

Foreword

The importance of reaching sustainable political agreements to end armed conflicts between states and population groups that claim, often legitimately, the right to self-determination, or that demand a degree of autonomy or a share of natural resources, has become increasingly obvious to the international community. Since the end of the cold war many such conflicts have become visible or have flared up, making all of us aware of the many wars that continue to destroy the lives of large numbers of innocent people in all parts of the world.

It is shocking to realise that so many political agreements concluded to end intrastate wars and conflicts are not or not fully implemented, a situation that often leads to renewed tensions and fighting. This excellent book, written by an impressive and eminent group of people who have worked to resolve such conflicts and who have experienced the difficulties of ensuring proper implementation of agreements, could not come at a better time when the United Nations and a number of regional organisations are struggling to understand the needs, pitfalls and complexities of peacebuilding, especially in countries where internal conflicts have raged.

In Timor-Leste, we have struggled to rebuild a country ravaged by violence, and continue to have our share of challenges in this respect. Progress in implementing the Good Friday Agreement in Northern Ireland continues to be difficult, while in Indonesia the difficulties of implementing the agreement reached between the government and the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) are becoming evident as I write this foreword. In the Sudan, some parties to the peace agreements are yet to demonstrate their ability and commitment to fully implement the accords, while the people of Sri Lanka are again witnessing the consequences of a breakdown of agreements with respect to the ceasefire even before reaching a political agreement.

The authors of this book help us understand the difficulties of implementation. They also suggest ways in which implementation can be improved. There clearly is not one solution to the problem of inadequate implementation, but several ways of strengthening the agreements themselves and the mechanisms that help to insure their implementation. The newly established Peacebuilding Commission of the UN and those governments and non-governmental organisations and individuals who are professionally involved in peacebuilding will find the wealth of experience of people like Francesc Vendrell, Niek Biegan, Dennis Haughey and Devasish Roy, and many others who have contributed to this book indispensable to their work. The analysis provided by the

editor, herself a mediator in intrastate conflicts, brings clarity and vision to an otherwise difficult field to penetrate.

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