

## THE FIRST OF ITS KIND – A CONSTITUTION-MAKING HANDBOOK FOR PEACE

Constitution-making is hitting the headlines. This year alone, constitutional reforms have been, or are, on the agenda in Tunisia, Egypt, Morocco, Nepal, Southern Sudan, Zimbabwe and now Libya.

Over 150 new constitutions have been created since 1975, and as many as 20 national constitutions are reformed or adopted each year. Recent months and the ‘Arab Spring’ have proven that this development continues.

A modern constitution needs to be legitimate in the eyes of the people, but achieving this is a challenge. Often national and international constitution-makers feel out in the cold as there has been no comprehensive resource on the options for constitution-making and reform. The design, implementation and management of these processes, in an inclusive way, create the foundations for lasting peace. The stakes are high. If the process goes wrong the seeds of future conflict and violence will be sown.

Interpeace, an international peacebuilding organization, is now filling this critical gap.

Today, Friday, September 9th, 2011, Interpeace launches the handbook: *‘Constitution-making and reform: Options for the Process’* a comprehensive resource for national constitution-makers and their advisors.

Held at the United Nations (UN) in New York, **H.E. Mr. Joseph Deiss**, President of the UN General Assembly is providing the opening remarks. **His Royal Highness Prince Zeid Ra’ad Zeid Al-Husseini of Jordan**, Permanent Representative of Jordan to the UN and Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission Country Configuration for Liberia, will moderate a panel discussion. He will be joined by **Jean-Marie Guéhenno**, Director of the Center for International Conflict Resolution, SIPA, and former Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations; **Nicholas Haysom**, Director of Political Affairs, Executive Office of the UN Secretary-General; **Jamal Benomar**, UN Special Advisor and Envoy for Yemen and former Director of the UN Rule of Law Unit; and **Michele Brandt**, co-author of *‘Constitution-making and Reform: Options for the Process’*.

Four respected experts from the constitution-making domain, Michele Brandt, Director of Interpeace’s ‘Constitution-making for Peace’ initiative, Jill Cottrell, Yash Ghai, and Anthony Regan, have united to create this ‘how to guide’ for constitution-makers around the world.



The handbook provides practical guidance on how to design transparent, nationally led and owned processes that are also participatory and inclusive.

“With the complexity of a constitution-making process come difficult choices. The handbook lays out the potential dilemmas and implications that practitioners on the ground may face,” explains Graeme Simpson, Director of Interpeace USA, Policy and Learning.

Simpson confirms how Interpeace has approached this initiative: “Much of the knowledge contained in the handbook simply did not exist in publications. Experiences needed to be harnessed. We involved over 120 practitioners and experts with invaluable first hand field experience. We have captured what they have learnt. We’ve not focused on just one area but have taken a global view. Experience from over 100 countries fed into the process and of course there is the expertise of the four authors. This handbook has content for everyone.”

“Members of constituent assemblies or constitutional commissions, government officials, politicians, civil society, activists, donors, foreign advisors, policy analysts, academics, and international aid actors can all benefit. It captures the knowledge and weighs up the options so they can make up their own minds on what will work best for their society,” highlights Scott M. Weber, Director-General of Interpeace.

Lakhdar Brahimi, who provides the foreword for the handbook, highlights: “I wish *‘Constitution-making and reform: options for the process’* had been available to the international community when I was the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Afghanistan. This book asks the right questions.”

The handbook will be available on line for all to access from the 9<sup>th</sup> September at 9am EST on [www.interpeace.org](http://www.interpeace.org)

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**ABOUT INTERPEACE** [www.interpeace.org](http://www.interpeace.org)

Created in 1994, Interpeace is an international peacebuilding organization, with headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland, that plays a discrete role in helping societies war-afflicted societies to build lasting peace. Interpeace operates as an independent non-governmental organization and in partnership with the United Nations on specific programmes. The organisation works with 300 peace builders to implement programmes in 16 conflict and post conflict zones across the world:

Africa:	Burundi, Rwanda, Guinea-Bissau, Somali Region, Liberia
Asia:	Timor-Leste
Europe:	Cyprus
Latin America:	El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Haiti, and a regional programme for the prevention of Youth Violence
Middle East:	Israel, Palestine

Interpeace also has an additional thematic programme on constitution-making.