



# NEW PATHS TO SUSTAINABLE PEACE

War and armed conflict affect the lives of some 2 billion people worldwide. A new initiative that includes Bert Koenders, former Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands, aims to find paths to lasting peace.

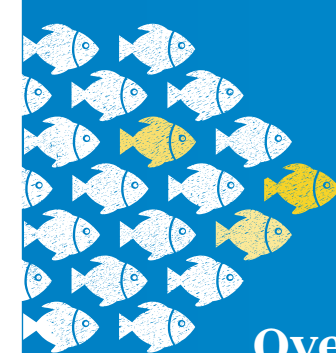
**ZÜNDER: Many peace processes falter and fail after an average of just seven years. As a UN Special Representative in Mali, what weaknesses did you experience in current approaches to peacemaking?**  
**BERT KOENDERS:** As a rule, we follow a top-down, hierarchical process in every country, backed by a UN resolution that was negotiated in New York and accompanied by high expectations. But when I arrived in Mali I realized that this way of peacemaking is not sufficient. If we want to succeed we will have to leave behind the hierarchical approach and stop treating every country in the same way. **Which way do you think is a more promising one?**  
 There is no easy solution. Peacemaking is a joint effort by the people concerned on the ground. That is why we need to listen to these people. All the different groups of the local population should be involved in the peace process: women, youth, young and old. We must not make

the mistake of talking only to those who have taken up arms. Inclusion is a key to success. We must also accept that peace agreements can only hold in the long term if they are monitored by the people on the ground themselves. **You support the Principles for Peace initiative and have become a member of its international Commission For Inclusive Peace. The initiative is led by Interpeace in Geneva and supported by the Robert Bosch Stiftung, along**

**The Robert Bosch Stiftung supports the Principles for Peace initiative as part of its commitment to peace. The Stiftung supports societies that have experienced violent conflicts on their path toward sustainable peace. It supports local initiatives and exchange on the importance of local peacebuilding on a global level.**

# [www.bosch-stiftung.de/peace](http://www.bosch-stiftung.de/peace)

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Motivated to help

## Overcoming borders

**Aiham Issa works to help refugees better understand life in Germany – because this process had been difficult for him, too.**

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ou need to understand more than the local language to settle down in a country. I came to this realization when I arrived in Germany from Syria. In the beginning, the behavior of my new fellow citizens often made me feel insecure. For example, if someone didn't offer me a second glass of water after I had refused the first, I was afraid I had upset him. In my home country, it is the host's job to offer his visitor something to eat or drink until he accepts it. Here it is different. Such small cultural misunderstandings made me feel foreign. I wanted to do something about that.

Today, I am one of six culture coaches – an idea of the Zohre Esmaeli Foundation, which is funded by the Robert Bosch Stiftung. Our goal is to defuse the potential for conflict that can arise when different cultures clash. To this end, we have been trained as mediators in the transcultural integration process.

We want to show the new arrivals how life in Germany works and create an understanding about different cultures. I have experienced many difficulties myself, so I understand their needs and problems. In addition, I am able to talk to them in their native language. This promotes

trust and ensures that no content is lost because of the language barrier.

This year we are holding an intercultural training session for around a hundred participants with and without migration experience. We have prepared a variety of topics for this training. For example, how does the German education system

work? What are the differences in body language and communication? People from my home country wonder, for instance, why their new neighbors greet them only with

a nod and are otherwise somewhat reserved. If I explain to them that this is not a sign of rejection, but simply a common behavior, they understand it better. Our events are to take place weekly and are designed in such a way that everyone can participate, even those whose knowledge of German is limited.

**Aiham Issa (35) worked as a lawyer in Syria. He fled to Germany in 2015 because of the civil war. Since then, he has been volunteering for social and intercultural integration projects in the German state of Baden-Württemberg. The culture coaches are a project in the Stiftung's Immigration Society theme, and are part of an effort to increase the participation of people with a migration background.**

<https://www.bosch-stiftung.de/en/theme/immigrationsociety>

