



# Natural Resources and Conflict

## A Guide for Mediation Practitioners



United Nations Department of Political Affairs  
and United Nations Environment Programme

## About this project

Mediating Natural Resource Conflicts is a collaborative research project undertaken by the Policy and Mediation Division of the United Nations Department of Political Affairs (DPA/PMD) and the Environmental Cooperation for Peacebuilding initiative of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). The project has also received support from Columbia University's Center for International Conflict Resolution (CICR), the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (HD), and the EU-UN Partnership on Land, Natural Resources and Conflict Prevention.

This guide collects and summarizes good practices on the successful mediation of resource conflicts. It draws on the field experiences of mediators and mediation experts, specifically those with natural resource expertise. It also features lessons learned from UNEP's work on environmental diplomacy in different conflict-affected countries, with a particular focus on how to use impartial technical knowledge to equalize stakeholder information in a mediation process.

This foundational knowledge was supplemented with the experience and insights of over thirty mediators who participated in an expert meeting in New York to share their own good practices and lessons learned on mediating natural resource conflicts. The workshop provided an invaluable opportunity to develop and refine the ideas in this guide, and the development team is grateful for the active and generous engagement of all participants. The guide was also subject to external peer review, which greatly enhanced the quality and clarity of the content.

This guide also builds on the conflict prevention research undertaken by the aforementioned EU-UN Partnership<sup>1</sup> as well as on the case studies and innovative practices identified within the global Knowledge Platform on Environmental Peacebuilding.<sup>11</sup>

The primary audience for this guide is mediation professionals and supporting institutions involved in localized or transboundary natural resource disputes, or those engaged in peace processes where natural resources play a critical role. However, it may also be of interest to stakeholders and natural resource management experts involved in disputes over natural resources that might be considering a mediated solution, ranging from governments and companies to local communities and nongovernmental organizations. It also contains information that is relevant to experts working on conflict-sensitivity, conflict prevention, and peacebuilding linked to extractive resources, land, and water.

This guide is being published in two formats. A compact version containing only the core guidance (Part A) and short practical examples that can be used by mediators as a reference for structuring mediation processes, sharing the methodology with key stakeholders, and delivering training. In addition, a longer version of the guide includes the core guidance plus nine detailed case studies (Part B) that demonstrate how different strategies and good practices have been combined in mediation processes. This longer version also contains a list of resources for additional reading. Together, these case studies and reference materials provide a range of successful approaches that mediators and stakeholders can draw ideas and inspiration from to inform on-going deliberations.

This guide was made possible through the generous contributions of the governments of Finland and Italy, as well as the support of the European Union.

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## Foreword



*“Natural Resources and Conflict: A Guide for Mediation Practitioners”*, produced by the Department of Political Affairs (DPA) and the Environmental Cooperation for Peacebuilding initiative of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), is an unprecedented, ambitious and long-awaited undertaking.

Recent years have seen growing recognition of land and resource disputes as drivers of conflict and violence. In parallel, peace negotiations have increasingly addressed these issues directly. Indeed, all major peace agreements since 2005 include provisions on land and natural resources.

Yet to date, the role mediation can play in peacefully resolving conflicts over natural resources has not been examined in a systematic way. Furthermore, mediators unfamiliar with the issues may be tempted to consider them as largely technical, thereby not fully appreciating their political nature and strategic importance. A challenge, therefore, is to ensure that mediators are fully equipped to grapple with the many complex issues involved.

This *Guide* bridges the gap between the technical and political aspects by providing a much needed conflict resolution framework for disputes that center on natural resources. It can be applied in localized or transboundary conflicts, as well as natural resource disputes that arise in the context of broader peace negotiations. This *Guide* distills decades of experience in natural resources dispute resolution into an easy-to-access format for mediation practitioners. I believe it should also be useful to parties involved in resource conflicts, in order to help them identify possible paths towards resolution through mediation and third party involvement.

The United Nations should be proud of this innovative joint effort by its political and environmental arms. I am certain that the *Guide* will become a vital reference for mediation practitioners and for all those who, more broadly, work to end conflict, secure peace, and build sustainable futures for the citizens of this planet.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading 'Jan Eliasson'.

**Jan Eliasson**

United Nations Deputy Secretary-General  
United Nations Headquarters, New York  
February 2015



# Acronyms

ABG	Autonomous Bougainville Government
AWS	Agreement on Wealth Sharing
BCA	Bougainville Copper Agreement
BCL	Bougainville Copper Limited
CAPP	Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers
CASA	Clean Air Strategic Alliance, Canada
CBM	Confidence-building measures
CICR	Center for International Conflict Resolution, Columbia University
CMC	Contract and Monopolies Commission, Liberia
CPA	Comprehensive peace agreement
DPA/PMD	United Nations Department of Political Affairs, Policy and Mediation Division
DUAT	Direito de Uso e Aproveitamento da Terra (Land Use Rights), Mozambique
EBM	Ecosystem-based management
ECRB	Energy Resources Conservation Board, Alberta, Canada
EEZ	Exclusive Economic Zone
EITI	Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative
EIVC	Extractive industries value chain
EU	European Union
FPIC	Free, prior, and informed consent
GAM	Gerakan Aceh Merdeka (Free Aceh Movement)
GBR	Great Bear Rainforest
GDP	Gross domestic product
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GIS	Geographic information systems

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