

international legal and normative regimes, particularly in the areas of democracy, human rights, and the rule of law at both global and regional levels. Some of these recommendations are discussed below.

### Preventive Diplomacy

The presentations on case studies of preventive diplomacy provided useful insights into the different modalities of mediation as an intervention technique. In practice, mediation takes a wide variety of forms and so-called "mediators" can serve as facilitators, go-betweens, and brokers who actively manipulate the parties and the negotiation process. From a conflict prevention standpoint, where the challenge is to gain entry into the conflict and initiate a process of dialogue with the parties, a problem-solving approach where the third party provides "good offices" in a low-key setting that is removed from the political spotlight is often desirable. Such dialogues can be initiated by various non-governmental actors and groupings--what is called Track II diplomacy. When such initiatives are undertaken by an international organization, the party providing the "good offices" is advised to eschew the formal language of "mediation" and "preventive diplomacy" and to establish some distance between him or herself and the sponsoring organization in order to cultivate the trust of the parties and maintain flexibility. Some of the other lessons that emerged in the discussion were as follows:

- Lack of bureaucratic encumbrances that allow for a creative approach in the field are essential to successful "mediation."
- The first phase of prenegotiation must build confidence between the parties.
- Sometimes it may necessary to keep participants to a minimum in such discussions as in the case of the Oslo talks. In other instances, it may be necessary to develop a more inclusive strategy that engages a wide variety of social and political actors. The goal of such dialogues is to engage the parties for a period of time in order to foster personal relationships and develop trust.
- Track II initiatives require close cooperation between those doing the mediating and the government/organization sponsoring the initiative. Some Track II initiatives, which had considerable potential to alleviate conflict or reduce tensions, failed because they did not receive adequate support from governments.
- Those providing "good offices" should be sensitive to local culture and conditions. Where possible, they should try to build upon local methods and institutions of conflict management and resolution. Third parties should resist the temptation to simply focus their efforts on urban areas and should include rural areas where the majority of the population may live.

Preventive diplomacy must also situate particular initiatives within a broader framework of comprehensive security. International norms and standards are critical components of a comprehensive strategy, especially when issues of identity, citizenship, political participation, access to education, access to resources, and cultural matters lie at the heart of conflict.