

## **International Seminar: Envisioning New Trajectories for Peace in Sri Lanka**

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Organized by the Centre for Just Peace and Democracy (CJPD)

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### **Session 8: Re-envisioning Sri Lanka – Lessons learned & Challenges and Opportunities**

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#### **Ways Forward & Breaking the Deadlock**

##### **Current Situation :**

The Geneva talks have created a positive environment that can be exploited to create the environment for negotiations on the substantive issues in the Sri Lanka ethnic conflict. Despite the statement of the Government spokesperson at the Geneva talks, which emphasized the views of the President of the GOSL on the CFA as contained in the President's vision (Mahinda Chintana), the talks ended with an endorsement of the CFA by both sides. The emphasis has now been placed on the implementation of the CFA, with particular focus on how to deal with the para-military groups.

The escalation of the activities of the para-military groups poses a serious threat to the peace process. The presence and activities of para-military groups can be exploited by criminal elements as well as by the parties to the conflict. The recent outcome of the local government elections with a victory for the United Peoples Freedom Alliance (UPFA) and the outcome of the elections in Trincomalee creates a new dynamic that will impact on the peace process.

These local developments will influence the peace process and can be exploited by either party as well as the Facilitator to create a more conducive environment for negotiations on substantive issues related to a lasting solution. In addition to local developments there are several regional and international developments that will continue to influence the situation in Sri Lanka or that could be exploited by the Facilitator and the parties to fast track negotiations towards a lasting solution.

##### **What could change the Current Dynamics?**

- 1.** Any change in the power balance, currently existing between the two parties, that is initiated by them can change the power balance. This could be a change in their status either on the military balance of forces or a balance of political support; locally; regionally; and internationally. Each party has several opportunities to change the political and military balance. Currently it would seem that the Government has more leverage to tilt the military balance in its favour and current international developments give both parties sufficient leverage to alter the political balance in their favour.
- 2.** The development of something “dramatic/unexpected” in the immediate environment (local E.G. Tsunami); surrounding environment (regional E.G. settlement of the Kashmir question and conclusive India/Pakistan peace); and greater environment (E.G. 9/11). These changes that have “shock and surprise” impact of immense proportions create short windows of opportunity. These allow the parties to make equally “dramatic/unexpected” moves on the part of either party to alter the balance of power in its favour or provide the “mediator/facilitator” with an opportunity to unlock new creative energy in the process and generate solutions that can give parties the quick “face-saving” excuses that allow them to

shift their maximalist positions and occupy the moral high ground without sacrificing their stature, legitimacy and credibility.

**What can be done to change the current environment?**

1. The Mediator/Facilitator and the parties themselves could alter their current status by developing strategies to take advantage of current local, regional and international developments.

2. The Mediator/Facilitator and the parties can also take advantage of “dramatic/unexpected” changes in the environment to introduce “shock/surprise” moves that create a new environment for breaking the deadlock in the negotiations. An opportunity to capitalise on the Tsunami was lost. The parties should be aware of this as a strategy and should be made aware of how to take advantage of such situations to avoid future lost opportunities.