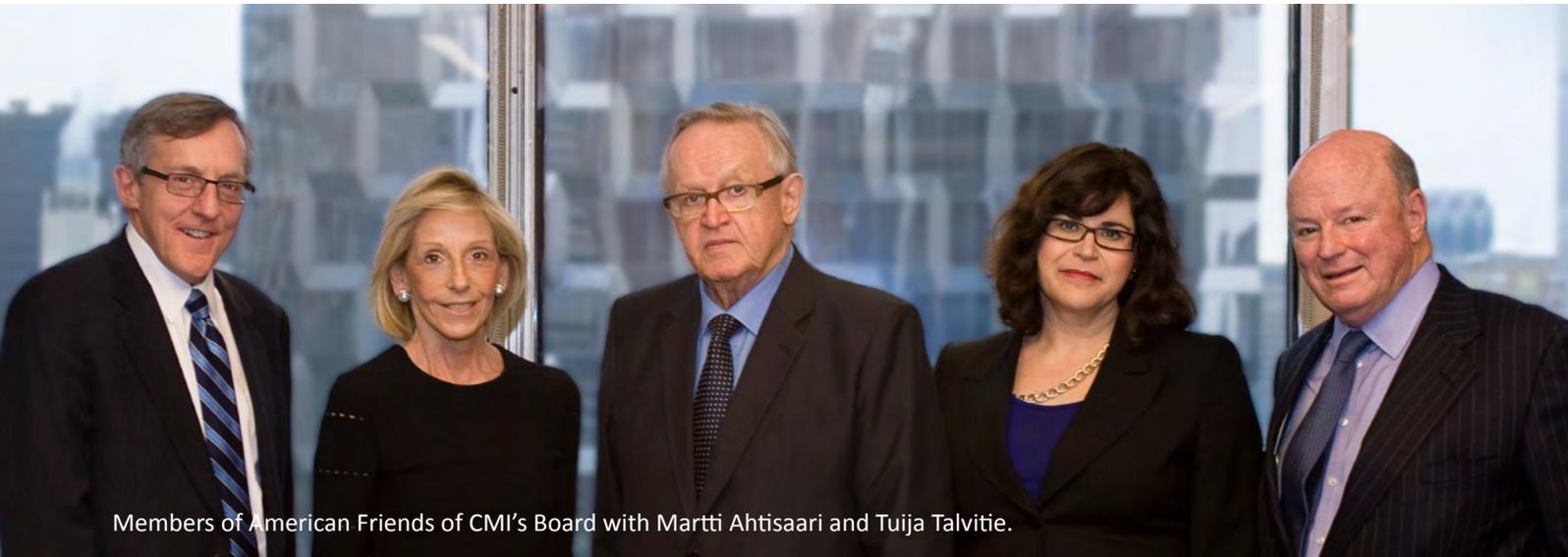


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# CMI NEWS

## SPOTLIGHT ON CMI'S PRESENCE IN THE UNITED STATES



Members of American Friends of CMI's Board with Martti Ahtisaari and Tuija Talvitie.

Text: Elina Lehtinen / CMI Photo: Tarja Tuppurainen

### **CMI has trusted friends in New York**

**"It has been a long and bumpy road, but we are getting there", says Executive Director Tuija Talvitie. She refers to CMI's plans to get recognition, funding and high-level partnerships in the United States, especially in New York and Washington DC. "To enter the world's most competitive market needs a lot of local understanding, connections and luck. We have a bit of all of those, but still need an extra boost of good luck", Talvitie laughs.**

This journey across the Atlantic began a few years ago and has since then been on the agenda of CMI's Chairman of the Board, President Martti Ahtisaari. His connections in the United States as well as a strong belief that CMI should have a presence there, close to the United Nations, has been a key driver behind the mission. The plans were also motivated by the potential funding opportunities that the US has to offer.

It all began with a grand idea of having an office in New York. “Dream on”, says Talvitie now and emphasises the valuable expert advice CMI has been able to get, especially the legal contributions from a Finnish law firm Dittmar & Indrenius and its US partner Sullivan & Worcester. Very quickly, after a context analysis, it became clear that you have to know how to walk before you can run. CMI’s leadership concluded that CMI’s US presence will be built step by step guided by an important ground rule: to make it light and purposeful.

## American Friends of CMI

To ensure a presence in the United States, CMI appointed in February a New York based Senior Advisor, **Kate Almquist Knopf**. She will be building bridges to the relevant constituencies in the UN and Washington DC.

Another move initiated by CMI took place already last year when an independent entity called the American Friends of CMI (AFCMI) was founded. The Friends’ mission is to fundraise, network among influential decision-makers and arrange high-level foreign policy discussions related to CMI’s work.

The Board of AFCMI currently has four members: Mr **Frank Wisner** (Chairperson), Ms **Helen Marx** (Vice-Chairperson), Mr **Michael Student** (Secretary/Attorney), and Professor **Chester Crocker** (Advisor). The Board is assisted by a coordinator, **Ritva Metso**. In 2014, the Friends’ will host events and contribute to the current foreign policy discussion in New York and Washington DC.

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## CMI’s face in the United States: Kate Almquist Knopf



Text: Caroline Haga / CMI Photos: Tomas Whitehouse

**“CMI has found a way to work in many of the most troubling conflict situations around the world”, Kate Almquist Knopf explains when asked about why she wanted to join the organisation. “I’m particularly impressed with CMI’s anticipation of a number of hot spots that have suddenly become much hotter, for instance in Eastern Europe and South Sudan, where our current work will only become more critical.”**

For a few years now, CMI has been looking at establishing a permanent presence in the United States. A key role in cultivating existing partnerships and forging new ones will be played by CMI’s recently appointed US representative, Ms **Kate Almquist Knopf**. Kate joined CMI’s staff retreat in Finland in mid-March, where she shared her challenging objectives for raising CMI’s visibility in the United States.

“I expect that we will raise awareness of CMI both in New York in the policy circles around the United Nations and in Washington with the US government and the policy community there, so that they will know and understand our work better. But more importantly, I am hoping to build such relationships and synergies that further leverage and deepen the impact of our activities”, Kate says.

## Devastated about the situation in South Sudan



Prior to joining CMI, Kate has gained experience in peace processes and conflict resolution particularly in Africa. She worked for eight years at the US Agency for International Development (USAID), among others as the Head of the Africa bureau and the Director of the Sudan mission. When asked about her most interesting professional experience, she does not hesitate.

“For sure it was to have been a part of the Sudan and South Sudan peace process. I first went to South Sudan in 1995 during the height of the North-South civil war, at an extremely desperate time for most of South Sudanese with no end to the conflict in sight. And then to sit there on Independence Day in July 2011, seeing a country where people have literally been fighting for decades and struggling for independence achieving their moment. It truly gives you goose bumps, to feel that you’ve been a little part of helping that to happen,” she describes.

With her previous experience, Kate will be an important asset for CMI’s project in South Sudan. The project has since the country’s independence been assisting South Sudan’s transformation into a stable country by supporting the increased participation of youth and women in decision-making and conflict resolution processes.

However, despite positive progress for many years, politically-motivated violence broke out in South Sudan in December 2013 and continues to this day. Kate finds the situation very troubling, explaining that the negotiations to peacefully resolve the crisis have thus far been futile and hundreds of thousands of people have already had to leave their homes. A famine affecting several million seems inevitable.

“It means that there will be a lot more destruction for a country that is only three years old and had such high hopes for building a new nation state,” she says sadly. “I think CMI’s work with women and youth will be critically important for the inclusive national process that hopefully will arrive from the current peace talks, far more important than when CMI’s office was first set up after independence. The people in Sudan and South Sudan deserve a peaceful society that they can live and prosper in.”

## Private actors can make a difference

Although she has spent most of her career working for the US government, Kate sees that private diplomacy actors can play a powerful and impactful role in helping to solve conflicts both at the unofficial level and in supporting the formal political processes. As they have less restrictions on who they talk to and where they go, private actors can build relationships with different actors, also with those official levels that Western governments may not be talking to directly. This way, they can for example inform about the conflict issues back in the capitals. But private players can also work independently and effectively to solve conflicts themselves, often building trust more easily as their neutral approach reassures conflict parties.

As for CMI, Kate had the opportunity to meet everyone for the first time during the staff retreat in March. “I’m impressed that many staff members come from the conflict areas that CMI is working in, so they bring firsthand knowledge and understanding of the situation. I am looking forward to working with everyone,” she concludes.

## CMI helps reinstate birth registration across Liberia



Text / photos: Helka Lamminkoski / CMI

**CMI has since 2007 been supporting the Liberian government in re-establishing its birth registration system. With the help of mobile phones, births can today be registered remotely in all counties of the country, even in the rural areas. These concrete achievements led CMI to conclude its direct activities at the end of 2013, but work still continues within the country.**

Birth and population information systems provide a person with an identity. They are prerequisites for the realisation of basic services and rights, such as education, health care and voting.

Fourteen years of civil war left Liberia with a destroyed infrastructure and economy and with limited abilities of the state to provide public services. According to a demographic survey in 2007 the birth registration rate among children under five years old was only about 4%. The Liberian government took this seriously and included birth registration as a concrete objective in its Poverty Reduction Strategy the following year.

### **Technology for sustainable processes**

At the request of the Government of Liberia, CMI began supporting the re-establishment of a civil registration system across the country in 2007. Working in partnership with Nokia and a local software firm Starz, the Universal Birth Registration (UBR) process was rebuilt with information and communication technology solutions customised for the Liberian context. Mobile phones with tailor-made forms enable information collection even in remote areas throughout the country, which is then easily transferred to the main birth registration server. The result is a sustainable decentralised birth registration system in Liberia's 15 counties.

## Birth registration as part of a population registry

Despite scarce resources, significant achievements have been made over the years. Birth registration is free for children to up to 12 year old and available in all counties. The aim of the Liberian Ministry of Health and Social Welfare is to have all children registered by 2018, and gradually provide the service to adults throughout the country.

An effective civil registration system is an essential tool of good governance. With adequate population data, policymakers can make informed decisions on the provision of services such as health care. To support further work, CMI promoted an inter-ministerial dialogue on the establishment of a population information system which would integrate the different components of civil registration (birth, marriage, elections, death) in the country.

## Increasing a regional understanding on the linkages between civil registration, identity and peace

More broadly, the project also sought to understand the linkages between registration processes, identity and regional peace and security. CMI facilitated regional meetings on the link between conflict, registration processes and the feeling of belonging to a state. During these, national stakeholders, experts and decision-makers discussed issues such as elections, population movements, identification and citizenship, and made concrete recommendations for conflict prevention and resolution. One of the key findings was that, for historical reasons, identity issues in the Mano River basin (i.e. Liberia, Sierra Leone, Ivory Coast and Guinea), have to be tackled at the sub-regional level.

## No one exists without registration



**As the birth registration project is ending for CMI's part, we took the opportunity to talk to one of the central persons coordinating the process in Liberia, Esther G. Thomas, to find out her views about what has been achieved. "Without registration no one exists. Registration gives people an identity. The feeling of being a part of something, having a nationality, unites people. Birth registration is therefore connected to stability and peace," she says with conviction when asked how the project has supported peace in her country.**

The implementation of the Universal Birth Registration (UBR) started in 2009. The same year, Ms Thomas began her job as coordinator of the project at the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare. Having been involved with the registration process since the beginning she is well known in her role.

"My main task in the beginning was to decentralise the birth registration process. This involved meeting with partners to find the best strategy to set up county offices," she explains. "Early on, CMI brought in many technical solutions that have proven to be very useful in the process and are now in use."

## Birth registration is only the start

The birth registration process is still being developed across Liberia. Nowadays, Ms Thomas monitors the work implemented in the counties, provides training to staff and heads a team of three.

She remains in close contact with county teams to learn about their specific regional requirements, concerns and achievements.

Esther continues to firmly believe in the right of every child to be registered. According to her, it simply has to be at the forefront of the development process, as it allows access to so many basic services and fulfils other fundamental rights. However, there is also a need to merge different registration systems and to develop a population registry.

“Without a birth certificate no one can prove they are Liberian. It may seem that we are not doing much, but birth registration is the start and the prerequisite for other registrations, at least it should be. So why not already create a merged system for registration processes, including voter registration, civil registration, citizenship and so on,” she asks.

Being asked how the future looks like, she says with certainty that she believes everyone in Liberia will be registered and have a personal identity number provided at birth.

### **Small steps can achieve much**

The reinstatement of the birth registration process and setting up county offices has been huge project for the ministry and all partners. What are the personal achievements Ms Thomas feels she has gained as the coordinator during these years?

“I have been able to learn a lot from the whole process and from the cooperation with CMI. The cooperation has increased my technical capacities and the process itself has also taught me how to motivate and capacitate other staff members implementing the work in the counties. I have also learned to understand that with small steps we can achieve a lot together,” she concludes with a smile.

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**All CMI staff from near and far gathered for a staff retreat in Finland on 19-21 March 2014. CMI's founder and current Chairman of the Board, President Ahtisaari (center), warmly thanked everyone for their work.**



## Project news

### South Sudan youth leaders: Dialogue and unity needed in the face of the current crisis



“There are no winners in wars”, youth leaders from across South Sudan agree. “As youth, we need to find our strength in unity. We want to show an example of truly inclusive efforts by working together, across all communal and ideological differences. That is the only route to sustainable peace in our beloved nation”.

Concerned youth leaders from all states in South Sudan gathered to discuss how young people could play a constructive role for peace and reconciliation during the current crisis. During their discussions in Juba on 21-23 February, they jointly agreed on a concrete roadmap for how youth could actively contribute to resolving the situation.

- » Previous news about the project, 14 January 2014: South Sudanese youth finalise their joint messages on insecurity, national identity and food security

### CMI's dialogue group presented joint recommendations to official negotiators in Chisinau and Tiraspol



In late January 2014, members of CMI's high-level expert dialogue group from Chisinau and Tiraspol presented the results of their joint work in 2013 to the Political Representatives of the sides in the Transdnestrian conflict settlement process; **Eugen Carпов** and **Nina Shtanski**. The group also shared

their joint recommendations with key representatives of the international community.

- » Previous news about the project, 17 January 2014: High-level experts discussed Transdnestrian settlement process in Moscow, Brussels and Paris

### Yemeni Women Forum: Women need to be effectively included in next phases of Yemeni transition



As the National Dialogue Conference draws to a close in Yemen, the Yemeni Women Forum for Dialogue calls for the continued active inclusion of women in the next phases of the transition, including in the drafting of the new constitution. CMI continues to support this group, bringing together women from different political backgrounds, in their efforts to ensure that women's voices continue to be heard in Yemeni decision-making.

“The Women Forum for Dialogue has given us a chance to work together. It has gathered women from different components and governorates under one ceiling to work for women's rights and an inclusive peaceful Yemen,” forum member **Salma Al-Masabi** summarised its significance.

## CMI's specialist: Women must be involved in peacemaking



"Women must be heard in peace processes", said **Antonia Potter Prentice**, CMI's specialist in gender and inclusion, in an interview published on the International Women's Day in Finland's largest national newspaper, Helsingin Sanomat. CMI actively works to support a stronger role for women in peace processes and better overall capacities in gender-sensitive mediation.

## Moroccan youth employability tackled in a two-day forum

The youth unemployment rate in Morocco is at alarmingly high levels. As around 30% of the country's population is between the ages of 15 and 29, the lack of employment among young people is currently one of the most critical issues in the society. CMI, together with the Mohamed V University of Souissi, addressed the issue of youth employability in a two-day forum gathering more than 130 participants.



## Conference on prospects for EU and OSCE in supporting peace in EU's Eastern neighbourhood

Since the break-up of the former Soviet Union, the EU's Eastern neighbourhood has been home to a number of protracted conflicts which continue to represent serious obstacles to regional security, stability and prosperity. Key representatives from the EU and the OSCE convene annually to share experiences and best practices in supporting the peace processes. The conference at the end of 2013 analysed the current situation regarding the conflicts and looked at the role of Russia and other regional actors.



## Organisational news

### CMI peacebuilding work receives thanks from UN Secretary-General

President **Martti Ahtisaari** and CMI's Executive Director **Tuija Talvitie** met the United Nations Secretary-General **Ban Ki-moon** in February in New York. The Secretary-General expressed his appreciation for our work in supporting a stronger role for women in peace processes and in the preparation of the UN Guidance for Effective Mediation.

## The Elders urge world powers to uphold Ukraine's territorial integrity

The Elders express deep concern at the crisis in Ukraine and urge all parties to resolve their differences peacefully. Read the statements of Nobel Laureates **Kofi Annan** and **Martti Ahtisaari** on behalf of the group in the press release.

## CMI's Head of Middle East speaks at Harvard Kennedy School

Mr **Mouin Rabbani**, Head of CMI's Middle East programme, visited the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard on 3 March to talk about the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations being promoted by the United States Secretary of State **John Kerry**.

## Premium Donor and proud of it



"A good future cannot be built without peaceful circumstances," says **Elina Liehu**, member of CMI's Premium Donors Club, a circle of individuals that support our work in conflict prevention and resolution.

## Peace spokeswoman Tegla Loroupe awarded at the Finnish Sports Gala



This year the Finnish Sports Gala highlighted the importance of peace and conflict resolution by giving the first-ever Sports Philanthropist award to **Tegla Loroupe**, Kenyan three-time world half-marathon champion and an internationally recognised spokeswoman for peace and education. The 10.000 euro award, sponsored by Wärtsilä, was presented on CMI's behalf by Executive Director **Tuija Talvitie**.

## New appointments

**Mr Itonde Kakoma** has been appointed as the new Head of CMI's Sub-Saharan Africa team. Mr Kakoma has significant experience in mediation, transitional justice and reconciliation processes, particularly in the Mano River Union, Great Lakes Region, and the Horn of Africa. Prior to joining CMI, he has worked among others for the Carter Centre, the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Liberia.

**Mr Vasyl Belmega** has been appointed as Project Officer, Mediation Support Activities, for CMI's programme in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia.

# WE BELIEVE IN A CONFLICT-FREE WORLD

We believe that all violent conflicts can be resolved if there's sufficient political will and skill. Achieving lasting peace requires long-term commitment, local ownership, creative solutions and broad involvement by everyone, including women and youth.

In today's world, we are all interconnected. The development and welfare of other nations, no matter how far away, has an effect on all our lives.

**Help us make a difference and bring more peace to the world!**

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