such a structure is no automatic guarantee for the quality of the dialogue but does provide a vehicle for improving the quality of relations and dialogue outcomes over a longer period. A more permanent dialogue structure usually requires strong commitment of the parties and the availability of sufficient financial resources over an extended period.

Sustainable dialogue does not necessarily equal regular or tightly structured dialogue. It can be an ongoing yet flexible process, typified with irregular intervals and fluctuating levels of intensity, for example, with peaks at times when important contentious issues arise and valleys when there are no hot topics to discuss, or vice versa.

Facilitators can draw the parties' attention to the bottom line which is that political party dialogue should never be seen as a one-off event but instead as an indispensable part of democratic culture.

Facilitators of political party dialogue mechanisms should keep all of these interrelated views in mind—that is, to help institutionalize dialogue structures so that they act as a vehicle for promoting a positive shift in political culture and inter-party relations, and for ensuring lasting democratic outcomes.

Peaceful, inclusive political dialogue: an expression of democracy

'The objective of political dialogue is to achieve practical and peaceful solutions to problems, and, at a deeper level, to address conflict drivers and reconciliation, build a greater national consensus or cohesion, and a shared vision of the future. The assumption is that political dialogue is an essential mechanism for promoting a peaceful democracy. Inclusive political dialogue is, by its nature, a democratic activity. Peaceful political dialogue therefore is an expression of democracy. When properly implemented it also contributes to the promotion of democratic practices by allowing the voices of all sections of society to be heard. Political dialogue is not in opposition to institution building. However, in many cases state institutions are not functioning properly because they have been compromised by political bias, corruption, and inefficiency. The role of political dialogue in such contexts is to strengthen the legitimacy of institutions by building consensus on and trust in their proper functioning. Extraordinary processes of dialogue are at times necessary to achieve this purpose.'
International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding ('The Role of Political Dialogue in Peace Building and Statebuilding' 2011)

2.5 Fostering an inclusive dialogue: avoiding elite politics

An inter-party dialogue is more likely to generate positive effects if the agreements coming out of the dialogue are considered democratically legitimate. Avoiding a dialogue between political elites and encouraging a more inclusive dialogue can help in creating this democratic legitimacy.

In today's world, inclusiveness and meaningful participation in decision making—both key features of democracy—cannot be achieved without a strong focus on participatory governance and the multiple aspects of diversity (e.g. gender, ethnic, cultural, linguistic or religious aspects). For example, while the gap between women and men's participation in political life has narrowed, there is still a great deal of room for improvement.

Consequently, political party dialogue should aim to include and benefit both women and men, and reach out to different social groups without any discrimination or bias. Inclusivity is a leading democratic principle and deserves continuous attention throughout a political party dialogue process. This is all the more important as the inclusivity principle is sometimes hard to align with the daily reality that certain groups in society do not take part in politics and, even if they do, are often unable to reach the highest level of authority and decision-making power within political parties and institutions.

In the majority of countries around the world, political decision making is still in the hands of political elites, and therefore these same elites are likely to be represented in inter-party dialogue processes. While a political party dialogue involving 'everyone, all the time' may not be realistic, inter-party dialogue processes should include, as a minimum, those political parties, party members and societal actors that are part of the problem to be addressed through the dialogue, as well as those that can contribute to finding a solution.

Inclusive dialogue can refer to involving all parties from across the political spectrum regardless of their ideology, size or popularity. It can also go beyond including the widest possible number of political parties and refer to engaging different groups from within each party, for example, women and men, majority and minority groups, national or local-level politicians, or party cadres and MPs. Finally, inclusivity can refer to working together with non-party actors like civil society.

Facilitators can try to convince political parties at an early stage that the more representative their delegates are the more democratic legitimacy and success the dialogue will have. They also need continuously to assess to what extent consultation of other stakeholders, both within parties and outside parties, such as civil society organizations, is appropriate in the different phases of the dialogue. More information on this topic can be found in Part III of this Guide.

2.6 The importance of agreeing on the facilitator's role

Before taking up a role as a facilitator it is important to discuss the parties' expectations of what the facilitation should entail, and agree on a general role division or mandate for the facilitator. Such a mandate may help avoid misunderstandings and create the right expectations as to what a facilitator is expected to do, and not do.

One way of doing so is for parties to develop a draft terms of reference (ToR) or job description for the facilitator. This ToR can refer to some of the facilitator skills and qualifications as listed above, but may also list the day-to-day responsibilities of the facilitator as foreseen by the political parties. These responsibilities could include:

- maintaining regular coordination and consultations with party members;
- providing support to maintain a secretariat function for the political party dialogue platform;
- coordinating with parties to convene periodic meetings;
- assisting with the logistics around the preparation of these meetings, including agenda development, room bookings, meeting facilitation, note-taking and distribution of minutes;
- providing technical assistance and expert advice on common issues of interest to members of the party dialogue platform, or identifying potential external sources of technical assistance and expert advice;
- on the request of parties, organizing multiparty seminars and workshops and technical input on relevant documents such as a political party law, codes of conduct and so on;
- securing relevant experts to facilitate skills training retreats (for party participants) related to topics such as dialogue and consensus building, and conflict resolution techniques;
- providing relevant technical materials for party members as well as publications and other resource materials to the party headquarters;
- identifying opportunities for joint political action that will enhance communication and trust building among parties, and assist them in reaching consensus on common key issues;
- identifying opportunities for international networking and exposure of the members in relevant

international symposia by coordinating with and seeking the support of other donors interested in supporting political party development; and drafting minutes/reports and key resolutions and agreements.[5]

Of the tasks outlined above, 'maintaining regular coordination and consultation with party members' forms the foundation of the relationship between parties and a facilitator.

Political parties will have to agree between themselves whether to invite a local or international facilitator to join their dialogue. Both options have pros and cons. While most local facilitators are better informed, in some countries (e.g. countries experiencing post-conflict ethnic division) an impartial local facilitator might be difficult to find. It may therefore be more practical to engage international facilitators in the start-up of a process and enhance local ownership of the programme by including more national facilitators at a later date.

An international facilitator could, however, also be less cognizant of local particularities (and might not speak the vernacular). Deciding on a national or international facilitator is therefore often dependent on local context, but a rule of thumb is to find someone that has at least all three characteristics described in this chapter: impartiality, political sensitivity and the ability to create party ownership.

Findings
- Political parties are the primary actors and owners of inter-party dialogue mechanisms and ultimately responsibility for reaching results.
- Facilitators accompanying parties in their dialogue should always act in an impartial manner and take a pluralistic approach.
- Refined political instincts, the right personality and preparation help facilitators to operate in sensitive, political contexts.
- Creating party ownership requires facilitators to engage with all political parties, while keeping in mind the common interest of the dialogue platform.
- Sustainable dialogue structures can act as vehicles for promoting a shift in political culture and for ensuring implementation of the dialogue outcomes.

- Elite politics should be avoided. The inclusion of all parties, different groups from within the parties and non-party actors should be encouraged.
- Parties do well to share their expectations on the role of the facilitator.

Recommendations
- Explain that the role of the facilitator is an impartial one.
- Define areas of 'political programming' that would require specific attention (e.g. political analysis or impact of dialogue on political processes).
- Strategically engage with all political parties individually and collectively.
- Explore opportunities for fostering party ownership, inclusivity and the sustainability and democratic legitimacy of the dialogue.
- Specify the facilitator's job description, for example, in a terms of reference document.

Chapter 3: Assessing the political environment

Political parties are embedded in societies, each of which contains its own historical, socio-cultural and political contexts, issues and actors. Consequently, before initiating a political party dialogue, it is essential to obtain a deep understanding of the political environment and infrastructure in which political parties operate. Local contexts should determine the dialogue's purpose, process and methods.

It is also important for facilitators to ensure that no harm is done, for example by inadvertently creating (more) suspicion between parties. The best way to avert this risk is to involve experts and engage a variety of stakeholders. Inclusiveness and representation strengthen local ownership of a dialogue process, and enable deeper knowledge of the main actors and their various relationships. This also means that both opposition and governing parties should be consulted and involved.

Political parties' engagement in an assessment of the political environment can be organized in various ways, for instance through stakeholder consultations or through party self-assessment. This chapter discusses two possible types of assessment: a comprehensive assessment of the context for political party dialogue, and a specific needs assessment focused on parties themselves.

'A country's political scenery is like a fluctuating landscape with faults and canyons.'
Ernesto Araníbar
Programme Coordinator, Ágora Democrática (IDEA–NIMD), Ecuador

3.1 Comprehensive assessments of political environments

Understanding the context and the political dynamics in which political party interaction takes place is crucial to any dialogue process. Different assessment tools can be used for collecting comprehensive baseline information and scanning a country's political and socio-economic context in a systematic way (UK Department for International Development (DFID) 2009). Two common analytical approaches are political economy analysis and power analysis. While falling under the same field of study, the two have a slightly different focus.

Political economy analysis looks at political institutions and relations from an economics perspective, and helps to study the interaction of political, economic and social processes in a society. This typically entails an analysis of the distribution of power in relation to wealth between different interest groups and individuals, and the processes that create, sustain and transform relationships over time.

A power analysis is more focused on understanding powers that can support or undermine a country's development and social change. It serves to stimulate thinking about processes of transformation, and especially what can be done about informal and formal power relations, power structures and the actors contributing to them.[6]

Over the past decade government agencies, international institutes and NGOs have developed and applied a variety of approaches for political economy and/or power analysis, and they are often combined with participatory research methods and tools.[7]

Experienced local researchers or academics are usually best equipped to apply these frameworks, methods and tools. A facilitator could hire these analysts on a temporary basis or recruit them as part of the dialogue facilitation team.

3.2 Limitations of comprehensive assessments

While a thorough, large-scale assessment of the political context is critical and a basic precondition for any external engagement, such assessments tend to be expensive and time-consuming. A full State of Democracy assessment, for example, takes at least a year from start to finish (International IDEA 2008a). As a result, a large-scale assessment might not be appropriate in urgent situations (e.g. dialogue processes instituted due to upcoming elections or reform deadlines), or situations where there are no funds available to hire local researchers or analysts.

Rushing the setting up of dialogue due to time pressure, or failing to conduct a proper context analysis, means running the risk of overlooking vital elements. For instance, inter-party relations may be misinterpreted or the wrong party participants invited, leading to problems later on in the dialogue process. Again, strong local ownership of the process and local expertise can help avoid falling into this trap.

Another disadvantage of some of these larger-scale assessments is that, even if they are already done, they are not always publicly available or easily accessible, for instance because of the sensitive information they might contain.

Facilitators concerned about these limitations should approach organizations working with political economy and power analysis to see if recent larger-scale assessments are available and can be shared, or take advantage of publicly available assessments such as those that are available through the Governance Assessment Portal or the State of (Local) Democracy website.[8]

Finally, comprehensive assessments like political economy or power analysis are usually not conducted from a political party perspective or with their interests in mind, and can therefore be complemented with a specific needs assessment.

3.3 Specific needs assessments

If an extensive assessment is not possible or still under way a practical second-best approach to the preparation of a context analysis is to conduct a specific needs assessment. Such an assessment is specifically focused on the role of political parties and the conditions for inter-party dialogue, rather than the overall country context.

One way to go about a specific needs assessment is to interview a variety of actors, and invite all political parties to an intake process or introductory meeting where the formal and more personal relations between and within parties can be explored and discussed. This process may also help to make the parties' real agendas, including their positions, needs and interests, more clear. A basic scan of the political environment for political party dialogue purposes could include a number of basic elements and overarching questions (see box 3.1).

Facilitators can also ask political parties to suggest additional issues to map, which will increase their ownership of the assessment results. Moreover, parties can be asked to consult internally in order to provide answers to some of the questions, reflect broader layers of the party and increase ownership and legitimacy.

Box 3.1.

Scanning the political environment: some focus areas

- **Political history and climate of the country.** How do a country's parties historically relate to each other? How does this background affect the current political climate and inter-party relations?
- **Party system in place.** What party system and electoral system are in place? Which political power relations does the party system produce, and to what extent do these facilitate or hinder meaningful political party dialogue?
- **Political party landscape.** This element involves mapping the parties that are registered and those in parliament; parties' geographical or ethnic support bases; organizational capacity; presence in the media or influence outside the legislature; (contentious) reform issues and each party's stance on them; parties' ideological, religious, ethnic, regional backgrounds; and any formal or informal alliances between parties.
- **External factors of influence.** How do upcoming elections, poverty, natural disasters, international sanctions and neighbouring wars impact on political parties' behaviour? (See for instance chapter 7 on the electoral cycle.)
- **National legislation governing political parties and candidates.** This element involves identifying legal requirements, including registration requirements, nomination of electoral candidates, campaign laws, regulations dealing with coalition building or the participation of disadvantaged groups. Do these laws discourage or stimulate parties to enter into a dialogue with each other?
- **Internal structure and functioning of political parties.** This involves mapping parties' organizational structures, and finding out how leaders are elected; how party policy is developed; how membership is organized; how parties are set up financially; whether internal consultation mechanisms exist; what campaigning strategies are in place; how parties address gender issues and how they deal with disadvantaged groups. How does all this affect a meaningful dialogue?
- **Agents of change.** This involves identifying the main reform-minded branches and individuals within each party as well as those that are likely to be more opposed to political dialogue and reform.
- **Political culture.** What are the underlying behavioural aspects of parties, including personal connections and informal inter-party relations? Does a country have a culture of dialogue or confrontation? Are clientelism, patronage or corruption typical features?
- **External relations (domestic and international).** It is useful to examine links to EMBs, business groups, corporations, trade unions, NGOs, movements, CSOs and religious groups. Relations with international party families, sister parties or outside donors are also significant. How do these external actors affect inter-party relations?
- **Barriers to dialogue.** What potential barriers have the previous questions brought to light? At what stage of the dialogue might they come into play? Should any additional barriers be taken into account?
- **Risks of inter-party dialogue.** What are the potential risks for starting a dialogue and how can these be mitigated so that no harm is being done? Is there a chance that a dialogue initiative will exacerbate inter-party tensions and polarization rather than diminish them? Could the dialogue agenda be hijacked by certain parties or actors? Could parties define rules that shut out other types of political organizations and what would be the consequence?

3.4 The need for continuous reassessment of political contexts

As political contexts are dynamic and tend to change over time, continuous reassessment and reconsideration are essential. Consequently, political economy or power analyses or specific needs assessments are often useful not just as a baseline exercise but also over the course of a dialogue process. Continuous reassessment enables political parties and facilitators to decide which approaches and activities are most useful in the context of changes in society.

One option is to conduct this kind of reassessment as an integrated part of the dialogue forum (e.g. by including it as a standing agenda item). NIMD's experiences in Ghana and Uganda have shown that another effective technique is to support individual parties in hiring a party policy analyst or to (jointly) employ a political analyst who liaises with the party leadership and specialists on a continuous basis.

Such an analyst can advise both parties and facilitators on the political risks, challenges and opportunities relevant to the dialogue process. As part of this continuous assessment, a facilitator will need to pay particular attention to the electoral cycle, a topic further discussed in chapter 7.

*'Assessing the political context is a continuous process
and necessary for deciding which dialogue activities
are useful and at what point.'*
Virginia Beramendi Heine
Head of IDEA Andean Office, Peru

Findings

- Before initiating an inter-party dialogue, it is essential to gain a deep understanding of the political environment in which political parties operate.
- Different assessment tools can be used for collecting comprehensive baseline information and scanning a country's political and socio-economic context.

Recommendations

- Ensure political parties' engagement in comprehensive context analysis through consultations or the parties' self-assessment of the political context.
- Conduct a specific needs assessment, focused on the role of political parties and the conditions for inter-party dialogue.
- Involve experts who can do the political analysis, including over the course of the dialogue.

PART II: Political party dialogue in practice

Chapter 4: Dialogue stages and dynamics

Each political party dialogue process has a certain starting point. In some cases the desire to initiate a dialogue is born out of a spontaneous conversation between political parties, while at other times it is a result of outside pressures or suggestions.

Regardless of what triggers the start of the dialogue, a facilitator will be expected to (informally at first) explore the opportunities for dialogue and liaise with individual parties and other stakeholders. When options have been identified and parties have expressed their basic commitment to inter-party dialogue, facilitators can assist by designing a dialogue process in line with their goals and expectations; anticipating future key events; and planning the general course of the dialogue as far ahead as possible.

At the same time, there is no widely recognized blueprint for planning a dialogue. Each dialogue has its own dynamics and will unfold in its own unique, often unpredictable, way. Political contexts differ greatly from each other and this has an impact on all aspects of the dialogue, including its goals, participants and organizational set-up. These elements are further discussed in parts II and III of this Guide.

For facilitators it helps to know if the dialogue is intended to be a long- or short-term process. Some focus on achieving a specific result or agreement before a certain deadline, while others are more multitasked and open-ended. Some dialogues may only last a few weeks or months, while others could take several years or become ongoing in nature.

From the perspective of a dialogue facilitator, any longer-term dialogue process, regardless of its scope or complexity, goes through a series of stages during its life cycle, with each phase having

its own features and characteristics. Breaking down the dialogue into different stages is useful when trying to foresee what lies ahead.

This chapter summarizes the different stages of political party dialogue.

4.1   Process in theory: the five basic stages of dialogue

A typical political party dialogue process usually comprises the following five stages:
1. exploring possibilities for dialogue;
2. designing the dialogue process;
3. marking the start of the dialogue;
4. conducting the dialogue; and
5. closing the dialogue (for more information, see International IDEA 2007: 53).

This segmentation of a dialogue is especially relevant in the early stages, as it triggers thinking about opportunities and obstacles in the longer term. Moreover, being able to explain the dialogue process to political parties and other stakeholders is important for creating a mutual understanding of what their dialogue will look like, thus creating buy-in and ownership and helping to manage participants' expectations.

Stage 1: Exploring possibilities for dialogue
A dialogue process usually starts with an exploration phase involving an initial assessment or political economy analysis. This analysis gives the facilitator a first chance to assess the 'window of opportunity' and judge to what extent the parties' openness, public demand, institutional setting, and resources for a political party dialogue are available.

In addition, political parties and other relevant actors are engaged and the factors that will be critical for

success and conditions for a successful inter-party dialogue are formulated. During the exploration phase, potential facilitators and political parties have the chance to discuss how a dialogue could add value in solving problems in their inter-party relations, the political system or society.

There are also situations where seeking a certain degree of clarity at the beginning of a dialogue will scare off important participants. In this kind of case, the initial meetings would be tentative, limited in scope and in vision, with the scope and the vision expanding (not necessarily consciously or perceptibly) as the process continues, allowing confidence and trust to build gradually. In that kind of dialogue, informality and taking one step at a time are the principles.

Stage 2: Designing the dialogue process
During the design phase, the dialogue mechanism is discussed, planned and structured in such a way that both ruling and opposition parties feel they can contribute and express their wishes. A critical element of this phase is the definition of common criteria for dialogue, including the organizational structures and 'rules of the game' (e.g. rules about what constitutes a fair process). This usually involves some initial convening or consultation activities, although these should not be confused with the actual dialogue. Once the benchmarks are set, parties can continue to discuss and agree on the substantive dialogue aims and agenda.

Stage 3: Marking the start of the dialogue
The official beginning of a political party dialogue is often marked by a breakthrough point or celebrated by an event such as the public signing of an agreement. This type of event is a chance for parties to demonstrate their commitment to inter-party

dialogue to their voter base, the public and the media. In other circumstances, however, it is better to avoid ramping up expectations or derailing the dialogue by focusing on external attention, position taking and questioning.

Sometimes the work done in the exploration and design phases can be so time-consuming and intense that it may feel as if getting the dialogue started is the main purpose. While reaching this stage can give a sense of achievement or relief and is often considered proof of parties' commitment to the dialogue, there is usually much more work to be done.

Stage 4: Conducting the dialogue
As soon as the actual dialogue starts, facilitators and political parties enter the implementation or execution stage. This stage can be considered the heart of the dialogue process. Implementation of the dialogue can be time-bound or open-ended, take many shapes and forms, and move in different directions. Facilitators should ideally use this phase to convene and deepen the dialogue between political parties by using different approaches, tools and techniques. Conducting the dialogue is actually one of the most complicated stages of a dialogue process, especially for the facilitator. It can resemble walking a tightrope, in a balancing act that requires very specific skills.

For a facilitator, organizing and sustaining a vibrant and meaningful dialogue over an extended period (i.e. one or more years) can be difficult. Political parties may also find it hard to maintain the same level of commitment and active engagement, especially in times of political setback. While this can be an indication that the dialogue is no longer useful, a facilitator may simply need to convince parties that a dialogue is still worthwhile.

Stage 5: Closing the dialogue

While a political party dialogue has the potential to be a continuous process, there may be reasons why parties or facilitators feel it needs to be concluded. Sometimes this may be due to an unexpected outside event, like the outbreak of a civil war or a geopolitical crisis. At other times, the desire to close the dialogue may be a result of a sudden breakdown in a dialogue process, for instance due to a loss of the required minimum level of inter-party trust. For example, one or more parties might continue to break promises made in the dialogue, or else a political scandal or an unexpected shift in the distribution of political power might occur. This is when an internal conflict resolution mechanism can be of help (see chapter 9 on the rules of the game).

In the best-case scenario, a closure phase is entered because the result that was set out in the beginning has been achieved. In these cases, a closure or exit phase marks the completion of the inter-party dialogue process.

Box 4.1.

Time-bound processes: drafting a new Political Party Law in Peru

Following the fall of the Fujimori administration in 2000, 12 political parties joined forces to change Peru's political party system. In parallel with the broader Acuerdo Nacional national dialogue process (see also box 17.1) they decided to set up an inter-party dialogue platform to define their role as political parties under the new democratic dispensation. The political parties used this platform for the time that was needed to build consensus around a new Political Party Law.

With the support of International IDEA, the Peruvian organization Transparencia acted as impartial facilitator and worked full-time with the parties from start to finish. Its job was to organize a safe space to meet, to facilitate the discussions and to bring in the appropriate technical expertise.

The very first meeting was about exploring the different ideas on what issues the law should cover, followed by ten preparatory meetings on specific topics, such as the role of the media or public funding. After these meetings, a preliminary draft law was presented, forming the basis for further discussions. The dialogue meetings on the new Political Party Law took place every two weeks.

The changing political context sometimes caused delays and setbacks, but the facilitators usually resolved these issues through discussions with the parties' technical experts and frequent communication with the party leadership. After each session, dialogue participants were asked to discuss new information within their parties. Controversies that arose were generally overcome largely due to strong commitment by all parties to reach consensus and make the dialogue work. More than 20 national forums, in which party leaders could present the draft law to their members, were organized.

Other actors involved were the electoral management body, academia, local NGOs and international organizations such as the National Democratic Institute (NDI). Moreover, local leaders, the media and civil society participated in the nationwide forums. Peru's Congress was involved from an early stage for example, through the active role of the chairs of the Constitutional Committee and the Political Parties Act Working Group in the dialogue forum.

Through this work, parties were able to reach a fundamental basic consensus, and two years after the start of the dialogue, Peru's first Political Party Law was successfully debated, on a few sensitive issues amended, and finally adopted in Congress.

Consequently, the political party dialogue was concluded (International IDEA and Transparencia 2004).

The closure of the dialogue phase should always explore mechanisms for implementation of the broad agreement or ways of ensuring that there is no relapse or that parties do not renege on the consensus reached. Institutions for implementation can be structured in such a way that they reflect the inter-party spirit that led to the agreement.

For example, when inter-party dialogue outcomes have informed a constitutional reform process and the changed constitution requires a revision of subsidiary laws such as an election law, a multiparty platform can be established for dialogue between political parties and the EMB. This platform can discuss the electoral environment and the organization and conduct of elections, and jointly develop sug-

gestions for the law. Kenya's Political Party Liaison Committee is an example of such a platform.

While sustainable dialogue is considered a good practice and therefore to be promoted (see chapter 2 on the role of the facilitator), facilitators and parties should not feel the need to keep the inter-party dialogue alive for the sake of keeping it alive. Long-term, ongoing dialogue is important only so long as it is useful to achieve the agreed purpose and goals.

4.2 Process in practice: dialogue can be highly unpredictable

The five basic stages described above might give the impression that any political party dialogue has a distinct beginning and end as well as a predefined, logical order of succession. In practice, however, political party dialogue processes tend to be highly dynamic and unpredictable, not least because the political environment and day-to-day developments have a great influence over the parties engaged in the process.

Consequently, the distinction between one phase and the next is in fact rather fluid. One step forward might be followed by two steps back (e.g. when a 'false start' is made) and the process may pick up speed and slow down at irregular intervals.

The duration of each stage can also be hard to define in advance. While in some situations the design phase may take weeks, when parties have difficulties agreeing over the dialogue set-up it can take months or years. Moreover, from the perspective of political parties, having some sort of dialogue with one's opponents is (or should be) an ongoing, permanent process. Therefore, dividing a dialogue into predefined stages may come across as an artificial exercise, especially when it comes to a 'closing phase'. Still, many facilitators may find it useful to keep the different phases in the back of their minds as they can serve as a planning and navigation tool.

'One could picture political party dialogue as a series of waves: it is an ongoing, continuous process during which the nature and intensity of interparty relations keeps on changing. Sometimes parties may reach out to each other; at other times, they choose to be in a modus whereby rivalry prevails. Their attitudes

change at irregular intervals, illustrating the continuous rise and fall of interparty relations.'
Ernesto Araníbar
Programme coordinator, Ágora Democrática, Ecuador

Findings
- In theory, dialogue processes go through a series of stages during their life cycle, with each phase having its own features and characteristics:
  – exploring possibilities for dialogue;
  – designing the dialogue process;
  – marking the start of the dialogue;
  – conducting the dialogue; and
  – closing the dialogue (if required).
- In practice, these processes tend to be highly dynamic and unpredictable and the distinction between one phase and the next can be rather fluid.

Recommendations
- Discuss and describe each phase of the dialogue as far as can be foreseen at the start of a dialogue process (e.g. long- or short-term, open or goal-oriented).
- Consider this description as a basic planning and navigation tool, update it along the way and align with political developments and dynamics.

Chapter 5: Setting goals and agendas

Political parties are competitive by nature and are usually more focused on winning the next election and staying one step ahead of their competitors than on pursuing a goal cooperatively. At the same time, parties may need each other to address common problems in society. Political party dialogue mechanisms usually become necessary when a majority of parties across the political divide face the same problems.

Parties may share concerns over the political system they operate within; the lack of peaceful resolution of conflict; the need to fight poverty; the desire to treat each other with respect; or a desire to create a more equal society. The goal of any given dialogue therefore forms the basis of the parties' longer-term dialogue agenda, and as such needs to be 'owned' by the parties.

Consultative goal and agenda setting can serve as a way of ensuring this ownership and of verifying that dialogue is the best instrument in the circumstances. It can also serve to create the right expectations as to what a dialogue can achieve. Finally, it can help to ensure that the dialogue does not become an end in itself, but instead a means to achieving certain objectives (International IDEA 2007: 80, 'Defining objectives').

In reality, these goals and broad agenda items may not be easy to identify, let alone agree on. Different actors may have a different understanding about what should or should not be included in the dialogue. The facilitator must manage the parties' expectations in this respect through discussion based on the dialogue's main goals (e.g. trust building or reform), and ideally at an early stage in the dialogue.

In addition, facilitators must keep in mind four important issues when setting the broad agenda for political party dialogue: divergent party needs and incentives; differences in parties' power to influence other parties; divergent political agendas; and the potential for changes in the goals of the dialogue itself.

Box 5.1.

Burundi: confirming the true scope for dialogue

'In a demand-driven approach, requests for assistance may come from the opposition and the ruling party alike. Parties choose and decide on topics themselves as long as it is within the mandate of NIMD. Using a demand-driven approach did not always work in Burundi, as we saw when it came to suggesting issues for dialogue. Parties were asked to list their needs and topics for discussion with the other parties but this list did not reflect the true scope for dialogue: it did not portray some of the tensions and real issues under the table. For instance, some political parties said they wanted to work on the election law but looking back it is clear that this was not feasible and instead formed a part of their political strategy.'
Eugene van Kemenade
NIMD facilitator, Burundi

5.1   Consultative goal and agenda setting

Consultative goal and agenda setting can be a powerful tool in facilitating consensus building: it creates transparency; helps create a distinction between political, technical and personal issues; and assists in managing expectations and keeping the dialogue focused.

Identifying the dialogue's goal and broad agenda in a consultative and inclusive way, at a pace that feels right to all parties, is also important to ensure party ownership of the issues discussed. If started on time, furthermore, it gives parties an opportunity to consult internally, prepare their inputs, and propose topics of special concern.

As a facilitator, there are different ways to go about this consultative goal- and agenda-setting exercise. One option is to consult all parties through bilateral sessions, while a second is to make it a truly joint exercise whereby topics emerge from the dialogue itself. A third option is to combine these two approaches so that a facilitator identifies the goals and broad agenda through consultations with the individual parties but with parties having the opportunity and freedom to agree jointly to revise the agenda at any time.

Although a facilitator should be as responsive to parties' needs as possible, he/she needs to be aware that using a strict demand-driven approach does not always work, because it may ignore some of the tensions and real issues under the table, and consequently not always reflect the true scope for dialogue. A facilitator therefore does best to balance between the needs voiced by parties and issues that emerge from a shared analysis of problems troubling the political party landscape.

The process of consultative goal and agenda setting is often a consensus-building exercise (see also chapter 11 on consensus building).

5.2   Balancing party needs and incentives

While many dialogues may finish with a win–win situation, they do not always start with parties thinking along those lines. Probably one of the first questions parties would ask themselves is how the dialogue will make them better off or not. The cooperation needs to be seen as helpful for them to achieve their own goals. In general, one could say that parties expect to gain something from these dialogues, which even brings them to accept the opponents gaining advantages.

Each party will have its own formal and informal positions, interests and needs. Mapping what is at stake and what can be gained by dialogue—as seen through the eyes of a political party—may help in identifying the parties' needs and incentives for joining. These incentives can be seen as the driving forces of political power behaviour and as the main factors that will motivate political parties to achieve a particular goal together.

In practice, incentives can be negative (e.g. a party joins a dialogue out of fear that other parties may conspire) or positive (e.g. a party wants to take credit for reform proposals that come out of the dialogue). In addition, incentives can be external (e.g. international donor pressure) or internal (e.g. pressure from party members). Finally, incentives may be pre-existing (e.g. embedded in a party strategy) or specially created (e.g. by capacity-building support programmes).

While taking part in a dialogue process needs to be attractive to everyone, the reasons why it is attractive vary depending on the party. For example, large ruling parties may be more susceptible to international pressure, while smaller opposition parties may be keener to have access to information and alternative ways to influence the ruling party. Because different party positions, interests and needs compete and change over time they require continuous reassessment. A facilitator needs to keep track

of these shifts in positions and assess their impact on the overall dialogue process.

5.3 Differences in parties' influencing power

In assessing whether a problem can be best addressed through a political party dialogue or otherwise, parties may benefit from looking at the power or influence of individual parties in comparison to the power or influence the political parties have as a group. Seeing the differences in this regard may lead to better insights into the benefit of joining forces, as well as the ways in which parties can address and contribute to the resolution of the problem in an inter-party setting.

Some problems may be out of the political parties' direct span of influence (e.g. changing international legal obligations), while the parties could solve other problems amongst themselves (e.g. restoring trust between political parties or designing a parties' code of conduct). In these cases, parties may need each other in order to create change, address issues through dialogue and, together, take a step forward. Further concerns might best be addressed

at the level of each individual party (e.g. promoting internal party democracy).

The political context in which the dialogue takes place is crucial in assessing the parties' influencing power. In *Confronting the Weakest Link*, for instance, Thomas Carothers identifies central, power-related challenges of party development in contexts in authoritarian or semi-authoritarian countries, and in new democracies (Carothers 2006); table 5.1 shows that each type of party system will bring along its own challenges for party development.

Similarly, each party system affects the inter-party dynamics—and, consequently, the chance for meaningful dialogue—differently, not least because party perspectives on inter-party dialogue will greatly diverge depending on the party system. For example, setting up a multiparty dialogue platform in a semi-authoritarian country can be deemed highly necessary from the perspective of (potential) opposition parties, but will most probably be less appreciated by the party in power and can even be seen as undermining state authority.

Table 5.1.

The central power-related challenges of party development outside the established democracies

Type of party system	Central challenge
Authoritarian or semi-authoritarian countries	
Single-party system	Creating political space, legalizing opposition parties
Emasculated party system	Empowering parties overall
Malign dominant-party systems	Reversing state–party fusion and checking the power of the ruling party
New democracies	
Benign dominant-party system	Preventing state party fusion
Unstable distributed party system	Facilitating party rootedness
Stable distributed party system	Stimulating party renewal

Source: Carothers, T., *Confronting the Weakest Link: Aiding Political Parties in New Democracies* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for international Peace, 2006), figure 3.1, 'The Central Power Related Challenges of Party Development outside the Established Democracies'

At the same time, there seems currently not to be enough research available to indicate anything definite about how each party system relates to the chance of success for political party dialogue. This is probably because there are too many other factors involved: for example, a dominant-party system is generally not seen as an enabling environment for political party dialogue; however, precisely because of this situation political dialogue mechanisms are often badly needed and mechanisms are therefore being established.

Box 5.2.

Dialogue in contexts dominated by one party

Parties' willingness to join a dialogue process is often linked to the political system or power balance in place. A specific case in that regard is a dominant-party situation. Contexts in which one party has an absolute majority in parliament and/or dominates government institutions generally make dialogue between ruling and opposition parties more necessary.

In dominant-party situations, dialogue between the ruling party and opposition can be more difficult, mostly because in such systems a ruling party can often take decisions without the opposition's consent. Conversely, given that small or extra-parliamentary opposition parties in a dominant-party system hardly ever need to engage with the ruling party in an institutionalized setting, they are often used to antagonizing those in power.

This kind of party power imbalance makes interparty dialogue in or outside parliament less likely. Both sides usually have strong reasons for resisting dialogue, although they might use different arguments for opposing it in public.

In the case of the ruling party, it could be that it is comfortable in power and sees no need to listen to the opposition. The opposition may fear co-optation by the ruling party and a weakening of its public image of non-compromise, or feel tired of trying to reach consensus when the majority position of the ruling party does not change.

Consequently, getting the ruling and opposition parties to engage in dialogue in a way that creates different power dynamics may entail extra persuasion and mediation efforts on the part of the facilitator. It is important to understand the perspectives of both sides and demonstrate how dialogue can actually benefit them in spite of their mutual grievances and distrust, albeit sometimes from a self-centred perspective.

For instance, from a dominant party's point of view, inter-party dialogue could be used as a way of showing both the media and the public that the ruling party is willing to consult and reach out to the opposition. This would act as a way of enhancing its legitimacy in the eyes of the international community or simply becoming more aware of the positions of the opposition.

The opposition parties, on the other hand, may feel they can benefit from inter-party dialogue to formulate and present strong proposals and use dialogue as an opportunity to raise their voice and status, either to get a better idea of proposals that the ruling party has in the pipeline, or to influence decision-making processes.

5.4　Diverging political agendas

In an ideal dialogue scenario—such as when all parties agree that it is time to address certain gaps in a country's democratic system—political parties share the same idea of what they wish to achieve through their dialogue. However, this is not automatically the case. A potential dilemma arises when one or more political parties' political agendas cannot be aligned in such a way that all parties are able to agree on a common goal for their dialogue. Another dilemma occurs when an assistance provider is not willing to support parties in addressing a problem based on this organization's expertise or mandate (e.g. when peace negotiations are the priority but the assistance provider does not have sufficient experience in this area to support the parties).

In cases of diverging agendas, parties and facilitator have different options, including:
- working on a longer-term strategy to get all parties on to the same page;
- collaborating with other dialogue platforms;
- starting with a less than comprehensive range of parties, with the aim of achieving a goal that excluded parties can be persuaded to live with;
- avoiding the most contentious issues in order to avoid initial roadblocks;

• beginning the dialogue with issues on which consensus is easy to reach; to build a positive attitude among participants and show results can be achieved; or
• waiting until a better time or moment.

Another method is to align the agenda of the inter-party dialogue platform to areas where there is substantial pressure for reform within society, for example, on topics like more decentralization or improved performance of political parties. This approach will encourage domestic accountability rather than external accountability.

'The main goal should be to look beyond the political conjunction of the moment.'
Ernesto Arañibar
Programme Coordinator, Ágora Democrática (IDEA–NIMD), Ecuador

5.5   Long- and short-term goals

Many facilitators know from experience that a dialogue's goal can change along the way, for instance when the political landscape changes. Consequently, the dialogue goal and agenda setting, just like conducting a political economy analysis, is usually an ongoing process. For more information see chapter 3 on assessing the political environment.

Dialogue facilitators who have been able to engage parties over a long period have also noted that, while trying to reach long-term goals, a sense of achievement can be reinforced by the successful completion of short-term or intermediate objectives. For instance, if the long-term goal is to build better relations between parties, a short-term objective may be to bring parties into one room. Alternatively, if the long-term goal is to create a level political playing field, a short-term objective may be to secure agreement on the obstacles that stand in the way of this reform measure.

Goals should also be realistic. When parties reach consensus on their goals, they therefore also need to discuss ways in which they can jointly monitor their implementation. Being specific about the short- and long-terms goals and using *indicators to measure results and progress over time* (e.g. marking the point when consensus is reached, a joint proposal is formulated or a measure endorsed by the wider public or parliament) is one way of doing this. Getting commitment to continued inter-party dialogue to oversee the implementation process is another.

Box 5.3.

Ghana: changing goals over time

'Just like political systems and interparty power relations, dialogue processes and the goals they serve can change over time. The Ghana experience is interesting in that regard. In Ghana, the dialogue started in order to bring political parties closer together and to jointly work on improving the country's democratic and political system. This platform has been able to set new goals for itself and change over time. Now it is gradually evolving from a forum that focuses on democratic reforms to a forum that will look at more socio-economic issues, with the aim to make Ghana's democracy deliver. This was never propagated or foreseen at the start of the dialogue and points towards the strength of a process that is truly owned by parties.'
Jean Mensa
Executive Director, Institute for Economic Affairs/Ghana Political Parties Programme, Ghana

Findings
• The dialogue goals and agenda usually arise from problems faced by all parties across the political divide.
• Goal and agenda setting is a joint exercise that serves to create a mandate for the dialogue process.
• A focus on positive incentives helps in making the dialogue attractive to everyone.
• Goals need to be realistic and measurable over short or long periods of time.

Recommendations
• Identify the dialogue's goal and broad agenda in a consultative manner.
• Map the different parties' needs and incentives for joining the dialogue.
• Explore ways to align diverging agendas with a common dialogue goal.
• Differentiate between short- and long-term objectives and develop practical indicators for measuring results.
• Define and adjust the dialogue's goal and agenda throughout the dialogue.

Chapter 6: Supporting political reform and national development

Political party dialogue processes can support a broad variety of goals, depending on a country's political, social and economic context and on the types of issues political parties are struggling with.

The dynamics of dialogue play a crucial role in any democratic transition, in supporting inclusive political and electoral processes and for creating broadly-based political will for reform and national development. Inter-party dialogue platforms can help in building trust between political adversaries, in providing the space for political parties to explore common concerns, and in finding ways to resolve national challenges in the best interests of the larger society. Dialogue outcomes can include improved inter-party relations or political consensus around a joint reform or policy agenda.

Constitutional, electoral and political system reform (e.g. through strengthening the quality of electoral or political party legislation) as well as long-term development plans that have wide political and societal support can all be part of the political party dialogue agenda. Facilitators do not necessarily have to be experts in any of these fields; however, having a solid understanding of the main issues under discussion is crucial in order to accompany parties successfully in their dialogue.

This chapter summarizes some specific areas in which political party dialogue can lead to concrete results and contribute to reform processes. They portray areas in which inter-party dialogue platforms can help parties to identify and represent the collective interest or where they can serve as a 'trade union' for political parties.

Box 6.1.

Inter-party dialogue in peacetime

'The aims of such dialogues are generally two-fold. Dialogue processes are created to be a protected space separate from the conventional political arena, in which the parties can communicate with each other, get to know each other better on personal basis, overcome conflicts, and build a base for cooperation. Sponsors of interparty dialogue also often hope that parties will use the dialogue process to work on political reform measures such as electoral reform, party finance issues, or other elements of the political rules of the game.'

Carothers, T., *Confronting the Weakest Link: Aiding Political Parties in New Democracies* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2006), p. 203

6.1   Creating a minimum level of inter-party trust

In many countries, political party dialogue primarily serves as a mechanism for strengthening inter-party cooperation and trust between rival political parties. This is important, as a (minimum) level of trust is a condition for a meaningful dialogue on issues of national importance. Often it also works the other way around: the need to resolve issues of national importance, such as political system reform, becomes a legitimate reason for parties to come together and build trust and mutual confidence.

Trust-building and reform processes are ongoing and interactive, and are in a dialectical relationship whereby one step forward by one allows for a step forward by the other, and vice versa. A minimum level of trust or a basic 'willingness to sit around the table' is necessary throughout all stages of a dialogue process. By meeting on a regular basis, parties can gradually build up levels of trust. This is

the first step towards a more accommodating and reconciliatory political culture (Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (NIMD) 2012).

A growing level of interpersonal and inter-party trust and mutual confidence serves to consolidate and strengthen multiparty democracy, not least because it helps to reduce political tensions. As such, it can act as a *conflict prevention* mechanism (e.g. by promoting a political party code of conduct instead of violence). Similarly, inter-party dialogue can be used as a *conflict resolution* mechanism to resolve political tensions or disputes (e.g. possible electoral fallout) in an informal, non-confrontational manner.

Further, in view of its trust-building qualities, inter-party dialogue can help in peace-building processes, especially in post-conflict countries. It also complements national healing initiatives and reconciliation efforts.

For more information on how to build trust, see chapter 10.

Box 6.2

Dialogue in post-conflict situations

After years of protracted intra-state conflict, mistrust, resentment and hatred prevail within a society and between political opponents. When trust is eroded and there is no longer a willingness to share different views, or to seek consensus and mutual understanding, a multiparty system cannot function effectively. The stability and effectiveness of a political party system are not only determined by its legal framework, the checks and balances within the system, and the parties' organization and general democratic practices; to a considerable extent, stability and effectiveness hinge upon the existence of mechanisms for parties to engage in inter-party dialogue and cooperation.

Major disagreements about a country's future do not dissipate after a peace treaty is signed. All too often, the international community has assumed that a post-conflict country will quickly move on to a status quo after the first, hastily organized free elections. That hardly ever happens. The peace is often fragile and the guns may have been silenced, but the origins of the conflict often still exist. To achieve sustainable peace, it is therefore essential that parties maintain an open dialogue, even after the first

elections. Particularly where strengthening the democratic system and developing a shared, long-term vision for the post-conflict restructuring of society are concerned, parties will benefit from a dialogue that at least in part takes place outside the media's direct attention, in a neutral, non-competitive environment.

Facilitating a multiparty dialogue not only serves to prevent a relapse into conflict; it is also a precondition for better political accountability, especially in countries where one party holds the reins of rule. Strengthening an inclusive multiparty dialogue will help parties to overcome mutual distrust, which often obstructs pragmatic dialogue on political issues. Maintaining a regular and peaceful dialogue enhances the chance that reconstruction efforts and necessary political, economic and social reforms will proceed peacefully.

The initiation of such dialogues requires a cautious and not overambitious approach that is tailored to the specific nature of fragile, polarized political relationships.

Source: An extract from ten Hoove, Lotte and Scholtbach, Álvaro Pinto, *Democracy and Political Party Assistance in Post-Conflict Societies* (The Hague: NIMD, August 2008), pp. 16, 17

6.2. Responding to changes in the external environment

The moment a minimum level of trust and mutual confidence is present a dialogue can help to organize parties around a shared agenda and open up possibilities for dialogue between the ruling and opposition parties (often for the first time) on critical political and policy reform issues (Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (NIMD) 2012). This usually shifts the focus of interaction towards meaningful dialogue, and requires parties to discuss, deliberate on or build consensus around issues that are in the long-term, collective interest of both political parties and the country.

Parties might wish to jointly scan changes in the external environment and respond to significant political events or developments in and outside society, especially changes that impact on and cut across all parties. International developments such as globalization, environmentalism, gender equality and immigration can put pressure on parties to adapt their structures and policies to the new circumstances in order to remain elector-

ally successful (Dalton, Farrell and McAllister 2011: 224–5). The same is true for domestic developments. For instance, when political parties face unanticipated changes or threats to their position (e.g. the rise of political apathy, increased voter dissatisfaction voiced through the internet or social media, or decreasing party membership at the expense of a competitive system of political parties), these threats and ways to mitigate them can be discussed in a dialogue setting (Dalton, Farrell and McAllister 2011: 224–5).

Box 6.3.

Mali: standing up for democracy

NIMD works with the Malian political parties through an inter-party dialogue platform, promoting cooperation and actively supporting the national democratization process. In March 2012 the Centre Malien pour le Dialogue Inter-parti et la Démocratie au Mali (CMDID) issued a press statement on behalf of all parties expressing their concern about the events of 22 March 2012, which prompted the suspension of the constitution and the dissolution of Mali's political institutions. In the joint statement, the parties publicly agreed to:
• organize discussions between the forces of the nation;
• build the capacity of the army for its operationalization;
• organize visits to refugee camps to support displaced populations; and
• hold transparent and credible elections.

Following this statement, CMDID's political movements also agreed to propose an action plan for the implementation of these solutions (Communiqué on the Mali coup 31 March 2012).

Political parties have a range of mechanisms by which they can adapt to changing circumstances in their environment, ranging from institutional fixes to changes in policy formulation (Dalton, Farrell and McAllister 2011: 229). Political party dialogue is one way to support parties in their organizational adaptation as well as in their (joint and individual) party agenda setting, and can be combined with capacity building and technical support programmes. The dialogue can then discuss technical issues that affect all parties' internal structures or functioning, and offer equal access to relevant expertise (e.g. on ways to comply with financial accountability or gender requirements).

Dialogue can help create a better understanding of the challenges political parties face as institutions, and of the ways to improve the social and political context within which they function. Exchanging information and discussing strategies for tackling some of the problems they face can help parties to better prepare and position themselves in line with a new political dispensation. The dialogue platform then provides a space to explore and strategize based on objectives that will benefit all parties and to lobby for their realization. Such exchange may also enable parties to engage more effectively with non-party actors including reform commissions, research institutes, academia and civil society groups.

6.3 Developing a political reform agenda
Parties can use inter-party dialogue to better understand the extent to which consensus building or joint actions to push certain measures to improve the political and social environment could be worthwhile.

When consensus is the desired outcome, proposals should reflect the opinion of all political parties. This way, major national reform initiatives are owned by all parties and therefore less likely to be revisited and fundamentally changed after an election or change of power. This is not to say that these outcomes should not be questioned, debated and endorsed by the wider society (as their democratic legitimacy is crucial) but rather that a minimum level of consensus among parties can contribute in a positive way to policy consistency and predictability. In practical terms, political parties can use their dialogue to develop a joint agenda for political reform.

Ghana's Democratic Consolidation Strategy Paper (DCSP)

In 2006 the Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA) and the Ghana Political Parties Programme (GPPP), an inter-party dialogue platform comprising representatives of the four political parties in parliament, undertook a groundwork study on the various arms of government and democratic institutions in the country. Their goal was to assess the state of Ghana's democracy since the constitution of 1992 came into effect.

The parties appointed a representative team of consultants who spoke with all significant stakeholders—from party members, parliament, the judiciary and civil society associations to grass-roots groups, including women's and youth organizations, chiefs and religious leaders—to gather their views on the functioning of Ghana's democracy. Based on these findings, parties drafted the Democratic Consolidation Strategy Paper (DCSP), a joint analysis of the country's democratic system, proposing a number of practical reforms (Mensa 2009). For instance, in the DCSP political parties agreed that in order to go forward as a nation they needed to review the 1992 constitution. In the run-up to the elections in December 2008, all the parties adopted this proposal into their manifestos and a Constitution Review Commission (CRC) was set up in 2010 to conduct a consultative review of the operation of the 1992 constitution.

Political parties also adopted other DCSP proposals and produced bills on the funding of political parties, the review of the political parties law itself, and the presidential transition process. The parties all pledged in their manifestos that they would pass these bills (Mensa 2009). On 16 March 2012, the Ghanaian Parliament unanimously approved the Presidential Transition Bill. Essentially, the legislation provides a framework for the political transfer of power from one democratically elected president to another and introduces a multiparty framework of ground rules and regulations to govern future transitions (e.g. by spelling out clear timelines according to which ministers of state must vacate their official accommodation). Once the bill was adopted, the IEA and Ghana's political parties continued to monitor the process, working with all relevant stakeholders to ensure that the institutional structures were established and functional ahead of the 2012 elections (Ofori-Mensah, 2012).

This section outlines some of the issues that often find their way into the agenda of a political party dialogue that relate to political reform, focusing on the legislation that creates national constitutions, political party legislation and electoral systems.

National constitutions

Often referred to as a country's supreme law, a constitution provides much more than an overarching legal framework for society. It regulates political power and strongly affects relations between society and the state. Constitutional reform is an important vehicle on the road to democratic consolidation.

Constitutional processes often play a fundamental role in ending conflict, renewing people's trust in their government, establishing fundamental national interests and identity, establishing foundational laws and ground rules, ensuring equality and inclusivity, and guaranteeing human rights. National constitutions are essential instruments in bringing and holding a nation together and, in the case of constitution building or review, political parties have an especially important role in negotiating the rules, timing, process and content of the constitutional debate.

Constitutions also tend to have a fundamental impact on a country's governance and political system and consequently on the position, role and organizational structures of political parties. For instance, the choice between a presidential, parliamentary or semi-presidential system greatly influences a party's ability to gain and exercise power. A decision to introduce a more decentralized governance system might require parties to be more present on the ground, while a ruling requiring them to adopt women's or minority quotas may force parties to revise their political participation and internal selection policies.

As intermediary institutions between the state and ordinary citizens, political parties have a crucial role to play in constitution building and review. They play a prominent role throughout the entire constitutional reform process, from the preparatory stage to the implementation phase. It is important to recognize that political parties can potentially contribute in three different capacities: as individual parties; as members of inter-party dialogue platforms; and as

political parties in relation to other stakeholders (Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (NIMD), African Studies Centre and International IDEA 2012: 14).

Political party dialogue can be used as a way of supporting a nation's constitution-building process, and can help in identifying areas of agreement or contention. Examples of countries where dialogue between political parties has been used to build consensus for constitutional reform include Kenya, Zimbabwe, Nepal, Ecuador and Bolivia (for more information see Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (NIMD), African Studies Centre and International IDEA 2012).

Political party legislation

Political systems usually flow from a country's legal framework. While a constitution reflects the 'soul of a nation', its subsidiary laws spell out the more detailed characteristics of the political system in place. Laws and regulations that concern parties and candidates as key stakeholders in a political system include political party laws, political party finance regulations, the electoral legislation and presidential transition bills.

Political party laws are crucial instruments for strengthening the functioning of a multiparty democracy and for achieving a level playing field. These laws usually regulate the establishment, registration, organization, activity and dissolution of political parties, and ensure that parties can perform their main functions in society. They not only define key characteristics of a political party system but also set the rules of the game. These may include certain prohibitions (e.g. forbidding political corruption or hate speech) or guiding principles (e.g. to use democratic means and methods to achieve political goals), sometimes complemented with a code of conduct. Political party laws also play an important role in ensuring inclusive politics.

Furthermore, legislative frameworks have a great impact on whether and how parties and party candidates can access public and private funding.[9] Money plays an important role in the political dynamics of most countries. For instance, the way that political parties and candidates raise and spend money can be more important for the fairness of an elector-

al process than anything that happens on election day. Parties often see political finance as a crucial yet sensitive issue. Inter-party dialogue can serve as a way to discuss positive and negative political finance issues in a safe environment.

In countries with little or low-quality political party law, facilitators can assist parties with establishing and improving these laws. As with many areas, the passing of a law does not automatically bring compliance. In cases where parties on the surface seem to operate according to formal rules, below the surface practices based on tradition, personal relationships or ethnic ties can prevail. These practices may be positive at times, but can also hinder a country's political development. Facilitators should ensure that this informal dimension is not overlooked in a dialogue about political party legislation.

Electoral systems

Electoral systems have a profound effect on the political life of a country, as political interests solidify around and respond to the incentives presented by them.[10] The kind of electoral system effectively determines who is elected and which party gains power. For instance, first-past-the post systems often lead to single-party governments and a coherent opposition, while proportional representation systems tend to encourage the formation of several political parties that generally reflect political and ideological differences within society.[11]

Even though most new or struggling democracies established and locked in their electoral systems during or soon after their break from dictatorial rule in the 1980s and 1990s, electoral system reform usually continues to be the subject of debate between political parties (Carothers 2008). In the case of new election policies and legislation (e.g. when the number of constituencies increases or independent candidates are allowed to run for election), parties may wish to respond and protect or improve their positions by proposing alternatives. In these cases, inter-party dialogue can be used as a platform for information exchange, for formulating joint action and for the tasks of building detailed understanding of each other's proposals and teasing out each other's cases, which can lead to modifications.

Where agreement has been reached, these issues can be jointly pursued with the relevant authorities, such as EMBs, giving the proposals more clout and gravitas. Dialogue results are more likely to be sustainable if governments, ruling and opposition parties and EMBs establish dialogue forums that operate continuously throughout all stages of the electoral cycle. For more information see chapter 7 on timing and the electoral cycle.

6.4 Drafting a national development agenda

Political parties perform institutional and social functions that are essential to representative democracy. Parties are responsible for national policy development, service delivery and reform, as well as delivering socially inclusive and sustainable development to the people (European Commission for Democracy through Law 2008/2009). As such, they have a responsibility to contribute to the formulation of their country's national development agenda.

Each political party should have its own programme, ideology and unique vision for society's future, explaining its strategy and approach for fulfilling this responsibility. Not all parties, however, may have such a strategy in place, for example due to lack of in-house expertise in this area, and they can use a policy-focused dialogue to test ideas and sharpen their thinking.

Also, and notwithstanding their inherent differences, there will always be some basic similarities between political parties. For instance, few parties will claim to be against poverty eradication, good health services and education, or the good use of natural resources. Holding an inter-party dialogue around these areas is therefore an opportunity for parties to see whether and how they could benefit from working together, for instance by developing a consensus-based minimum agreement.

'Dialogue is not always about disputes over power, but should be about finding a place at the table to discuss and address great national problems, like financial, oil, agricultural or public policy reform. Political parties can develop that agenda and facilitators can be used to provoke topics for debate.'
Rene Mauge
Director of the Research Institute for Electoral Promotion and the National Electoral Council (CNE), Ecuador

One advantage of developing such an agenda is that it will alleviate the need to develop a new long-term development plan from scratch every time a new government is in place. Government policies in any country need a level of predictability in order to enhance financial and economic stability, as well as international trust. At a more general level, citizens need to plan their everyday life beyond the next elections.

An inter-party dialogue can also stimulate political parties to be proactive in informing strategic national players (e.g. national development and planning agencies) about their interests, or seek alliances with influential groups in society. In some cases having a joint vision that is supported by all major parties can serve the national interest by avoiding instability and encouraging policy predictability.

In practice, there are different examples of political parties' commitment to contribute to a comprehensive shared national agenda (as was the case in Guatemala: see box 6.5) or to work towards consensus on specific policy agendas (as was the case in Peru where the focus was on national health policy: see box 6.6).

Box 6.5.

Guatemala's Shared National Agenda

In 2002 and 2003, 20 political parties in Guatemala came together to develop a shared analysis of the situation in their country and a policy agenda for improvements. This Shared National Agenda (Agenda Nacional Compartida) was endorsed in December 2003; since then, it has constituted the principal framework for politics and policies in the country ('Agenda Nacional Comparatida').

The agenda focused on political, economic and socio-environmental areas for reform and development, as well as on issues related to peace, human rights and reconciliation. Although the national experience of developing the agenda is considered successful and was copied (for example) at the local level, it remains a challenge effectively to translate the agenda into concrete legislation and policy implementation.

Follow-up discussions on implementation of the agenda continued to take place in various forums, including in the

multiparty institutional platform Foro de Partidos Políticos, established earlier to help develop the Shared National Agenda. The platform has continued to serve as an alternative venue for deliberations and policy developments by the Guatemalan political parties (ten Hoove and Scholtbach 2008).

Box 6.6.

Peru: a national health agenda

In 2005, the NDI, working in Peru, helped 16 political parties reach a consensus on national health policies. This initiative was part of efforts to follow up on NDI/Department for International Development (DFID) research on Peru's political parties and the promotion of pro-poor reform. (For further reading see National Democratic Institute (NDI) and UK Department for International Development (DFID) 2005.) The parties signed a public accord, the provisions of which were then adopted and implemented by the Peruvian Ministry of Health. Together with NDI, the parties worked from the starting position that, irrespective of who won the next elections, eight health issues (e.g. health insurance) would need to be addressed. In the words of one of the party members: 'we agreed on consensus on these eight health issues, but we could differ on the rest'.

Findings
- Inter-party dialogue can help in building trust between political adversaries, which in itself is a building block for peace building and political reforms.
- Dialogue, furthermore, provides the space for parties to explore common issues of concern, especially in building consensus around political reform or national development policies.
- Dialogue can also support parties in their organizational and programme adaptation, as well as in working towards more inclusive politics.

Recommendations
- Establish whether there is sufficient inter-party trust for meaningful dialogue.
- Identify what changes in society impact on and cut across all parties.
- Explore opportunities for developing a broad political reform agenda.
- Identify specific areas of contention or potential agreement, for example, those related to a

country's constitution, its political party legislation or the electoral system.
- Look at how the dialogue could contribute to a national development agenda.
- Coordinate the dialogue's efforts with the work of others, like national peace building, reform or development commissions.

Chapter 7: Timing and the electoral cycle

Political party dialogue is usually considered a long-term process rather than a one-off event. Sometimes a dialogue is only expected to last a few months or years, for instance when it is set up to deliver input for a specific 'product' like a new constitution, or to deal with a specific crisis. In other cases, political party dialogue becomes accepted as a more permanent consensus-building mechanism or a part of the national peace architecture.

A dialogue's goals and expected duration influence both its start date and the timing of specific activities undertaken by participants. Many practitioners in the field face dilemmas related to finding the 'right timing'. While there is no easy way to resolve these dilemmas, some general considerations should be taken into account.

The timing of a dialogue between political parties is especially relevant in cases where it concerns elections. A country's elections are a clear landmark in time and usually exert a great influence over inter-party relations. While political parties tend to thrive during elections, reaching their apex of citizen interaction, elections are also the ultimate manifestation of political party competition.

Therefore, by their very nature, elections create high levels of polarization and have the capacity to reshape the political party landscape rapidly. This can have a significant impact on the way political party dialogue processes are conducted.

This chapter looks specifically at the issue of the timing of political party dialogue, focusing in particular on the link between inter-party dialogue and elections.

'Elections are the indispensable root of democracy. They are now almost universal. Since 2000, all but 11 countries have held national elections. But to be credible, we need to set high standards before, during and after votes are cast. Opposition organizations must be free to organize and campaign without fear. There must be a level playing field among candidates. On polling day, voters must feel safe and trust the secrecy and integrity of the ballot. And when the votes have been counted the result must be accepted no matter how disappointed the defeated candidates feel.'
Kofi A. Annan,
Chair of the Global Commission on Elections, Democracy and Security in *Deepening Democracy: A Strategy for Improving the Integrity of Elections Worldwide* 2012: 3, 'Foreword' by Kofi A. Annan

7.1   Time is both an ally and an enemy

Time (or the lack thereof) can sometimes be regarded as a dialogue's enemy, especially if a dialogue process is set up to achieve results before a certain date (e.g. to develop new political party legislation before the next election). In these cases, the pressure to deliver on time overtakes the overall benefit of having an open-ended dialogue between political adversaries that aims to create mutual understanding in an atmosphere of trust.

In other cases time can be an ally—for instance, when parties have been competing against each other for years over the same issues but have grown tired of conflict. The pressure to finally deliver a shared outcome that allows all parties to pursue their political goals can lead them to become more open to changing their existing positions and behaviours.

In practice, facilitators may choose to find a balance between helping parties achieve results within pre-

defined time frames, and upholding good inter-party relations that remain committed to the dialogue's outcomes. This long-term perspective is especially crucial when looking at issues of timing because anticipating certain future developments and adjusting the planning of the dialogue process to anticipated events can be a difficult process.

7.2   The timing of a dialogue process

The timing of a dialogue process is important for a number of reasons. It is different from the concept of 'time' in that it deals with choosing the right time rather than having sufficient time. It defines the amount of time that is available for ensuring buy-in from all parties, for building up trust and interpersonal relationships between the political parties and for setting up dialogue structures.

The timing of a dialogue platform also matters greatly because it tends to influence the focus of the dialogue. For instance, around election time parties will be more likely to be concerned with monitoring and addressing election-related events and incidents, while in between elections the dialogue will usually be more focused on ways to influence the legal and political level playing field.

There is no such thing as the perfect time to start a political party dialogue process: each moment will offer its own unique opportunities and risks depending on the specific circumstances in a particular country and the purpose of the dialogue. At the same time, it usually does make a large difference if a country finds itself right before, in the middle of, or after a process of political transition (e.g. elections or a constitutional reform debate).

Certain moments will simply provide more challenges for a multiparty dialogue as they occur in the midst of extreme political polarization. As a result, timing can matter a lot for the intensity, inter-party trust and success of a dialogue process, all of which will increase if the setting up of a dialogue architecture is started 'on time'.

Finding the right timing is about both the internal functioning of the political party dialogue (e.g. the level of inter-party trust) and the purpose of the dialogue and the extent to which parties can influence external processes such as political reforms through the dialogue. These two factors can be each other's companions as well as enemies.

After all, building trust within a successful dialogue modality requires time and lack of pressure, while making political reforms outside of the dialogue tends to involve strict deadlines (e.g. deadlines related to a parliamentary cycle, election dates, peace processes or reform time frames). Pursuing these two goals (often simultaneously through a dialogue platform) can seem counterproductive.

In practical terms this means that, ideally, a dialogue should start long enough before an anticipated reform deadline to enable the achievement and strengthening of both goals.

7.3   Anticipating moments of high pressure

A political party dialogue process is usually more easily set up in a context of relative harmony. This makes it easier to bring parties together to think jointly about ways to organize the dialogue and the agenda. Even when a dialogue process is primarily meant to mitigate tensions, doing so successfully is often dependent on a level of trust and a cooperative spirit, both of which are best developed before political polarization increases.

For instance, in cases where pre-electoral polarization in the public domain starts a year before scheduled elections, a dialogue process should probably begin a year earlier (i.e. two years before elections). In an ideal situation, a facilitator will ensure that the process of building the internal architecture is ready before large political developments take place. In reality this is not always possible.

Sometimes the pressure to set up a dialogue platform arises just when inter-party tensions and polarization are at their height, or when reforms are due (rather than expected). For instance, while a sense of urgency with regard to possible election violence might lead to external funding to mitigate this threat, the funding often only becomes available shortly before elections.

The challenge for the facilitator is to convince parties and those funding the dialogue of the need for a timely start, before real problems become visible. A facilitator's response to those who see no urgency should be to point out that the dialogue might make it possible for harmony to prevail in tougher days. Facilitators should also be looking ahead and sketching future topics that can potentially create controversies. All possibilities should be seriously considered so that the architecture for dialogue is in place when problems arrive.

7.4   The role of the facilitator: anticipating events

A critical task for a facilitator is to anticipate the timing of certain events and factor them into the dynamics of the dialogue. A facilitator should assist parties in planning and try not to be overtaken by events when a deadline nears. Conversely, the facilitator might also use that deadline in the dialogue's favour in order to stimulate parties to make decisions when they are dragging their heels on reaching compromise.

Facilitators can help parties in doing their own strategic and organizational planning, as well as in organizing joint scenario planning, by looking ahead at critical moments and junctures in time, such as upcoming elections or national reform agendas, by following critical debates in society and by keeping track of political developments in the country (see e.g. van den Berg, forthcoming 2013). There will always be moments of intensity and pressure, even in an established dialogue, as well as moments of 'political sleep'. In many political systems, developments are haphazard rather than planned and political parties often respond to, rather than anticipate, incidents.

Politics in many countries also tends to work in seasons, with parliamentary recess periods or summer holidays suddenly slowing down a dialogue. It is important for a facilitator to use these quiet moments to invest in the dialogue architecture, rather than to focus only on handling acute incidents. These moments provide opportunities to network (although this is, of course, an ongoing role also during busy times), to think of potential responses to future issues, or to bring political opponents together when the rest of the world feels that nothing of interest is happening on the political front.

Finally, a facilitator can use these quieter moments to train and prepare secretariat staff, or network with those that operate more behind the scenes of a party.

7.5   The electoral cycle

Democracies have national processes and predefined time frames that cannot be ignored. One such key process, which is called the electoral cycle, revolves around presidential, parliamentary, local or other types of elections. The recurring practice of holding national, sub-national and sometimes supranational elections can be regarded as a continuous cycle.

The electoral cycle shown in figure 7.1 illustrates the fact that elections are not events but processes, and the figure is used to demonstrate that elections are recurring events that are preceded and followed by a more or less similar pattern of activities. The electoral cycle itself is therefore in many ways a planning tool for shifting attention away from the tensions that mark the elections themselves and towards the preparatory stages that can help minimize these tensions.

The electoral cycle tends to cover a four- to six-year period and can be divided into different phases, with election day itself as the main starting and ending point of reference. While a traditional electoral cycle may typically refer to the 'pre-election', 'election' and 'post-election' phase, political parties may consider adding an equally important fourth phase: the 'consolidation' phase.

Figure 7.1.

The electoral cycle

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                    ┌──────────────────────┐
                    │   Electoral period   │
                    │ (nomination, voting, │
                    │   campaign results)  │
                    └──────────────────────┘

┌──────────────────────┐              ┌──────────────────────┐
│  Pre-electoral period│              │ Post-electoral period│
│  (planning, training,│              │(review, strategy,    │
│ information,         │              │ reform)              │
│ registration)       │              │                      │
└──────────────────────┘              └──────────────────────┘

                  ┌──────────────────────┐
                  │ Consolidation period │
                  │(policy/law review,   │
                  │ party strengthening, │
                  │  govern/control      │
                  │  government)         │
                  └──────────────────────┘
```
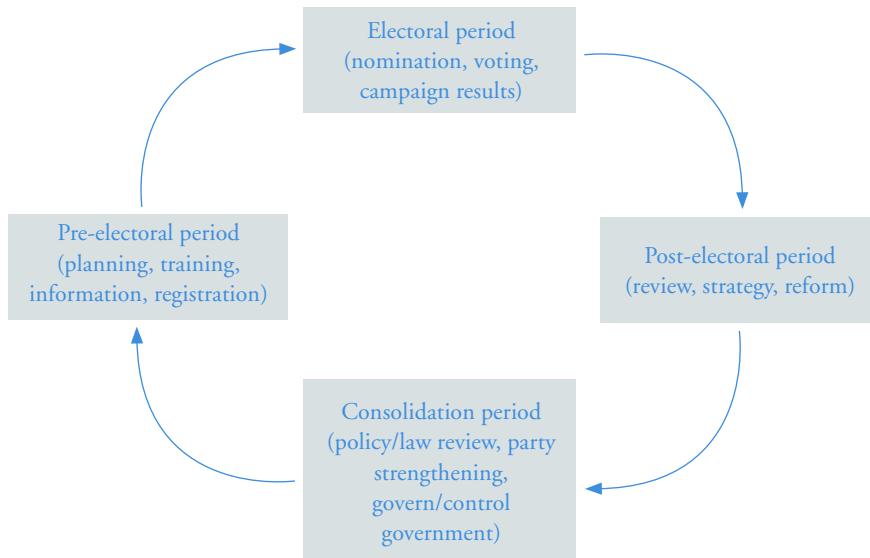
Source: Based on International IDEA, *Electoral Management Design: The International IDEA Handbook* (Stockholm: International IDEA, 2006), figure 2, p. 16.

These four phases are not set in stone but serve rather to illustrate that for political parties elections play a major part in the type of activities they may carry out at different points in time.

7.6 Political party dialogue in the four phases of the electoral cycle

Political party dialogue can be useful throughout all phases of the electoral cycle. However, each phase has different characteristics in terms of the parties' goals and priorities, as well as the type of activities that they will wish to focus on. The parties' changing mindsets (e.g. feelings of greater or lesser trust, or of greater or lesser interdependence) during each phase therefore influence the topics that will be on the inter-party dialogue agenda.

1. The pre-election phase

In a pre-election phase (usually between six and 12 months before election day) a party's attention is usually focused primarily on internal preparations for the upcoming election. The party's focus on the external election campaign means that issues such as party manifesto development, candidate selection, and developing a campaign strategy will be high on the agenda for all parties.

During this phase, parties gradually move into competition mode and this may have an impact on inter-party relations. For those considering commencing a political party dialogue at the pre-election stage in the cycle this can mean two things.

First, the potential increase in inter- and intra-party tensions could signal the need for an inter-party dialogue process as a mechanism for building up trust and letting off steam. In this case the dialogue could build confidence in the electoral process, put contentious issues on the agenda and focus on mitigating conflicts in the run-up to the elections (e.g. through discussions between parties and the EMB). This is the time to raise concerns and make last-minute changes to the electoral process through consensus.

Second, larger reform issues at this stage are often increasingly hard to discuss, as parties will be preoccupied with the upcoming power struggle. Putting structural reform issues on the agenda can create unreasonably high expectations that the dialogue can deliver change, with the ultimate risk of the disintegration of the platform.

2. The election phase

The election period constitutes not only the day (or days) of the election itself but also the preceding weeks and sometimes months during which political parties conduct their election campaigning. Election campaigns can be 'fierce but fair' but may also include 'dirty tricks', strong accusations and in some cases violence. Up until the moment the final election results are announced, inter-party tensions tend to increase.

During this time a dialogue platform can serve to limit specific election-related concerns to a forum in which they can be discussed more effectively, away from spaces where they may be used purely for electoral gain. Inter-party codes of conduct or electoral ethical pacts for instance are often developed at the start of the campaign.

Box 7.1.

Peru: parties sign an electoral ethics pact

In 2005, more than 20 Peruvian political parties signed a pact committing them to ethical electoral conduct. Several dozen local and regional political groups joined since then. In the pact, the parties for example agreed to focus on ideas and platforms in their campaigns, to avoid personal attacks on opponents and their families, and to reject aggressive, violent, intimidating or repressive tactics. They also agreed to respect laws regarding the posting of campaign materials, urged elected officials to avoid misuse of public funds and to abide by formal dispute resolution mechanisms. Each party was to designate a representative to monitor compliance with the pact. Besides their own commitments, the parties also called on the media to ensure that parties have equal access to airtime and print space for campaign advertisements, and provide impartial coverage to political organizations. The Pact was used during the following presidential and local elections (International IDEA 2005).

Parties can also organize public dialogue activities in order to manage polarization, for instance through multiparty media debates that focus on policies instead of personal issues.

At the same time, in the run-up to an election the parties will be even more competitive in their campaigning than in the pre-election phase. This may mean that party leaders have less time to attend dialogue events. Facilitators seeking to start up a political party platform at this time should also be careful to avoid accusations of bias or of outside interference in the national democratic process.

In general, a dialogue around elections tends to be better suited to monitoring electoral developments and reacting to potential incidents than to solving structural problems.

3. The post-election phase

The announcement of the final election results usually also signals the start of the post-election period. This can sometimes be a relatively quiet phase but can at other times be a period of maximum distrust. This is especially the case when electoral campaigns have been fierce or when there has been a change of power (along with the loss of access to the benefits of power) and even more so when accusations of electoral fraud exist.

However, even when the electoral outcomes are generally accepted, parties will need time to get used to new political dispensations, new alliances, and new faces in government and opposition. Depending on the context, this period may last for up to a year after the elections. In some cases a change of political power will necessitate the selection and appointment of new government personnel. In addition, party strategies will need to be adjusted and new leaders and ministers will need to find their way around their ministries and get used to new responsibilities.

A facilitator may find that this phase is useful for scanning the landscape and gauging possible interest in starting a dialogue. At this time, the idea of dialogue may catch the parties' attention, as electoral events and potential weaknesses in the political system are still fresh on their minds. For parties it can also be a good time to evaluate jointly the func-

tioning of the electoral system itself, to reflect on recommendations from observation missions and building those into reform agendas, or to identify which issues of common concern they would like to address in the coming years.

On the other hand, starting a dialogue right after elections can mean that some parties are in a victory mood while others are healing their wounds. If one or more parties do not accept the election results facilitators can propose using the inter-party dialogue as an informal conflict resolution mechanism, alongside any official complaint mechanisms such as filing complaints in court. Parties are often in a process of internal reflection and may be preoccupied with adjusting to the new political dispensation and new power positions. In general, a dialogue after elections is better suited to drawing lessons from the conduct of elections and identifying structural reform issues.

Box 7.2.

Post-election dialogue: a common practice

'It should become common practice that there is in-country, post-election dialogue among international and domestic observer groups, electoral authorities and political actors to identify areas for reform efforts, consider potential international assistance for such reforms, and improve preparedness for the next elections. Subsequent electoral observation and revised recommendations can then form the basis for changes in assistance strategies to ensure that fundamental principles of electoral integrity are respected.'
Global Commission on Elections, Democracy and Security, *Deepening Democracy: A Strategy for Improving the Integrity of Elections Worldwide,* (September 2012), p. 9.

4. The consolidation phase
There is no clear moment that defines the transition from the post-election period to the consolidation phase. Instead, it is a gradual process dependent upon context. Generally one could say that the start of the consolidation period is the moment when parties are more 'settled' in their new positions and have had time to grow used to the new political reality.

Even though polarization in this period might still be high and the willingness to cooperate relatively low, the consolidation period is usually the time when structural problems in the political make-up of a society are still fresh in people's minds. This makes it an ideal time to follow up on evaluations of the political system. Therefore, the earlier in the consolidation phase the dialogue can address issues of reform, the better.

The consolidation phase is often seen as a potential window for reform. This is especially true in relatively stable countries, where the consolidation phase might last for two or three years. During this time, no major political power alternations are expected and there is greater potential for decisions on state reform and development policies. Parties also tend to be less in the public spotlight than during the pre-election phase and have more opportunity for internal reflection, and this mindset can lead to more manoeuvring space and a chance to take a longer-term perspective.

In some situations, however, changes (or the lack of change) in power structures may influence the willingness of parties to take part in dialogue. They may not be motivated if the dialogue is not expected to have an impact until far into the future and may prefer to stay put until a time that is closer to the next elections—in other words, until the beginning of the next pre-election phase.

The problem, of course, is that the closer one gets to the pre-election period, the higher the political stakes. This in turn makes some reforms more difficult to reach agreement on. Despite this reservation the consolidation phase is generally regarded as a period during which political parties will more likely succeed in introducing new policy and reform proposals.

7.7 The influence of the electoral cycle on political party dialogue
In general one could argue that when competition between parties is increasing, inter-party cooperation and dialogue are likely to decrease. A facilitator may wonder whether increased tensions in the lead-up to election day provide a justification for starting up a dialogue, or whether it should instead be postponed until after the elections.

At the same time, in situations where the pressure on all parties to win an election increases, the need for peaceful interaction between political adversaries also becomes an important way to avoid electoral misconduct or pre-election violence.

Two important factors that relate to dialogue timing are the dialogue's *internal workings* (which depend on sufficient inter-party trust and consensus building) and its *external outputs* (e.g. attempts to influence reforms). These two factors need to be in sync with each other in order for a dialogue to be successful. For instance, it is probably best not to discuss large reform issues just before elections, when the intensity of political competition is extremely high, but to put them on the agenda in the consolidation phase when these tensions tend to ease down.

Figure 7.2 illustrates the interrelationship between the possibility of influencing national reforms and policies, and the intensity of political competition and polarization. The graph also helps to show that dialogue fluctuations recur due to the repetitive nature of the electoral cycle. The implication is that, given time, many dialogues get a second chance (both at success and failure).

Figure 7.2.

The relationship between the intensity of political competition and the chance for dialogue to influence reform

— Chance for dialogue to influence reform/policies   — Intensity of political competition/polarization
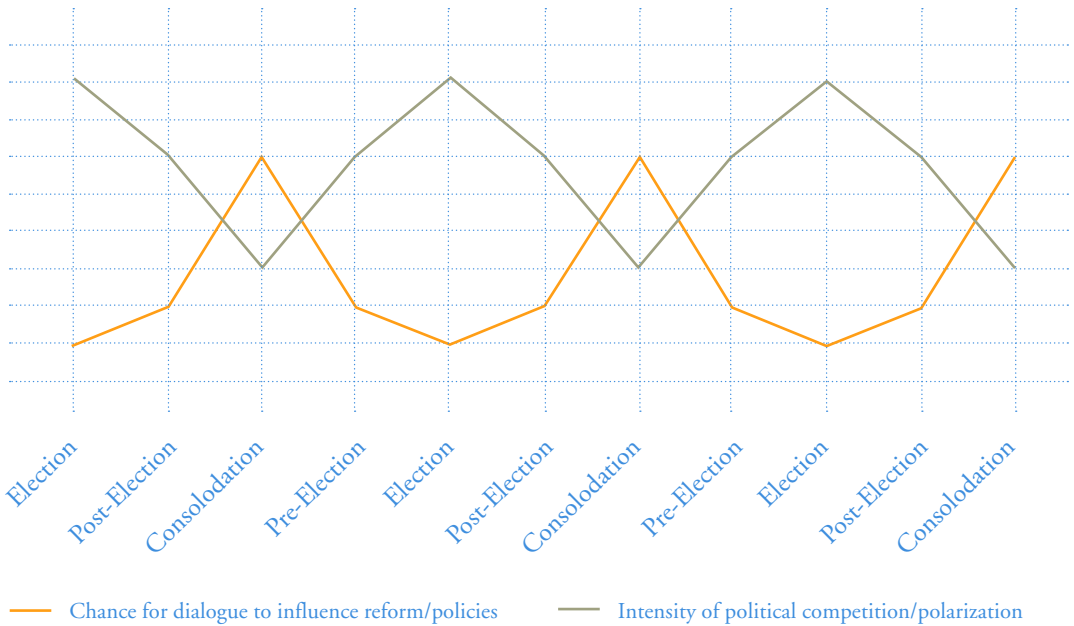
For a facilitator this therefore means that certain recurring features which can be expected and anticipated should be taken into account in the planning and preparation processes. Before the beginning of each phase, facilitators should try to determine what reform issues will come up at what stage, and how a dialogue can affect the parties' mindsets. This has the potential to lower distrust in periods when their mindsets are traditionally more polarized, such as during elections.

The role of a facilitator is to make sure that the external reform needs and the internal functioning of the dialogue match each other as much as possible. If the facilitator believes that the gap between these needs and functions is too large, it will become necessary to find other ways for the parties to deal with the issues, perhaps even outside of the dialogue platform.

7.8 Political parties' own time-related processes
Even though the electoral cycle is among the more important external processes that a political party can focus its attention on, political parties also go through other time-bound processes. One other example of a time-related process is the constitutional reform process, which follows its own life cycle and often depends on legal time limits that can, in turn, impose strict deadlines on a dialogue's outcomes.

Intra-party processes also influence the parties' own internal behaviour and their interactions in a dialogue. For example, annual party congresses—during which a party answers to its members regarding its political and policy choices of the past year, presents its goals for the next year, reports on its financial accounts and sometimes elects a new leadership—can greatly influence a party's views or attitudes in a dialogue platform.

These intra-party events may also influence the dialogue because congresses are usually a time-consuming affair for some in the party executive committee, leaving less time to focus on alternative issues, such as a dialogue. Further, a party congress is the place where political leaders shape and defend their political identities, and this may require a temporary change in political interactions with other parties.

7.9 Timing and established dialogue platforms
There are a number of challenges involved in trying to start up a dialogue at an appropriate time during the election cycle, and similar opportunities and risks will apply to already established dialogue platforms. For example, during the election phase party campaigns will remain fierce, and party leaders will generally be more interested in running an election campaign than in taking part in a dialogue process.

At the same time, the recurring nature of the electoral cycle allows established dialogue platforms gradually to build and increase trust. When parties to a dialogue have experienced the process of going through the different phases (or power alternations) before, they are better able to deal effectively with problems in a new electoral cycle.

This logic applies in both forward-looking and retroactive senses. If parties know that a dialogue previously dealt effectively with electoral issues, they will use the dialogue more easily in future processes. Perhaps more importantly, parties will be less likely to abuse or discard the dialogue if they know that they will need each other at later stages in the electoral cycle.

The extreme fluctuations illustrated in figure 7.2 are influenced by many factors, including changes in the party system over time. However, because of the repetitive nature of a dialogue, the fluctuations are likely to decrease as the dialogue platform goes through its life cycles, exhibiting lower peaks and more shallow lows.

7.10 Dialogue with electoral management bodies
In many countries, EMBs liaise with political parties on election- and electoral reform-related topics through multiparty dialogue mechanisms. These kinds of dialogues are often referred to as inter-party liaison committees. In some contexts, EMBs are in fact important initiators of inter-party dialogue platforms (although usually only on reforms related to their own mandates). For facilitators, it is important to understand to what extent parties are already engaging with an EMB and how these relations might be further improved.

The scope for cooperation between EMBs and political parties depends on the level of development of the relationship, as well as the specific phase in the electoral cycle (International IDEA 2006: 16). For example, in terms of taking an active role in reaching out to parties, an EMB is likely to be more active in the elections phase and less active in the consolidation phase of the electoral cycle. Cooperation between EMBs and parties could occur based on practice but might also be included in electoral legislation or the EMB's mandate.[12]

Topics of discussion in meetings can focus on both electoral reforms that relate to the EMB's mandate and trust in the electoral process. In terms of electoral reforms, discussions might cover a wide variety of issues related to election management, including electoral calendars, voter registration preparations, requirements for nomination of candidates, guidelines and codes of conduct for political parties, nomination processes, complaint procedures and the announcement of the results.[13]

Political parties' engagement with EMBs can also help eradicate mistrust and avoid accusations between political parties regarding the election. As such it can play a positive role in mitigating tensions on issues that could potentially spark election-related violence, like inadequate electoral rules, problematic parties, candidates or voter registration, unequal media access or violent actions, problematic election day operations or vote counting, or disputes over the verification of election results (International IDEA 2012a).

In some contexts, however, there is little cooperation between an EMB and political parties, for instance because an EMB may wish to safeguard its independence, or the political parties may lack faith in its impartial role and functioning. It is furthermore important to realize that dialogue on general reforms usually goes beyond the EMB's mandate.

As a facilitator it is also good to bear in mind that an EMB can be a political player with its own interests and point of view. How an EMB's interests are manifested in the political system depends on the country context, the electoral management body model used and the composition of the EMB. Parties can choose a government model, an independent mod-

el and a mixed model. Consequently, in some countries the EMB is made up of government officials and technocrats, while in others it is composed of a mixture of political party nominees (multiparty-based) or of individuals appointed on the basis of their professional standing (expert-based) (International IDEA 2006, chapter 4).

This means that EMBs are not automatically impartial dialogue participants, especially in cases where an EMB is more associated with or linked to one particular party (e.g. the main government party) or its members are appointed by the president. In these cases there is often a need to separate the EMB–political party dialogue from the political party dialogue.

In cases where a political party dialogue deals with election-related issues, the role of the facilitator of that dialogue is to make sure that both forums are well coordinated.

Box 7.3.

Cooperation between parties and the electoral management body in Nepal

The Election Commission of Nepal (ECN) works intensely and closely with political parties in the areas of political development, electoral policies and technical preparations. In Nepal, in practice, the ECN initiates development of policies and draft regulations regarding elections and political parties. During this process, it invites consultation with representatives of these political parties at various stages to generate ideas, gain feedback on the draft, and discuss draft policies, legislation and procedures. Generally, the following policies, procedures and drafts are developed in close consultation with the political parties:

• electoral policies;
• legislation governing elections and their management;
• rules, regulations and procedures for the conduct of the elections;
• identification of polling locations and their management;
• development of a code of conduct;
• overall procedures to manage the elections;
• the introduction of new technologies in electoral processes; and
• reviews of the security situation involving political parties in the creation of an enabling security environment.

At the completion of the election cycle, a bottom-up
review process is conducted, involving political parties,
election observers, electoral staff, security officials and civil
society members. This review then makes recommenda-
tions for future reform.
Bhojraj Pokharel
Former Chief Election Commissioner, Nepal[14]

Findings
- During each stage of the electoral cycle, political
  parties encounter different opportunities and
  risks, both of which can influence a successful
  dialogue.
- The consolidation phase can be used to
  strengthen the dialogue's internal workings and
  its political reform outputs ahead of moments of
  political polarization, such as elections.
- The recurring nature of the electoral cycle also
  gives established dialogue platforms the oppor-
  tunity gradually to build and increase trust.
- Political parties go through many other internal
  and external time-bound processes that also
  need to be taken into account.

Recommendations
- Assess the timing of the dialogue in relation to a
  country's electoral cycle.
- Take note of the key characteristics of each
  phase of the cycle, including the parties' chang-
  ing mindsets, and how these pose risks or op-
  portunities.
- Anticipate upcoming intra-party processes
  such as leadership elections, and assess their
  influence on the parties' internal behaviours and
  interactions in a dialogue.
- Ensure coordination with the EMB throughout the
  electoral cycle.

Chapter 8: Designing a dialogue's organizational structure

When parties agree to get together on a structural basis, they will also have to start thinking about how best to organize their interactions and relations. The type of dialogue structure that is chosen can greatly influence the relationships between the political parties and how the participants function in the dialogue platform.

The starting assumption is that effective dialogue can be organized very informally, and does not necessarily require formal or weighty structures.

Also, and even though it is important to think about the dialogue design before beginning the dialogue, many facilitators have experienced that it is very difficult to create a finished design in the initial phases. Many design elements will emerge in the course of the dialogue. For example, how formal or informal the dialogue is going to be will probably emerge once it is under way.

Nevertheless, using an organizational structure that suits the dialogue's purposes, the stage at which the dialogue finds itself and the types of participants involved allows parties to focus on the dialogue agenda and create clarity as to who does what, and equips parties better for joint decision making and consensus building.

In contrast, poor organizational design and structure can lead to confusion about roles and responsibilities and vague decision-making procedures, and distract the attention of party participants from the actual dialogue process. In a worst-case scenario it can even exacerbate tensions between political parties. An overarching principle when designing an organizational structure for dialogue purposes is to ensure that it supports the dialogue process and goals.

In view of these two diverging outcomes the main question for parties and facilitators remains: what organizational structure to use? Unfortunately there is no simple answer to this question. A wide variety of political party dialogue structures exist, from very informal, loosely organized platforms to formal, highly institutionalized party trusts or foundations.

8.1 Informal versus institutionalized platforms

Facilitators can assist parties in thinking about the relative advantages of informal and institutionalized dialogue platforms. Keeping the dialogue informal requires less commitment, entails less pressure to achieve results, and brings with it fewer management and financial responsibilities. In contrast, making a dialogue more institutionalized shows greater inter-party trust, and provides opportunities to hire staff or carry out joint fundraising for party activities.

Institutionalized dialogue platforms are also usually more focused on long-term goals. Their governance structures (e.g. a board made up of political parties and a secretariat for support functions) and financial foundations enable them to be sustainable over a longer period. An institutionalized platform also implies that the structure can potentially be legally owned, strategically governed and financially sustained by the parties themselves.

The sustainability of this type of structure depends on the degree of party ownership, as well as other factors such as the availability of financial resources or regulatory provisions.

Kenya's multiparty platforms

Kenya is an example of a country where multiple dialogue platforms use different structures and approaches. The inter-party dialogue in Kenya between the various political parties, the Registrar of Political Parties and the Electoral Commission began as a very informal process but became institutionalized as the Political Parties Liaison Committee (PPLC). During the discussion on the enactment of the Political Parties Act and the Elections Act, the process of dialogue was formalized in both the Political Parties Act and the Elections Act. Specifically, section 38 of Kenya's Political Parties Act (2011) makes a provision for the PPLC:

Article 38—Establishment of Political Parties Liaison Committee.
- There is established a Political Parties Liaison Committee.
- The Political Parties Liaison Committee shall be established at the national and county levels.
- The principal function of the Political Parties Liaison Committee is to provide a platform for dialogue between the Registrar, Commission and political parties.
- The Political Parties Liaison Committee shall perform such other functions as may be prescribed by the Registrar.

Before the establishment of the PPLC, a number of Kenyan parties had already set up another interparty platform, the Centre for Multiparty Democracy (CMD-K). CMD-K is a body founded by political parties in Kenya, which are also its members, and registered as a trust in early 2004. Its mission is to facilitate the growth of multiparty democracy through the capacity building of member political parties in Kenya, while also acting as a platform for dialogue and the building of consensus on important national issues amongst political parties.[15]

These examples from Kenya show that, depending on their goal, political parties can benefit from using more than one option for institutionalizing a dialogue process. In the case of Kenya, the actors involved vary importantly between the two dialogues, with some discussions being best addressed in a setting co-owned by the Electoral Commission and all registered parties, while others are handled more effectively within a more select group of only political parties. The following sections highlight some choices that will need to be made by dialogue participants and facilitators, as well as general considerations to keep in mind when designing the structure of a political party dialogue process.

Choosing between short- and long-term commitments

Whether the dialogue is meant to be a one off event or a longer-term process makes a world of difference for the dialogue platform set-up. Parties' commitment to a long-term dialogue process can open the door to developing stronger organizational ties, but when the focus of the dialogue is on a specific achievement within a certain period of time it may be easier to choose a more temporary, informal set-up.

Choosing the right option depends on the political context and rationale behind the dialogue. In Nepal, for example, the main parties came together to try to build consensus around a new constitution. This meant that the adoption of a constitution was the desired end point of that particular inter-party dialogue process. With that time frame and purpose in mind, designing a formal, permanent dialogue structure was unnecessary. Therefore, a more informal organizational set-up was chosen, consisting of an external secretariat that was in charge of prepar-

ing, organizing and following up a series of dialogue sessions on behalf of the main political parties.

In some cases the parties' choices can be influenced by the availability of external funding. For instance, some organizations seek to build a long-term engagement with the parties in a country and guarantee funds for a number of years, while other party assistance providers may prefer to operate with a more short-term focus and stay 'light and agile' by not committing support beyond a certain date.

Choosing between minimum and maximum party ownership

The level of party ownership has a great impact on the shape of the structure. With regard to the design process itself, all parties need to feel ready to make a joint commitment, and not feel forced to make choices or take up responsibilities they are not comfortable with.

The highest level of party ownership can imply that an external facilitator is not (or no longer) needed. In these cases parties may prefer to take responsibility for organizing a dialogue process themselves, for example, through informal sessions on some burning issues. If the preferred route is institutionalization but this process takes off too fast, it can become counterproductive in the end, as expectations can run too high without being backed sufficiently by the required political commitment.

As a facilitator it is important to give political parties time to think through carefully the kind of structure they prefer, as well as the pros and cons of keeping it informal or working towards a more institutionalized structure. The challenge is to keep the institutional developments in sync with such issues as political commitment, the capacities and availability of parties and individual politicians to make the structure function, and funding opportunities.

Another element of party ownership lies in the extent to which parties wish to engage themselves in the day-to-day functioning and management of the organizational structure. This kind of party ownership comes with a number of responsibilities, and parties can choose between minimum and maximum approaches.

In a minimum approach parties will choose to steer away from taking up joint organizational responsibilities. One reason for doing so may be that joint party ownership can easily place too great an emphasis on managerial rather than substantive issues and, in the worst case, increase the chance of inter-party disputes. In this scenario parties might prefer to ask an external organization to deal with the day-to-day operational issues.

In other cases parties may wish to hold the management in their own hands, for instance to avoid an outsider becoming the initiator or driver of the dialogue process. When parties choose maximum ownership, they also need to accept complete responsibility and accountability for what happens within the organization, especially when it comes to issues such as financial management or the hiring of staff. This means that the parties themselves will need to agree on clear rules and procedures, establishing the necessary governing bodies and structures, and ensuring sufficient and sustainable financial resources and oversight.

Choosing between pure dialogue and additional capacity building

The structure is also dependent on the type of functions the parties wish the organization to serve. In some contexts, parties may use a restricted approach and focus the use of their platform on the dialogue alone. In other cases, parties may want to use the platform for purposes that go beyond dialogue, like joint capacity building or training programmes, exchange visits, seminars or public events.

While political party dialogue processes and party capacity-building programmes can be regarded as two distinct activities in which political parties are engaged, in practice they are often linked (see e.g. Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (NIMD) 2010). For example, when parties are in charge of a training programme in a multiparty setting, they may use dialogue as a way to reach consensus on the type of activities they feel are needed, or to agree on an annual activity plan. In this case the inter-party dialogue is primarily meant to support the capacity-building programme.

In other cases it works the other way around: capacity-building programmes can be used to support a parties' dialogue process, for instance when a political party dialogue is focused on revising the political party finance regulations, and parties feel that they need to strengthen their own knowledge in this area through training or an exchange visit to other countries.

The consequence of using one organizational structure for different functions means that it usually comes with a larger amount of external funds, more management responsibilities and the establishment of specific bodies like party programme boards, and financial oversight or audit committees. Ideally, the increase in joint responsibilities strengthens the inter-party cooperation. However, it can also have a bearing on the flexibility of dialogue platforms, and may in some cases take attention away from the substantial (reform) agenda of the dialogue process.

Therefore, when combining the goal of party capacity building with that of inter-party dialogue, facilitators should carefully balance the two objectives.

Box 8.2.

Centres for multiparty democracy

'For NIMD, the Centres for Multiparty Democracy are instrumental for their approach to capacity development, so that the institutionalization of the CMDs has become an objective in itself. From the MoUs [memorandums of understanding], the aim of capacity development is to strengthen each CMD to become "a credible and autonomous institute, leading on policy influencing and transformational reform to deepen democracy and to strengthen its political party landscape". The CMDs are considered unique institutions in the sector of democracy support. They are managed by the leadership of political parties, with professional staff who facilitate programme implementation and support consensus oriented dialogue between governing and opposition parties on political reform challenges/agendas.'
Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (NIMD), 'Evaluation of Dutch Support to Capacity Development: The Case of the Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (NIMD)', IOB Evaluation no. 331, 2010, p. 74, available at: <http://www.nimd.org/document/2368/evaluation-of-dutch-support-to-capacity-development>

Financial management choices

Establishing an inter-party dialogue platform can be expensive. Even when parties choose to engage in dialogue through a very informal set-up, some money will be needed to pay for support staff, meeting venues, dinner, transport and other logistical costs. These financial resources can come from various sources. Costs might be paid by the political parties themselves, covered by government funds, or paid by donors.

When political parties have access to public funding, it is reasonable in some cases to ask each party to contribute to the organizational costs and activities of the dialogue process. Such contributions are a sign of political will and independence, and can help to ensure the sustainability of the platform in case external funding dries up.

In cases where no public or party funds are available and donor money is used, the risk of donor dependency needs to be taken into account. Even though external funds are often a good incentive for a dialogue platform's professional functioning, a balance has to be found in terms of financial ownership in order to ensure locally driven decisions.

Box 8.3.

External support to political party dialogue

In the past two decades, democracy assistance has become a significant feature in the work of many international aid agencies, particularly since what has become known as the 'third wave' of democratization, which took place in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

This development has gone hand in hand with increased donor support for political parties, sometimes through traditional training and technical assistance programmes, and over the past decade progressively through party system aid. The latter is what Thomas Carothers calls a method to 'foster changes in all of the parties in a country at once, via modifications to the underlying legal and financial frameworks in which parties are anchored, or changes in how the parties relate to and work with each other' (Carothers 2008:12). This method includes supporting inter-party dialogue platforms.

Organizations that support such dialogue platforms financially or technically include all types of political party assistance providers, including (but not limited to):

- Political party foundations and institutes, such as the German and Swedish political party foundations, the International Republican Institute (IRI), NDI or NIMD;
- National NGOs and institutes, such as the Institute for Economic Affairs (IEA) in Ghana or Transparencia in Peru;
- International NGOs, such as the Oslo Center for Peace and Human Rights or the Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa (EISA);
- Multilateral organizations, such as United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE/ODIHR), or International IDEA;
- Government agencies, such as the UK Department for International Development (DFID), the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) or Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ).

Moreover, new multiparty foundations continue to be established that engage in this area, such as the Danish Institute for Parties and Democracy (DIPD).

Financial resource management usually requires structures that safeguard sufficient checks and balances. It may therefore be worthwhile to consider leaving the day-to-day management of a dialogue programme to independent staff and general guidance and supervision to an inter-party board. Making use of financial resources can also create risks for the dialogue platform. This is important to realize as even allegations of misuse of funds can compromise the organization, the dialogue, and consequently the reputation of all political parties.

In all cases, the use of funds has to be sufficiently accounted for through a system of checks and balances and tools, including financial audits. Sound financial management and monitoring and evaluation systems help parties to meet these demands and learn from wrongdoings and best practices. This holds particularly true for situations where the political parties' dialogue forum is also linked to tech-

nical assistance or capacity-building programmes supported by financial donors. In these cases the amount of funds and the pressure to account for them tend to be higher.

'Three tips from Malawi:
I   *Make sure you have longer-term funding to sustain the dialogue so it can be extended beyond the current regime;*
II *Create a dialogue constitution in order to avoid needless stalemates and endless discussions over the modalities of dialogue and decision-making; and*
III *Arrange for political parties to put some of their own money in the dialogue to show commitment and ensure sustainability when donors disappear.'*
Levison Ganiza
MAFUNDE party, Malawi

Developing a professional secretariat

An impartial, professional dialogue secretariat from which a dialogue facilitator operates can help safeguard the impartiality of the political dialogue platform and organization. One advantage of creating a professional secretariat is that, in addition to one or more dialogue facilitators, it usually includes financial personnel and logistical and administrative staff.

Such a secretariat has greater capacity to facilitate the inter-party dialogue, call meetings, ensure transparent and timely communication between parties, maintain meeting records and monitor follow-up. A secretariat supports parties technically, logistically and financially in implementing dialogue outcomes. Having a secretariat can also make it easier to implement capacity-building programmes and deal with the management of larger amounts of funds.

Box 8.4.

The role of the CMD-Kenya secretariat

'CMD–Kenya has established its own secretariat. This secretariat is given professional jurisdiction over day-to-day affairs and is responsible for the implementation of policies and programmes. It also evaluates and accounts for programmes and resources used, both to those parties within CMD–K and to donors. It serves as a resource and knowledge centre on democracy and politics for both political parties and society as a whole. The secretariat is

led by an executive director, who has strong roots and a relevant network in civil society and who represents the non-political face of CMD–K to the outside world.' Extract from Speijcken, Renée, 'Strengthening the Roles of Political Parties in Public Accountability: A Case Study of a New Approach in Political Party Assistance in Kenya', 2012.[16]

The relation between the political parties (or board) and the secretariat staff does require proper clarification to avoid tensions later on.

In setting up a professional secretariat, parties generally have two options. First, political parties can decide to establish the secretariat themselves, making it formally accountable to the parties only (as in the case of CMD-K). Second, political parties can delegate a number of tasks to an outside organization over which they have no legal authority (as in the case of IEA/GPPP).

While the first option can be considered a strong sign of party ownership of the dialogue platform, it also comes with extra managerial responsibilities for the parties. These duties may include management of personnel and the planning, implementation and monitoring of activities, as well as overall financial and administrative oversight and accountability. The secretariat's functioning will also depend largely on the parties' degree of commitment, capacities and inter-party trust.

Under the second option, parties ask an existing outside organization (e.g. an NGO, think tank or academic institution) to function as the secretariat of the political party dialogue platform. These kinds of organizations usually have structures in place that make it easy to get started and entail less risk for the parties (for instance in case of accusations of mismanagement of funds). The disadvantage, obviously, is that parties may feel they depend on an external actor and are therefore dependent in their decision making, which at times might affect their commitment and sense of co-ownership of the dialogue platform.

A secretariat typically includes a facilitator (sometimes called a director), a finance manager and a person who provides administrative and logistical support. Depending on the scope and ambition

of the dialogue platform, the secretariat can be expanded to include thematic programme officers, researchers on relevant dialogue topics, project accountants, a secretary or conference coordinators. While staff members may sometimes have political party connections, in order to safeguard the secretariat's impartiality it is often preferred to employ non-aligned staff, albeit with a strong understanding of the political climate.

A secretariat can also play an important role in identifying national or international experts, inviting them for presentations on comparative cases or hiring them to undertake analysis or make recommendations in specific areas. Making experts part of the secretariat is often successful but can also create internal tensions. Depending on the context, parties may feel less free to disagree with what is being proposed by an in-house as opposed to an outside expert.

8.2 Governing bodies for political party dialogue processes

Political party dialogue mechanisms come in a variety of shapes and forms. The basic choices and considerations discussed in the preceding sections inform the parties' rationale for creating a certain organizational structure around their dialogue.

In some situations parties may also opt to jointly establish an official governance structure for the steering and oversight of a dialogue process. They may do so for a number of reasons. Governing bodies can provide guidance and leadership to the secretariat and any other subordinate bodies, leaving parties to drive the dialogue and take care of the more general agenda.

Governing bodies will also have a duty to bring plans and decisions to the parties, oversee the implementation of agreements, and become involved in resolving conflicts between lower-level bodies. Further, certain types of governing body may be considered mandatory from a legal point of view. For instance, when dialogue activities involve money a party foundation or NGO structure may be the only legal way to ensure that parties receive and manage these funds ethically.

While establishing governance structures is often important and in some contexts quite important, one risk is that the parties' focus gradually shifts from the dialogue agenda to management and administration issues. For instance, when a party board meeting focuses on approving annual plans or budgets this will most likely lead to very different inter-party dynamics and outcomes, compared to meetings focused on exchanging views about sensitive political reform measures.

A facilitator can help in making this distinction between governance and substantial matters by placing them under separate points on the agenda, or by considering the governance and dialogue functions as separate processes within the institution. In practice this can mean organizing separate meetings with distinct objectives, different party participants and varying procedures (e.g. decision making by voting when dealing with operational issues and by consensus when it comes to reform proposals).

With this note of caution in mind, and mostly based on the experiences of the NIMD-supported dialogue platforms, this section describes a number of party-driven governance bodies established as part of a political party institution.

Political party boards

A political party board ('the board') is usually established as the principal decision- and policy-making organ of the institution (depending on the context, other names such as 'party council' or 'board of trustees' may be used). Through the board, parties jointly oversee the activities of the organization. The board's activities are determined by the powers, duties, and responsibilities delegated to it or conferred on it by the political parties themselves.

The legal responsibilities of the board and its members vary according to the nature of the organization, or the jurisdiction within which it operates. Typical duties of a board include governing the institution, designing the organization strategy and discussing the broader dialogue agenda. The board may also oversee an executive board and other bodies; ensure sustainable financial resources; approve annual budgets; report to external funders; and appoint key staff.

A board typically meets around four to six times a year and its membership can include secretaries general, party presidents, or both, usually because only the party leadership has a mandate to take and enforce decisions. However, these high-level party officials do not always have time to take part in all meetings, and may delegate some of their responsibilities to selected party representatives.

Dialogue with top-level leaders can bring big gains but is also a big risk: if things go wrong, there is no possibility to refer problems to a higher level of authority. Second-tier leaders need to be able to persuade their leadership, as the Nepal case study shows (see Appendix 1), but they can also float and explore things with each other in a way that top leaders usually cannot, which can bring more flexibility. Having board members formally nominated, for example by the party's national executive committee, can guarantee a basic level of legitimacy and representation.

While delegation is understandable, the top leadership needs to be continuously engaged in the forum in order to guarantee true party ownership, if not on the board then by other means, for instance through irregular summits. A strong party board is ideally composed of members who are respected in the political party structures but also have sufficient autonomy to make their own decisions in times of crisis.[17]

In some cases, a board might include only one representative per party, while in other cases more than one representative has a seat at the table. In dialogue processes involving many parties, one person per party may be enough to fill a big meeting room, while in countries with only a few political parties more party representatives would be welcome.

Inviting more than one party representative enhances that party's presence when some participants are unavailable. It also better reflects party factions, allows for diversity and increases parties' institutional involvement. A general lesson is that party leaders should always be aware of and engaged with any organizational structure.

Executive boards or steering committees

In addition to a political party board, other bodies can be created to support or advise the board or function as an appeal mechanism in the event of disagreements. An executive board or steering committee can be made responsible for the day-to-day management and administration of the inter-party platform as a whole. Such a body tends to function as the coordinating arm of the political party board (supported by a secretariat), and is supposed to ensure the actual formulation of annual plans and programmes, and be in charge of the implementation and regular monitoring of the decisions and policies made by the political party board. The executive board can be composed of members of the political party board and usually includes a number of designated officials including a chairperson. A secretariat, often made up of positions such as a financial administrator, a programme manager, a treasurer and a secretary, can function as a support structure.

Box 8.5.

The CMD-Kenya Board structure

'Apart from the professional staff of the secretariat, CMD-K consists of an Oversight Board (OB) and the General Meeting (GM), both made up of party members. The board is the principal policymaking organ of CMD-K. It meets at least four times per year. Each party appoints two representatives, preferably from a senior level (Secretary General or similar) to give CMD-K a good link to the party leadership. Board members elect a chair for one year. The chair also serves as the main political representative of CMD-K to the outside world. Several committees, of which the Steering Committee is the most important, assist the Board. The GM is the supreme decision-making organ of CMD-K with regard to annual and strategic plans and budgets. It meets once a year and consists of five delegates per member party. Parties can choose whoever they deem fit to represent them.'

Extract from International IDEA paper by Renee Speijcken, 'Strengthening the Roles of Political Parties in Public Accountability: A Case Study of a New Approach in Political Party Assistance in Kenya', 2012

Summits

A summit can be organized in order to reflect the highest level of decision making and to allow for governance oversight. It can be placed above the board to allow for escalation in case of disagreements between the parties' dialogue delegates when the board cannot reach agreement. A summit usually takes place once or twice a year, and can function as the ultimate governing body when necessary. It should ideally be composed of party secretaries general and party presidents, who would come together to discuss the strategic direction of the inter-party platform and the dialogue process it is meant to support.

Advisory councils and councils of elders

An advisory council or council of elders can be composed of senior and respected party members whose role is to advise the parties on substantive as well as organizational issues, or to mediate in cases where disputes arise. Their experience and knowledge base can help the board (or summit) set the tone for big-picture decision making, and provide a broader perspective. This is especially true when the advisory council is composed of trusted former party leaders with experience of other inter-party dialogue processes.

Technical committees

Technical committees can be established to address specialist issues, whether political or more operational in nature. These committees can help to set the board agenda in a particular field. For example, if parties wish to know more about a specific topic (e.g. federalism), the details of a certain legal provision or the appropriate way to respond to audits, a temporary or permanent technical committee can give input during board meetings on these issues. External experts can also assist such committees.

8.3   **Two examples of organizational charts for dialogue structures**

An organizational chart can help political parties visualize how they want to relate to each other, as well as to a facilitator. The chart should explain how each party fits into the hierarchy of decision making and authority, show the different organization bodies and the different levels of the dialogue platform, and identify who is represented where on behalf of the

party. The type of participants identified in such a chart depends on the level in the dialogue structure that is gathering, the size and internal organization of each party, and the individual capacities of participants. The facilitator can accompany parties in designing an organizational chart. This section outlines two examples of organizational structures used in practice.

The designs of the dialogues studied were usually ex-post, rather than ex-ante, descriptions, while in other cases the design was developed in the early stages of a dialogue but turned out to function differently in practice. Still, it is useful to look at two examples of basic organizational charts of existing party dialogue structures.

The Bolivian Foundation for Multiparty Democracy
The Bolivian Foundation for Multiparty Democracy

(Fundación Boliviana para la Democracia Multi-partidaria, fBDM) is a foundation composed of individuals from almost all Bolivian parties and the academic world (see the case study on Bolivia in Appendix 1). Its organizational structure comprises a General Assembly and a *directorio* (directorate or board).[18]

The directorate is responsible for wider policy decisions and for control and approval of the actions of the executive director, who is responsible for policy implementation and daily business. The executive director is assisted by up to 20 staff members, most of whom are based in La Paz (four staff members are based in fBDM's branch office in Santa Cruz).

While some institutional changes have been made since mid-2004, the core structure remains the same (see figure 8.1).

Figure 8.1.

Basic organizational chart of the Bolivian Foundation for Multiparty Democracy

Fundación Boliviana para la Democracia Multipartidaria	Board	
Offices	fBDM Headquarters in La Paz	fBDM branch office in Santa Cruz
Programmes	Programme implementation units	Programme implementation units
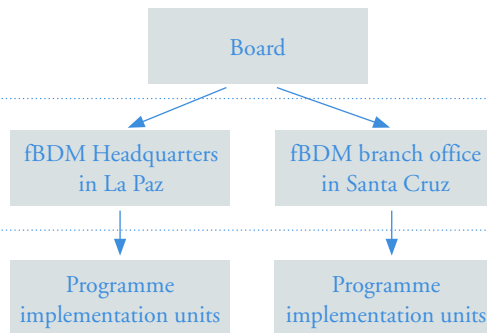
Uganda's Inter Party Organisation for Dialogue (IPOD)
The NIMD-facilitated Inter Party Organisation for Dialogue (IPOD) provides a neutral platform through which Uganda's parliamentary parties can gain a better understanding of each other's positions and resolve disputes peacefully (see the case study on Uganda in Appendix 1).[19]

According to IPOD's MoU, it is the IPOD Secretariat that manages the organization's day-to-day affairs,

including its administration. This entails managing the IPOD programmes, developing annual work plans and budgets, providing secretarial services and reporting to the Council of Secretaries General.

The Council of Secretaries General provides strategic and financial oversight, oversees the annual programme development process, and is responsible for ensuring broad participation from party members and the anchoring of the IPOD dialogue within the parties.

The Council is also in charge of organizing the IPOD Summit, appointing the administrator and other secretariat staff and forming technical committees. The Summit, which is composed of the leaderships of the member parties, defines policy, provides political guidance and approves annual budgets and programmes. IPOD's organizational structure as per the MoU is outlined in figure 8.2.

Figure 8.2.

Basic organizational chart of the Inter Party Organisation for Dialogue (IPOD)

Composed of the heads of the member parties (presidents or chairpersons) or his/her alternate. The Chair of the Summit rotates between member parties on a quarterly basis in alphabetical order. Quorum is one member of each party.

Summit

Composed of SGs of member parties plus an additional two members from each party—to be nominated by the parties themselves. Each party delegation will be led by its S-G. Rotating Chair. Quorum shall consist of at least one member from each member party.

Council of Secretaries General

Composed of an Administrator (acts as chief executive of Secretariat), and necessary ancillary staff approved by Council in line with IPOD budget). The Administrator is a professional appointed by the Council and an ex-officio member of both Summit and Council.

Secretariat
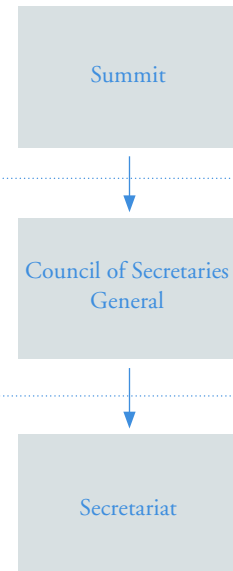
8.4   Replicating structures at the local level

Expanding the dialogue to other levels within the party (e.g. by initiating inter-party dialogue mechanisms at the provincial or local level) can further institutionalize the dialogue and deepen inter-party relations. In addition, expanding the dialogue means that responsibility for keeping up good relations between political parties is shared.

Creating more layers of political party interaction may also make the inter-party dialogue more immune to sudden tensions and fluctuations in political party relations. In situations where relations at the national level are temporarily distorted, political party dialogue at the local level may continue.

This was the case in Bolivia in 2012, when political party dialogue at the national level had all but come to a halt, while continuing to take place at the regional level in Santa Cruz. This was partly because the balance of political power (i.e. seats in parliament) between these two levels was different, with the majority party more dominant at the national level.

Local political party dialogue can be very useful during state restructuring and decentralization processes. Just like dialogues at the national level, local or sub-national structures can vary, depending on the context. While the party power balance and issues for discussion at the local context may be very different from those at the national level, it is important to ensure that both structures are linked.

Ideally, the party leadership should remain informed of and involved in local-level discussions in order

to ensure full party ownership. Similarly, local party branches should be updated on progress with regard to national-level dialogue processes so that they can contribute and so that both discussions can feed into each other. As discussed in chapter 12, this can be achieved through internal party preparation and dialogue.

8.5 The changing nature of organizational structures

For purposes of ensuring the internal power equilibrium, it is important to make clear agreements about the form of the organizational body and the role and responsibilities at each level. This will help to avoid time-consuming meetings over who is responsible for what tasks and prevent internal fighting. A body's mandate can be specified through an MoU or else embedded in a constitution.

However, it is important to keep in mind that a constitution or MoU should maintain a balance between strong and functional agreements, and have the flexibility to be adapted to changing circumstances when needed. Timing is also crucial: sometimes a focus on formalizing or legalizing structures comes too early and destroys the momentum for dialogue, while at other times it may come too late, creating a lack of problem-solving capacity.

Managing and deciding on everything that involves an organization such as a political foundation is an ambitious undertaking, especially in multiparty or polarized contexts where political parties spend most of their time competing against each other. If done well it is a major achievement.

However, both parties and facilitators should also remain aware of the possibility that the cooperation structure may not work or else show signs of collapse, for instance because of disagreement over organizational issues or diminishing commitment to the dialogue process.

In practical terms this means that an organizational structure should be as simple and functional as possible, and remain flexible. The structure should reflect the stage at which the dialogue finds itself, the level of trust between the participating parties, and the purposes of the dialogue.

The structure of a dialogue forum can change over time, shifting from informality to formality and back again. While this can be a practical burden, and too much flexibility may distract parties from focusing on the important issues, it is also a part of the political reality in which party relations fluctuate.

As a result, parties may have to revisit their organizational structures every now and then, in order to make sure that the dialogue does not get trapped in a static, rigid structure but rather has sufficient space to adjust itself to circumstance and continue to work well.

Findings
- When designing an organizational structure, parties will need to decide on the level of institutionalization.
- Parties can choose between short- and long-term commitments, minimum or maximum party ownership, pure dialogue and additional capacity building, or between different financial management responsibilities.
- Key organizational bodies tend to include governance bodies (e.g. a board) and a professional secretariat.
- An impartial, professional secretariat can help safeguard the impartiality of the political dialogue platform and organization.
- Governing bodies can include a party board, an executive board or steering committee, a summit, an advisory council and technical committees.
- Local structures can be similar to or very different from national structures and can help to further institutionalize the inter-party dialogue.

Recommendations
- Present and discuss the different options for organization design with the political parties individually and collectively.
- Ensure that the organizational structure is as simple, functional and flexible as possible so that the governance structures facilitate and do not overtake the actual dialogue function.
- Develop an organizational chart to help political parties envisage how they want to relate to each other, as well as to a facilitator.

Chapter 9: The rules of the dialogue game

In any dialogue context, setting ground rules for how political parties conduct themselves is an important step in creating an environment in which participants feel safe and comfortable. Political parties are likely to gain more faith and confidence in the process if they know in advance what kind of rules will govern their inter-party relations during the dialogue process, for instance on what to do if conflicts arise or if decisions need to be made. Establishing the rules of the game at the start can help to lessen tensions in the end, particularly in highly polarized contexts.

Each dialogue space has its own structure, logic and complexities, and will therefore need its own behavioural rules, procedures and guiding principles. These internal 'rules of the game' may be easy to sum up in theory, but are in practice only useful when mutually agreed upon and respected by all parties. Regulating for the sake of regulating can even be counterproductive. Over-regulating a dialogue platform, in contrast, can lead to arguments over the interpretation of different rules, or cause frictions that will take away the parties' attention from the dialogue.

Once parties agree upon both ground rules and behaviour, this can support them in developing a dialogue culture where parties mutually respect each other, despite their inherent differences and points of view. Ground rules can be useful in providing guidelines in a number of different areas, each of which is discussed below.

9.1   Behavioural values

Political parties may agree to abide by a number of shared values such as mutual respect and tolerance, honesty and commitment. Although such values may seem obvious, defining and adopting them

jointly does create a stronger moral impediment to misbehaviour. It also provides a facilitator with a more legitimate basis to intervene when necessary. When participants in a dialogue platform maintain a culture of regarding each other as peers, of keeping one's word, of seeking the common good and of holding each other accountable, these principles are more likely to be respected and operationalized within the organizational structure.

For instance, parties can agree that if a politician and dialogue member is found to be corrupt within the context of the platform, he/she can no longer be a board member. This kind of conduct is essential for the building of trust. It may also give off a positive signal to other interlocutors such as EMBs, CSOs, governments or external funders. Positive peer pressure to respect mutually agreed rules and behaviours within a platform could also influence intra-party processes outside the platform, such as parliament, and vice versa.

While agreeing on certain generic principles can be an important statement in itself, it is even more valuable to discuss what parties mean by the different principles they subscribe to. For instance, in one context parties may agree that 'inclusivity' means that all political parties (even non-parliamentary parties) are invited, while in other contexts parties may understand the concept as a commitment to include more women in the dialogue forums, or regard it as implying a 'spirit of consultation'.

Ideally, a dialogue platform should be a space where parties are equal and open to criticism. However, in practice, relations also depend on the power balance between parties. For instance, while in parliament the power of the strongest party makes it less vulnerable to criticism, in a dialogue forum

(where parties are supposed to enter as equals) the ruling party may feel more easily threatened by the opposition.

Rules and principles (e.g. about decision making, speaking time, and interruption procedures) can balance opposition and ruling-party forces so that they feel respected in a tolerant environment. It is often good to invest time in discussing principles and values at an early stage so that parties work towards sharing a similar understanding about what they mean in practice.

At the same time, facilitators may not want to over-formalize the process before starting the dialogue, because this approach may risk killing the dialogue before it has taken off. A facilitator should consider finding a balance in the early stages between fewer rules (which might allow for dialogue) and more rules (which could hamper dialogue).

'The most important rule is to speak rationally. This means that if someone speaks and makes a proposal, the same person has to also state an alternative option. Think before you speak is a "rule" that has grown over time during the dialogue process.'
Atmaram Prasad Shah
Madheshi Janaadhikar Forum—Republic Party, Nepal

9.2   Informal versus formal agreement
While in some cases an open discussion on the 'spirit of the dialogue' is sufficient for reaching agreement on the terms of engagement and gaining confidence in the process, other situations may call for more formal 'rules of the game' which mention, for example, principles and procedures for decision making or dispute resolution. One way to capture the rules of the game for an inter-party dialogue more formally is through the development and use of a memorandum of understanding (MoU).

An MoU between political parties can be seen as an instrument for getting all parties on to the same page, for validating the parties' joint intentions and expectations, and for agreeing on the dialogue's main purpose and goals. Most importantly, it can be used as a way of managing expectations in the early stages of a dialogue. Parties all need to understand what issues are included in the dialogue; the MoU

should therefore state what the dialogue is meant to achieve, and be specific on where the dialogue process stops.

For instance, parties in Nepal have kept their inter-party dialogue forums very informal, with hardly any formally agreed rules, while CMD-Kenya has outlined detailed rules in its organizational constitution. In practice, some dialogues require more rules than others, depending on their stage, number of participants, and cultural context.

Some facilitators prefer to agree on arrangements along the way and view the dialogue as an organic process. Others argue that the rules of the game are best established in relative harmony at the start of a dialogue process, because once a conflict arises it is often too late to agree on a solution or a way out of the impasse. Much also depends on the level of trust between political parties, as well as the public sensitivity of their meetings. In cases of extreme polarization, the signing of an MoU can formalize what are still explorative talks, thus jeopardizing their further development. In other cases, agreeing on the values that unite opposite sides can help to give the dialogue legitimacy in the eyes of the outside world. A facilitator should therefore time the signing of an MoU carefully.

'We had to create the path as we walked the path. There was no premade dialogue methodology in place so we had to make the best out of every chance.'
Luis Egusquiza
Programme Coordinator, Transparencia Peru

9.3   Governance and participation provisions
In general, especially if the dialogue is supported by an organizational structure, the organization's MoU or constitution will include some governance and general membership provisions. The governance and membership provisions to be included are highly dependent on the parties' wishes and internal agreements.

These provisions can touch on a number of issues including the organization's structure (e.g. an informal platform or a foundation); its objectives (e.g. short- or long-term goals); its membership regulations (e.g. the number of party members); and the role of key bodies (e.g. the tasks and composition

of a board, advisory council and secretariat). In addition, issues such as the level of party representation (e.g. party president, secretary general to the board, or party experts in technical committees); the titles of office bearers and officials (e.g. the duties of chairperson, treasurer and secretary); and the gender balance (e.g. specific quotas, or representation by women's wings) may also be covered.

Provisions that are more detailed could also be required. These may include specific nomination or appointment procedures (e.g. by voting or appointment); procedures for removal of board members or staff (e.g. a board member being expelled for ignoring dialogue decisions or not keeping promises); or provisions on who is allowed to serve as a substitute (e.g. agree on deputies).

Rules on eligibility and appointment become especially important when capacity training or other benefits to a party organization complement a dialogue platform. Unambiguous rules help to avoid endless bickering over who gets what, so that distractions from the dialogue purposes of the platform remain minimal.

With regard to the chairperson, specific rules can also be included, such as determining the chairperson's main functions and deciding how he/she is chosen. Parties may prefer a permanent or rotating chairperson (e.g. by agreeing that the ruling party or the largest opposition party always provides the chairperson, or that the holder of the position changes every other year).

9.4 Meeting procedures

Parties will also have to agree on the way they want meetings to be held. The challenge in doing so is not to kill the spontaneity of the meeting by over-regulating. If too many procedures are put in place, this runs the risk that the dialogue will start to resemble parliament and other formal decision-making bodies. Too few procedures, however, might make the dialogue unmanageable. Some questions that might come up include how often meetings will be held (e.g. quarterly, monthly, weekly) or how to ensure orderly conduct, timeliness, advance planning of meetings and timely notification of events.

In the case of the IEA/GPPP in Ghana, for instance, parties adopted specific provisions. According to one such provision, 'correspondence relating to dialogue platform should be made mandatory items on every agenda while minutes of meetings must be faithfully reflected in a written record and confirmed prior to each meeting'. Another stipulates that 'a written notice of a meeting shall be circulated among participants at least three working days before each meeting and must clearly state the date, time, agenda, and venue of meeting'.

It may also be useful to agree on the mechanisms by which parties are able to place items on the agenda for discussion, for instance by stating that items should be relevant for the dialogue, and should be submitted to the facilitator or chairperson a specific number of working days before the meeting. Parties might agree that each party can call special meetings when the need arises, or they may leave it up to the facilitator or chair to call such meetings.

Another provision could deal with quorums, which may vary between more and less important dialogue meetings and in some cases may even mean that attending meetings is mandatory for all.

9.5 Making decisions in the dialogue process

While dialogue can be about reaching mutual understanding, inter-party dialogue often aims to agree on either recommendations or decisions. Whereas decisions are often within the scope of what the dialogue participants can implement themselves, recommendations often require the agreement of third actors.

Examples of this kind of actor include related organs such as parliaments, EMBs, constitutional reform committees or the international community, but also other actors within the parties themselves, such as party memberships, who might for instance be tasked with implementing a recommendation to ensure gender equality when selecting electoral candidates.

If a dialogue platform is used to make decisions, or to decide on what recommendations to make, parties need to agree on the appropriate procedures. For instance, parties might need to come to an

agreement on what kind of decisions they can take, and at what level within the organizational structure they are to be taken.

In a dialogue setting, any decisions should be reached, as far as possible, by mutual agreement or consensus, with voting resorted to only in difficult cases. Some topics, such as substantive reform proposals or the parties' long-term dialogue agenda, may only be settled by the highest level of party leaders and only by consensus, while on other less strategic or more operational issues (e.g. a conference agenda or points of order) it may make more sense to decide by majority or at a lower party level.

Parties can also propose voting by a simple show of hands to arrive at those decisions on which no consensus is reached. In such cases a dissenting political party may refrain from being involved in actions entailed by the decision.

9.6   Use of funds

Financial issues can trigger disputes between parties, or between parties and a facilitator, even when not much money is involved. For instance, party participants often either expect or receive refunds for fuel, travel, accommodation or dinner expenses incurred whilst participating in meetings and in some cases even daily or 'sitting' allowances (often considered controversial by funders).

One practitioner remarked that in the context of patronage politics and high levels of corruption, access to financial resources could become problematic for the relationship between political parties and the facilitator. In one country, party representatives of an inter-party board were seen to continuously employ themselves as facilitators in various regional activities and, while doing so, provided themselves with substantial allowances. Consequently, the board became an arena where party representatives competed for access to financial resources, thereby putting the facilitators in an uncomfortable position and the dialogue at risk.

It is important to mention that this is but one example and not necessarily a problem of the majority of dialogue platforms. However, in order to avoid wrong or diverging expectations it should be made clear from the start of the dialogue to what extent

parties are entitled to the reimbursement of costs, and under what conditions and through which procedure they can obtain refunds. When party dialogue platforms also engage in party capacity building and more money is involved, making strict agreements over expenditure and accountability necessary, regulations become even more crucial.

It may be necessary to include rules on the use of external funds, the division of costs related to dialogue activities and mutually agreed division criteria. These criteria are often a reflection of the political party landscape. Accountability measures will also have to be agreed upon when it comes to the management of funds (e.g. reporting two weeks after each dialogue event, assigning signatories of bank accounts, and establishing financial oversight and approval procedures).

Box 9.1.

Formulae for the division of funds in Ghana and Malawi

In Ghana, the GPPP, facilitated by the IEA, agreed to give all parties participating in their inter-party dialogue platform equal access to funds assigned to internal party strengthening. With four parliamentary parties, each party would receive one-quarter of capacity building-related support, regardless of the actual power balance in parliament. In contrast, in Malawi, 50 per cent of bilateral funds are allocated to the parties in government, while the remaining 50 per cent goes to the other political parties. In 2009, this regulation was amended to allocate 85 per cent of the funds equally, with the remaining 15 per cent distributed based on parliamentary representation. This shows that parties often decide on different fund division criteria, depending on the country context they are operating in.

9.7   Conflicts and dispute resolution

Trust can never be taken for granted: throughout the dialogue process, sensitive issues may come up and relations can suddenly become hostile. Trust building is an ongoing, non-linear process and constructive party interactions need constant care and attention, especially because party leaders can change after an election. A dialogue platform may therefore benefit from designing a conflict resolution mechanism.

Such a mechanism could outline ways to involve the leadership in the event of unproductive tensions between the party representatives; or methods for dealing with contentious issues or serious disputes. The effectiveness of such a mechanism is complicated by the fact that a political party dialogue itself is, in many cases, designed as a conflict resolution mechanism between parties.

Conflict within the dialogue platform needs to be anticipated and prevented at an early stage by agreeing on a code of conduct or on a role for an advisory council, a council of elders, a summit or another ad hoc body in finding a resolution to a specific problem. This also means that dialogue and engagement are key instruments for resolving internal disputes.

A code of conduct or specific dispute resolution mechanism is best put in place before conflicts occur. Such internal agreements need to be endorsed by all parties, and facilitators should ask each new member to accept the code of conduct when they are appointed or sworn in. Such conflict resolution mechanisms are, however, instruments of last resort, as they usually have significant bearing on internal relations. It is up to a facilitator to try and avoid disagreement reaching the stage where conflict resolution mechanisms or outside mediation are needed.

9.8 External communications and spokespeople

An important issue to agree upon is whether to go public about the issues that are being discussed in the dialogue—and, indeed, whether to even confirm the existence of the dialogue platform itself. In some contexts parties may prefer absolute confidentiality and adopt 'Chatham House rules', meaning no press or outside communication on what is discussed during the meetings. In other contexts, parties may favour complete openness and invite the media to some or all of the dialogue meetings. This might, however, stifle the dialogue, as some parties may feel that they can no longer express their opinions in a secure and trusted environment.

A compromise might be to publicize only the result of the dialogue. Every political party within a dialogue platform will aim to present the dialogue's outcomes in a manner that is positive for their individual position. As this can actually undermine the outcomes, it helps to discuss beforehand how to communicate the results to the media and wider public.

Parties might choose to issue joint press statements or communiqués when significant consensus is reached. After a specific meeting, parties might also adopt a joint resolution and recommendations. Such a resolution can be jointly issued while at the same time reflecting the dissenting opinions of individual parties.

In all cases it is important to decide who is going to be the spokesperson for the dialogue. The characteristics of a spokesperson may be personal (e.g. a willingness to engage in dialogue, political ideals, or commitment to democracy) or related to placement in the political scenario and the partisan balance of power. To avoid feuds over this role, the facilitator or dialogue chair can also be asked by the parties to make public announcements on their behalf.

Parties' wishes concerning the level of publicity they want to give to the dialogue forum can also change over time. In Zimbabwe, for instance, a first phase of the inter-party dialogue involved groundwork by facilitators to lay the dialogue's foundations. The aim was to create a common understanding and general willingness to take part in an inter-party dialogue.

This phase took place behind the scenes but over time it became more important to go public, as it was felt that holding confidential meetings could give rise to rumours and feed mistrust amongst politicians and between parties and the public. Once the dialogue process was sufficiently established, demonstrating the positive outcomes of the dialogue could further enhance internal unity and trust.

This 'realization/convincing process' in itself took time, though, and required patience from all sides. One general lesson learned is that going public is only possible when parties are convinced of some of the benefits of cooperation. Once that happens, public appreciation for the dialogue process can further boost the confidence and trust of the dialogue participants, and foster the dialogue's democratic legitimacy.

Findings

- Each dialogue space requires its own internal 'rules of the game'.
- Such agreements can outline how the dialogue functions and how meetings are to be held (e.g. covering issues such as timing, correspondence and quorums).
- If money is involved, expenditure and accountability regulations are crucial.
- Designing conflict resolution mechanisms can help in maintaining trust.
- Discuss how to communicate dialogue results to the media and public.

Recommendations

- Discuss the values and principles parties wish to subscribe to in the dialogue.
- Capture internal rules in an informal agreement or a more formal MoU at an appropriate point in the dialogue.
- When decision making is part of the dialogue, specify the agreed procedures for making decisions or recommendations.
- Agree on external communication mechanisms and spokespeople.

Chapter 10: Building trust between political parties

Meaningful dialogue, for example on political system reform, can seem virtually impossible without a minimum level of trust between political parties, especially in polarized settings. Locally owned inter-party dialogue processes can serve as a way to bring parties together and help to provide a safe place where they can meet informally to get to know each other as competitive colleagues as opposed to enemies. In such a space, dialogue allows parties to let off steam and in doing so serves as a mitigating and depolarization mechanism or as a means to advocate for peaceful coexistence.

When political parties consider each other enemies rather than competitors it is essential to bring political parties around one table to engage in dialogue. In contexts dominated by deep-rooted fears and suspicion between political adversaries, building a minimum level of mutual trust and confidence is an important first step, as well as a foundation for sustained and meaningful dialogue.

The facilitator's role in creating an appropriate environment and building trust among the participants is crucial. The building of inter-party trust however starts with building *trust between the parties and the facilitator*. In order to gain the political parties' trust in the personality, skills and capacities of the facilitator usually means that he/she interacts with parties not only within the collective space, but also outside of it.

Facilitators have a lot of manoeuvring room in their bilateral relations with the dialogue participants, as long as they stay aware of the political developments and dynamics that surround them, are being perceived by all sides as impartial and inclusive, and always act with the common interests of parties in mind.

'Facilitating a political party dialogue in a tense environment is about managing hopes, fears and expectations.'
Dialogue facilitator
Africa

Building trust between political parties does not necessarily imply 'complete trust' but rather creating sufficient confidence in the sincerity, professionalism, skill or capability of the parties to enable them to cooperate. While the amount of time it takes to develop this minimum level of trust can vary greatly, the important issue is to decide how to take the first step.

10.1 Understanding the reasons for mistrust between parties

One of the first things a facilitator should do when asked to explore the possibility for inter-party dialogue is to identify which unproductive tensions and conflicts—beyond the normal inter-party competition—might be reduced through dialogue.[20] Reasons for mistrust between parties tend to be multifaceted, especially in conflict and post-conflict situations, and may be hard to fully grasp or understand for an outsider.

In post-conflict countries such as Mozambique, Nepal or Burundi it is clear that tensions can result from unresolved issues between warring factions in a conflict, or from deep political divides. In less polarized contexts, inter-party competition or suspicions may have a different cause. In some cases tensions can increase when one party suspects a hidden political agenda, or second-guesses another party's motivations for joining the dialogue. In other cases it may be a matter of distorted personal relations.

Outside pressure can make it even harder for parties to join an inter-party dialogue. Civil society actors are also often divided along party lines and may have adopted a similar 'for or against me' attitude. As a result, parties may not wish to be associated with an inter-party dialogue and reach out to their political opponents out of fear of being seen as weak or losing face in the eyes of their support base.

All of this may sound discouraging but is merely intended to demonstrate the value of preparedness, especially on the part of facilitators. It is very important for facilitators to know what kinds of arguments spoilers or sceptical actors might use, and to think of counter-arguments in advance. Further, many dialogues that have since proved successful started off with people using spoiling arguments.

10.2 A meeting to break the ice

Mistrust between parties tends to involve disrupted personal relations. The first dialogue session or meeting between party representatives is therefore a chance for parties as well as facilitators to get to know the different actors around the table, to understand why they are joining the dialogue, and to become aware of the different perceptions and reasons for debate.

Parties can be invited for such a meeting via formal letters sent to the party leadership, but in most polarized contexts much more time, patience and effort are needed before all parties will show up. Alternately, facilitators may wish to hold a series of preliminary, informal consultations with leaders and key party representatives, or else mobilize the help of other domestic institutions that already have the trust of parties (e.g. think tanks, universities, or other civil society and religious brokers). In Mozambique, for example, Christian church leaders played an important role in encouraging party leaders to take part in an inter-party dialogue.

Easy as it may sound, organizing a first meeting between political adversaries can be one of the hardest parts in a dialogue process. Consequently, many facilitators stress that the general process of confidence gaining and trust building between political parties is likely to take more than one meeting and that 'breaking the ice' is more often a process that may take months, sometimes years.

10.3 Discussions with a non-party actor

Another way of improving personal relations between parties is to institute preliminary discussions between the parties as a collective and a separate non-party actor. Examples of non-party actors include state ministries or other key democratic institutions like the EMB or a national planning committee.

Discussions with a non-party institution may make political parties more open to sharing the same space and informally talking with each other about their respective viewpoints. As a result, parties may be more easily persuaded to defend their positions, needs and interests as a group and consequently focus more on what they have in common than on the differences between them.

10.4 Engaging in a dialogue about the dialogue

During the first dialogue sessions it is a good idea to focus on discussing the potential usefulness of inter-party dialogue. Talking about the pros and cons of initiating a dialogue may lead towards an increased understanding of what inter-party dialogue has to offer, and eventually to some sort of agreement on how to go about setting it up.
In order to create this more open, positive mindset it can help to learn from successful inter-party dialogue experiences in other countries and invite fellow politicians to explain what dialogue meant for them. International peer exchange between politicians who have been actively involved in dialogue processes may assist facilitators in making a convincing argument in favour of dialogue and help in outlining an optimistic scenario for future inter-party relations (van Breukelen and Magolowondo 2010).

Box 10.1.

Uganda-Ghana peer exchange

One successful example of peer exchange took place in the initial phases of the Ugandan inter-party dialogue process (IPOD), when high-level Ghanaian politicians visited the Ugandan political parties to share some of the positive outcomes of a similar dialogue process in Ghana that had taken place some years earlier. These exchanges played a critical role in securing buy-in and support from the Ugandan political leaders for their own dialogue programme (see also the case study on Uganda in Appendix 1).

Facilitators may also consider and discuss different process options and tools for adapting the design and implementation of a dialogue process to its context and the purpose of trust building. International IDEA's *Democratic Dialogue* Handbook offers an array of process options and tools, such as for exploration and awareness raising; for sharing of knowledge and ideas; for relationship building and working through conflict; for deliberation and working through tough decisions; and for collaborative action.[21]

10.5 Focusing on non-contentious issues

Setting an agenda during a dialogue can play a central role in bringing parties together, especially in cases where it seems best to temporarily avoid sensitive topics and circumvent areas of potential conflict between parties. In particular, it can be counterproductive to focus on contentious issues at the start of a dialogue process. It is preferable to look instead for commonalities amongst the participating parties.

Sometimes these common interests are directly related to democratic reforms. At other times it can be useful to start the dialogue process by discussing less politicized topics that do not directly affect the role and power of individual parties. Issues such as poverty eradication or disease control, for instance, can be equally important for the future of the country but politically less controversial. The agenda then draws attention to topics that parties will more easily be able to develop common views on, as opposed to further polarizing relations.

However, what is regarded as sensitive will usually vary. In some circumstances parties may feel comfortable working on democratic values and principles because everyone is convinced of their value and general nature, while in other situations these values and principles may lie at the core of the conflict.

Regardless of the topic under discussion, it is recommended that facilitators make use of empirical evidence as an input for the dialogue. Once a sufficient amount of inter-party trust has been established, the need to avoid sensitive topics may gradually dissolve, and be replaced by a situation where areas of dispute become more central to the dialogue.

'As a Centre for Multiparty Democracy (CMD) you run the risk of becoming irrelevant if you avoid the hotspots. Therefore we always look for a balance: what is relevant but keeps us together. In the beginning, we generally concentrated on "safe", non-contentious issues that both the opposition and the ruling party were interested in. Over time, it became possible to put more contentious issues on the agenda, like topics on which the president sometimes changes his stance. As a result, various draft acts were repealed or sent back to the law commission after discussion in the CMD, including the access to information act, the marriage age bill, the police bill, and the pension bill.'
Kizito Tenthani
Executive Director, CMD–Malawi

10.6 Starting by 'interacting without dialogue'

In cases where a first dialogue session between parties is still one step too far, there may be less threatening ways to bring the parties together. Sometimes it helps to organize and invite parties to multiparty activities in which dialogue is not the main purpose, but where being in the same space and sharing similar experiences is the underlying motive.

Activities that have been designed and used for this purpose include multiparty training sessions, workshops, study visits, seminars or conferences. All parties should be invited to participate or asked to contribute through presentations. One specific approach that was used in Ecuador was to create a multiparty political magazine. There, parties were involved in multiparty discussions about themes and articles for the magazine and were asked for their contributions.

This kind of 'interaction without dialogue' has the potential to create basic inter-party relations at different levels within the party and an initial bond between participants.

'Each party has two faces. One for public consumption, a public face, as well as another off the record, intra-party face. These two usually look different. By showing some parts of our intraparty face in the dialogue we, as parties, were able to move forward.'
Atmaram Prasad Shah
Madheshi Janaadhikar Forum—Republic Party, Nepal

Findings
- A minimum level of trust or a 'willingness to sit around the table' tends to be a precondition for meaningful inter-party dialogue.
- Building trust between the parties and the facilitator usually precedes the building of inter-party trust.
- While trust building is an ongoing process, the first step of getting parties together to talk to each other is often one of the hardest points in the dialogue.

Recommendations
- Identify any unproductive tensions and conflicts that might exist between political parties.
- Consider different options for 'breaking the ice', including:
  – meetings to get to know each other and improve personal relations;
  – discussions between political parties and a third, non-party actor;
  – exchanging views about the pros and cons of having an inter-party dialogue; or
  – multiparty events and activities such as training, workshops or study tours.
- See how focusing the dialogue on non-contentious subjects and using evidence-based information as input for discussions can have a positive effect.

Chapter 11: Consensus building through structured dialogue

Using dialogue for consensus building speaks to the political parties' joint responsibility for solving problems that affect their common interests. In general, however, the ability or will to reach a general agreement or consensus is not automatically present amongst all political actors.

Most facilitators agree that the success or failure of the dialogue is most often achieved through consensus building, and that fears, high expectations, or lack of confidence are all inherent and influential factors during this stage.

Building consensus can therefore be difficult to achieve and a careful approach is needed to structure discussions at this stage. If the dialogue process is not set up or managed well it can easily result in political stalemates instead of solutions to problems. In some cases parties can only settle a dispute or come to an agreement by making concessions.

Facilitators can play an important role in creating an environment in which parties feel encouraged to look for consensus and, if needed, show the willingness to compromise. In particular, they can structure the dialogue sessions and meeting agenda in such a way that they offer parties opportunities to work towards consensus gradually.

11.1 From dialogue to consensus

Dialogue is a way to enable deliberation and decision making as well as mediation and negotiation processes. This means that, even when political parties are brought together with the explicit aim of having a 'dialogue', in practice it remains easy to move beyond dialogue into other areas.

This is not a problem as long as facilitators remain aware of the dynamics within the dialogue and recognize the type of conversations parties are engaged in at certain points in time: are they in a process of dialogue, negotiation, deliberation or decision making, or using a combination of some or all of these?

Dialogue is mostly associated with an open exchange of information, sharing different stories and perspectives and an exploration of the position of other parties. It is generally used to foster respect and a shared understanding. Deliberation and decision making tend to go one step further by placing an emphasis on carefully considering and weighing the different options required to make (sometimes tough) decisions.

Negotiation and mediation are generally more focused on finding specific solutions to problems, getting parties to reach agreement over contentious issues and resolving conflicts. All of these processes are closely linked; negotiations and deliberations can flow into dialogue and vice versa, depending on the situation parties find themselves in. Despite the many theoretical differences, in practice overlap is often unavoidable and necessary for reaching results and building consensus. (For more on this topic see e.g. International IDEA 2007: 22.) If a dialogue is to be successful it is in many cases inherent in the dialogue to evolve to a later stage of deliberation, negotiation and decision making.

'The difference between dialogue and negotiations is that dialogue involves brainstorming to get new ideas: ideas that could lead to a consensus among parties.'
Shekhar Koirala
Nepali Congress (NC) Party

11.2   Avoid deciding on issues by means of a vote

Decision making comes in different shapes and forms: a decision can be made by a single authority, as well as by a group through voting or by means of consensus (International IDEA 2007: 23, figure 1.3.1).

When aiming for consensus, a basic starting point for all actors around the table is to realize that decision making in a dialogue setting is different from decision making in parliament: what is decisive is the way parties come to reach agreement as a group, rather than their respective strengths (i.e. the number of seats required to pass a bill).

This also means that, unlike parliaments, dialogue platforms should generally try to avoid using a voting system as much as possible.

In some cases, however, such as when having to make governance-related decisions (e.g. approving annual reports or financial audits) voting can be necessary. When a large group of political parties is involved, voting may be used as a way to gauge the parties' level of approval of proposals under discussion in the dialogue.

When voting is considered, a facilitator can be faced with two options. The first is to let parties vote according to their individual strength in parliament; this would make the ruling party or coalition more powerful than smaller parties. The second option is to adopt a 'one party, one vote' principle; this would grant the smallest party as much power as a majority party. In the first scenario voting could lead to the smaller parties feeling overruled (in a similar way as in parliament), while in the second scenario it is the party in power that may end up feeling sidelined. Both can create unnecessary tensions and replicate the antagonistic kind of debate that takes place in parliament.

One way to describe the dialogue decision-making process and avoid duplication of parliamentary rules is to explicitly state and agree with all parties that any decisions will be made by consensus, or to describe under which specific circumstances voting is allowed. It is also important to stress to the parties that a win–win situation that usually results from dialogue initiatives is preferable to a winner-takes-all situation, which is a usual characteristic of the voting process.

11.3   Accommodating the views of all parties to the dialogue

A dialogue process is not likely to lead to consensus unless each party recognizes its own contribution to the outcome. One of the main responsibilities of a facilitator is therefore to ensure that all of the views around the table can be accommodated. A facilitator can identify and present parties with the different options at hand, while party representatives need to consult with their parties and agree on areas where compromise might be possible.

A compromise can be regarded as 'the highest level of give and take' and this can sometimes be a difficult and painful exercise for those involved. As such, building consensus is not just a technical exercise but also a political and personal mindset. Political parties may need to be encouraged to listen to each other and be open to using their skills to communicate, consult, seek consensus and, when necessary, have the courage to compromise (see figure 11.1). Even if some parties may need to be persuaded to take part in the dialogue, they should never be forced into a situation where they find it uncomfortable to speak.

For parties, the final and best solution is one where an agreement is considered 'collective property'. Even when the solution to a problem may seem obvious to a facilitator, the dialogue has to produce the result at the right pace for all parties to embrace it. For facilitators this may require patience: if you cannot resolve the issue immediately, discuss it the next time—consensus building requires openness to accept a diversity of opinions and needs to reach a certain level of maturity.

The dialogue facilitator can assist in helping to create the basis for the rationale underpinning the consensus and compromise process by providing factual knowledge and information on the parties' different options.

Box 11.1.

Nepal: the capacity to compromise

'In the beginning I could feel hurt by the opinions of other parties but now I realize that we are all fighting for our country but simply have different perceptions. We needed to become more rational and have, over time, strengthened our "tolerance capacity", allowing everyone to state his or her own views. However, the bottom line is that we were able to find a compromise. In a negotiation, there is not a sole winner or loser, and the result is often 50/50. This compels us as parties to discuss and compromise. In doing so, there will always be a need for dialogue.'
Atmaram Prasad Shah
Madheshi Janaadhikar Forum—Republic Party, Nepal

Figure 11.1.

The four Cs: communication, consultation, consensus and compromise

Communication
- exchange of information
and diversity of view

Consultation
- listening and weighing
options

Consensus
- agree on common interests
and commonalities

Compromise
- give and take for the
sake of the bigger objective
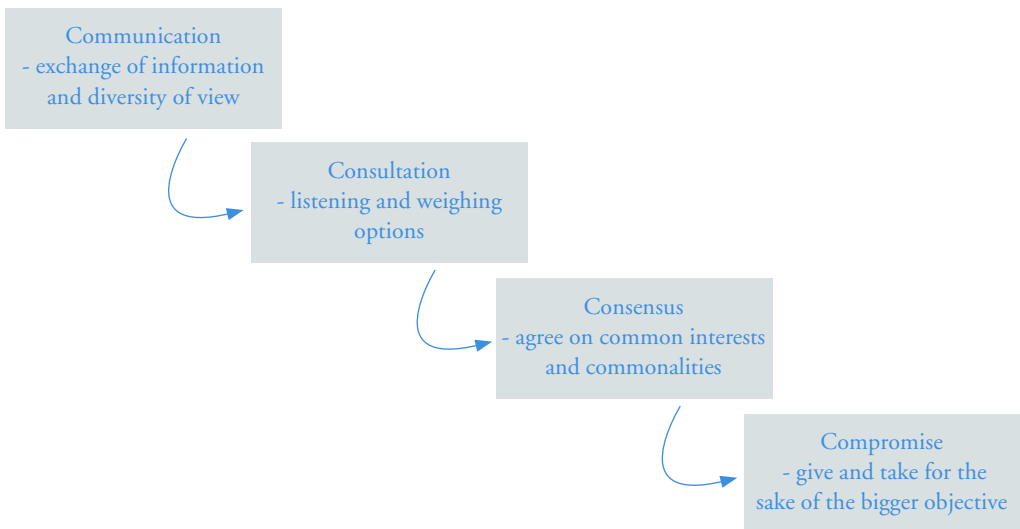
11.4 **Adopting a structured approach**

Facilitators can also structure a dialogue process so that it fosters consensus building. They can do so by using a preparatory phase before the first dialogue session, and a follow-up phase before the second session, as well as by using a meeting agenda that is geared towards identifying areas of common interest and potential agreement.

The 'first' dialogue session in this context does not necessarily mean the very first encounter, but rather the first time that parties come together for substantive discussion on the topic on which consensus needs to be reached, be it how to set up the dialogue structure or on other, more political issues.

Facilitators wishing to encourage political parties to work towards inter-party consensus on either of the topics may wish to keep four phases in mind.

1. The preparation phase

Building party ownership of the dialogue and securing the buy-in of all participants can be facilitated through the creation of a common understanding of what the dialogue is about. Preparations are an important way for the facilitator to get to know the parties, and for parties to understand the dialogue process they are engaging in. In preparation for the first dialogue session facilitators (ideally together with technical experts) should inform themselves about different party opinions and positions, and analyse views from all parts of the political spectrum.

While doing so, the facilitator can also carry out an initial comparison of the various party positions, outlining the key differences as well as the potential areas of agreement while seeking to identify 'second-best options' that could work for all parties. Upon the completion of this exercise a facilitator can consult the respective party leaderships, sounding out which topics should be on the meeting agenda and the identified potential areas for middle ground. The facilitator should then draft the final agenda and share it with the parties.

2. The first dialogue session

During the parties' first dialogue session a facilitator has the chance to introduce participants to each other, present the topics for discussion and provide time and space to exchange initial views and ideas. It is important that the facilitator allows equal contributions from each of the parties and ensures that the dialogue remains focused on potential areas of consensus, for example by using the below agenda points.

While this meeting agenda might seem (too) elaborate for one session only, it shows the desired discussion flow. It is up to facilitators to assess the inter-party dynamics in the meeting and make up their own minds as to how this flow can best be created. This can for example imply organizing a two-day retreat so that parties will have sufficient time and the opportunity to focus, or limiting the discussion to one specific topic.

Box 11.2.

Suggested points for an agenda

Points that can be put on the agenda of the parties' first meeting could include:

1. an opening statement by the facilitator introducing participants and stating the purpose of the meeting;
2. participants committing themselves to the dialogue process and ground rules;
3. sharing of official party statements and personal stories from each party;
4. joint identification of the political and technical matters raised;
5. prioritization of the various topics for discussion;
6. a second round on issues: direct exchange of ideas on specific topics;
7. generating options, using input of technical experts;
8. exploring alternatives acceptable to all parties around the table;
9. formulating areas where consensus is reached and/or finalize agreement;
10. recognition of issues on which parties 'agree to disagree';
11. identification of areas parties wish to continue discussing in future sessions;
12. agreement on action points or 'homework' for facilitators, experts and parties;
13. proposals for topics for the next dialogue session; and
14. a summary of conclusions and a positive closing statement by the facilitator.

3. Follow-up on first dialogue session

After the first session a facilitator will need to invest time in following up on the action points and ensuring that results from the meeting are fed back and followed up by the respective party representatives. This follow-up phase is not to be underestimated, for a number of reasons.

First, it is critical to establish to what extent parties do what they have committed themselves to do. Second, a facilitator will need to ascertain whether the information that was shared during the dialogue session was complete and truthful. Third, it is important to find out if there are any hidden or underlying dynamics between parties or within a party that may affect the dialogue outcome. Fourth, the follow-up phase allows the facilitator to observe how each party organizes its own intra-party consultation or dialogue mechanisms. This last point is especially important to ensuring that the dialogue remains anchored within the parties.

While doing all this a facilitator can simultaneously begin preparing for the second dialogue session. At this time, the facilitator should consult with each party leadership to verify the outcome of the first session and prepare the meeting agenda for the second. Other responsibilities include stimulating intra-party group work and consultations, and understanding the parties' capacity, strengths and weaknesses in implementing decisions or action points. In some cases a facilitator also has the mandate and means to assist parties directly on a bilateral basis, for instance by providing technical and financial support for intra-party dialogue sessions.

4. The second dialogue session

The second session should follow up on the outcomes of the previous session and start off with a summary outlining the topics on which consensus was reached by the parties as well as the topics that parties had not yet agreed upon. This second session builds on the changed context and party positions, but copying the above agenda points.

A series of dialogues conducted in this way has the potential to gradually reduce the number of disputed issues. Ideally, most problems will disappear naturally but in some cases other processes may be needed in order to find a solution (e.g. a vote in par-

liament or a special negotiation process between the main opponents).

This method for holding a dialogue is more results-oriented and in many ways better than that used in one-off dialogue sessions (which politicians often perceive as lectures). The strength of a structured approach is that it can be repeated and serve as a framework for continued dialogue.[22] Parties are also able to monitor the progress they have made together towards reaching consensus while remaining aware of the challenges ahead.

As indicated previously, it is important for a facilitator to safeguard that party representatives continue to enjoy the support of their respective parties when building consensus. Too often, political party representatives reach consensus in the dialogue but have failed to ensure continuous communication and consultation with other party representatives who are not in the dialogue team or members of the party's support base.

This may result in a situation where certain groups do not support the consensus (and, indeed, may express this openly), thus creating mistrust, misunderstanding, frustration and a lack of clarity. Such situations often delay the dialogue and can constitute serious setbacks. Supporting intra-party dialogue and consultation mechanisms is one way to assist parties in embedding the dialogue into the different party organizations (see chapter 8 on organizational structures).

Findings
- Consensus building entails a mix of dialogue, mediation, negotiation, deliberation and decision making.
- Parties need their capacity to communicate, consult, and seek consensus and compromise.
- Longer-term dialogues can be structured so that they foster consensus building and are aimed at gradually reducing the number of disputed issues.

Recommendations
- Inter-party dialogue platforms are strongly encouraged to steer away from coming to decisions by means of voting and to encourage consensus building.

- A facilitator should find ways to accommodate all views around the table and can use the meeting agenda as a practical tool.
- He/she needs to make use of the preparation and follow-up phase of each dialogue session to consult with parties and to promote intra-party dialogue.

Chapter 12: Internal party communication and preparation

Practice teaches us that too often parties come to the dialogue table unprepared, with the wrong assumptions or with diverging expectations. Being prepared means doing your homework with regard to the topics on the agenda and securing internal party support for the positions you aim to reach.

A lack of party preparation can increase the chances of a dialogue failing. For instance a party delegate may not feel comfortable speaking his or her mind out of fear that a party leader might get upset, or might not know the party stance on a certain issue, making it impossible to exchange views or engage in an actual dialogue.

Ensuring that a party is internally prepared and sufficiently consulted is more easily said than done. Facilitators should be aware of the main views and positions of each party before the start of a dialogue session, so that potential obstacles can be cleared via direct consultation with a party before the actual meeting, in order to prevent one issue from holding the entire dialogue to ransom.

Adequate preparedness requires continuous interaction between the facilitator and the parties, even between dialogue meetings, and depends on a facilitator's political antenna, as well as access to internal party discussions. This chapter, therefore, discusses the various ways in which facilitators can help parties to prepare themselves for a dialogue.

12.1 Entering dialogue as equals: internal reflection

In an ideal situation, political parties enter a dialogue as equals—not necessarily in terms of actual political power but in having the same knowledge, ability and understanding of what the dialogue entails before they join. In practice, however, a political party may not always possess previous experience in conducting an inter-party dialogue, for instance, when it is a recently established party. Such a party may consequently be hesitant about joining without sound knowledge of what it will get itself engaged in, especially if it feels it may be at a disadvantage compared to other parties.

A facilitator can help or support parties by giving advice, drawing attention to stronger and weaker sides of a party's dialogue capacity, and, in some cases, by providing capacity support. This kind of support can be focused on strengthening a party's internal communication structures and can include, for instance, support to design specific intra-party consultation mechanisms, or dialogue and mediation training for relevant party staff. Assistance can also be geared towards strengthening a party's thematic expertise (e.g. by providing training on political finance, state reform or decentralization, or on public policy issues like health care, education or natural resource management).

Before the start of a dialogue, a party may first wish to reflect internally on its formal and informal party position on certain topics; who to send as its representatives and with what mandate; and what kind of dialogue structures and rules would suit the party best. Parties might think about what they hope to achieve by engaging with the dialogue process (e.g. access to information or influence in a reform process).

At the same time, parties need to realize that entering an inter-party dialogue process is not the same thing as entering negotiations or a debate in parliament. In fact, dialogue may require different skills and different ways of reaching agreement, and is usually more focused on an open exchange of views and ideas, and less on decision making.

12.2 Understanding dialogue representatives' mandates

From the perspective of the dialogue participant, it is also important that a party has prepared itself, as parties and their dialogue delegates need to remain on the same page throughout the process. In order to feel safe enough to speak out delegates will need backing and a clear mandate from the party and its leadership. This means that parties need to know why they are entering into a dialogue and what they would like to gain from it and, based on that discussion, give their delegates the appropriate mandate to participate in the dialogue on their behalf.

This mandate should include sufficient space to engage at a more personal level, explore alternatives and speak without fear of being 'punished' if what is discussed during the dialogue is not completely in line with formal party positions. While their mandate should allow them to take decisions when issues are on the agenda, it is important to realize that a mandate in a dialogue context is not the same as enforcing internal party discipline by requiring a party representative to follow the party line at all times (as often seen in parliament when it comes to voting). Often, dialogues lead to outcomes only when participants are willing to compromise.

A dialogue mandate is dissimilar to a mandate in negotiation processes, whereby a party's possible 'gives and takes' are likely to be spelt out and closely monitored to see who is winning and losing. A dialogue facilitator should always emphasize the primary importance of exploring alternative ways of looking at issues and problems, and by doing so stimulate mutual understanding or consensus building between parties.

Dialogue participants generally value having a mandated space for open talks that is approved by the leadership; has some flexibility to go beyond the formal party stance; and is flexible enough to explore ways to reach common ground. At the same time, parties do not want their delegates to go too far by making promises that go too much against the party line. This means that party representatives in turn have to respect the mandate they have been given, inform and consult with their parties on a regular basis, and stay within the limits of how far they can stretch their party's positions without losing the party's support.

'For a party representative it helps to have a clear mandate from the party; that way it is possible to speak more freely. If a clear mandate is lacking, there is a risk that the representative's view point deviates from the party line and gets criticized after the dialogue has taken place.'
Pradeep Kumar Gyawali
Communist Party of Nepal UML (Unified Marxist–Leninist)

12.3 Promoting intra-party dialogue

One way of ensuring that party representatives are respectful of the mandate they have been given is to link the dialogue platform with the party and its support base better by strengthening a party's internal communication mechanisms. As such, effective inter-party dialogue is intrinsically linked to a party's internal capacity for dialogue.

Failure to make effective use of this capacity runs the risk of pursuing an inter-party dialogue between individuals, rather than political parties as institutions. If the party support base does not feel engaged it might end up being unhappy with the issues discussed in the dialogue and, ultimately, its outcomes.

Intra-party dialogue sessions promote internal communication and can be effective tools for consultation, spreading new knowledge and generating new ideas that can feed into the inter-party dialogue. They can include a small group of selected party representatives (e.g. in the form of thematic brainstorming sessions) or can be set up as larger consultative forums to collect opinions from within the whole party.

The advantage of these larger forums is that they have the potential to create buy-in and generate broad party member support, while the downside is that they can be very costly and time-consuming. This is why, in some cases, national partners or international actors support intra-party dialogue and consultation mechanisms.

Each party can create its own models for intra-party dialogue. Some may prefer to set up a dialogue team, and complement this with an internal party reference team and a dispute resolution team. Another basic model for effectively linking intra-party

dialogue to the inter-party forum involves meeting
regularly with a number of key party officials to form a
'triangle' between relevant players (see figure 12.1).

Figure 12.1.

Participants in an intra-party dialogue session

Dialogue delegates

Other party members
and groups, like
MPs, local party
branches,women or
youth wings, legal
experts etc.
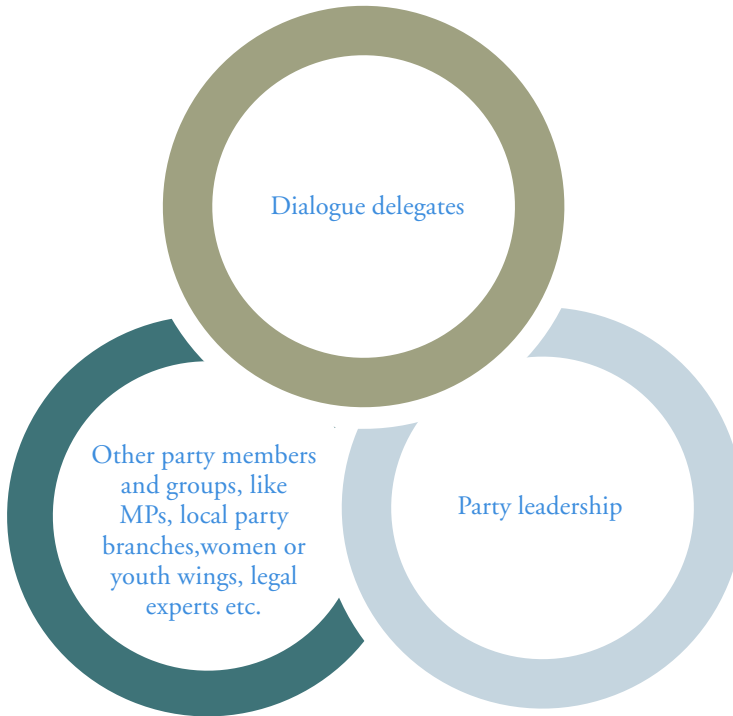
Party leadership

12.4 Ensuring communication with party leaders

One particular challenge is to make sure that the party representatives and the party leadership continuously communicate and consult with each other in order to avoid an information gap. Such gaps are sometimes blamed on the leadership's lack of time or interest in the dialogue, and in other cases on the party delegate who may feel hesitant about reporting back to the party. Regardless of the reason, bridging the information gap between the party representatives and leaders is essential to the success of an inter-party dialogue platform.

A facilitator can encourage each of the party representatives to maintain good personal relations with and access to the leadership. This will facilitate short communication lines. Another way to help the party leadership and representatives to talk regularly is by planning sufficient time in between dialogue sessions, which will enable them to meet up. Facilitators can also introduce standard communication procedures such as sending a summary report after each dialogue session to the party cadre and leadership.

Box 12.1.

Mozambique: adopt a 'CC policy'

'One way of being transparent in your communication and to make sure that all relevant party actors are informed of what is discussed is to make sure that each letter is always copied to the Secretary General, the President and others (e.g. thematic experts). This "CC policy" helps to ensure that everyone has the same information and enforces open communication. Other ways of ensuring the engagement of the parties include asking a group of permanent representatives to the dialogue forum to organize quarterly or annual presentations for the party leadership and cadre. All this promotes a culture of internal party democracy.'
Hermenegildo Mulhovo
Representative, NIMD Mozambique

12.5 Internal party preparedness documents

Internal party preparedness, while critical to ensuring that the dialogue is 'anchored' within the political parties and crucial for the success and political party ownership of the dialogue, can be easily forgotten or its importance underestimated. Facilitators can play an important role in reminding parties about the importance of this process and provide advice on how to do so.

Facilitators can stimulate party preparedness by encouraging parties to write an internal party preparedness document on the dialogue: this can help them to prepare the minds of the political actors, manage expectations and make sure that parties are aware of their needs, interests and positions on certain topics. Assisting political parties in producing such a document will allow a facilitator to identify potential clashes at an early stage.

In order to deal with potential obstacles, a facilitator should help a party to explore alternative options before the dialogue commences so as not to steer a party in a direction that other parties will later disagree with. An internal party preparedness document can be important for preparing party positions on the issue at hand, and for institutionalizing the dialogue within the party. Building on and reflecting the party vision, mission, values and principles, the document should, through consultative intra-party mechanisms and procedures, identify the party's needs, interests and positions in relation to the dialogue agenda.

Figure 12.2 is based upon the analogy of an onion and its layers.[23] The outer layer represents formal party' positions (e.g. its striving for a more democratic political system). Underlying these are the parties' interests—that is, what they hope to achieve in a specific situation (e.g. establishing a new legal framework for political parties that will allow for a more level playing field). Finally, at the core are the parties' needs (e.g. a better chance of electoral success for party X in the next elections).

Distinguishing a party's needs, interest and positions
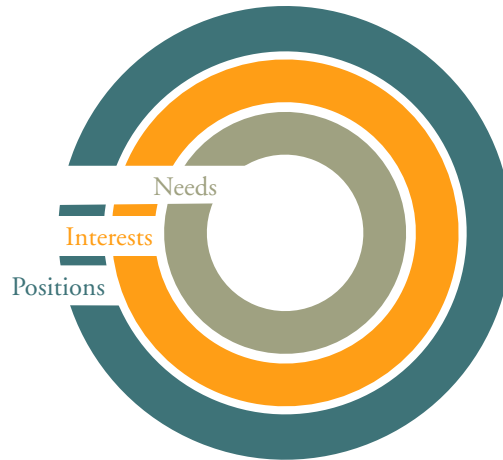
Making the distinction between a party's needs, interests and positions will make it easier for parties to uncover hidden problems or identify underlying issues that are of real concern to them. In terms of preparing for a dialogue, this analysis can lead to a party defining its policy priorities, including its prime position, its secondary position and any non-negotiable position more clearly. It may also help parties to deepen the discussions and move away from a dialogue about positions only.

Facilitators can assist in the analysis by meeting each party on an individual basis to discuss and prioritize their needs and interests. Another option is to provide financial or technical support to each party that is willing to organize its own internal session for this purpose.

It is important for each party to be prepared to 'dialogue on how to dialogue' before proceeding to the issues at hand. By discussing these points through an inclusive and participatory process, including all relevant bodies and organs of the party, the dialogue becomes more institutionalized internally. Internal preparedness must also identify

any possible need for skills training of any individual, body or organ included in the dialogue.

The internal party preparedness strategy can be in writing, as this sometimes helps to give a participant the formal backing needed to represent his or her party successfully. Nevertheless, written consultation documents can also force participants to take their trenches, as they might be afraid to deviate from officially stated party lines. Any written internal party preparedness document should therefore deliberately explore multiple scenarios that allow a dialogue participant a level of flexibility during the dialogue.

12.6 Balancing long- and short-term processes
Internal party preparedness can be considered and supported by facilitators, and be viewed from a long- and short-term perspective. A long-term process is especially relevant at the start-up of a dialogue, when important longer-term topics are likely to be discussed. In this case, internal party preparedness consultations should spell out a party's expectations and wishes with regard to the desired long-term objectives (e.g. political reform

issues), the dialogue organization and internal rules of the game (e.g. decision-making structures or conflict resolution models) and any other points that the party feels should be reflected in the dialogue process.

At the same time, political parties can use internal preparedness consultations to get ready for a specific dialogue event or meetings on a specific topic. Through the preparation of a more short-term internal preparedness document, the party can formulate its position, interest and needs about specific issues and take into account changing circumstances and the dynamics of the day.

For instance, a party's views on specific provisions in a new constitution may depend on the result of discussions in other forums (e.g. forums on developments in a wider peace process). A case-by-case internal preparedness document could include questions about the history of the discussion, the party's position, the positions of other parties, the intended dialogue approach and the potential gains and losses for the party.

Findings
- Effective inter-party dialogue goes hand in hand with effective intra-party dialogue.
- Political parties need to prepare themselves for the dialogue before they join.
- Dialogue representatives will benefit from a clear, flexible mandate backed by the party leadership.
- Bridging the information gap between dialogue representatives and party leaders is essential to making dialogue work.
- Internal party consultations, possibly captured in a document, are a practical tool for enabling parties to unravel positions, interests, needs and values.
- Such a document might help parties to move away from a dialogue about positions only and include short- and long-term views.

Recommendations
- Facilitators should plan sufficient space and time for internal party reflection.
- Internal party preparedness consultations need to be promoted as they can help to prepare party positions and institutionalize the dialogue.

- Any written document capturing internal consultations should mention different alternatives to party positions, to allow the dialogue participants a level of compromise.

PART III: Inclusive dialogue

Chapter 13: Deciding which political parties to invite to the dialogue

Setting up a political party dialogue process is by nature a multiparty undertaking, as it involves at least two and, more often, multiple parties. Using a multiparty method can mean reaching out to all registered political parties, but if there are too many there may be no opportunity to have a meaningful discussion between players that truly matter. In reality setting up a dialogue therefore often involves choices about inclusion and exclusion (Carothers 2006: 118).

These choices can easily be perceived as politically motivated, especially when they are not well communicated. A facilitator may even come under fire for being biased, which can ultimately lead to a situation in which he/she becomes unable to play an impartial role. Good reputations get damaged and a dialogue process may not succeed for reasons that could have been avoided.

This risk can apply to both international and local facilitators. A relative outsider, for instance, may involve the wrong parties because of a lack of insight into the complexities of the political context. Facilitators who have been in a country for all of their lives may find it easy to 'feel' which parties are relevant and which are not, while at the same time failing to include the parties in their decision-making process over who to include or exclude, thus tainting their own impartiality.

Finally, sometimes the selection criteria are clear, but some of the relevant participants are simply unwilling to engage. Regardless of a facilitator's background, a critical question remains: how to define the 'right' parties, and how to engage them in a way that ensures legitimacy and serves the purpose of the dialogue?

13.1   Agreeing on transparent criteria

How to reach agreement on the selection of participants? Although context is important, some general best practices can be identified. It is important for a facilitator not to be persuaded to choose on behalf of the political parties. The ultimate selection should be made by the parties themselves and should be based on predefined criteria. These are preferably formulated in writing and publicly available, both for purposes of transparency and to create public support for the selection. To make these criteria as justifiable as possible, their formulation should link directly to the values and objectives of the dialogue, such as representation, inclusiveness and so on.

Therefore, it is important jointly and carefully to think through the party invitation or selection process, and consider the potentially positive and negative consequences the final choice may have for interparty relations. For instance, it may help to imagine how smaller but serious parties that represent distinct constituencies would feel if they were left out of a dialogue platform about national reform issues, or how some of the larger parties would feel if very small parties without popular backing were to be given an equal say in all decisions.

In helping parties come to agreement on the criteria, facilitators have an important role to play. They can develop different options for participation, all of which logically explain the relation between the criteria and the values and objectives of the dialogue, as well as their impact on the selection. Through bilateral meetings with parties, a facilitator can map the most and least preferred options of each party. That gives him or her greater opportunity to anticipate dissatisfaction and appease those who are likely to be excluded at an early stage.

Doing so enhances broad acceptance of the model that is ultimately chosen by the parties as a group.

In the end a balance needs to be found that is satisfying and justifiable to as many parties as possible. It is also important to keep in mind that the number and nature of parties can fluctuate significantly over time, for instance because of elections or revisions in political party regulations. Criteria that are perceived as 'right' at the start of a dialogue process can change over time, especially in cases where the party landscape is unstable or fluid.

As a minimum the criteria used when selecting parties need to be accepted by a broad range of parties in order to achieve an effective dialogue.

13.2. Participation criteria and considerations

As mentioned in the introduction to this Guide, the basic principle is that political party dialogue concerns dialogue between legally constituted or, failing that, publicly endorsed political parties and groups. There is however no single rule about which political parties to include or exclude, or specifying which criteria to use.

Nevertheless, a dialogue platform should generally aim to select its participating parties on the basis that they are as *representative* of the people as possible, and that they are *owners of the problems* that the dialogue discusses. In addition, the parties selected should be *serious* about achieving dialogue outcomes (rather than merely appeasing critics or seeking sitting allowances). Further, the number of parties around a dialogue table should allow for an *effective* dialogue. Finally, the parties should possess the personal *capacities* necessary for effective engagement in constructive discussions that can lead to consensus.

In reality, political parties often translate these more qualitative criteria into quantifiable thresholds that the dialogue platform can use as a formal justification for their selection. These more formal arguments depend on the local context, but can include a combination of the following criteria:

1. all parties that are formally registered;
2. only parties that have representation in parliament;
3. the main ruling and opposition parties;
4. all parties that participated in the last elections;
5. parties that have reached a certain national or regional electoral threshold;
6. party diversity and pluralism (e.g. ideological differences, new and old parties);
7. parties that represent ethnic, religions, regional or other minorities;
8. parties to the dialogue should represent almost 90 per cent of parliament;
9. parties with representation at the local as well as national level;
10. parties with acknowledgeable presence and influence in the country (e.g. as reflected in the media); and/or
11. in countries where public funding exists, parties that receive such funding.

A basic strategy is to engage all parties that are considered part of the cause of and/or the solution to the problem to be addressed through the dialogue. The purpose of the dialogue greatly influences the types of actors that need to be involved in the process and, consequently, which criteria will be appropriate to use.

For instance, in cases where a political party law is to be developed it makes sense to invite a larger range of political parties, whereas if building trust is the dialogue's main purpose, those parties that

are primarily responsible for creating inter-party tensions should be on board. A country's political context, party landscape and problems consequently all become influential factors when deciding upon the 'right' parties to invite to a dialogue.

For example, within a highly polarized context, it will make a difference if the purpose of an inter-party dialogue is building trust between the two main established parties, as opposed to the exchange of ideas on a new political parties law for which the opinions of smaller or new parties also need to be taken into account. In the first scenario at least 'the main ruling and opposition parties' would need to be on board (with smaller parties becoming involved later), while in the second scenario 'all registered parties' would need to be on board in order to ensure inclusivity.

In addition, serious attempts should be made to inform parties that are excluded from the dialogue of the reasons for their exclusion and, where possible, obtain their agreement with the selection criteria. Even in situations where small parties have little relevance for political decision making, their ability to make noise and discredit a dialogue process if the selection criteria are not clearly justifiable can be considerable.

13.3 Engaging with excluded parties

If a decision is made not to work with all political parties, the question of how to engage with those parties that have been excluded still needs to be resolved. As mentioned in the previous section, parties that are not included (e.g. non-parliamentary parties) may not agree with the criteria used or may feel deprived of a chance to influence decision-making processes.

This feeling of exclusion can lead to public outcry in the media or accusations of elite politics, both of which risk discrediting the dialogue platform. This can be exacerbated in cases when a political party dialogue process is linked to financial benefits (e.g. sitting allowances or capacity-building programmes), leaving parties feeling as if they have been deprived of extra financial or technical support.

More positively, smaller or extra-parliamentary parties might be considered crucial mediators or intelligent contributors that can help the dialogue reach consensus more easily. Finally, some smaller parties may be expected to grow in both size and influence, as is sometimes the case with new parties established by veteran politicians. It does not necessarily make sense to exclude well-respected political figures for mere numerical reasons.

One option is to allow for different levels of status in the process for different parties. The Tanzania Centre for Democracy (TCD), for instance, invites extra-parliamentary parties to join dialogues and gives them 'ex-officio' or observer status. CMD-Malawi has also involved non-parliamentary parties by giving them the opportunity to be represented in the dialogue as a 'party bloc' with a rotating presidency.

13.4 Weighing criteria and party willingness

In practice, in many contexts it can be hard to determine which criteria to use when selecting dialogue participants. Further compounding the problem, parties that have been identified as the right parties may not be willing to engage in a particular dialogue. This is usually a result either of the way the political playing field is shaped, or the ways in which parties deal with the existing power balance.

A crowded political party landscape, the influence of strong political movements, the emergence of new parties, the actions of rebel or armed groups or the unwillingness of a particular party are all factors that can make criteria problematic. Each of these situations is discussed in turn below.

Dialogue in contexts involving a large number of political parties

Inclusivity is one of the main guiding principles for those involved in dialogue processes. However, in some contexts a large number of registered parties crowd the political landscape, either because of a natural progression or because it is lucrative to establish a 'briefcase' party (e.g. a party with just one member that has been formed for financial gain). While many parties will be qualified and willing to join, from a practical viewpoint it may be necessary to limit the number of parties in a dialogue in order to make it work.

One argument against opening the dialogue to all parties is that a greater range of voices increases the probability of a diffused rather than a focused debate. Specifically, it is argued that time spent listening to what (sometimes politically less significant) parties have to say means less time for a serious and open dialogue between the main political adversaries.

Another negative side effect of setting up a broad dialogue platform is that it can lead to bloated logistical costs and put a strain on the (often limited) funds available. For instance, imagine the money needed to cover lunch, dinner, accommodation and transport to the dialogue venue for up to 40 or 60 parties!

On the other hand, a broadly-based dialogue between all registered political parties—regardless of size, strength or capacity—has the potential to lead to positive outcomes. For instance, involving smaller parties that never get to speak out in parliament or push for a more democratic political system can be a very empowering experience.

Facilitators faced with this situation should take advantage of available dialogue techniques, designed to accommodate small to very large groups. For instance, *Democratic Dialogue: A Handbook for Practitioners* provides a list of specific process options and tools for different group sizes (from eight to 4,000 participants), distinguishing between exploration and awareness raising, relationship building, deliberation and decision-making purposes (International IDEA 2007, Appendix 2).

Box 13.1.

Mali's diverse party landscape

Mali's political landscape is very fragmented, with around 120 registered political parties, reflecting the diversity of groups and geographical interests that exist in the country. CMDID was established in 2008 and consists of an impressive 52 member political parties (13 of which are represented in parliament). Most of the remaining 68 parties were no longer active and never chose to participate. Involving each of these actors in the same way would make it very difficult to develop a multiparty dialogue and capacity-building programme. The CMDID party board

therefore now has ten members: the five major parties have one representative each, both parliamentary coalitions have two, and the coalition of non-parliamentary parties has one member. The board also has two funding and support streams. The first provides bilateral support to five parties with representation in parliament as well as two parliamentary groups (essentially coalitions of smaller parties). The second is a multiparty capacity-building component intended for all member parties. A small budget for extra-parliamentary parties is used to reach out to these parties and avoid frustration, which might lead to spoiler tactics.

Dialogue in contexts involving political movements

Sometimes it is hard to differentiate between political parties and other political actors. For instance, a broad based citizens' or political movement can emerge as a powerful player, as was the case with the MAS in Bolivia, which evolved from a movement of coca growers and consolidated grass-roots, social, economic and indigenous groups into a more institutionalized political organization.

Engaging with a political movement can be problematic, as its lack of a clear organizational structure can make its internal functioning and hierarchies difficult to understand. However, even if a political movement does not have a 'traditional' organizational party structure, if it has representation in parliament and the ability to perform traditional party functions it plays a role in the political game. Consequently, it is appropriate to provide these types of political movements with a place at the dialogue table in order to reach effective agreements on political issues.

Dialogue in contexts involving newly elected parties

Engaging with political parties requires a different approach when a country holds elections for the first time, for example, due to a democratic system replacing an authoritarian regime. In these situations a plethora of parties and groupings might not yet comprehend what it means to act as a political party within a democratic system of governance. In young democracies where formal political parties have not yet been allowed or established, as was the case in Egypt before its first elections in decades, it can be hard to judge which parties or movements are legit-

imate players. This type of fluidity, complexity and sensitivity demands flexibility, patience and a careful approach.

Facilitators working to establish dialogues in these contexts may face difficulties in establishing an accurate overview of the political party landscape (e.g. understanding who the main party counterparts and competitors are, or recognizing how old and new political forces relate to each other). The context can have many grey zones. Parties may be ill-defined not only in terms of their support base or views but also in terms of their historic roles and current allegiances.

This means that, as long as the political system continues to be in rapid flux, it is important not to rush the selection of dialogue participants or even the dialogue as such. Instead, facilitators could consider supporting newly established (as well as any older) parties through training (e.g. on election and campaign management skills, the use of different media platforms or constitutional processes). Bringing parties together in this way can help create a foundation of trust for later dialogue, while at the same time gaining greater insight into the parties and their individual actors.

Dialogue in contexts involving armed groups or rebel movements

Another situation in which the line between political parties and other political players can become blurry is when armed groups or rebel movements emerge as powerful political forces. This dilemma becomes most visible in periods of political transition, for example, in post-conflict contexts, after a peace deal has been signed.

In post-conflict contexts three broad types of political parties can be distinguished: (a) those that already existed before the war; (b) those that emerged out of former warring factions, rebel groups or militias; and (c) those established in the post-conflict era (ten Hoove and Scholtbach 2008).

In these contexts dialogue between armed groups, in some cases aspiring to become political parties, and the established parties can serve to facilitate a transition to political normalcy, for instance, by formulating their views on the role of political organ-

izations in the new democratic dispensation. This kind of dialogue might even occur before the armed group has formally transformed into a political party.

Existing political parties, however, may have valid reasons for not wishing to engage with armed groups or rebel movements (e.g. an objection to their violent nature or the fact that rebel movements refuse to abide by democratic standards). In turn, the (former) armed groups might not acknowledge the other parties as legitimate entities, thus making a constructive discussion virtually impossible. In these situations a facilitator may need to consider alternative methods of engagement. One option is to support ways of opening channels of communication between political parties and armed groups or rebel movements at a different level, outside the political parties' dialogue platform.

Box 13.2.

Nepal: engaging with actors considered rebel groups

International IDEA has been working in Nepal since 2004, initially offering its State of Democracy tool to enable citizens to assess the country's democracy. Since the rise of the People's Movement for Democracy and the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in 2006, IDEA has supported national actors in the process of constitution building by providing knowledge, facilitating dialogues and promoting public participation. Part of this process was a dialogue with aspiring political actors. In the pre-CPA context in 2005, laws that did not allow parties to meet made it challenging to conduct activities with political parties. However, IDEA staff reached out to parties inside the country as well as the Maoists, who were then considered rebel groups, outside the country. Engagement with the Maoists was to a certain extent a dilemma, as they were no longer considered part of the 'regular' party landscape and because the security situation during the war made it difficult to get in contact with their leaders. IDEA's early engagement—mostly involving talks to explain the mandate and role of the Institute—took place behind the scenes but played a positive role in developing good relations with the Maoists when they later became an official political party. Alongside attempts to liaise with all political parties, including the Maoists, IDEA worked during this transition phase to support the setting up of a civil society dialogue.

Although there is much overlap between political party dialogue and peace negotiation/mediation processes—especially when parties are emerging out of former warring factions—both are still widely thought of as separate fields of work and often require specific expertise (e.g. peace negotiations can involve the position of former combatants or amnesty measures). A cautious approach is therefore required. A great deal of literature on the role of mediation and negotiation in (post-) conflict situations is available (e.g. International IDEA 1998).

Dialogue in contexts where one party blocks the process

Dialogue is only possible when parties wish to be engaged in it. However, in some situations, one or more parties may show no interest at all in an inter-party dialogue. This lack of willingness means than individual parties can block an anticipated dialogue process.

For a dialogue facilitator, in cases where not all parties want to join it may be very tempting just to go ahead. It may be possible to support opposition parties in their dialogue, for instance if they wish to develop solid, comprehensive opposition proposals. However, the success and sustainability of the dialogue often depends on the participation of both opposition and ruling parties. Especially in cases where the lack of trust between political parties is among the main issues of concern, party inclusivity is a dominant criterion.

Engaging all parties requires time, energy and most of all patience. One way to try to resolve a situation in which one party does not want to participate is to request a meeting with the party leader, party whip or opposing factions, stressing the fact that all parties are invited, and explaining the consequences of a party not participating. However, just adducing the party's responsibility will not always do the trick. In fact, a ruling party might view blocking the dialogue as a strategy that gives it an advantage in its political dealings with the opposition in the public realm.

Instead of taking 'no' as a definite answer, a facilitator should first unpack the reasons why a party does not wish to participate: is it afraid to expose its weaknesses? Does it see political threats in cooperating? Does it not trust the facilitator? Answering these questions can help facilitators explore alternative options that may help to convince the party to join. The more advantages taking part in a dialogue process has to offer, the more likely it is that parties will take part.

Facilitators can also try to focus on tensions the party may be facing internally. For instance, if there is disagreement about who should be part of the dialogue, consider inviting representatives from the different factions. This is one example of the facilitator's need to negotiate and compromise at the same time.

Other approaches to convincing unwilling parties can include involving other parties or other individuals or institutions that the party trusts. The party could also be offered observer status at first, so that it can decide whether to join the dialogue later. In order to lower the threshold, the first dialogue meeting could be changed to a 'pre-meeting' to stress that no decisions will be made, that everything is informal and that the party does not need to commit itself to anything.

Facilitators can also be more careful about involving reform-minded factions within the party, although this also has its risks in terms of ensuring broad commitment in the longer run. Finally, convincing an unwilling party often simply requires patience, perseverance and time—in fact, it can sometimes take years rather than months. During this time, the temptation and pressure to simply exclude pessimists and continue with a less inclusive group of willing parties can be difficult to resist, although this option should be avoided as long as realistically possible. See also chapter 10 on trust building.

Findings
- Using a multiparty method often means reaching out to all registered political parties.
- In many cases, however, choices need to be made about inclusion and exclusion.
- Potentially complex contexts include countries with a large number of parties, with reluctant or new parties, or with the presence of citizen movements or armed groups.

Recommendations
- A basic guideline is to engage all parties that are considered part of the cause of and/or the solution to the problem to be addressed through the dialogue.
- Facilitators need to encourage parties to use criteria for inclusion that are transparent, broadly accepted and conducive to an effective dialogue.
- Beware of spoilers: consider strategies for involving excluded political parties in line with their size and capacities.

Chapter 14: Choosing political party dialogue representatives

Deciding which persons from within a party should be invited to participate is just as important as settling the question of which political parties should be part of the political dialogue. Identifying the 'right people' is not always as straightforward as one would hope.

For instance, some party participants may be too senior (and therefore too busy) to be regularly available, while others might be too junior to make decisions. Some may have a strong profile in the media but lack influence within the party, while others may have support from within the party but lack the right personal skills for dialogue with opponents.

Other factors may influence the decision as to who is the best person to take part in the dialogue. Is the topic of the dialogue highly political or more technical? Does it deal with a large-scale democratic reform agenda or a local political dispute? Are the main counterparts long-term political enemies or on good terms?

It goes without saying that, in a dialogue, personalities matter—people can make or break the process. At the same time, political parties as institutions need to be reassured that their ideology and programme as well as their political values and viewpoints are going to be safe in the hands of their delegate(s) at the dialogue table.

In advising or talking with parties about who are the right people to represent the party, a facilitator will therefore need to consider political parties as institutions (i.e. by determining a person's position within the party) as well as the individuals that make up the party (i.e. by assessing the personality that this person brings to the table). This chapter presents some practical advice to help facilitators complete this important task.

14.1 Respecting party hierarchy

Striking a balance between institutional and individual approaches is not always easy. However, one helpful ground rule is that a dialogue process between parties should strengthen, not undermine, political party structures. This means that it is important to respect and work in line with party hierarchies, for instance by accepting that it is ultimately up to the party leadership to decide who it wishes to send.

For facilitators in turn, it is essential to understand the party structures and know who is represented in the various party organs, so as to be better able to advise the leadership on who would be best placed for a dialogue platform. This is especially true in relation to other parties: if some parties wish to send their secretary general, it is likely that other parties would automatically consider someone at the same level.

Dialogue participants will always expect to meet peers in the dialogue, as opposed to participants from a much lower or higher level within another party. However, party size also counts. The president of a ruling party, who is often also the head of state, cannot really be considered the peer of an extra-parliamentary party president. One therefore often sees situations where, for example, the president of a small party and a senior MP from the ruling party act as dialogue interlocutors.

Each individual context informs what combination of participants makes an equal company. Participants' formal hierarchical position, their informal networks within the party and the size of the party are among the factors that can influence a party's choice of representatives.

Depending on the topic and context, party representatives may come from the national leadership committee or executive body (made up of party presidents, chairs, secretaries general and other key staff), from auxiliary groups such as youth or women's wings, or from regional and local party branches.

Regardless of the mode of representation chosen, the party hierarchy should explore a feedback mechanism to enhance party ownership. For more information on internal party communication and preparation, see chapter 12.

14.2 Appreciating informal relations within parties

Formal organizational structures are not necessarily the same as the real power structures with a party: these informal relations are usually hidden beneath the surface and harder for a facilitator to gain insight into. Informal talks with politicians from various party bodies, as well as other political players or outside observers, may help when seeking insights into who the real 'movers and shakers' are.

As one facilitator described it, it is important to understand the party workings and to 'know the creature you are dealing with'. It may therefore be useful to distinguish between those politicians who should sit around the dialogue table, and those within (and outside) the party who can help to persuade these politicians to join (e.g. those close to the inner circle of the leadership).

> *'The impact of the dialogue relies to a large extent on the influence of the people directly involved. Therefore it is important that the representatives are political allies of the leader.'*
> Dinanath Sharma
> Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist)

Informal relations can sometimes be found in unexpected places. In Malawi, for instance, a participant was found to be very influential because she was said to have the ear of the first lady.

It is also crucial to know the different party wings and factions, be aware of the main intra-party rifts and understand the interpersonal dynamics. For instance, while a secretary general may be the

formal focal point for a political party, he/she may not always hold highest de facto decision-making power or political clout. The person actually pulling the strings could in fact be an influential figure acting outside the formal party structure.

As these internal power structures have a tendency to change, either rapidly or over time, the mapping exercise undertaken at the beginning of a dialogue process should become a continuous process of engagement. By better understanding the informal relations within parties, a facilitator will be better able to judge which party factions to engage, as well as how certain combinations of party representatives and personalities will impact the dialogue.

Nevertheless, as was mentioned earlier, the informal influence of individual politicians should never mean that formal party structures are circumvented, let alone undermined. A dialogue facilitator should aim to find a balance between those that hold formal and those that hold de facto decision-making powers in a party. In reality, this may mean that each party is asked to delegate more than one representative. Doing so may have another benefit, which is that it creates the possibility to include representatives of different party factions. To make the dialogue sustainable, a facilitator should aim to get a party's commitment across its entire internal spectrum, which means including those who are traditionally sceptical of inter-party cooperation.

Box 14.1.

Intra-party rifts in Burundi

'In Burundi, within the ruling party some members might feel more militant than others. For the sake of the dialogue, it has been important to try to get both groups involved and be as inclusive as possible. This is also necessary for any other party. Some people may ask why we work with both the cooperative and the inflexible people, but it is important to also offer them the opportunity to talk and change. Don't push them aside. Everybody needs to be involved in unity and peace building.'
Fabien Nsengimana
Coordinator, Burundi Leadership Training Program (BLTP), Burundi

14.3 Agreeing on the party leadership's role

Party leaders can take on two roles. They can take part in the dialogue themselves (i.e. as a secretary general or party president) or identify and decide on someone else who can speak on behalf of the party.

The advantage of holding a dialogue involving party leaders is that these politicians have the most influencing and decision-making power. The potential downside is that they are often busy, and may be less open to exploring options beyond the official party line. Further, when those around the dialogue table are also ultimate decision makers and then get into a conflict, there will be little room to escalate the discussion to higher party organs for conflict resolution. A facilitator will benefit from always having a contingency option available that provides alternative personalities other than those around the dialogue table.

This means that, while the highest level of commitment comes from the leadership, on a day-to-day level it may be more useful to work with a second group of more hands-on, 'ready-to-cooperate' party representatives. However, whether or not the leadership chooses to participate, they should always remain engaged and updated about the dialogue in order to maintain commitment at the highest level.

In order to make the dialogue work it is important that the leadership defines the level and mode of engagement. One option that allows them to stay informed and involved, even if only at crucial decision-making moments, is to define specific communication channels or procedures, including briefing sessions. For example, the political parties that established the TCD in Tanzania agreed that the heads of parties would meet at least twice a year through a body called the Summit (see also chapter 8, section 2).

14.4 Establishing a dialogue team

Another approach is to set up two teams: a 'party dialogue team' comprising the second layer of party representatives (i.e. the regular dialogue participants) and a 'reference team' made up of the party leaders. The reference team can continue to play an important role in monitoring the participants' activities throughout the dialogue process and can, if needed, bring in new delegates.

Establishing a small party dialogue team can be useful, because effective dialogue and the building of inter-party trust tend to require consistent representation and participation. Situations where parties continually send different officials to the dialogue sessions should be avoided as this often complicates the overall dialogue process and denies the process continuity and consistency.

Working with a party dialogue team also helps to avoid situations whereby a party representative engaged in inter-party talks monopolizes his/her role on behalf of the party and to mitigate the risk that views expressed in the dialogue become disconnected from the party stance. Facilitators should always try to balance and avoid both losing institutional memory and monopolization of information.

A facilitator should have regular access to a variety of party representatives (certainly in larger parties that are characterized by factionalism) and working with a party dialogue team can make this easier. Facilitators can also suggest alternative or additional representatives, for instance if a new technical dialogue topic requires a specific experience, expertise or level of authority.

Box 14.2.

Involve the party: don't isolate a particular leader

'Make sure that the whole political party is responsible for the topics discussed, instead of just one individual politician. In other words, avoid isolating one leader but instead involve a broader group of party representatives in the start-up of a dialogue process, for instance by involving a central committee or the national executive committee in the talks. This can be a challenge as some of these bodies may consist of over 50 people, but if done well and with a strong representative group, it will give reform-minded politicians involved in the dialogue process a wider support base within the party and a mandate to work on joint activities like exchange visits or dialogues initiatives. This "groundwork" is crucial.'
Dialogue facilitator
Africa

14.5 Appreciating gender equity and diversity

A dilemma often faced by political party dialogue facilitators is that, on the one hand, they have to single out a group of party power holders and decision makers who reflect political power, while on the other they must encourage the creation of a dialogue that is inclusive and representative of the diversity of a country's population.

This is especially true when it comes to the participation of women, who make up 50 per cent of any given country's population but mostly remain under-represented in politics, especially at the party leadership level. Significant differences in gender representation, as well as in other areas such as diversity in age, ethnicity or class, should be taken into account when the topic of dialogue participants comes up, and concerns regarding gender inequality or lack of diversity should as much as possible be addressed or balanced. More information on this topic can be found in chapter 15.

14.6 Defining the profiles of party delegates

If someone below the leadership level participates in more day-to-day dialogue or technical working meetings, party leaders should agree on who these party representatives are. The facilitator can also make suggestions and help in making a pre-selection of suitable dialogue participants with the right profile.

This is considered better practice than asking the party to appoint a 'random' representative, because some parties could send a delegate out of a wish to comply with the request, instead of actively looking for candidates with the right expertise and qualifications to participate in the dialogue. Respected politicians are generally considered to be suitable participants if they:

- have a relevant position within the party they represent;
- belong to the layer of trusted party members and are close to the party leadership;
- have significant political experience;
- have a clear interest in or expertise in the subject;
- have the intelligence and capacity to conduct a dialogue;
- act as reform-minded forces within the party, or at least are not there merely to obstruct the process;

- are responsive to gender and diversity issues within their party;
- are not sworn enemies of other dialogue participants;
- are able to work with different factions within a party;
- are willing to take up an active role in the dialogue process;
- possess a generally positive and constructive mindset; and
- have the ability to represent the party to the outside world.

In addition, and as mentioned above, party size should be factored in so that all participants can be said to hold similar power not only within their party, but also in society in general.

14.7 Engaging new leaders and party delegates

A facilitated dialogue process that runs for years will ultimately be affected by internal party elections or national elections. Consequently, a party's leaders, as well as its representatives in the dialogue, may change. New leaders and potential party delegates may therefore need to become acquainted with the dialogue process in order to appreciate dialogue as a way to look beyond party lines.
This process of 'the changing of the guard' can require time and patience, especially when a new leader or delegate is not as supportive as his or her predecessor. For instance, a dialogue may be the legacy of one party chair, while a new chair wishes to take a different route. For a facilitator, this implies a continuous duty to build up relations, explain the workings of the dialogue platform to newcomers and where possible facilitate them—for instance, by ensuring that the dialogue agenda also reflects their vision.

The challenge is to carry this out in such a way that newcomers not only see the benefit of the platform but also feel a sense of ownership over something that was initiated before their time. A facilitator must anticipate such changes by continuously engaging with wider networks of politicians. Members of these networks might become involved in the dialogue at a later stage, either through direct participation or else via internal party discussions that concern the party's commitment to the dialogue.

A facilitator should also realize that a critical person outside the dialogue could cause just as much damage to a party's involvement within a dialogue platform when the dialogue is discussed at party national executive committee meetings. He/she could therefore make efforts to reach out to critics or hardliners within the party.

Some facilitators underline the importance of continuity in the members of the dialogue team, and of minimal changes in the persons representing the political parties, as excessive rotation of members undermines the level of trust between individuals and can cause temporary delays or setbacks.

In other contexts, however, changing personalities can have a positive impact on the dialogue; new people may bring in new energy and ideas. A facilitator will need to continuously assess which choice fits best, and anticipate the changing dynamics and positions because of national or intra-party elections.

Findings
- In selecting participants, facilitators should distinguish between institutional and individual approaches.
- Dialogue participants are either party leaders taking part at the dialogue's highest governance level or representatives appointed by the leadership.
- The party leadership should always be informed and engaged with the dialogue forum.
- Facilitators can assist the process of pre-selecting dialogue participants with the right profile.

Recommendations
- Facilitators need to respect formal party structures and hierarchies, while appreciating informal relations within a party.
- Parties need to agree on the party leadership's role and consider establishing a dialogue team.
- Concerns regarding gender inequality or lack of diversity should as far as possible be addressed or balanced.
- Facilitators need to invest time in involving newly elected party leaders and delegates, and seek commitments from decision makers who are not directly involved.

Chapter 15: Equal participation and representation of women and men

Women and men's equal political participation is recognized in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international conventions as a fundamental tenet of any democratic system of governance (see box 15.2). Taken together, these frameworks recognize the ability of women and men to work as equals in engaging and shaping the development of their societies.

While this recognition is rarely disputed as a statement of principle, in practice across the world men and women experience inequalities in many areas of life, including within political parties. For instance, structural and institutional barriers inherent to the processes and methods for the selection, identification and nomination of candidates for elected positions often exclude women.

Because of this practice, political arenas and party leadership positions continue to be dominated by men and unfortunately all too often political party dialogue forums as well. Political parties are, however, still the main channel for equal political participation, as well as a privileged vehicle for the resolution of social conflicts and for representing women's demands and interests (Llanos and Sample 2008: 7).

Consequently, concerted efforts should be made to prevent political dialogue platforms from becoming male-dominated and to include women.

15.1 Women's participation in a political party dialogue context

For facilitators, the specific tension involved in improving women's participation in dialogue often lies in the need to bring both the party leadership (as the main power holders) and women politicians (as a group under-represented at the political leader-ship level) into conversations about how to change the political and party systems and processes.

This can be particularly delicate for a party's power holders because the change is likely to involve a potential reformulation of their power, both within and outside the party. Facilitators may find that this means they need to balance respect for the formal party structures and hierarchies against the need to draw the parties' attention to the importance of equality between men and women within the dialogue.

This dilemma presents potential difficulties at every step of the dialogue. It poses challenges in terms of framing the purpose of the dialogue to reflect the concerns of both women and men equally; in assembling a representative and inclusive dialogue group; and in designing and implementing the dialogue process in a way that effectively manages the issues that arise from bringing together people from very different positions within the party (International IDEA 2007: 154).

Facilitators can argue in favour of gender equality and do their best to foster a change in attitude, for instance, so that the parties and their leadership do not see women's participation as a threat to their positions but as a way to strengthen the ways in which parties function. Indeed, facilitators can make efforts to convince parties that, in the longer term, they will become truly representative of at least half of the population; that women's participation allows them and their parties to appeal to women voters and enhances the chances of electoral success; and, most importantly, that they face a democratic imperative to do so.

Another critical reason for including more women in a dialogue is that they are able to articulate different experiences and perspectives on societal issues, and that these experiences help build sustainable consensus on the issues at hand. In other words, the process and the outcome will benefit from both men and women taking part in the dialogue. Sharing information and engaging in dialogue create awareness and enable participants to unravel concerns and find ways to address them.

Those involved in political party dialogue processes should ensure that they take into account equality between men and women in all policy and reform initiatives. They should also ensure equal representation and participation of participants within the dialogue—a critical minority of at least one-third of one gender is strongly recommended—and closely link the dialogue to the relevant external women's groups and caucuses to allow for cross-fertilization.

15.2 An agenda for inclusive politics

A dialogue platform can be a useful space for parties to discuss the roles of women and men in politics. A dialogue can focus on at least three levels of inclusivity: the role of women and men within political parties; the role of women and men within political institutions, including parliament, cabinet or ministries; and the role of women and men in society.

Figure 15.1.

Levels at which equal participation of men and women can be realized
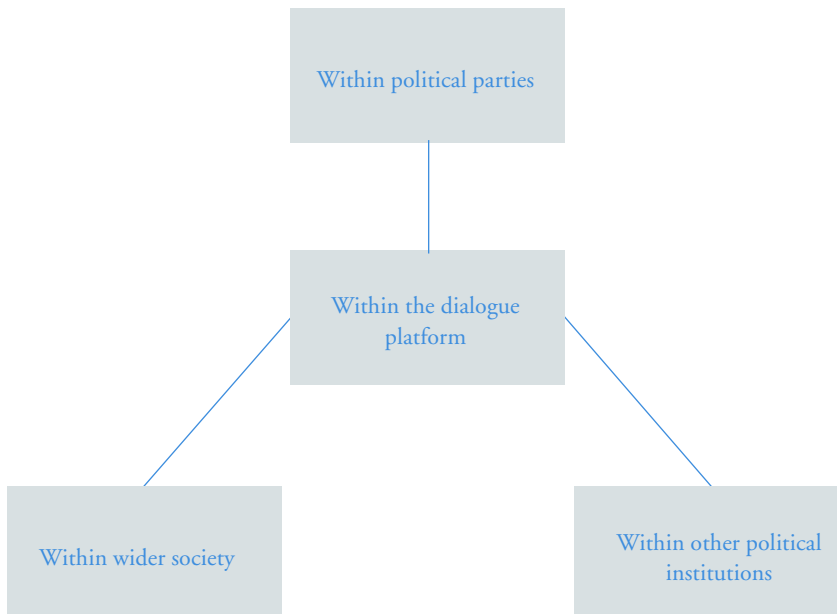
Starting with the first level, parties can use the dialogue to review their internal party structures and regulations with regard to gender, and formulate joint actions at the party and national levels to address the situation. These actions could take the form of discussing comparative knowledge on internal party rules and regulations (e.g. reviewing gender-sensitive language), party structures (e.g. different leadership and decision-making roles or the role of women's wings) and political party systems (e.g. how candidate nomination and selection processes can influence gender balance).

Some parties may not be keen to discuss their internal affairs and problems with other parties. Nevertheless, sharing experiences and ways of overcoming obstacles can be of great assistance to parties, and may also create peer pressure in living up to gender pledges made in the dialogue. A facilitator can highlight these positive aspects.

A political party dialogue can also, directly or indirectly, focus on the roles of women and men in political institutions, which are often highly dependent on the national legal frameworks (i.e. constitutions or political party laws) that govern the selection or appointment of those within these institutions.

'In the Malawian dialogue platform, each party is asked to ensure that at least one out of three representatives is a woman. Not all parties comply, however. Informally, Malawi has what they call a PhD ('Pull Her Down') culture. Women in politics are too often seen as morale boosters. In some cases you see female politicians expected to dance in party meetings to entertain the males.'
Ann Maganga
Programme Officer, Centre for Multiparty Democracy, Malawi

Frank discussions about differences in position and status between men and women—for instance, as part of the process of developing a new election bill—are significant not only for the fact that they foster the inclusion of women in dialogue processes, but also for their future inclusion in the domestic political and legal order itself. Similarly, political party dialogue can touch on the role of men and women in society, for instance when discussing public or socio-economic policies.

Inter-party agreements are one of the most widespread and effective practices women can use to promote the discussion, consensus and approval of measures favouring their rights. For instance, women in Latin America have realized that isolated efforts can often be easily diluted and that there are issues—beyond a party's or group's ideology or interests—that unite them and require the development of common platforms. They use at least three types of linkages to this end: agreements among women parliamentarians, between women activists and between women activists and civil society (Llanos and Sample 2008).

Box 15.1.

Ranking of Colombian political parties in terms of equality of women and men

In Colombia, an inter-party dialogue was set up to deal with gender equity issues. This dialogue generated discussion on a quota law and facilitated the definition of gender indicators adopted by all the parties. These indicators permitted a 'ranking' of parties, allowing them to see which one was most gender friendly, thus creating peer pressure. Ranking occurred in three dimensions, dealing with the organizational, electoral and programmatic sensitivity of parties. The instrument was the result of a consultative process with experts and validations by political parties and political movements. The participation of the latter in all stages of the process was considered of vital importance to promote ownership. The same ranking then functioned as input for constructive dialogue and work on the subject.

The position of women and men in parties, political institutions and society can be equally affected by the political parties' positive or negative policies on gender equality and women's empowerment, as articulated in the media or in informal promises to the general public. Where a disconnect occurs between what political leaders promise and agree to on paper and what they actually deliver, a political party dialogue can help in monitoring the implementation of previous commitments.

Box 15.2.

Understanding the legal framework and root causes of inequalities

Facilitators can provide opportunities for parties to improve their understanding of international human rights frameworks, and how these provisions are implemented in their own country.

- The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), which recognizes, in article 21, the right of all men and women to participate in the political system of their country;
- the Convention on the Political Rights of Women (1952) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966), both of which reaffirm the right to participate in public and political life without discrimination;
- the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW, 1979) and the Beijing Platform for Action (an outcome of the 1995 United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women), both of which call for strategic action to end inequality between men and women and the sharing of power and decision making at all levels;
- United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (passed in 2000), which urges UN member states to increase women's representation at all decision-making levels in institutions, and in mechanisms for the prevention, management and resolution of conflict; and
- the Millennium Development Goals (2000), especially goal number 3: 'Promote gender equality and empower women'.

Even in the most developed countries, gender equality in politics is far from being achieved in spite of the accession of these countries to the relevant international covenants. While it is important that political party leaderships are informed about international human rights and legal instruments against women's discrimination, facilitators should also be aware of the roots of the phenomenon, which go deeper than the lack of such information.

Understanding the deeper, historical legacies of women's political marginalization in each context also helps in order to mitigate expectations that the problem can be easily overcome. To identify the constraints and opportunities for defining courses of action and gender strategies, it is important to understand the current state of women's representation and participation in political parties as well

as the factors that determine the parties' degree of commitment and responses to specific gender demands (Roza, Llanos and Garzón de la Roza 2011).

15.3 Fostering gender equality within the dialogue

In addition to developing a dialogue agenda that includes discussions of gender disparities in external frameworks, parties should also agree from the outset on how to ensure women's participation within the dialogue forum. As explained in chapter 14, participants in a dialogue forum are usually chosen by their party and its leadership, and tend to come from positions with influence and decision-making power within the party. As women are generally under-represented at the party leadership level, many political party dialogue platforms typically include more men than women at the dialogue table.

This situation can be avoided by reaching inter-party agreement on ways to create more equal participation on the part of men and women in the dialogue. This agreement could include a dialogue strategy for including and reaching out to women—for instance, by inviting representatives from party women's wings, or by creating a mixed space for dialogue (see section 15.4 for some options). Once consensus has been reached, this agreement can be formalized and made part of the dialogue platform's MoU or constitution.

It is also important to distinguish between women's participation and women's *inclusive* participation. In some cases, women might be represented numerically in the dialogue but do not enjoy the inclusive space and opportunity to participate in and contribute to a dialogue. Facilitators should therefore ensure that the dialogue's rules and procedures (see chapter 9 on the rules of the game) are conducive to women's full participation.

15.4 Mixed spaces, gender and special women's groups

Parties wishing to involve women politicians in the dialogue more actively will first look at the specifics of the context they find themselves in and consult with key women politicians or spokespersons within their respective parties to think through different options. Three approaches that have been utilized by parties in practice are outlined below.

Create a mixed space for dialogue

Parties can agree to a mixed space of dialogue whereby both male and female representatives attend the dialogue. Depending on the number of party representatives present in the platform, the forum can commit itself to certain percentages; for instance, if each party sends three representatives to the dialogue they can undertake to send at least one of a different gender.[24]

Other formulae include always inviting a representative from the other gender from the same rank (i.e. male leaders bringing their female counterparts within the party, and vice versa) or always including a representative of the party women's wing. The advantage of this kind of set-up is that women and men are present at the same table and have equal opportunities to influence the course of the dialogue discussions.

A possible risk is that parties may agree to a certain formula but do not act in the spirit of the agreement and, for instance, appoint women who have no real influence within the party. If this happens, a facilitator can initiate bilateral discussions with the party concerned to see how this situation can be changed for the better. It is a facilitator's role to make sure that all those appointed by parties to participate in a dialogue are truly representative of the party, have a strong mandate and can make a meaningful contribution. This goes equally for men and women.

'In Mali, all the party Secretary Generals are men. As a result, CMDID's strategic plan pays specific attention to equal participation and the issue of women's participation: each party agreed to send two leaders—one man and one woman—to take part in the interparty dialogue. CMDID also assists the parties' national party bureaus to become more sensitive to women's issues and reinforce capacity building of women through leadership training.'
Soumano Moumouni
Executive Director, Centre for Multiparty
Democracy (CMDID), Mali

Establish a gender reference group

A second option is to set up a special gender reference group composed of both women and men, alongside the regular political party dialogue forum. This group can be established as part of the dialogue structure or more independently to bring politicians together, define common goals, inform themselves about the laws and internal party regulations and provide suggestions for improving equality within the parties.

Specific tasks of the gender reference group can be to offer gender perspectives on the political party dialogue agenda and to answer questions that come out of the dialogue. Having a gender reference group can also make it easier to link up with other civil society groups in society that support the country's broader women's agenda.

'Women only' groups and parliamentary caucuses

A multiparty 'women only' group can be useful in contexts where women politicians feel uncomfortable discussing their concerns in the presence of men, for instance because of cultural sensitivities, or because they want to avoid accusations of undermining party discipline—sometimes the women's agenda goes against a certain political party line, for instance when discussing new electoral systems.

These women's dialogue groups can act as incubators for more mainstream dialogue. Sometimes women find themselves in agreement with women from other parties on topics that concern women, thereby providing a natural opportunity for dialogue. In other contexts, party leaders view women's issues as less sensitive dialogue openers and are therefore more easily inclined to support the multiparty dialogue initiative.

A facilitator should be aware of these opportunities and make use of them where they exist. The risk in setting up a special women's group, however, is that the role of women politicians may remain associated with (or even limited to) 'women's issues'. The existence of a women's group can even be used as an excuse not to bother with women's issues in the mainstream dialogue.

Because this group should never be used to sideline women from the regular dialogue forum, a 'women only' dialogue platform should never be the sole method used when seeking to achieve gender equality. In a number of countries, different kinds of women's groups exist parallel to each other, and

each can serve a different purpose. For example, in Ecuador, women both from parties and from civil society set up a formal network, the Red de Mujeres Políticas del Ecuador (Women's Political Network of Ecuador) focused on supporting women in leadership positions, while an informal multiparty women's group aimed to strengthen the position and visibility of women politicians within their own parties.

Women's caucuses in parliament are also built around the idea that women from different parties have particular concerns in common. In countries where these caucuses exist, they can be considered as an institutionalized dialogue mechanism.

Caucuses that focus on defending the rights of women sometimes face criticism from within their respective parties with regard to putting women's interests ahead of the party agenda. In other countries there is no space for a parliamentary women's caucus, as in the case of Bolivia, where public meetings between indigenous and non-indigenous women were at one point considered too sensitive as a result of strong pressure to prioritize the indigenous agenda (as opposed to the women's agenda).

An alternative approach may be not to set up a formal platform but rather to facilitate more informal, behind-the-scenes meetings. A multiparty women's dialogue can help prepare the ground for a future parliamentary caucus. Both women's groups and caucuses are designed to contribute to the overarching goal of equal participation of men and women in politics. A facilitator may wish to make sure that efforts between the different groups are coordinated.

'Creating allies amongst women is crucial; be friends as women and as politicians.'
Cecilia Velasques
Politician, Pachakutik Plurinational Unity
Movement, Ecuador

15.5 Gender sensitivity within the dialogue

Many women face specific obstacles when entering politics, including the need to balance the public/private life dichotomy in a way that differs from men. These types of differences need to be taken into account when discussing the workings of the dialogue. Similarly, in parliament, one of the obstacles to women's participation is the need to work long hours or attend late-night meetings, which many women must balance against the need to take care of their families.

For facilitators, this means reaching out to women representatives from the outset, and seeking to identify shared concerns that can be taken into account during the dialogue process. At the same time, while discussing the political participation of women and men it is important to keep in mind that neither group is homogeneous. Women politicians have as many identities as men (e.g. having a certain gender, belonging to a specific indigenous, ethnic or religious group, being poor or part of the economic elite), juggle with an accumulation of different responsibilities, and may face various kinds of discrimination and prejudice while doing so.

For a dialogue process this means that, ideally, the opinions of a wide variety of women and men need to be considered. A facilitator can also assist parties in developing their own capacities to analyse issues from a gender perspective (e.g. by offering training on how gender roles are shaped and the ways in which men and women engage in socio-economic life and the world of politics).

Findings
- Women are still under-represented in politics, especially at the leadership level, and are therefore often overlooked as dialogue participants.
- Through political party dialogue, parties have the opportunity to discuss policies, measures and practices that help reduce gender disparity.
- Dialogue platforms can also create the necessary peer pressure to support the implementation and monitoring of gender-sensitive measures.
- Women and men may share similar concerns but are not homogeneous groups: parties may wish to strengthen their capacity to conduct a gender analysis.

Recommendations
- Parties need to agree from the outset on how to ensure women's participation within their own dialogue forum.

- Facilitators can present options, for example, creating a mixed space for dialogue, a gender reference group or a women's group.
- These dialogues should never be seen as a way to sideline women and need to be coordinated with other women's groups and parliamentary caucuses.

Chapter 16: Minority representation and diversity

Respecting and reflecting the rights and roles of minorities in majority decision-making processes is an important part of any democracy. Politics in a democratic society is by its very nature about more than the rights of simple or absolute majorities. The maturity of many democracies can be evaluated by assessing their ability and willingness to include and accommodate minorities.

Political parties are critical institutions in shaping this kind of democratic system, and bear responsibility for representing and to some extent reflecting the populace. A (perceived or real) lack of political power and the political alienation of certain groups can lead to unrest in a country. The exclusion of minority groups from political processes might even cause outbreaks of civil unrest and conflict.

The advantage of a dialogue over a regular political debate is that it has the ability to more easily accommodate minorities in a political decision-making process. However, including diversity as part of a dialogue also leads to new dilemmas. Given the many overlaps in identities and the ways in which identities can be defined, a facilitator will have to balance between identities and limit their number in order for the dialogue to be effective.

Furthermore, political parties are unique when it comes to diversity, as they can legitimately represent a particular identity at the expense of others, especially when the party represents a disadvantaged group. How, therefore, can a facilitator accompany parties in making their dialogue sufficiently diverse, or at the very least sensitive to diversity issues?

16.1 Creating a shared understanding of definitions

Before addressing this question, it is useful to reach a common understanding about basic principles. Facilitators and parties should ask themselves what they mean when they talk about diversity in a political context, as different terms mean different things depending on the context.

Diversity could be defined as referring to characteristic variables including (but not limited to) religion, ethnicity, gender, language, sexual orientation, functionality, age, class and geographical location. The word '*minority*' could be used to highlight exclusionary processes and thus refer not only to numbers but also focus on issues of power and influence. It is important to remember that marginalized groups sometimes comprise the numerical majority, apartheid South Africa being a case in point.

The term '*minority representation'* is often used to refer to the inclusion of previously excluded groups and individuals in political party processes and decision-making procedures. Minority groups can be defined based on religion, ethnicity, class, language, functionality, age, gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation or caste.

Gender should not be understood merely as a synonym for the differences between women and men, but rather as a term that encompasses how notions of femininities and masculinities are constructed and how this in turn is linked to the distribution of power and resources. The construction of gender is in this way linked to social processes that intersect with other identity or demographic markers, such as class, age and religion.

Identity generally refers to the overall character or personality of an individual or group. It can take various forms (e.g. political, social, cultural, religious or personal) and one person or group can have multiple identities. The different political party types are linked to political group identity, with each type representing its own unique political ideologies, policy issues, belief systems, group interests, systems, norms and values.

Political ideologies lie at the heart of parties' political agendas and actions and most politicians define themselves according to political ideology (e.g. as liberal, conservative or socialist). Consequently, political ideology greatly influences the positions and opinions expressed by a party in a dialogue process.

Box 16.1.

What is 'intersectionality'?

Even though minorities as a group might suffer from exclusion, groups are not homogeneous entities. It is therefore important to account for 'minorities within the minority' as multiple layers of barriers to political inclusion. They will intersect with and affect different members in the group differently, depending on the context and their characteristics (e.g. gender, age or sexual orientation). Exclusion is in this way a fluid concept, informed by a confluence of many different intersectional structures, some of which are stronger in some settings, some reinforcing the others. One way to think of this term is as people having multiple identities often leading to layers of exclusion. For example, a disabled woman from an ethnic or religious minority may experience multiple stigmas and rejection or discrimination at a number of levels.

16.2 Minority representation in politics

As the main representatives of the people in political decision-making processes, parties should (taken together) reflect the interests of all citizens. This applies not only when talking about decision making but also when speaking symbolically for politically marginalized groups, as this enhances their sense of inclusion in society.

Minority representation in politics is organized differently in different countries and, consequently, takes various forms. For example, a minority group might set up its own political party (e.g. the Ang Ladlad

party in the Philippines, which represents lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transgender Filipinos), or express itself through different political parties (e.g. the Dalits in Nepal) or decide not to organize politically. The latter option may be chosen because the minority concerned does not have the will or ability to organize itself through political organizations.

In other cases, a country's regulations might forbid parties from excluding groups. This is the case in Burundi, where political parties are not allowed to associate themselves with one ethnic group. Also, in some countries formal identification along ethnic lines is not allowed (e.g. Rwanda) or it is difficult to build parties around religion (e.g. in Tanzania).

This demonstrates the reality that, as with women's groups, minority groups are not homogeneous entities whose members think and act in the same way. This further complicates the process of representing the diversity inherent in a national group.

'Diversity and plurality are written and unwritten principles. The latter refer to the level of respect for all opinions in a group, and a situation in which it is unacceptable to block a determined group from the dialogue.'
Ernesto Araníbar
Programme Coordinator, Ágora Democrática
(IDEA–NIMD), Ecuador

16.3 Creating a diverse dialogue platform

While it is not up to facilitators to solve the issue of representation in society, they can advise parties how to set up a dialogue platform that is as diverse as possible, as well as how best to allow dialogue to create relevant reform outputs. One could distinguish between a 'dialogue on diversity', 'dialogue in diversity' and 'dialogue with respect for diversity'. All three types of dialogue are equally important, but each requires different actions from a facilitator.

The following sections outline approaches to the three kinds of diversity dialogue.

Dialogue on diversity

In many young democracies, issues of diversity are at the core of political strife: the existence of political parties that represent (or in some countries exclude) certain ethnicities, indigenous groups, regions,

languages, religions or sexual orientations can in some cases lead to serious polarization and violent confrontation.

Dialogue on diversity issues like the secondary status of certain minorities or even majorities in society (e.g. Hutus in Rwanda, or Shias under the regime of Saddam Hussein in Iraq) can help reduce tensions and enable peaceful solutions to lingering problems or feelings of injustice.

If diversity is perceived as a problem in society, parties may wish to put the issue on the dialogue agenda, or even set up specific formal or informal theme groups to discuss the issue, exchange views and develop proposals to tackle the problem. These issues might either be evident from the start of a dialogue or gain sudden importance later in the process, underlining the importance of continued political analysis.

In any given society, problems sometimes stem from misinformation or a lack of recognition of the key viewpoints of minority groups. Ensuring that the political parties are informed and act on the basis of correct information—at least within the dialogue setting—is therefore an important task for facilitators.

Access to information may help representatives in a political party dialogue achieve a more uniform understanding and general appreciation of diversity issues in society. Facilitators can also offer assistance by conducting a joint analysis or inviting presentations from experts explaining the background to certain minority representation and discrimination issues.

Having the same facts and information usually makes it easier for parties to have a discussion and try to find common ground in a dialogue. This understanding is also needed in order to make the dialogue produce political reforms that reflect diversity, for instance when discussing constitutional provisions.

In environments that have been marked by recent ethnic or sectarian violence, however, discussing diversity issues is sometimes not the most conducive way to build trust at the start of a dialogue. In these cases, discussing less sensitive topics (while still doing so in a group composed of ethnically and religiously diverse participants) can build a level of trust that later on allows these issues to be tabled in a peaceful manner.

Dialogue in diversity
Facilitators who wish to counter what is sometimes called the 'pale, male and rich' or 'same old elite' dilemma may seek to consult with the party leadership on ways to include a diversity of participants in the dialogue. Who these participants might be would depend on the context and the purpose of the dialogue, but usually involves looking beyond the party leadership or key decision makers within the party. A political party dialogue forum may also wish to invite participants from minority groups that do not have political representation.

In reality, a dialogue facilitator may be faced with a choice between political diversity in the sum of its segregated parts (i.e. across parties) and diversity within individual parties. In the first case, facilitators need to be aware of the types of parties participating in the dialogue, in the sense that they can show great differences and come from totally different backgrounds, representing different groups in society. If the aim is to have all individual parties reflect diversity, practical suggestions to counter under-representation include proposing that parties send three or four representatives (of which one must be a woman or a member of an ethnic, religious, gender or sexual orientation minority).

The exact combination of identities should be reflective of the main diversity issues at stake in a society. One challenge is to find a diversity of representatives who are also of a similar rank within the parties, so as not to create dissimilar mandates with which participants are allowed to speak. Whereas in the case of gender identity it is the task of a facilitator to make all parties reflect gender diversity, with other issues of diversity a facilitator can allow parties at the dialogue table to be representative of one identity only.

Dialogue with respect for diversity
In a political party dialogue participants can be representative of one minority (or even majority) as long as a facilitator makes sure that diversity issues are

respected by all participants (e.g. by ensuring that a participant does not negate someone else's identity), and that the dialogue as a whole is reflective of as many identities as realistically possible.

In general, diversity enriches the political dialogue by augmenting its democratic values and the depth and scope of the dialogue. At the same time, affirmation of identity should not be predicated on negation of the identity of another. This means that a facilitator should try to ensure that participants in a dialogue meeting respect each other's diversity.

One method for increasing mutual respect involves arranging for people to spend time understanding the experiences of their fellow participants, for instance through 'experiential learning'. Many other dialogue techniques can be used to create such 'understanding for the other' and can help to overcome strong emotional predispositions between personalities or groups of people (for examples see International IDEA 2007: 215).

As a facilitator, it is important to understand the various challenges faced by different minority groups, and how these may affect the dialogue. In some cases minority groups have been subordinated or discriminated against for years. They might not have the same level of education or professional schooling as the majority group, and so the dialogue might need to be complemented by some kind of capacity building or training.

Similarly, language issues in a multilingual country might also be of importance, especially if a country's recognition of a single, majority language for official purposes makes inclusive dialogue with minority groups difficult. These kinds of issues can be resolved by the hiring of translators for dialogue sessions.

Finally, as a facilitator, it is important to realize that ways of expressing issues or problems often differ across ethnic groups (e.g. indigenous women, men, elites or peoples at the grass roots). For instance, in some groups it is acceptable to go directly to the core of the issue, while others apply a more indirect way of building up their argument. This is important to realize, especially during a dialogue between parties with diverse backgrounds.

Findings
- Political parties bear responsibility for representing and to some extent reflecting the populace.
- In practice, political parties tend to have different ways of dealing with minority representation, and are often internally challenged to be diverse.

Recommendations
- Facilitators need to strike a balance between including diverse (minority) groups and a workable number of identities in order for the dialogue to be effective.
- In a dialogue parties need to create a common understanding about what diversity means for them.
- While facilitators can take actions to support parties in setting up a 'dialogue on diversity' or a 'dialogue in diversity', both approaches should be complemented by an overall respect for diversity.

Chapter 17: Engaging with civil society organizations and the media

Political parties may end up 'working in a bubble' if they do not involve the key civil society and media actors in their society. This applies to all areas of politics, including situations when political parties engage in an inter-party dialogue process. In any political party dialogue, it is necessary to consider ways to involve CSOs—including the often vigorous networks and voluntary associations through which citizens manage their own affairs and influence public policy—as well as independent and pluralistic channels of communication (International IDEA 2008a).

Political parties may benefit from the dialogue or consensus-building process with each other in many ways. However, if they fail to explain why they meet, what they discuss or what they have been able to reach consensus on, media organizations and CSOs (e.g. human rights, church and election observation organizations) may accuse them of acting in isolation from society.

This perception may lead to a negative picture of political parties as democratic institutions and the further stigmatization of parties in the eyes of the public. It may also enhance the idea that political parties form an elite group which prefers to make 'secret deals' behind closed doors rather than interact with the people they represent.

Whenever new entities such as CSOs are included, an inter-party dialogue automatically becomes less exclusive to political parties, thus risking a decline in commitment from the participating parties. At the same time, CSOs and the media can assist in extending the dialogue to hard-to-reach parts of society. This chapter will look more closely at the role of civil society and the media in the dialogue.

17.1 Early engagement and validation

Facilitators should remember that, in the end, political party dialogue processes are meant to strengthen a country's democratic system and the parties' role and functioning within that system. This means that at some point the inter-party dialogue process and its results need to be validated by citizens, by way of informing both civil society and the media. This will enhance the dialogue's democratic legitimacy.

The moment this principle comes under fire, for instance when newspaper headlines start including public allegations meant to discredit the dialogue process, the good intentions and successful outcomes of the dialogue can be overshadowed and the reputation of political parties damaged.

One way to prevent this happening is by developing, at an early stage of the dialogue, positive relationships between the dialogue platform, civil society and the media.

Box 17.1.

Tripartite dialogue forums: Peru's Acuerdo Nacional

In many national dialogue processes, political parties are only one type of actor among others. The Acuerdo Nacional (National Accord, AN) development process in Peru, for example, was a tripartite dialogue forum: it comprised political parties, government and civil society organizations, ranging from trade unions to churches.

The AN forum was established after the end of the Fujimori administration in 2000, with the aim to reformulate state policy and build consensus around 24 policy goals divided into four categories: democracy and the rule of law; equity and social justice; economic competitiveness;

and an institutional framework of efficiency, transparency, and decentralization.

The forum met every second month and adhered to the Chatham House rules: press and revelations of internal disagreements were not allowed and only final agreed-up-on policy documents were communicated to the media. For topics requiring specialist knowledge working groups were established and in doing so created more than 25 new laws. The signing of the AN took place on 22 July 2002.[25]

Importantly, the AN created a culture of dialogue, respect and tolerance. It continues to provide opportunities for consensus building as well as a learning space where politicians, civil society and the government can exchange ideas and jointly develop their long-term vision for Peru.

Linked to this process the Peruvian political parties established their own temporary inter-party dialogue platform and together drafted a new Political Party Act, which was successfully adopted in 2003 (see also box 4.1).

17.2 Differences between political parties and civil society organizations

To understand the role of civil society in a political party dialogue, it is important to first look at the different roles parties and CSOs play in society. Even though they have a lot in common, parties and CSOs are fundamentally different institutions. Political parties are generally associated with a contest for power, and play a role in the representation of broad groups of citizens and the aggregation of a wide range of policy ideas, while CSOs are typically seen to play the role of a watchdog advocating for specific policies or service delivery.

Political parties tend to view their responsibility to find solutions for common problems differently from CSOs, which carry no responsibility for governing. They are usually not elected through a nationwide democratic process, and are often not officially mandated by way of a country's constitution to represent the people as a whole in their dealings with the state. They are therefore not considered democratically accountable in the same way as parties are.

Therefore, when including CSOs in a dialogue, parties may feel as though they are not amongst equals. Facilitators need to be mindful of this dimension.

'Working with political parties is different compared to civil society organizations. CSOs usually have a focused advocacy agenda while parties are negotiating the full package and are therefore keeping cards behind as to how far they are prepared to go in finding a compromise or consensus. It is more of a game. On the one hand this makes it harder to work with political parties on the other hand it offers more flexibility. Party policies can change, more than a civil society agenda; the bottom line of today, is not the bottom line of tomorrow.'
Leena Rikkila Tamang
Head of Mission, IDEA Nepal office

Although they tend to oppose wrongdoing by those in power, CSOs are not necessarily politically neutral, and some of their representatives may even originate from a specific party background. Inviting 'politically aligned' or otherwise affiliated CSOs could affect the trust of other parties in the dialogue process. In other contexts, CSOs may be the ones not wanting to participate in a dialogue with political parties, for instance when there is outright citizen distrust in one or more of the political parties.

In these contexts CSOs may be concerned about being co-opted by the political parties or losing their independence through the process. They might also view being perceived as siding with one or more of the parties as a risk. Facilitators should not judge but rather seek to understand the way in which political parties and CSOs prefer to interact.

Understanding these relations and the level of confidence or mistrust between actors will be important throughout the dialogue process as it may influence the inter-party dynamics as well as a society's positive or negative perception of the dialogue. Identification of CSOs should therefore be included as part of the political analysis. In all cases it is useful to verify a particular CSO's capacity, expertise and political affiliations.

Box 17.2.

Cooperation between political parties and civil society organizations in Ghana

Historically, the relationship between civil society and political parties in Ghana has been difficult. This stems from a long period of unconstitutional military rule, during which time political parties were not able to build human and institutional capacity. After the introduction of the multiparty system in 1992, political parties were often criticized for having developed into 'electoral machines' and for focusing less on public policy issues. CSOs filled this gap and took up some of these policy issues. At the same time, political parties had the electorate's mandate to formulate and develop public policy. This tension created some resentment between groups. Therefore, in 2005, when Ghanaian political parties (with the assistance of the IEA's GPPP) came together and set up a long term inter-party dialogue platform, this platform was also used by parties to reach out to and engage with CSOs. Positive reforms and areas where Ghana's political parties and CSOs have worked together include a framework for natural resources, a joint democratic reform agenda, the Presidential Transition Bill (2012) and a review of Ghana's constitution.

17.3 The role of civil society organizations in political party dialogue

In spite of their differences, the common challenge for both civil society and political parties is to foster a vision of society together and to work more or less collectively both on national reforms and on public policy formulation processes. Civil society involvement in a dialogue is important because it can offer parties a broader, often critical perspective regarding the issues under discussion.

Regular consultation with CSOs can also assist the more general goal of maintaining good relationships with a wide range of specific interest groups with a stake in the political parties' activities. CSOs might include organizations focusing, among other things, on democratic development and electoral reform, governance, civic education, public sector reform, combating corruption, reforming legal systems, human rights, the position of workers or employers, women's empowerment, people with disabilities, and religious or ethnic tolerance (ACE Electoral

Knowledge Network, undated). These actors might operate at both national and international levels.

Parties regularly depend on CSOs, both for their expertise and for their potential support for political reforms. This interdependence can find a natural place of convergence through a dialogue platform.

Providers of expertise

In some cases CSOs can be invited as formal dialogue participants, especially when they are a core part of a political problem or a solution that is being addressed through the dialogue. However, in most cases they will be more loosely engaged in the dialogue process, often as providers of expertise. Civil society actors can be engaged from the start of a dialogue as experts or invited as resource contacts, so that parties can use their insights and knowledge.

For instance, consulting with trusted CSOs in the political analysis or dialogue agenda-making phase can make it easier to identify relevant national issues, as for CSOs there are 'no votes at stake'. Just as civil society is involved in parliamentary law-making processes through public hearings, so too can civil society actors be invited to join in the dialogue agenda setting and provide information about certain viewpoints in society or comparative experiences in their areas of expertise.

In addition, during the dialogue civil society may be consulted on certain technical or specialized issues on the agenda. From a very practical point of view, involving civil society groups as resource persons can serve as a useful way for parties to obtain the right expertise 'for free'. Thematic meetings or technical working groups can also be used to include representatives of a range of CSOs (e.g. when reviewing a political legal framework).

'Where civil society is strong political parties should see the added value of forming partnerships through dialogue.'
Njeri Kabeberi
Executive Director, CMD–Kenya

Partners in citizen outreach and dissemination

Throughout a dialogue process, civil society can be seen as a crucial link to certain special interest

groups in society. In this context, engaging CSOs in an effective manner can lead to more legitimacy and buy-in among these groups and their civic networks. In particular, when it comes to dialogue topics for which citizen awareness and consent is important, CSOs can be valuable strategic partners in reaching out to these groups. Also, consulting CSOs at early stages of a dialogue to obtain the views of larger and diverse groups in society can enhance the extent to which a dialogue is representative of the people and their needs.

After a dialogue process has produced results (e.g. when a political party code of conduct has been agreed upon), CSOs, along with the media, can play a major role in further socialization and dissemination of these results. Civil society can, for instance, help to create awareness about the content of a political parties' code of conduct during elections, or the meaning of new constitutional provisions (e.g. local NGOs can use their networks to get messages out).

Again, also from a practical perspective it may be useful to realize that, because organizing dialogue and consensus-building processes costs money and a lot of effort (especially when taken to the local level), sharing this responsibility with civil society actors can be of great help.

17.4   Improving relations between civil society organizations and political parties over time

Given the paradox of interdependence on the one hand and distrust on the other, a relationship of trust and openness between political parties and CSOs should be created over time. This gradually improving relationship should be one in which political parties aim to consider CSOs' perspectives and disclose as much information about the dialogue to the media and public as possible.

However, what is 'possible' depends on what helps and what hinders the dialogue's cause. Facilitators may wish to keep in mind that there is a difference between seeing transparency as 'informing of progress and results' and viewing it as being about holding the dialogue process itself in the open. The latter alternative is often not conducive to trust building and a frank exchange of opinions.

Facilitators may also wish to obtain prior agreement on the extent to which parties wish to cooperate with civil society, and should be careful about giving CSOs and political parties an equal status in the dialogue. This is not to say that the contribution and role of CSOs are not important—rather that the level and timing of their engagement is a critical factor.

Box 17.3.

Citizen-led movements

The recent past has seen an increase in citizen-led democratic forces, both in the context of popular mobilizations against authoritarian governments and in the context of political movements linked to civil society organizations. These mobilizations and movements include revolutions in the Arab world, the 'occupy' movements in Europe and the United States, the 'indignados' movement in Spain, student protests in Chile and the 2012 post-presidential election protests in Russia.

Citizen-led movements can be powerful political forces, and perform strong but informal representative roles (Norris 2004). This makes it appropriate and sometimes necessary for facilitators to strategically engage these movements in order to reach effective agreements on political issues.

Powerful as they might be, the function, role and status of citizen-led movements are not always clearly defined and can easily change over time, making it difficult for inter-party dialogue facilitators on the ground to engage with citizen-led movements and differentiate them from CSOs (Norris 2004). This holds especially true when CSOs and citizen-led movements are closely linked, for example, when both are advocating for political change or citizen rights.

Nonetheless, just as facilitators will seek to engage CSOs and the media at strategic points throughout the dialogue, facilitators should also explore possibilities and potential benefits from an engagement with citizen-led movements.

Ways to engage citizen-led movements include inviting their leaders as observers or guests of the party platform, liaising with broadly-based national dialogue platforms that these movements are part of, or engaging in citizen movement forums such as social media.

17.5 **Engaging the media in the dialogue process**

Professional mass media affect both the ways in which people interact and how democracy works in practice. Since communication and interaction are building blocks of democracy, it is in the interests of all parties to allow a free and functioning independent press, to enhance the degree of trust between political parties and the media, and to appreciate professional, non-partisan media reporting (Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (NIMD) 2004).

The media can play both positive and negative roles while reporting about a political party dialogue process, and by doing so make or break the dialogue.

Box 17.4.

Diverging perceptions of the use of the media in Bolivia

In January 2012 the president of Bolivia invited all 27 registered parties, as well as the media, for an inter-party dialogue as part of an event called the Social Summit. The governing party's point of view was that the political party dialogue had been called in order to reach out to the opposition and, through the media, communicate this to the people. In contrast, the opposition viewed the Social Summit event as just another element of the ruling party's publicity campaign and felt that it did not intend to engage in true dialogue. Consequently, all the opposition parties refused to take part in any serious inter-party dialogue for several months.

Image and perceptions are important and the media influence the way in which the dialogue between parties is perceived by the public—as a constructive collaboration, or as a way to make secret deals behind the scenes. While not informing the public of dialogue proceedings can undermine their outcomes, over-informing can also make dialogue participants feel monitored, and take away the spontaneity and trust within the dialogue.

In a political dialogue process, citizens' awareness of the topics that are being discussed can be a crucial factor in ensuring the democratic legitimacy of the process as well as public support for the adoption of laws or policy measures that are proposed through the dialogue. Because of their power, the media should ideally become strategic allies in informing the public about the process and outcome of the dialogue, in order to create public awareness and pave the way for reform.

In some cases, however, parties may be hesitant to inform the media about the dialogue process, for example, in highly polarized or post-conflict contexts where inter-party trust is absent or fragile and dialogue is a sensitive topic. These situations may call for a more cautious, gradual approach in engaging the media.

Facilitators should always assess how to take advantage of media coverage of the dialogue so that it serves as an incentive for the participating parties and fosters the democratic legitimacy of the dialogue outcome.

This usually requires creating the right balance between openness and seclusion, which is often a matter of timing and defining the scope and level of detail of the information that is shared. For example, the dialogue sessions can be governed by the Chatham House rules, while the dialogue outcomes can be shared with the media through regular information sessions, perhaps as soon as consensus on specific topics has been reached. More information on the dialogue spokesperson can be found in chapter 9.

Box 17.5.

The influence of the media on Peru's Political Parties Act (2003)

'Peruvian parties in 2002–2003 took part in a dialogue process to develop a new Political Party bill. The parties' strategy was to engage with the media at an early stage and this generated a positive effect: the media understood the problems to be covered by the bill and remained onside. This helped with the eventual approval of the Political Party Act in parliament. However, on the issue of political party financing this did not work out as planned: the public remained against it and as a result parties in parliament amended and weakened the provision. This showed how important it is to engage and inform the media and civil society on time—even when consensus is achieved in extra-parliamentary forums, parliament will still have to approve the law and the media has a role to play in informing the public in the right way.'

Jorge del Castillo Gálvez, at the time of the dialogue member of Congress for the Partido Aprista Peruano (APRA party), Peru

Findings

- Civil society, the media and political party organizations usually play different roles in society.
- Engaging with CSOs and the media at different stages of the dialogue can enhance the representation of citizens' views.
- At some point, the inter-party dialogue process and its results need to be validated by citizens, often by way of informing civil society and the media.
- Early engagement fosters the democratic legitimacy of the dialogue outcome.
- One common challenge for both CSOs and political parties is to work, more or less collectively, on national reforms and public policies.
- Media attention can serve as a positive, but sometimes negative, incentive for the participating parties.

Recommendations

- A facilitator's role is to strike a balance between inclusion and exclusion of CSOs and the media throughout the dialogue process.
- A facilitator needs to be aware of linkages (e.g. mutual distrust, or political affiliation) between political parties, CSOs and the media.
- CSOs can play a positive role in political party dialogue as providers of expertise and broad citizen views, and in citizen outreach and dissemination.
- The media should be strategic allies in informing the public about the general process and outcomes of the dialogue.

Chapter 18: Concluding remarks: moving beyond the handshake

Dialogue processes are designed to feature the free-flowing exchange of views with the purpose of creating greater understanding between participants. As discussed throughout this Guide, exchanging political views often leads to very concrete results, for instance when parties reach consensus on political reform measures. Parties may even make results visible through a joint statement or draft agreement, signed by all parties.

One of the risks parties and facilitators may face is in assuming that, once the dialogue has achieved a result, the dialogue process can be considered successful. While this assumption may seem correct in the short term, it constitutes one of the main barriers to sustainable dialogue mechanisms and long-term outcomes.

A political party dialogue process does not end with the signing of agreements or joint statements, but has to continue with an emphasis on actual implementation ('The Role of Political Dialogue in Peace Building and Statebuilding' 2011). This section offers five basic recommendations for more effective, long-term dialogue processes.

Ensuring that the dialogue delivers results

Recommendation 1: Draw attention to the implementation phase

The importance of the implementation phase is often overlooked in practice. A lack of implementation is not only a problem for the success and impact of the dialogue process, but may also lead to a decline in public trust.

For instance, political parties that agree on a code of conduct for peaceful elections are likely to be keen to present it as a significant achievement in the media. However, the moment the parties fail to live up to their promises and the public notes that they are not taking the implementation of the code seriously, their confidence will backfire. If this happens more than once, unsurprisingly, people lose faith in the inter-party dialogue and in the parties' overall trustworthiness.

A failure to implement may also undermine the long-term support for a culture of party dialogue and can even create 'dialogue fatigue'. Facilitators can draw attention to this issue and encourage parties to take the implementation phase seriously. A facilitator's main task is to ensure that what parties have agreed to is implemented, monitored and, ideally, further improved at a later stage.

Recommendation 2: Develop realistic expectations and use a road map

Few things are more harmful to a dialogue than unrealistic outcomes—in other words, agreements that in reality prove not to work.

A dialogue outcome that has to be reversed later seriously damages the credibility of the entire dialogue process. During the process, therefore, facilitators must continuously assess what any promise or agreement by the parties might lead to in practice—in essence, a facilitator must think two steps ahead of the parties themselves.

An important part of managing a dialogue is avoiding a situation where parties agree to something that is not realistic. Facilitators and parties may work enthusiastically towards agreeing on a law proposal or a reform measure, only to find that this enthusiasm dies down once the measure is adopted by the platform as a common goal.

This decline in interest can be due to the fact that, while reaching consensus and finding an agreement can be tough, implementation is less politically interesting and often involves a long-term, tiresome process. For instance, it may take weeks or months to reach agreement on political party quotas to support the equal political participation of women and men, but it may take years for parties to actually implement this measure.

Transforming institutions often takes a long time, as does the implementation of legislation (e.g. decentralization measures). This means that each of the political parties standing behind these reforms would need to stay equally committed in the months or years that follow.

A facilitator can help parties to stay aware of this dimension of the dialogue by drawing attention to the long-term nature of political reform before the dialogue on a reform issue is finalized. This can help to manage expectations and ensure that agreements are realistic.

Implementation plans or road maps are important tools for ensuring that this occurs. A road map could spell out the different steps on the path to implementation as well as the expected timeline, and identify those within each party responsible for doing so. A certain level of detail is often essential in order to make parties understand the implications of their decisions.

Recommendation 3: Establish monitoring and evaluation mechanisms

When parties reach consensus or come to an agreement, they should also discuss the various ways in which they can jointly monitor the implementation of reform measures. One option is to agree to a continuation of the dialogue and to make the joint monitoring of agreements one of its main (or subsidiary) purposes. The dialogue then functions as a kind of peer pressure or accountability mechanism, and as a means of ensuring that parties live up to the promises they make.

If implementation problems arise, parties can also use the dialogue platform to raise issues and identify possible solutions. For instance, when developing a political party code of conduct, parties can agree to

monitor its application throughout the election period and discuss areas of concern in the dialogue forum. They may even go as far as to develop specific indicators to measure the result, for instance by agreeing to parties taking concrete measures to enforce the code internally.

The advantage of working with such indicators is that it can be easier to track progress and analyse where implementation problems lie. A possible disadvantage is that this type of measuring of results may be considered bureaucratic or time-consuming. A possible compromise solution is for the facilitator to keep an eye on the progress made towards these indicators and brief parties along the way.

At the end of the implementation phase (or after a significant amount of time has expired), parties also may decide to jointly evaluate the extent to which their agreement was implemented as well as the way it has affected society. This kind of joint evaluation through dialogue has in some cases led to an updated agreement (e.g. a revised code of conduct taking into account the experiences of the previous election).

Facilitators should make sure that dialogue outcomes are concrete and not just vague promises. This is often difficult: the more concrete the outcome, the more likely parties are to commit themselves and put their political reputations on the line.

A facilitator always has to strike a balance between what is politically feasible and what is sufficiently realistic.

Recommendation 4: Link parties to parliament

In order to transform dialogue agreements into government policy or law, they usually have to go through formal law or policy-making processes in parliament. In a dialogue, the facilitator can draw the party delegates' attention to this reality, and ask parties to think about ways of 'translating' the dialogue agreements into real party commitments that can be debated in society and, to the extent possible, upheld in parliament.

This could also entail, for instance, examining the parliamentary cycle and identifying specific times when bills can be tabled. It usually also involves ensuring that the party representatives in parliament

are well informed and supportive of the agreement or consensus reached in the dialogue.

One could expect that one party's agreement in a dialogue forum will automatically lead to a similar agreement in parliament, but this is not always the case. Sometimes political developments occur between the moment a dialogue process has ended and the moment of debate in parliament. At other times, parties turn out to be internally divided, thus leaving those participating in a dialogue to think and argue differently from their counterparts in parliament.

Parties wishing to prevent such a disconnect between dialogue and parliament will have to make sure that their MPs are consulted and informed throughout each stage of the dialogue process. Dialogue delegates, party leaders and MPs therefore need to make use of their party's internal party communication mechanisms. It is one of the tasks of facilitator to highlight the importance of using intra-party dialogue in addition to inter-party dialogue.

Moreover, as the status of an inter-party agreement always requires democratic debate both within and outside parliament, facilitators might want to emphasize the need for a '*democratic transition*' between the moment all parties agree on something behind the scenes and the moment such agreement is presented in parliament. Parties need to invest sufficient time for fostering the democratic legitimacy of their proposals (e.g. by explaining their views and encouraging public debate on the topic).

Recommendation 5: Achieve public validation by involving civil society and the media

As discussed in chapter 17, the influence of public opinion should be taken into account throughout a dialogue process. From the perspective of parties who have invested a lot of time and effort in designing their proposals, a lack of support from either the public or the parliament for dialogue process outcomes might be considered a loss or, in some cases, the process might be considered a waste of time.

The only way to avoid this situation and address it in line with democratic values is to ensure that civil society and the media are strategic partners in any dialogue endeavour. Civil society, for instance, has

a critical role to play in monitoring agreements and holding parties to account, while journalists are crucial in informing people about the pros and cons of certain measures through stories in online or printed media and in initiating public debates ('The Role of Political Dialogue in Peace Building and Statebuilding' 2011).

A communication strategy involving the media can be a useful tool for managing the expectations of the public at large. Parties may decide to pursue a strategy whereby they avoid claiming success upon the signing of an agreement, but rather frame it as a positive start of a long-term process. In this way, citizens will be more able to appreciate positive dialogue outcomes as opposed to expecting drastic changes overnight.

> *'Entering into a dialogue with other political parties should be the reflex, rather than the exception.'*
> Soumano Moumouni
> Executive Director of the Centre for Multiparty Democracy, Mali

Findings
- Ensuring follow-up of the dialogue in the outcome implementation phase is a crucial way to demonstrate the dialogue results and create long-term impact.
- The status of an inter-party consensus or agreements requires additional democratic debate both in- and outside parliament.
- Intra-party dialogue is important in bringing party leaders and dialogue members on to the same page with MPs when adopting reforms.
- Civil society and the media are strategic partners in ensuring public support and validation of the dialogue after its outcomes have been agreed upon.

Recommendations
- Facilitators should draw attention to the implementation phase and assist parties in developing realistic expectations and using a road map.
- Specific attention should be paid to the link between a dialogue and the parliament in which proposed laws and policies are usually to be adopted.
- Facilitators need to encourage parties to promote public debate on the (possible) dialogue

outcomes before presenting agreements in parliament.
- Inter-party dialogue should continue to play an important role in jointly monitoring and evaluating the implementation of policy and reform measures.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Case studies

The five case studies below illustrate particular aspects of the political party dialogue process and are based on experiences of dialogue facilitators in Bolivia, Ecuador, Mozambique, Nepal and Uganda.

Despite the fact that they represent a relatively small sample of inter-party dialogues, these cases allow the reader to reflect on the multiple and diverse situations in which inter-party dialogue can come into play. They also illustrate the recurrent challenges dialogue facilitators face, and provide examples of ways to circumvent the most serious obstacles (e.g. a lack of inter-party trust) using creative approaches and perseverance.

All cases point to the extreme difficulty of starting a formal and organized inter-party dialogue in polarized political contexts. On the other hand, they also show that the initial lack of trust among parties and their lack of will to enter into a formal dialogue should not be taken as an insurmountable obstacle.

As shown, trust-building initiatives can take many forms, from organizing joint capacity-building and training activities to managing a multiparty political magazine to setting up inter-party women's groups and caucuses. Virtually all cases point to the critical importance of the time factor: change tends to happen very gradually, over years rather than months.

Bolivia:
from friendship network to foundation

Context

A decade ago, Bolivia's political parties and its party system were in a state of crisis. At that time, the rise of a popular, indigenous movement—the Movement towards Socialism (Movimiento al Socialismo, MAS)—synthesized demands for social change and increased public involvement in decision making. When, in 2006, MAS obtained the majority of seats in the National Congress as well as the presidency, an MAS-led government was formed and Evo Morales was inaugurated as president.

President Morales came to power promising a constitutional reform agenda according to which excluded groups would be given a voice in politics. As MAS clashed with the former political establishment, the constitution-making process led to political confrontation and violence. It was only in 2008 that the government and the opposition reached an agreement on the text of the new constitution, after which it was approved by a popular referendum.

The 2009 elections returned President Morales and gave MAS a two-thirds majority in both the (then newly established) Plurinational Legislative Assembly and the Senate. Thanks to its clear majority, MAS had no problems gaining approval for its public policy and legislation proposals. However, as the support of the opposition groups (which were mainly based in Bolivia's eastern lowlands) was no longer needed, their voice was ignored, causing further frustration and polarization.

Establishing a foundation

The turbulence of the past decade, during which inter-party relations changed fundamentally, affecting the level and nature of political party dialogue in both positive and negative ways, is also reflected in the challenges faced by the Bolivian Foundation for Multiparty Democracy (Fundación Boliviana para la Democracia Multipartidaria, fBDM).

Established in 2002 by Bolivia's political parties and movements, with the support of NIMD, fBDM was set up in response to the party system's widespread loss of legitimacy and constituted an attempt to change the political culture of confrontation to one of dialogue.

fBDM started out as a group of concerned individuals from almost all Bolivian parties and the academic world, developing gradually from an organization based on friendships between like-minded politicians from different parties into a more institutionalized dialogue platform. Over time, some members began voicing concerns about the subjective side of the friendship bond, which eventually led to the establishment of a foundation.

As a part of fBDM's institutionalization process, a board was established. This body was made up of ten members: four representing political parties, plus six non-aligned public intellectuals and civil society representatives. This division was based on the idea that the foundation was 'an institute for political parties, not of political parties', and implied that each party represented in the fBDM Board had an equal say in both the dialogue and its organizational decision making.

The positive role of fBDM in inter-party dialogue processes in Bolivia

The role of fBDM in renewing and strengthening democratic political parties has been two-fold from the start. First, the foundation functions as a 'space' or platform for dialogue, consensus and trust building among political parties. Second, fBDM functions as an organizing body for activities to enhance the democratic quality of the political parties and the party system (Koonings and Felipe Mansilla 2004).

Over the years this approach has produced a number of positive results. In 2008, for instance, the foundation helped the government and the opposition reach agreement on the text of the new Bolivian Constitution. In 2009, fBDM also played a significant role in achieving multiparty consensus for reform of the electoral law.

The foundation was able to contribute to these agreements by bringing together moderates from both the government and the opposition and facilitating a process of consensus building. Other organizations including International IDEA and the UNDP complemented this work by supporting the parties with technical expertise and an analysis of the constitution.

The impact of a dominant party on the dialogue process

Before 2009, with no significant political majority in place, both ruling and opposition parties needed each other. However, MAS becoming the strongest political force had a profound impact on Bolivia's political system and, as a side effect, on fBDM.

In this highly polarized context the inter-party dialogue process that the foundation had facilitated for

years suddenly came to a halt in 2010 and the foundation's board stopped functioning as it used to.

The main trigger for this was a dispute that involved MAS demanding a greater say in the foundation's decision-making process as well as a larger share of the resources that the foundation had available for political parties. The other board members disagreed with this request, wishing to maintain the equality principle that had always ruled the foundation's operations.

Despite this disagreement, the parties in fBDM realized that in order to end the stalemate changes needed to be made to the foundation's organizational structure and rules. A dispute resolution commission was therefore established, with the four main parties and movements (represented by the four most-voted-for politicians in Congress) tasked with identifying a solution.

Lessons
While renewal of fBDM was deemed fundamental, it did not come easily. In 2012, a re-launch of the foundation was being prepared.
While it is hoped and expected that a solution will be found eventually, one of the main lessons learned from the Bolivian experience is that equal powers make for easier dialogue. When one party dominates, dialogue becomes more difficult and is less likely to be effective.

A second lesson is that a change in the composition of parliament after elections can shake up the initial dialogue structure, and that this should be anticipated and discussed when institutionalizing a dialogue.

Ecuador:
creating openness through multiparty activities

Context
Despite the return to a civilian, democratically elected government in 1979, Ecuador remains characterized by high political instability and weak institutions. Since the 1990s in particular, the credibility of traditional political parties has declined, while the influence of (often indigenous) social movements has risen.

Rafael Correa and his political organization Proud and Sovereign Fatherland Alliance (Alianza PAIS—Patria Altiva i Soberana) came to power in 2007, introducing a new constitution, framed under the so-called citizens' revolution in 2008. One year later, Correa was re-elected as president. In May 2011, a national referendum took place, which resulted in popular backing for Correa's proposed reforms in the justice system and media legislation. The opposition accused Correa of 'strong man politics' and of using the reforms to increase his power. This has contributed to increased mistrust and suspicion between government and opposition powers.

International IDEA and NIMD founded Democracy Square (Ágora Democrática, AD) in 2006 as a way of countering the level of mistrust in Ecuadorian politics. AD was set up under a programme of political system reform and party strengthening, and was designed to provide technical assistance to political organizations and support inter-party cooperation.

AD's aim is to contribute to the consolidation of a sustainable multiparty democratic system, including the promotion of political party dialogue. However, after seven years AD has only partly succeeded in achieving this last goal, as the parties have not systematically institutionalized their dialogue but instead have engaged in a number of multiparty initiatives.

Parties' reluctance to engage in political dialogue

Since its establishment, AD has been closely involved in the democratic reform process that took place after the adoption of Ecuador's new constitution in 2008. This involvement included concerted efforts to improve inter-party relations and encourage political parties and movements to work together on constitutional reform, as well as party and electoral regulation.

In the AD experience it has not been easy to bring Ecuadorian political organizations together and it has been even harder to promote a dialogue about contentious issues of national concern. Most parties seem to lack the necessary will and confidence to reach out to their political opponents, and even when they do make contact this tends to happen only in the lead-up to elections, for the purposes of transitory coalition building.

One of the factors explaining the parties' reluctance to engage in a dialogue is that the opposition did not see the point as long as Alianza PAIS and President Correa were seen to be making all of the country's decisions on their own. Similarly, due to its relatively comfortable position in parliament, Alianza PAIS lacked incentives to consult the opposition.

Multiparty initiatives

In view of the parties' negative view of political dialogue, AD decided to opt for a gradual, pragmatic approach. The programme refrained from setting up formal dialogue platforms, but instead decided to support other ways of inter-party interaction (complemented, where possible, with dialogue).

By taking this flexible approach and avoiding the 'dialogue label', AD found itself better able to bring parties together. AD accompanied parties in building trust and confidence, and through a number of multiparty initiatives paved the way for more regular and meaningful inter-party dialogue.

First, in 2010 AD brought together representatives of the most important Ecuadorean political organizations. This group organized itself as the Editorial Board of a new political magazine, *Agora Política*. The aim of this quarterly magazine is to disseminate a variety of political perspectives on the new political situation in Ecuador. The board meets on a regular basis to discuss relevant topics and choose articles focused on political trends and developments in Ecuador. While contentious issues tend to be avoided, topics are selected based on consensus.

Second, since 2009 AD has supported the informal multiparty women's group Grupo Multipartidario de Mujeres (GMM). This group, together with women members of CSOs, uses intra- and inter-party dialogue to increase women's advocacy capabilities and range of influence in political organizations and across the wider political spectrum. GMM's goal is to better put into practice the provisions of the new constitution and the Democracy Code regarding women's political rights and equal political representation.

Third, a mixed multiparty parliamentarian group was set up as part of the new legislature in 2009. The group supports gender-sensitive legislation and the women's rights agenda within the assembly, including a national budgeting process designed according to a gender perspective. It uses dialogue processes to advance the treatment of gender-sensitive issues in legislative proposals, including laws on equality and health, and the penal code. Since its formation, the group has worked with the Ecuadorean women's political network Red de Mujeres Políticas del Ecuador (REMPE), GMM and other CSOs and received support from AD, UN Women and the United Nations Population Fund.

Fourth, in 2008–2009, AD and the community-based radio broadcasting system Coordinadora de Radios Populares y Educativas de Ecuador (CORAPE) organized public debates between political organizations, CSOs and the local media. The radio programme *Ágora Constituyente*, set up to disseminate information about the National Constituent Assembly and its contents, allowed for an informal exchange of views between the different political stakeholders. The programme continues to be broadcast nationwide by CORAPE to provide political information and context analysis.

Why political dialogue remains important

Despite these multiparty initiatives, some Ecuadorian experts remain concerned that the decline of political parties will continue unless parties reinvent

themselves and reinvigorate their role in society—for instance, by making serious efforts to develop longer-term agendas on issues critical to the general welfare of the population.

While institutionalized political party dialogue is still in its early stages in Ecuador, AD's initiatives have contributed to an environment in which national actors are increasingly exploring inter-party dialogue mechanisms. In 2012, for instance, Ecuador's electoral management body set up the Political Consultative Council and set in motion the Democracy Institute provided for under the terms of the constitution, both meant to bring parties together.

One lesson learned in Ecuador is that meaningful dialogue can only start when both governing and opposition parties feel they have a common interest in strengthening the system they operate within.

Mozambique:
from party strengthening to dialogue

Context

Mozambique became independent from its Portuguese colonizers in 1975. A long and bloody civil war followed between the National Resistance Movement (Resistência Nacional Moçambicana, Renamo) and the governing party Frelimo (Frente de Libertação de Moçambique, Front for the Liberation of Mozambique). After 15 years of fighting, a peace agreement was signed in 1992 and a system of multiparty democracy was adopted. Frelimo won the first general elections in 1994, and has been in power ever since. The four subsequent rounds of multiparty elections have seen Frelimo gradually increase its representation in parliament at the expense of Renamo.

NIMD (then called Stichting Nieuw Zuid-Afrika/ Instituut voor Meerpartijen Democratie, NZA/IMD) commenced its first activities in Mozambique in 2000, as part of efforts to depolarize the political discourse. In 2003, a small country office was opened in order to engage in a gradual process of relationship and trust building with the political parties. Its main purpose was to support the political parties in Mozambique in the field of capacity building and institutional strengthening and to promote a democratic culture within parties.

In trying to reach this goal NIMD used two programme components: a bilateral fund for direct projects with political parties and a special fund for multiparty activities. These multiparty activities were intended to facilitate interaction between participants and bring parties closer together. Inter-party dialogue was at that initial stage not yet part of the programme.

Overcoming mistrust through multiparty events

From the beginning, NIMD worked with all registered parties without discrimination. This approach helped avoid criticisms of favouritism and built confidence across the spectrum of political parties. This open and transparent approach was important,

as one main challenge was the extreme level of mistrust between Renamo and Frelimo. In fact, this mistrust was so high that representatives of the two parties were not willing to meet, speak or even to sit together in the same room, outside the formal meeting spaces.

Through multiparty training, the two parties were provided with opportunities to slowly get to know each other better. It was, however, not until 2006— that is, five years after NIMD's first encounter with the parties—that Renamo and Frelimo agreed to send representatives to an NIMD conference in Nairobi. This event opened a new phase in the party support programme, in which parties were willing to work together on issues of common interest.

Adding the dialogue component
In broadening the scope of the multiparty activities, a forum for inter-party dialogue was considered. Informal dialogue outside the framework of parliament was deemed necessary as the party landscape in Mozambique was so polarized that dialogue and reconciliation within parliament were hardly effective: parties tended to adopt opposing positions on virtually all issues.

Moreover, because of the proportional representation system and the ruling party's dominant position, Frelimo controlled virtually every aspect of parliament. Because opposition parties grew tired of not being able to influence decisions in parliament, they looked for an informal space in which to meet the ruling party, finding impartial facilitators in NIMD representatives.

The ruling party's reluctance to engage in dialogue
Setting up an inter-party dialogue process in this context was not easy, especially for the facilitator. Frelimo continued to resist the establishment of an informal dialogue platform, as it felt that the parliament and the media already offered sufficient space for dialogue. For NIMD—an organization promoting multiparty democracy—this was a dilemma, because it could only support the dialogue if all political parties, and especially the two with parliamentary representation, were on board.

The facilitator's approach to this dilemma was to engage in discussions with parties on an individual basis in order to stimulate them to reflect on the need for inter-party dialogue and the potential advantages of making it more systematic. In doing this, parties were allowed enough time and space for their internal reflections.

Promising achievements
This engagement period lasted for approximately two years. In 2009, in the run-up to the general elections, Frelimo agreed to join the dialogue sessions around electoral issues and election preparations. Through this platform, the National Electoral Commission (Comissão Nacional de Eleições, CNE) registered political parties and other electoral stakeholders in Mozambique shared information and addressed questions and common challenges.

The dialogue sessions around electoral issues were facilitated by NIMD and were a small but significant step towards more structural cooperation between the parties. By 2012 a fairly systematic dialogue was in place involving the three parliamentary political parties in Mozambique on issues of shared concern.

The agenda for the dialogue is now set in close consultation with the three parties, depending on their needs and interests. Formal organizational structures and formal rules of engagement are not yet established, but this may come in the future. The dialogue sessions are seen as a way to activate the system in place and stimulate a more continuous dialogue in both formal and informal spaces.

Lessons
The highly polarized political environment, as well as the two-thirds majority and consequent dominance of the ruling Frelimo party, have for a large part determined the pace and the shape of the dialogue process in Mozambique. An NIMD programme that started with capacity building has gradually evolved into a political party dialogue platform.

Over a period of almost ten years NIMD has provided bilateral support to individual parties, encouraged the parties to get to know each other through multiparty activities and facilitated inter-

party dialogue. In 2012 parties agreed to discuss openly the possibility of establishing a more systematic inter-party dialogue platform.

This shows that in an environment like Mozambique, where all efforts are immediately labelled pro-government or pro-opposition, the only way to create an environment of trust and proximity is to spend time together and give the dialogue sufficient space to mature.

Nepal:
finding common ground on constitutional reform

Context

The 2008 elections in Nepal ended a decade of civil war, popular protest and constitutional stale-mate. The resulting Constituent Assembly (CA) was charged with developing a new constitution as part of Nepal's peace building and democratic transition process. In the four years that followed, the CA worked to draft a constitution that would command consensus.

Increasing inclusivity

From the start, the constitution-building process was designed to be inclusive. The electoral system for the CA led to significantly increased inclusivity, with 197 women members elected out of a total of 601, and the inclusion of indigenous members, young people and excluded minority groups (e.g. Dalits, or 'untouchables', increased their presence from zero to 48). In addition to the formal debates in the CA, many informal political party dialogues took place, some set up by political parties themselves (most notably a tripartite high-level party forum), others facilitated by international actors.

International IDEA contributed by convening and supporting an Inter-Party Dialogue Group, which consisted of between ten and 12 party central lead-ers and influential CA members representing major political parties, including the regional parties based in the Terai region of Nepal. In a 'behind the scenes' context, the group members sought to understand and explore each other's positions and ideas, ex-pand their knowledge and range of options by draw-ing upon expert briefings, and thus reach positions and sometimes compromises that would be accept-able to all parties and, in particular, their leaders.

The dialogues started in May 2009 and proceeded to identify issues on which the political parties had a common position, issues on which they held different positions, and possible common ground. The outcomes of the dialogues were related to the

knowledge, skills and political will of Nepali political parties in clarifying their own party positions and seeking accommodation of each other's views.

Complications arising from decision making outside the Constituent Assembly

However, final decision making on important constitutional issues was retained by senior party leaders and often took place outside the formal CA processes. The decision-making role assigned to the CA was circumvented. As a result, the CA debates and decision making on most critical issues were aborted and the promised public consultations on the first draft never occurred. This left many CA members and the public frustrated and disappointed in their political leaders.

On 27 May 2012 (the final deadline for the CA to reach agreement on the constitution, which had already been extended four times), the political leaders appeared to have found a compromise formula on the contentious issue of federalism and the draft constitution was prepared for printing.

However, the party leaders ultimately failed to reach a final agreement. Deep-rooted mistrust between personalities contributed to this failure, as did disagreements between different groups as to whether and how states in a new federal system should be formed, especially with regard to the numerical strength of certain identity groups. The CA therefore dissolved, leaving the constitution unfinished.

A period of recrimination inevitably followed. The way forward remained unclear in an environment where there was no sufficiently accepted constitutional or legal framework to determine what should happen, and no political consensus to help guide actors in the absence of legal clarity.

The value of interaction

Despite this, the International IDEA dialogue process allowed party participants to interact with national and international experts. Offering parties equal access to technical knowledge and expertise helped them build a shared understanding on the different options for solving contentious constitutional issues, and allowed them to play a more effective role in the CA and its constitutional sub-committees.

Inter-party dialogue is about parties as institutions, not only individuals. Formal dialogue delegations were assigned, usually comprising two or three party members who were close to the party leadership and had an interest in the subject matter and the dialogue process.

This is not to underestimate the value of individuals: the dialogues were designed so that the same participants would be able to participate over a longer period in order to create trust and camaraderie between them. This strategy was largely successful, even in cases where the position and standing of an individual in the party did change and could have led to a change of guard.

Dialogue needs to be facilitated both among and within parties. After each session many participants sought to use intra-party dialogue and communication mechanisms to spread newfound insights within their party. Knowledge gained during the dialogue often also found its way directly to the CA, especially through those dialogue members who were also CA members.

While party leaders were consulted on a regular basis, bridging the gap between the party delegations and their leaders remained a challenge for dialogue participants. Some, who were not always able to get the leaders' full attention, blamed this on the latter's lack of time or commitment. Whatever the reason, this made it harder to ensure full party support.

Lessons

A positive effect of the various dialogue processes has been that Nepalese political parties have, over the course of four years, been able to dramatically reduce the number of contentious issues that stand between them. Despite a failure to agree on the form and basis of federalism, the parties did in fact agree on the establishment of an inclusive, secular republic with a semi-presidential framework and a mixed electoral system—and, indeed, on the federal principle itself.

While the constitution was not formally adopted when the CA dissolved, the thinking and discussion that led to this level of agreement clearly left a footprint that could strongly influence the starting line for future debate. However, the general feeling among

the Nepali population following the dissolution of the CA was that if the agreed rules of procedure had been followed and the CA had been allowed to debate and vote on contested issues, the stalemate could have been avoided.

In practice, party leaders were often unwilling to devolve power to the wider membership of the CA. The question is thus whether the agreed rules were in fact realistic, or whether it is in practice inevitable in such processes that final agreement on the most divisive and contested issues can only be reached by top party leaders behind closed doors and then ratified through a wider process.

The Nepal experience serves to illustrate that political party dialogue, even when broadly effective, is probably necessary but not sufficient in itself to ensure democratic reform. Such reform requires continuous coordination with formal institutions, effective communication with leaders, and sufficient commitment by these leaders to reaching agreement and, when needed, compromise.

Uganda:
initiating a dialogue in the lead-up to an election

Context
Uganda's recent history has been characterized by severe political turmoil and internal strife: since its independence in 1962 it has witnessed five military coups and transitioned from a military to a multiparty system. For almost 20 years under the no-party system, political parties were banned, and competitive party politics only reappeared with Uganda's first multiparty elections in 2006.

While the elections were an important milestone for Uganda's revived multiparty democracy and brought new actors into the political arena, the political playing field remained uneven. During the 2011 general elections, President Yoweri Museveni secured a new term as president and his party, the National Resistance Movement (NRM), gained even more seats than it had in the 2006 elections.

With the NRM now holding around 70 per cent of parliamentary seats, Uganda continues to be characterized as a dominant-party system.

Rationale for inter-party dialogue platform
In the context of a volatile political environment and public fears about violent elections, Uganda's parliamentary parties invited NIMD to launch a dialogue programme in the autumn of 2009. Central to NIMD's approach was the setting up of an informal inter-party dialogue process that, despite an existing legal provision enabling its creation, did not yet exist.

The rationale behind the dialogue platform, known as the Inter Party Organisation for Dialogue (IPOD), was to create a safe meeting space in an inclusive, confidential and informal setting outside parliament to allow parties to get to know each other and gradually increase both interpersonal and inter-party trust.

The platform also offered an opportunity for parties to organize around a shared reform agenda and

could serve as a mechanism for letting off steam and peacefully mitigating conflicts in both the run-up to the elections and their immediate aftermath.

The issue of timing

The main dilemma for NIMD at the start of the programme was the issue of timing. The fact that the dialogue platform was set up in a pre-election year meant that parties would be brought together in a politically charged atmosphere. The late start created high expectations that the platform would deliver electoral reforms but provided little time for the dialogue to mature, let alone set up structures or build trust.

NIMD therefore felt that it was taking a high risk in engaging at such a late stage in the electoral reform process. Should the electoral reforms not materialize, the dialogue process could well stall and even be aborted if the opposition parties pulled out. The facilitator was faced with this tension on a daily basis, and had to make focused efforts to convince parties to meet in the same room and talk with each other.

The positive contributions of the facilitator

Despite these challenges, parties on both sides remained engaged and committed to the dialogue. Three elements of the facilitator's work contributed positively to the IPOD platform's establishment.

First, the facilitator generated buy-in and support at different levels within the IPOD member parties. Initially, a majority of parties saw the IPOD dialogue process as the preserve and initiative of a few individuals rather than the parties themselves. In such a scenario any agreements struck would not be capable of achieving the political parties' blessings.

The facilitator sought to mitigate this risk by seeking wider buy-in to the process by the parties, including regional party leaders and party leagues. Internal party preparedness was crucial for creating this level of party ownership. A series of meetings and consultations were held within each party, focused on the organization and set-up of the IPOD platform.

These meetings brought together the national and regional leaders of the parties to ensure buy-in to the process by this larger leadership group. In addi-

tion, all parties ensured that their respective national executive committees approved the MoU establishing the rules and organization for the dialogue platform, in order to ensure ownership of the process by the parties.

Second, as part of these consultations, the secretaries general of both the ruling and the opposition parties in Ghana and a highly respected Ghanaian expert visited the Ugandan political parties individually. During these visits they talked to a wider group of party leaders in order to share some of the positive outcomes of a similar dialogue process in Ghana that had taken place some years earlier. These exchanges played a critical role in securing buy-in and support from the Ugandan political leaders for their own dialogue programme.

Third, a dedicated effort was made to secure a few modest successes early on in the process to reduce the risk of the dialogue platform collapsing. Due to the time pressures the parties and the facilitator were under, IPOD limited the agenda topics to electoral issues. This set in motion a dialogue that culminated in the production of a set of amendments to the legislation that were supported by all IPOD's political party members.

Lessons

Reaching this kind of agreement in a short time frame required both ruling and opposition parties to compromise. The facilitator actively promoted this attitude by alerting parties that they would have to make some concessions in these pre-election stages if they wanted to establish their bona fides in the process.

In hindsight, the platform served as a pressure releaser and helped to mitigate electoral risks. Despite these positive results, the Uganda experience also shows that the issue of timing and elections cannot be underestimated, and that postponing the dialogue until after elections or focusing on modest activities remain valid alternatives.

Appendix 2: Considerations when designing a political party dialogue process

This list of questions is designed for use by dialogue facilitators who have been approached by political parties (or other actors) to explore possibilities for a political party dialogue process.

The questions correspond to the 18 chapters and areas of attention as discussed in this Guide. The list is not a checklist, rather a basic starting point for discussion. Ideally, the questions will trigger a conversation and joint reflection process between and within parties early on in the dialogue process, to help facilitators build a common understanding of what a dialogue process could contribute to and look like.

This list serves as a practical tool that can be used as a basic agenda for exploratory meetings between the facilitator, political parties and/or other government and civil society actors. It can be used to guide and inspire discussions on various aspects of political party dialogue during (multiparty) workshops or training sessions and to generate basic information that can be used for formulating proposals or advice on the potential role of political party dialogue in a given country.

Each section of the questionnaire relates to a particular chapter in the Guide and contains three components. The brief introduction (in italics) provides a few short statements that the facilitator can use to introduce the topic that is to be discussed; the overarching question (in bold) is meant to define the scope and focus of the discussion; and the follow-up questions can be used to encourage an exchange of views on more specific issues.

This list of questions can be applied equally across different countries and can also be expanded and contextualized by facilitators and parties as they deem fit.

PART I:
General considerations with respect to political party dialogue in country X

1: Defining political party dialogue

Democratic performance often depends on political parties' capacity and will to cooperate with their competitors. While contests over power can be hard and bitter, discussions over content can still lead to fruitful dialogue and sometimes agreement between parties. A political party dialogue mechanism can help parties in achieving this. The three main groups of actors involved in political party dialogue are the political parties, the facilitator and, in some cases, civil society or government actors.

Overarching question: To what extent does country X have a healthy balance between political party competition and cooperation?

- What are the most important examples of political competition in country X?
- Is it clear what constitutes a 'political party' in country X?
- What are some examples of political cooperation in country X?
- To what extent has the balance between competition and cooperation improved or deteriorated in the past two, five and ten years?
- What are reasons for exploring ways of holding a dialogue between political parties?
- What dialogue mechanisms are used inside parliament (e.g. coalitions or caucuses)?
- What dialogue mechanisms are used outside parliament (e.g. informal dialogue processes)?
- To what extent do parliaments function as the primary space for inter-party dialogue? (e.g. look at a parliament's functioning, links between MPs and their party, or tense party power relations)

- How can political party dialogue be used to complement and inform parliamentary debate?
- What would be the purpose of the proposed political party dialogue?
- Which actors should become core members of the dialogue, and which should be involved on the periphery or in other capacities?
- In what ways can each of the political parties and other actors be connected to the dialogue process?

2: The role of a facilitator

The main role of the facilitator is to serve as an impartial broker between political parties which, by their nature, are in competition with each other and will therefore find it hard to take the initiative. Because of the complexities that come with working with political parties, facilitators require a political antenna as well as the right personality to engage with high-level, political actors. In addition, guiding principles such as joint ownership, sustainability and inclusivity can be of assistance to facilitators when creating legitimate and meaningful inter-party dialogue processes.

Overarching question: What should the role of a political party dialogue facilitator be in country X?

- What makes the dialogue facilitator non-aligned and able to act in an impartial manner?
- Is it possible to identify examples of facilitators with skilled political instincts?
- What about examples of facilitators who are not able to operate in sensitive political contexts?
- In what ways can a facilitator show the will and ability to create party ownership of the dialogue?
- How can the facilitator help parties to build inter-party trust and work on democratic reform?
- What is the ideal role division between the facilitator and the parties?

- What would be the facilitator's profile and job description if it were to be described in a ToR?
- Which local and international organizations and/ or individuals could act as impartial facilitators?
- How do political parties interpret and define 'joint ownership', 'sustainability' and 'inclusivity' in country X?
- What other guiding principles could be added to guide the inter-party dialogue?

3: Assessing the political environment

Before initiating an inter-party dialogue, facilitators should respect the 'do-no-harm' principle by ensuring that they have a deep understanding of the political environment and infrastructure in which political parties operate. A variety of assessment tools can be used to analyse the political and socio-economic context and keep track of political developments.

Overarching question: What is the best method for assessing the political environment?

- What approach and tools are available for the political environment scan?
- To what extent do these assess the wider political context and the specific needs of political parties?
- Can tools like multi-stakeholder consultations or joint party self-assessments be used?
- How can facilitators ensure that continuous reassessment takes place (e.g. by political party analysts)?
- To what extent will the assessment focus on the political history and climate of the country; the party system in place; the political party landscape; the external regulations and requirements; the internal functioning and structure of political parties, and their external relations; and the political culture?

- Is there a strong difference between how parties are legally obliged to act and how they act in practice?
- To what extent will the assessment identify risks and potential barriers for political party dialogue?
- How will the assessment point towards windows of opportunity for successful political party dialogue?

PART II: Political party dialogue in practice

4: Dialogue stages and dynamics

In theory, dialogue processes go through a series of stages during their life cycle. These usually include an exploration and design phase, an official kick-off and the actual conduct of the dialogue. The dialogue can be open-ended or focused on a specific result or end date. In reality, many dialogue processes lack 'logical flow'.

Overarching question: What are the main stages in the anticipated political party dialogue process?

- What is the expected timeline and general focus of the dialogue?
- How will the dialogue be affected by the short- or long-term nature of the process?
- What are the anticipated milestones and characteristics of each phase in the dialogue process?
  – Exploration phase: …
  – Design phase: …
  – Start of the dialogue: …
  – Conducting the dialogue: …|
  – Closing the dialogue: …
- What events are likely to form natural breaks between one phase and the next?
- What unexpected, unpredictable events can be foreseen that could have an impact on the dialogue?
- How could changing levels of trust between parties influence the planned steps of the process?
- How can comparative knowledge and expertise be used to promote a continuous flow of ideas?
- Is it possible to secure local knowledge and understanding to assist in facilitating each of the phases?

5: Setting goals and agendas

Political party dialogue processes can support a broad variety of goals. They can serve as a mechanism for strengthening inter-party cooperation and trust or else help parties to pursue joint democratic reform or development goals. There are few limits to what can be discussed, as long as the participants agree on the relevance of the topics; goals and agenda setting are tools used to focus and serve as the dialogue mandate.

Overarching question: What are the short-term, intermediate and long-term goals of the dialogue?

- How can goal setting be organized in such a way that it becomes a joint exercise between parties?
- What are issues of national interest and what are issues of political party interest?
- In what areas are parties more influential and where can they bring positive change when working together?
- To what extent will the dialogue goals reflect problems faced by all parties across the political divide?
- To what extent do the parties' various interests and agendas diverge?
- Can positive incentives be identified, so that joining the dialogue becomes attractive to everyone?
- Which contentious topics should be part of the dialogue agenda, and which not?
- Will it be possible to ensure that the dialogue's goals and agenda can be adjusted and measured over time?

6: Supporting political reform and national development

Political parties are essential actors when it comes to initiating political reforms and developing a long-term vision for society. Parties are responsible for developing policy alternatives and programmes for equitable economic and human development. Inter-party dialogue can help parties move beyond their own interests and build consensus on areas of national importance.

Overarching question: How can dialogue contribute positively to democratic reform and development?

- What political reform and development processes are critical in country X?
- What positive (and negative) roles could political party dialogue play in these processes?
- How could the outcomes of inter-party dialogue feed into constitutional reform processes?
- To what extent can parties use dialogue to improve political party laws and regulations?
- How can dialogue help strengthen electoral frameworks, regulations or codes of conduct?
- How can dialogue help to increase predictability on issues of national importance?
- How can dialogue help to build a minimum consensus for long-term national development plans?
- Can dialogue be used to jointly identify new trends and developments that affect all parties?

7: Timing and the electoral cycle

The timing and dynamics of a dialogue between political parties are closely linked to the electoral cycle. A country's elections are a clear landmark in time and greatly influence inter-party relations, especially in the run-up to election day. The post-election and consolidation phases are best suited for reflection and for developing policies and legislation.

Overarching question: Is it possible to time the dialogue in such a way that it considers the electoral cycle?

- What are examples of ways in which time and timing can influence the dialogue, and vice versa?
- What are the general time frame and main milestones of the electoral cycle in country X?
- What are the key characteristics of the pre-election, election, post-election and consolidation phases?
- What are the opportunities and risks that parties are likely to encounter in each phase of the electoral cycle?
- What can be expected of the parties' activities and changing mindset in each phase of the cycle?
- Do coordination mechanisms with essential actors such as electoral management bodies already exist?
- What would be the best way to make use of the reform window in the post-election and consolidation phases?

- What other internal and external time-bound processes do parties go through simultaneously?

8: Designing a dialogue's organizational structure

When parties agree to get together on a more structural basis, they may wish to organize their interactions and relations. A large variety of political party dialogue structures exist. Depending on the political context, these dialogue structures can range from very informal, loosely organized platforms to formal, institutionalized political party organizations.

Overarching question: What is the preferred organizational set-up and structure of a dialogue platform?

- What are the pros and cons of informal versus more institutionalized dialogue platforms?
- How can the organizational structure support the dialogue's purpose while also ensuring party ownership?
- Does the structure facilitate dialogue alone or also party capacity-building programmes?
- What are the roles and responsibilities of the secretariat and governance bodies (e.g. the board)?
- Can written terms of reference or an MoU help parties agree on organizational design?
- What resources (both human and financial) will be needed to set up and sustain the platform?
- How can the structure be made flexible enough to respond to political developments (e.g. alternating power arrangements)?
- How can the structure assist in dispute and conflict resolution?

9: The rules of the dialogue game

In any dialogue context, setting ground rules about how political parties should conduct themselves is an important step in creating an environment in which participants feel safe and comfortable. Each dialogue space has its own structure, logic and complexities, and will therefore require parties to develop their own behavioural rules and principles.

Overarching question: What are the rules and procedures parties wish to adopt for their dialogue space?

- What are the behavioural values parties jointly subscribe to (e.g. respect, honesty, tolerance or commitment)?
- Are these values informally agreed upon or can they be captured in a formal MoU?
- What kinds of governance and/or general membership provisions are required?
- If money is involved, what is to be agreed in terms of financial expenditure and accountability?
- How are the dialogue meetings to be held and organized (e.g. questions of timing, correspondence and quorums)?
- What are the decision-making mechanisms (e.g. by consensus)?
- How will dialogue results be communicated to the media and public (e.g. through the dialogue spokesperson)?
- Have any dispute resolution mechanisms been specified (e.g. an advisory council, a council of elders or a code of conduct)?

10: Building trust between political parties

In contexts dominated by deep-rooted fears and suspicion between political adversaries, building a minimum level of mutual trust and confidence is an important first step, as well as a foundation for sustained and meaningful dialogue. Building trust often begins with politicians getting to know each other better.

Overarching question: How can the dialogue be used to build minimum levels of inter-party trust and confidence?

- What are some examples of unproductive tensions and conflicts existing between the political parties?

- Is it possible to gain a better understanding of the historical and political reasons for mistrust?
- What options would be available in terms of overcoming these tensions?
- Would parties be willing to exchange views about the potential benefits of inter-party dialogue?
- Do opportunities exist for dialogue between political parties and non-party actors?
- What multiparty events (e.g. training, workshops or study tours) can help to bring parties together?
- How could focusing the dialogue on non-contentious subjects help in getting parties to talk?
- How much time will be needed to establish a minimum level of trust and confidence?

11: Consensus building through structured dialogue

Facilitators can play an important role in creating an environment in which parties feel encouraged to look for consensus and may therefore need to be willing to compromise. Consensus building generally entails a mix of dialogue, mediation, negotiation, deliberation and decision making. It is also about equality between parties and avoiding situations where a vote is required in order to reach a decision.

Overarching question: In what ways can dialogue be used to build consensus?

- To what extent are the power dynamics in the dialogue platform different from those on display in parliament?
- To what extent can the dialogue be combined with elements of negotiation, mediation or decision making?
- Are parties open to working through consensus and steering away from decision making through voting?
- How can inclusive and consultative agenda setting be used as a tool in trying to build consensus?
- How can a facilitator give each party time and opportunity to present its points of view and proposals?
- How can a facilitator ensure that all parties have equal access to knowledge on the issues under discussion (e.g. inviting experts, supporting research and analysis)?

- How do parties plan to use their capacity to communicate, consult, and seek consensus and compromise?
- What would consensus look like in practice (e.g. an agreement on a single issue, or a broader consensus) and how can it be made sustainable?

12: Internal party communication and preparation

In an ideal situation, political parties enter a dialogue as equals—not necessarily in terms of actual political power but in having the same knowledge, ability and understanding of what the dialogue entails before they join. Intra-party dialogue and preparation are therefore preconditions for effective inter-party dialogue.

Overarching question: How can a facilitator strengthen the parties' internal communication and preparation mechanisms?

- How can facilitators provide parties with similar information or support before they join the dialogue?
- What internal communication and preparation mechanisms do parties have in place?
- Are these mechanisms used in practice for internal party reflection, preparation and the dissemination of results?
- Which party members form part of these structures (e.g. MPs, local leaders, dialogue members, women's and youth wings, or party experts)?
- To what extent do party representatives have a clear, flexible mandate backed by the party leadership?
- How do parties go about bridging the information gap between dialogue delegates and the party leadership?
- Is it possible to allow sufficient time between dialogue sessions for intra-party communication and preparation?
- Can an 'internal party preparedness document' be used as a tool to prepare for the dialogue?

PART III: Inclusive dialogue

13: Deciding which political parties to invite to the dialogue

Setting up a political party dialogue process is by nature a multiparty undertaking, as it involves at least two and, more often, multiple parties. Using a multiparty method can mean reaching out to all registered political parties but in reality it often involves choices about inclusion and exclusion. Using transparent criteria can help in creating a sense of fairness.

Overarching question: How should a facilitator go about engaging political parties?

- How many political parties exist in country X, and how do they vary in nature?
- To what extent do each of the political parties considered as participants in the dialogue:
  – Act as representative of the people?
  – Own the problems that the dialogue discusses?
  – Take achieving dialogue outcomes seriously?
  – Possess the capacity to engage in constructive discussions that can lead to consensus?
- Will the proposed number of parties around a dialogue table allow for an effective dialogue?
- What transparent criteria do parties wish to use when selecting dialogue participants or platform membership?
- To what extent do these criteria take into account changes in the political context or power shifts?
- Can strategies be identified to deal with dominant, reluctant or new parties, or with political and social movements?
- What is the relationship between political parties and armed or rebel groups?
- Is it possible to prepare communication and cooperation strategies before dealing with excluded political parties?

14: Choosing political party dialogue representatives

Each party needs to discuss internally who is taking part in the dialogue platform. A party's choice of participants can be based on a person's position within the party organization or on his or her personality, but in practice it is usually a combination of both. As a facilitator it is important to know 'who is who' within the parties and to respect the party hierarchy.

Overarching question: Which individuals will be invited to take a seat at the table?

- Who makes up the leadership and party cadre of each of the political parties at the national and local levels?
- How can all parties be equally represented, and at which level (e.g. party leaders, cadres, experts)?
- How important are the formal and informal personal relations between parties?
- What will be the role and level of involvement of the party leadership?
- How are dialogue participants and their alternates appointed and with what mandate?
- Might there be ways to involve future elected party leaders and delegates?
- To what extent are gender, minority representation and diversity considerations taken into account?

15: Equal participation and representation of women and men

Women and men should ideally work as equals in shaping the development of their societies. In practice, however, men and women across the world experience inequalities in many areas of life, and this also applies to political parties. Concerted efforts should be made to include women politicians and prevent dialogue platforms from becoming male-dominated.

Overarching question: How can a facilitator ensure that women and men are equally represented in the dialogue?

- To what extent are relevant human rights treaties supported and implemented in country X?
- To what extent are women and men equally represented in politics and political parties in country X?

- What is the balance between men and women politicians at the party leadership and cadre levels?
- How can the dialogue platform and composition ensure more equal participation by women and men?
- Can the dialogue support legislation and policies that help reduce gender disparities?
- Is it possible to coordinate efforts with other women's groups in society, or with parliamentary caucuses?
- How can the dialogue reflect the reality that, while women and men may share similar concerns, they do not always act as homogeneous groups?

16: Minority representation and diversity

The maturity of a democracy can be judged by its ability and willingness to include and accommodate minorities in decision-making processes. The strength of a dialogue over a regular political debate is that it has the ability to more easily accommodate minorities in a political decision-making process. At the same time, dialogue requires a workable size in order for it to be effective.

Overarching question: How can facilitators ensure that appropriate attention is paid to diversity and minority issues in the dialogue?

- What are the major issues of minority representation and diversity in country X?
- How do these issues relate to the dialogue's topics and processes?
- How do these issues relate to each of the political parties?
- How can the dialogue as a whole reflect as many identities as realistically possible?
- What are obstacles to doing so (i.e. being inclusive) and how could they be addressed?
- What are the opportunities for dialogue on diversity issues in society; a dialogue of which the composition or the participants are diverse; and dialogue with respect for diversity (e.g. for people's identity)?

17: Engaging with civil society organizations and the media

At some point, the inter-party dialogue process and its results need to be validated by citizens, by way of informing civil society and the media. A facilitator can play a positive role in bringing parties and civil society closer together but may be faced with the question of how to balance between the inclusion and exclusion of civil society organizations.

Overarching question: Is it possible to effectively engage civil society in the dialogue?

- What are the roles of civil society and political party organizations in country X?
- To what extent are political and civil society organizations related or opposed to each other?
- What reform and public policy issues do both civil society and political parties work on?
- How can CSOs be engaged in such a way that parties still feel that the dialogue process is their own?
- How can CSOs play a positive role in the dialogue (e.g. as providers of expertise)?
- How can CSOs be engaged as strategic partners in citizen outreach and dissemination?

18: Concluding remarks: moving beyond the handshake

Political party dialogue is often an exercise between politicians, but the synthesis needs to be distributed and shared both within and outside the party in order to have impact. A political party dialogue process does not end with the signing of agreements or joint statements, but should continue with an emphasis on actual implementation in society.

Overarching question: How do parties plan to ensure that dialogue results are sustained and/or implemented?

- What are the main goals of the dialogue process, as identified at the start?
- What are some of the expected 'intangible results' (e.g. improved inter-party relations, or increased levels of trust)?
- What are some of the concrete results the dialogue plans to deliver (e.g. legislation or policy measures)?

- When do the parties expect to achieve these results?
- Do parties foresee any follow-up or implementation of the results (e.g. a 'road map')?
- How can the facilitator ensure continuous links with relevant actors including parliament and the executive branch (e.g. in cases when laws or policies are to be adopted)?
- How do parties plan to ensure that they stay committed to the dialogue's intentions and outcomes?
- What practical, joint monitoring and evaluation mechanisms can be used to demonstrate and track progress?
- How can a facilitator help ensure continued public support and validation for the dialogue's outcomes?

Acronyms and abbreviations

AD	Ágora Democrática (Ecuador)
AN	Acuerdo Nacional (National Accord) (Peru)
CA	Constituent Assembly (Nepal)
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
CMD	Centre for Multiparty Democracy
CMD-K	Centre for Multiparty Democracy-Kenya
CMD-M	Centre for Multiparty Democracy-Malawi
CMDID	Centre Malien pour le Dialogue Interparti et la Démocratie au Mali
CNE	National Electoral Council (Ecuador)
CRC	Constitution Review Commission (Ghana)
CSO	civil society organization
DCSP	Democratic Consolidation Strategy Paper
DFID	Department for International Development (United Kingdom)
ECN	Election Commission of Nepal
EMB	electoral management body
fBDM	Fundación Boliviana para la Democracia Multipartidaria (Bolivian Foundation for Multiparty Democracy)
Frelimo	Frente de Libertação de Moçambique (Front for the Liberation of Mozambique)
GMM	Grupo Multipartidario de Mujeres (Ecuador)
GPPP	Ghana Political Parties Programme
International IDEA	International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance

IEA	Institute of Economic Affairs (Ghana)
IPOD	Inter Party Organisation for Dialogue
IPU	Inter-Parliamentary Union
MAS	Movimiento al Socialismo (Movement for Socialism)
MoU	memorandum of understanding
MP	member of Parliament
NDI	National Democratic Institute
NGO	non-governmental organization
NIMD	Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy
NRM	National Resistance Movement (Uganda)
PPLC	Political Parties Liaison Committee
Renamo	Resistência Nacional Moçambicana (National Resistance Movement) (Mozambique)
TCD	Tanzania Centre for Democracy
ToR	terms of reference
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme

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1   Definition of 'party' (political group) from the *Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary & Thesaurus* (Cambridge University Press), available at: <http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/british/party_2>.

2   For ease of reference in this Guide the term 'parliament' is used when talking about democratically elected institutions. The term can be understood to include other democratically elected institutions such as legislatures or assemblies at all levels of society.

3   Based on an overview of the difference between dialogue and debate. See <http://www.crnhq.org/pages.php?pID=15>. The Public Conversations Project of the Family Institute of Cambridge holds copyright to the table above. 46 Kondazian Street, Watertown, MA 02172 USA, e-mail: thepcpteam@aol.com, tel. (617) 923-1216, fax (617) 923-2757.

4   Due to the sensitive nature of the work of political party dialogue facilitation, especially in politically tense environments, some interviewees requested not to be named in this Guide.

5   Based on the Inter-Party Alliance (IPA) Terms of Reference (ToR) which were facilitated by NDI in Nepal.

6   See <http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=3195>, based on Bjuremalm, Helena, summary of 'Power Analysis: Experiences and Challenges', 2006.

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16 This paper was prepared by Renée Speijcken, Maastricht Graduate School of Governance/UNU-Merit, Maastricht University, the Netherlands, as a part of International IDEA's Democracy and Development programme work in 2011. It was selected as a contribution to stimulate debate on and increase knowledge about the impact of democratic accountability on services. See <http://www.idea.int/resources/analysis/loader.cfm?csmodule=security/getfile&pageid=52018>.

17 Constraints that can limit the activities of a platform with different bodies can be related to its own institutional set-up, nature and governance structure. See Speijcken, 'Strengthening the Roles of Political Parties in Public Accountability'.

18 Based on the fBDM organizational set-up in 2012.

19 The description and chart are based on the IPOD MoU, as described in Olukya, Godfrey, 'Signing of Memorandum of Understanding, Uganda', NIMD, 2010.

20 Reformulation of a question asked by Carothers in *Confronting the Weakest Link,* p. 205.

21 The Democratic Dialogue *Handbook for Practitioners* explains a number of these phases in more detail. International IDEA, *Democratic Dialogue: A Handbook for Practitioners,* Appendix 2.

22 More information about processes and process tools for dialogue and deliberation can be found for example in International IDEA, *Democratic Dialogue: A Handbook for Practitioners*, Appendix 2.

23 Based on 'Responding to Conflict, 2000' (part of the hand-outs received during the Dialogue and Mediation Course, Folke Bernadotte Academy, Sweden, May 2012).

24 Even though it is not very common, some countries recognize not two but three genders (e.g. Nepal and Australia, which give official recognition to transgender or 'indeterminate' people), in which case other arrangements can be agreed upon.

25 See <http://www.acuerdonacional.pe/>.

Colophon