

PEACE-BUILDING and CONFLICT RESOLUTION – both processes require individuals, groups, and societies to undergo a slow, incremental and risky process of change with yet unexpected outcome. Due to the rising interdependency and interconnectivity on the international, regional and national level, the society's capability to handle conflicts is crucial in order to live in a peaceful tomorrow. In line with the conference's major goal to identify major regional conflicts and to assess tools for conflict resolution, I strongly would like to call for a multi-disciplinary, multi-sectorial as well as and multi-layered approach in research. In this regard, I will elaborate the potential and competency of political psychology when it comes to peace-building and conflict resolution.

The main contribution of POLITICAL PSYCHOLOGY to peace-building and conflict resolution could be summarized by strengthening the culture of knowledge-based dialogues, support consensus in reaching common understanding on key national issues and interests among diverse groups. That way, the psychology of polarization and various forms of supposedly intractable enmity systems within the society, transcends the individual, inter-group, and societal level, and will be unblocked, resolved, and transformed. This approach addresses both the root cause and the symptomatic structural challenges arising from ongoing tensions and current political circumstances – all representing common obstacles to civil peace.

LOOKING AT THE ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK OF CONFLICTS, one should look at the underlying psychological landscape that drives the emergence and the persistence of conflicts. Various psychological sub-disciplines provide a vast body of literature to elaborate research on conflict resolution, peace-building and reconciliation:

- **Social psychology:** Social identities are built around out-group and in-group boundaries or incompatibilities, which in turn determine each conflict party's narratives of "us" versus "they". Thus, competition, hostility and violence between groups are not only a matter of competing for power resources but they are also the result of competing identities.
- **Organizational & personality psychology:** Conflict resolution requires an attitudinal change on the individual level, even if strong resistance always accompanies change. Individuals' patterns of approaching their social world, are products of learning experiences (e.g. socialization, personal encounters, traumas, etc.). This leads us to assume that attitudinal change ought to take place at different layers of the one's personality.
- **Theoretical & experimental psychology:** The collective memory carries all sorts of emotions ranging from experienced pride upon the victory at an international football game to experienced loss of a beloved one in times of civil war, and all influence the individual's behavior, emotions, and thinking.
- **Clinical psychology:** In many post-conflict countries, the conflict persists on a much more subtle level on which individuals are not given a common space for mourning. A non-accomplished forgiveness process is a source of collectivistic/ national trauma that affects not only the daily life of common people but also the nation's political positioning.

I HOPE that this conference will contribute in various ways to the understanding of future outbreaks of collective, large-scale violence and the multiple traumas they generate, by explicitly paying attention to each sector's contribution to CONFLICT RESOLUTION and PEACE-BUILDING.