



## UNITED STATES MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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**United States Statement  
Exchange of Information on State Practices  
on the Peaceful Settlement of Disputes:  
“The Use of Good Offices”  
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United States Mission to the United Nations  
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Thank you, Chair.

The United States welcomes the opportunity to provide a few observations about the use of good offices to facilitate the peaceful settlement of disputes. The practice of a State or international body making itself available through the use of its good offices can take a number of forms. It may mean providing facilities and staff to create a forum for sovereigns to meet. It may mean initiating direct negotiations between parties, with or without direct participation by the State or body providing the good offices. It must be consensus-based and not imposed. It may be public or discrete. The United States welcomes and encourages States to play this important role in whatever form it takes. We recall the work of countries like Angola in providing its good offices to Rwanda and Uganda, and of Switzerland for its extensive mediation work, among many others.

Although the use of good offices is not specifically mentioned in the UN Charter, the long list in Article 33(1) of pacific tools of dispute settlement that parties shall first employ includes an open-ended phrase, “other peaceful means of their own choice.” The phrase conjures creative, bespoke solutions that parties to a dispute may employ, including the use of good offices by a State or body. Article 33(2) echoes the primacy of the Security Council’s ability to call on the parties to settle their disputes by such peaceful means.

The use of good offices is of course not limited to States, and perhaps no one has done more than the Secretaries-General of the United Nations, including through the use of special envoys. The good offices work of the Secretary-General, and that of his special representatives and envoys, has supported the implementation of peace agreements, political transitions, the resolution of outstanding disputes, and efforts to end violence in conflict. This work has been crucial to conflict prevention, encouraging political dialogue, governance reform, peaceful and credible elections, and peacebuilding. For example, in recent years, the Security Council has welcomed the work by the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region to help bring an end to violence in the eastern Democratic Republic of the

Congo. The Council has welcomed the work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Libya, who also serves as head of the United Nations Support Mission in Libya. The Council has also expressed its full support for the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy for Western Sahara to facilitate discussions to achieve a solution to the Western Sahara question. These are only some of the many examples of the important work undertaken by the Secretary-General in furtherance of the use of his good offices.

Regional and sub-regional organizations can also play an important role through the provision of good offices. The Security Council has repeatedly highlighted the valuable contributions of regional and subregional arrangements, particularly subregional economic communities, in promoting good offices to end conflicts and ensure successful processes. These have included bodies like the Economic Community of West African States, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, and the Southern African Development Community.

These are just a few examples of the important diplomatic work that the provision of good offices has facilitated. Good offices have and will remain a crucial component to facilitating the peaceful settlement of disputes. The United States thanks UN Member States, regional and sub-regional arrangements, the Secretary-General and his special representatives and envoys for their efforts in using their good offices in furtherance of the UN's purposes for international peace and security. We appreciate hearing from other members of the Charter Committee about their own perspectives and experiences with the use of good offices.