

**CMI** MARTTI AHTISAARI  
PEACE FOUNDATION

2023

# Annual Report

# Mastering the craft of peace

CMI – Martti Ahtisaari Peace Foundation is an independent Finnish organisation that works to prevent and resolve conflicts through dialogue and mediation. Founded in 2000 by Nobel Peace Prize Laureate and former President of Finland Martti Ahtisaari, we have since grown to be a leader in the field of international peacemaking.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

2-3	<b>TABLE OF CONTENTS / KEY NUMBERS 2023</b>
4-5	<b>FROM THE LEADERSHIP</b> Shaping the future of peacemaking / The scale and culture of waging peace
6-7	<b>OUR WORK</b> Regions and projects 2023
8-9	CMI and the EU: A thriving partnership
10-11	Working towards a lasting peace for Ukraine/ Supporting efforts for peace in the Middle East
12-13	CMI's longstanding support for Libya's democratic transition
14-15	Mediators discuss gender-inclusive peace amid pushback on women's rights / Developing digital foresight for peace mediation
16-17	<b>IN MEMORIAM</b> Martti Ahtisaari 1937-2023
18-19	Martti Ahtisaari's living legacy
20-21	Ahtisaari Days / Communications
22-23	<b>WHO WE ARE</b> Strategic partnerships and funding
24-25	Finance overview
26-27	Our people

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## KEY NUMBERS 2023

**99**

requests towards CMI

**13,9**

million euros total funding

**84**

employees in Helsinki and Brussels

**22**

mediation and dialogue projects globally

**50%**

of women participants in CMI events and activities

**16**

established dialogue  
platforms supported

**16**

peace processes  
in 20 countries  
or regions  
supported

**14**

international, regional or  
national actors provided  
with technical or  
advisory support

**65**

capacity building workshops or trainings convened by CMI

**1424**

meetings with conflict parties and stakeholders

**1297**

meetings with international actors and peers

**168**

dialogue meetings convened by CMI

**5410**

direct beneficiaries of conflict resolution activities

**3367**

direct beneficiaries reached by activities in Finland

# Shaping the future of peacemaking

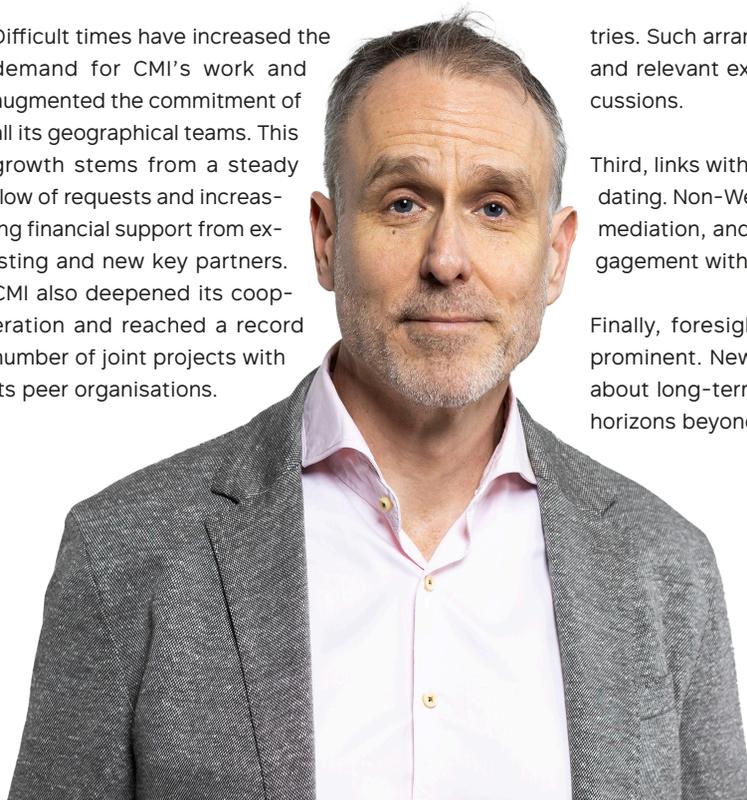
As wars and polarization have narrowed the space for official diplomacy, independent mediators such as CMI have a growing role to play.

In 2023, international developments were shaped by military conflict and ongoing geopolitical tensions. Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine continued, while emerging major conflicts in Gaza and Sudan displaced millions of people and threatened regional stability. Much of the international attention was focused on limiting the consequences of these wars.

In addition to the bloody wars, CMI's year was marked by the passing of our founder, President Martti Ahtisaari, in October 2023. In the dark autumn, we found solace in President Ahtisaari's inherent optimism and his ever relevant clarion call that "peace is a question of will".

As international organisations grapple with geopolitical tensions and diplomats face increasing constraints, President Ahtisaari's vision of independent mediation actors remains relevant. Building on its founder's living legacy, CMI aims to stimulate discussion on the future of peace mediation through workshops and seminars.

Difficult times have increased the demand for CMI's work and augmented the commitment of all its geographical teams. This growth stems from a steady flow of requests and increasing financial support from existing and new key partners. CMI also deepened its cooperation and reached a record number of joint projects with its peer organisations.



Looking at our work in 2023, four overarching developments are likely to shape our future efforts:

First, there is a need to maintain engagement with regimes and actors that are shunned by the international community. Wars and polarisation have narrowed the official diplomatic space. Independent actors who do not legitimise their counterparts have a growing role to play in bridging this gap.

Second, as international organisations struggle, there is a demand for minilateral or flexilateral arrangements that allow for smaller and flexible coalitions between coun-

**Difficult times have increased the demand for CMI's work and augmented the commitment of all its geographical teams.**

tries. Such arrangements bring together regional actors and relevant external actors in informal and frank discussions.

Third, links with emerging mediation actors are consolidating. Non-Western actors are increasingly engaged in mediation, and CMI looks forward to deepening its engagement with them.

Finally, foresight methodologies are becoming more prominent. New digital tools can facilitate discussions about long-term problems and solutions, and broaden horizons beyond present-day conflicts.

**Janne Taalas**  
Chief Executive Officer, CMI

Photo: Maria Santto / CMI

# The scale and culture of waging peace

The spirit of my father Martti is alive at CMI. It is marked by a sense of inclusion, an empathy for counterparts, and a willingness to engage with all when the timing is right.

When I was invited to join the board of CMI – Martti Ahtisaari Peace Foundation three years ago, I discovered a vibrant team, unique both in scale and culture.

In terms of scale, CMI has doubled both its funding and staff in the past eight years. While scale is not an end in itself, it is important in being a trusted partner for funders and conflict parties. It also allows us to partner with peer organisations more than ever.

**The Martti Ahtisaari Peace Fund serves as a kind of keel in future heavy weather, further strengthening our independence and proactive approach in peace mediation.**

Scale enables a flexible operational model that combines skilled staff with senior advisors around the world. Despite our rapid growth, we have stayed focused on our programme and core mediation activities. Our scale affords us the patience and tenacity to stay engaged in regions and conflicts for as long as needed.

The second unique feature of CMI is its culture. Upon joining the board three years ago and now serving as its chair, I've been struck by the presence of the spirit of CMI's founder, my father Martti. The culture is alive in the team every day, marked by a sense of inclusion, an empathy for counterparts, and a willingness to engage with any and all parties when the timing is right. But also a sense of humour.

The year 2023 was particularly important in diversifying our funding structure. The Finnish government committed 10 million euros to endow the peace mediation work of CMI. In the coming years, we aim to match this donation with private funds. The Martti Ahtisaari Peace Fund serves as a kind of keel in future heavy weather, further strengthening our independence and proactive approach in peace mediation.

Our diversified funding will also allow us to continue our efforts in increasing women's involvement in peacemaking and the use of new technologies for mediation. The use of digital technologies to increase inclusion in peace processes and to improve foresight in complex conflicts will continue to grow.

Independent peace mediation is in more demand than ever. We look forward to playing a key role in waging peace in a rapidly changing landscape. Our door is open.



**Marko Ahtisaari**

Chair of the Board, CMI

Photo: Saara Autere

## REGIONS & PROJECTS 2023

CMI continued its long-term work in Eurasia, Asia, the Middle East and North Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa, and prioritised investing in Women in Peacemaking and Digital Peacemaking.

### EURASIA

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The Eurasia region faced new challenges. The Russian war in Ukraine entered a protracted phase, while Moldova experienced increased domestic tensions. Military escalation in Karabakh led to the displacement of the ethnic Armenian population. The EU opened accession negotiations with Ukraine, Georgia, Moldova and Bosnia and Herzegovina. During the year, CMI contributed to bolstering existing conflict resolution efforts in the region through support to national actors, convening informal dialogues as well as strengthening international peace-making processes and practice.

- Strengthening Coordination Among Ukrainian and International Stakeholders
- Building Resilience in Conflict through Dialogue
- Advancing Conflict Settlement and Prevention Efforts in the Moldova Context
- Supporting Institutionalised and Sustainable Dialogue on the Gagauz Autonomy
- Supporting Efforts for Stability and Peace in the South Caucasus
- Supporting Regional Mediation Efforts
- Supporting Dialogue in the Western Balkans

### SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

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International peace efforts faced many difficulties on the African continent during the year. For instance, the impact of the war in Sudan has been immense for regional security in the Horn of Africa. CMI contributed to the strengthening of international peacemaking processes and practice by supporting the African Union's mediation capacities as well as ongoing peace processes at the sub-regional level in the Horn of Africa. On the other hand, and at the core of CMI's work, was the advancement of different informal dialogue processes contributing to peace and stability, such as in Burundi and Sudan.

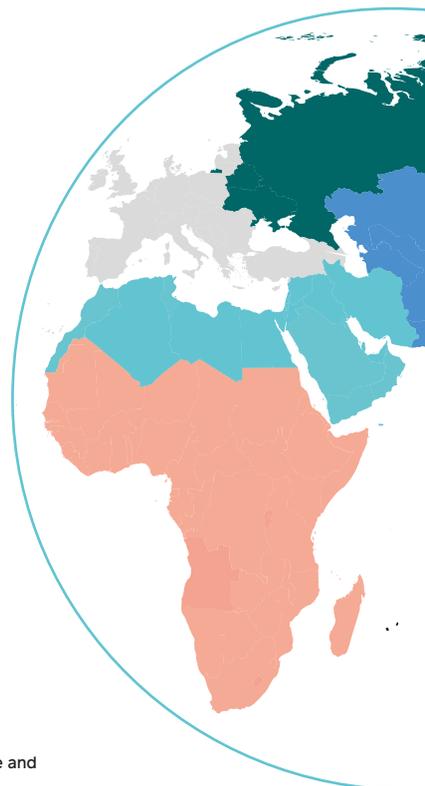
- Mitigating Regional Conflict Dynamics and Advancing Inclusive Dialogue in the Sahel Region
- African Union Mediation Support Project
- Advancing Constructive Dialogue in Burundi
- Fostering Regional Dialogue around the Red Sea / Enhancing constructive dialogue and cooperation on peace and security in the Horn of Africa
- Supporting the Resumption of a Political Process and Inclusive Peace in Sudan

### MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

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The military escalation in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict led to a further exacerbation of regional tensions and a refocusing of international attention on the unresolved question of Palestinian self-determination. CMI continued to provide long-standing support for the advancement of intra-Palestinian dialogue on national unity, while also providing process design support to the EU's efforts aimed at contributing to the resumption of the Middle East Peace Process (MEPP). In the context of highly militarised political environments in Libya and Yemen, CMI continued to provide support to civilian political actors, including political parties, with the aim of developing national visions that would fulfil societal aspirations for inclusive and democratic governance.

- Supporting Dialogue and Conflict Mitigation in Libya
- Supporting Dialogue for Unity in Palestine
- Foster Dialogue on Pathways for a Revitalised Middle East Peace Process
- Supporting an Inclusive Peace Process and Enhanced Agency Among Key Stakeholders in Yemen



- 22** mediation and dialogue projects globally
- 16** established dialogue platforms supported
- 16** peace processes in 20 countries or regions supported
- 14** international, regional or national actors provided with technical or advisory support

## ASIA

CMI's work in Asia is largely conducted in the absence of official political and transition processes. However, there is an emerging international approach to Afghanistan and increased regional efforts to address the deteriorating situation in Myanmar. In this context, CMI has been able to deepen and expand its work with national actors and to enhance connections to regional and international networks of actors in both countries. CMI also accelerated its work on peacemaking policies and capacities in the region. Firstly, CMI increasingly made its networks and expertise available to the regional organisation ASEAN, whose role is as important as ever. Secondly, China's role has significantly increased in addressing conflicts in the region and globally through mediation diplomacy. It is therefore important to continue exchanges with Chinese experts and officials to develop policy thinking along with and assessing China's aspirations in mediation.

- Exploring Context-Specific Approaches to Peace in Myanmar
- Supporting Inclusive and Regional Peace Efforts in Afghanistan
- Supporting Regional Peace Structures and Inclusive Peacemaking in Asia

## WOMEN IN PEACEMAKING & DIGITAL PEACEMAKING

Across its programme, CMI highlights women's roles in peacemaking and the new opportunities and threats that digital technologies present to mediation.

CMI continued its support to women's agency in ongoing political processes in Libya, Yemen, Sudan, Palestine and Afghanistan. We also enhanced the capacity of mediators to use gender inclusive approaches through peer learning, policy discussions and by supporting regional women mediator networks.

CMI advanced the use of technology for the benefit of peace efforts for instance through digital consultations in Sudan and Palestine and foresight in Armenia and the Sahel-Maghreb region. The lessons learned were disseminated widely, including in a scientific article co-authored by CMI.

### THEMATIC PROJECTS

- Women's Political Agency in Conflict Resolution
- Policy and Praxis of Gender Inclusive Mediation
- Digital Peacemaking

### OTHER PROJECTS

- Enhancing International Peacemaking Practice
- Global Education – Ahtisaari Days

## CMI and the EU: A thriving partnership

After nearly two decades of collaboration, the relationship between CMI and the EU is flourishing.



CMI's high-level dialogue in Brussels in January 2024. Federica Mogherini (left), Janne Taalas and Miroslav Lajčák. Photo: Kim Haldin / CMI

In 2023, CMI's activities with the European Union (EU) expanded and diversified to include new actors and stakeholders, reinforcing the EU as one of CMI's most important partners.

Over time, CMI has sought to raise its profile in Brussels to highlight and ensure the political relevance of its activities throughout the EU. As an independent actor with more freedom to engage with different conflict parties, CMI adds flexibility to the EU's peace mediation efforts. In return, the EU lends additional authority to CMI, fostering a mutually beneficial relationship.

**“As an independent actor with more freedom to engage with different conflict parties, CMI adds flexibility to the EU's peace mediation efforts.”**

CMI increased its influence on EU policy-making through targeted contributions to the revision of the EEAS Mediation Guidelines and the new 2023 Civilian Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) compact. It also contributed to the development of key EU policies on mediation and conflict resolution through the European Peacebuilding Liaison Office's (EPLO) Civil Society Dialogue Network.

The Brussels office actively developed CMI's EU expertise by organising and participating in strategic EU events and meetings such as the European University Institute's State of the Union and the

first EU Schuman Security and Defence Forum.

The provision of targeted strategic analysis further strengthens CMI's substantial role in shaping the Union's peacemaking policy. In 2023, CMI provided the EEAS with conflict analysis assessments, mappings, methodological development, training, and capacity building. These were part of an EEAS framework contract on conflict prevention and mediation.

The annual EU Peace Mediation Community of Practice (CoP) showcases and produces tangible contributions to the EU's work on conflict resolution, making it a key platform for influencing EU policy and decision-making. At the 2023 CoP, CMI organised and co-organised panels and sat on the Steering Committee, which sets the overall vision for the event and advises on aspects such as content, formats, and participation.

The 2023 CoP was an ideal opportunity to stimulate discussion on themes and regions such as emerging mediation actors, women mediator's networks, Sudan, Kosovo, and the Sahel-Maghreb region. In other contexts, CMI has highlighted key topics that receive limited attention in Brussels, such as EU enlargement and peacemaking, and the EU's role as a global peacemaking actor in the changing geopolitical environment.

Beyond influencing policy, CMI works with the EU to support peace processes, closely partnering with EU Special Representatives (EUSR) and Special Envoys. In the Middle East Peace Process (MEPP), CMI's practical cooperation with the EU has deepened, including efforts to address the ongoing war in Gaza. Since

June 2023, CMI has been advising the EUSR for the MEPP as part of a joint project with the European Institute of Peace.

In Afghanistan, CMI seeks to complement the work of the EU Special Envoy's office and the EU delegation, providing crucial support as international attention has shifted to other regions. With its independent and informal approach, CMI has supported the broader international processes around Afghanistan, focusing on Afghan-led initiatives and solutions.

Furthermore, CMI has actively engaged with the EU to promote women's agency. Together with the Folke Bernadotte Academy, CMI was invited to support the establishment of the Afghan Women Leaders' Forum until January 2024. This EU-led initiative aims to involve Afghan women in high-level international discussions on Afghanistan.

In 2023, CMI organised a high-level event in Brussels to bring together women from conflict areas to discuss their political agency in peace processes. Held in cooperation with the Permanent Representations of Finland and Denmark to the EU, the event focused on women's rights, political participation, protest movements and the use of digital tools in protests.

CMI also contributed to several policy dialogues with EU actors, developing their understanding of the diverse roles of women in peace processes and sharing lessons learned on the practical implementation of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda.

From shaping policy to contributing to peace processes and promoting

agency, CMI continues to be a strategic peacemaking partner for the EU.

## CMI in the EU

- Contributes to the development of EU policy on peacemaking
- Supports numerous peace processes in the EU context
- Works to promote agency in peacemaking

# Working towards a lasting peace for Ukraine

Work towards a lasting peace for Ukraine must continue to be prioritised to ensure effective negotiation and reconstruction processes. In 2023, CMI continued to strengthen the resilience and social cohesion of Ukrainian society.

The ongoing wars in Ukraine and Gaza come at a time of significant global change: waning US power, shifting alliances, the erosion of international law and its associated universal principles. Against this backdrop, understanding of Ukraine’s place in this dynamic order, both inside and outside Ukraine, is increasingly important. With nearly 15 years of experience in the region, CMI continues to respond to the changing needs of Ukrainians to address some of the challenges.

The long road to lasting peace outside of negotiations is often overlooked. As the war rages on, CMI and its Ukrainian partners continue to lay the groundwork for a sustainable peace. In 2023, the work helped to strengthen the resilience and social cohesion of Ukrainian society during the ongoing war.

Ukraine faces multiple pressures. Social cohesion is the glue that holds society together in the country. This is the backbone for social resilience, helping to support stability and unity, which are important contributors to a sustainable peace in a post-war Ukraine.

CMI’s focus on social cohesion has been part of our work since we began collaborating with civil society in Ukraine.

Through an inclusive process that brings together different parties, CMI aims to advance dialogue between all parts of society at local, regional and national levels. Working closely with civil society is essential, as the longer the war continues the greater the risk is of growing societal tensions.

This is why we continue to work within the framework of the National Platform for Resilience and Social Cohesion, which was established in 2018. Following the full-scale invasion, the central role of the National Platform has been to mobilise, support and advocate for initiatives aimed at strengthening Ukraine’s resilience and social cohesion. This has included providing integrated mobile mediation and psychological support services to communities in need across the country to prevent conflict at the grassroots – the first of its kind.

As the war continues, it is important to build on what has already been achieved. Our relationships with key stakeholders reflect CMI’s role as a trusted partner in the region. For us, this trust is earned and used with great care to ensure that sustainable peace remains an attainable outcome in what we hope will be the near future.



The National Platform for Resilience and Social Cohesion press conference in Kiev in June 2023.

## Supporting efforts for peace in the Middle East

Amid the escalating Israeli-Palestinian conflict in 2023, CMI provided expert advice to the EU on the Middle East peace process and strengthened the political participation of Palestinian women.



Young Palestinian women from Gaza in a workshop organised by CMI and Masarat, May 2023. Photo: Mahmoud Al Borbar

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict experienced a major military escalation in October 2023, leading to a deadly war in the Gaza Strip with significant implications for regional and international security. This has refocused the international community's attention on the urgency of finding a comprehensive political solution to the conflict.

At the regional level, CMI – in a consortium with the European Institute of Peace (EIP) – is providing expert advice to the EU Special Representative (EUSR) for the Middle East Peace Process (MEPP). The aim is to support the EU's Peace Day Effort for a comprehensive regional peace launched in September 2023. The inclusion of women's expertise and voices, which are otherwise not heard in formal discussions, is a key feature of CMI's project. CMI has provided the EUSR with recommendations from a wide range of experts on a possible package of incentives for the parties, focusing in particular on elements related to trade, investment, energy, climate, environment, water, connectivity, tourism and food security, among others, that could advance a political solution.

In Palestine, in 2023, CMI and its partner, Masarat – The Palestinian Center for Policy Research & Strategic Studies, developed a policy paper, *Toward an Effective Approach for Ending the Palestinian Division*, informed by consultations and dialogues. Since 2007, Palestinian political life has been divided not only between the two main factions, Hamas and Fatah, but also internally, and the paper provides recommendations for a path towards Palestinian unity. Its findings remain highly relevant as the international community seeks solutions to Palestinian governance.

In addition, CMI worked with Masarat to create a space for political dialogue among a diverse range of women actors, thereby strengthening their agency in addressing political issues. Following the war in Gaza, the network created has also been active in joint advocacy. In late 2023, CMI refocused its efforts to ensure better inclusion of women's views in post-war political arrangements. In 2023, CMI and Masarat further opened new spaces for political engagement between Palestinian youth and established political and civil society actors.

## CMI's longstanding support for Libya's democratic transition

With an emphasis on inclusion and continuity, CMI has worked with Libya's political parties to advance the country's journey towards stability and effective governance.



Libyan parties have made progress, but international support remains crucial. Photo: Daily Sabah

Since the fall of the Gaddafi regime in 2011, Libya has struggled to complete its political transition to stability and to establish a responsive system of governance. CMI's work in Libya began in 2014, supporting a multi-stakeholder dialogue on the country's constitutional process. In this context, CMI focused on advancing consensus on natural resources management principles.

Since then, CMI has provided facilitation, expert support, and capacity building to local partners, including political parties, women leaders, and civil society organisations. Despite their marginalisation in official negotia-

tions, these groups play a crucial role in the country's long-term transition process.

Political parties in Libya have historically been suppressed due to the distrust cultivated during Muammar Gaddafi's rule. Saana Keskitalo, a Senior Manager of CMI's Middle East and North Africa team, explains that during Gaddafi's regime, parties were intensely vilified and outlawed. Since his fall, Libyan society has been thoroughly fragmented.

CMI has concentrated on building mutual trust among

political parties. Through CMI's facilitation, Libyan parties have envisioned a more constructive and collaborative relationship, ensured their inclusion in the political system and contributed to advancing elections and ensuring their peaceful aftermath.

For a democratic political system to emerge in Libya, political parties are key to ensuring that Libyan citizens are given the opportunity to develop and vote for national political programmes that transcend narrow primary identities and interests.

At a time when confidence in the country's political parties has been low, CMI has worked on the assumption that Libyan stability and political development required functional parties that could play a constructive role in the transition process.

As a Finnish organisation, CMI has been effective in bringing together groups with opposing political views. Keskitalo notes that Finland's positive image, rooted in its perceived neutrality and lack of a colonial past, has bolstered CMI's reputation across the Middle East and North Africa.

The political isolation legislation passed in 2013 excluded key constituencies from politics, a measure that has since been seen as an obstacle to reconciliation. Key groups, including political parties, were not systematically included as political institutions in the 2015 UN-backed peace deal. Until recently, political parties were largely excluded from formal negotiation and dialogue processes.

Following General Khalifa Haftar's failed assault on Tripoli in 2019-2020, tensions resurfaced in the

country. CMI worked to mitigate them by helping the various political parties and actors envision a common future for Libya in 2040: an independent and democratic country governed by civilians.

During a decade of conflict, there has been a lack of attention to the country's political parties by most international organisations. CMI has continued to promote dialogue and cooperation between parties, especially since the 2020 ceasefire. With the ceasefire holding, 2021 saw a period of increased momentum to influence the political process, and CMI was there to support its partners.

Keskitalo says that CMI's work to strengthen inclusion has always been seen as a more long-term pro-

cess, involving mutual trust-building, visioning, and capacity building. Reflecting on the longstanding collaboration, Keskitalo says that the organisation's focus on inclusion and a longer-term view has been seen as essential by its stakeholders.

While Libya's political parties have made some progress, the creation of a rules-based environment in the country that allows political parties to operate, as well as international support, remains essential. The international community has been instrumental in facilitating formal negotiations.

CMI aims to maintain its engagement in Libya, supporting short-term plans with a light touch and fundraising for follow-up activities.

## The path to political party empowerment in Libya

### 1. Regaining public trust through cooperation

Political parties promote common interests in terms of legal status and signal to the public that they are able to cooperate to ensure a democratic transitional process.

### 2. Commitment to free elections and peaceful transfer of power

Political parties work together to ensure that conditions for free and fair elections materialise, and commit to the principle of peaceful transfer of power.

### 3. Transparency

Parties engage their constituencies on policy issues based on concrete political programmes, and make their funding sources public.

### 4. International support

An international push is made to promote the role of political parties in the transitional process in Libya.

# Mediators discuss gender-inclusive peace amid pushback on women's rights

Excluding women from peace processes is widely regarded as a barrier to achieving lasting peace. Yet, women's involvement in formal peacemaking processes remain alarmingly low.



Patience Chiradza at the seminar. Photo: Maria Santto / CMI

The 12th annual UN High-Level Seminar on Gender and Inclusive Mediation Strategies, held in Porvoo, Finland, provided a vital platform for senior peace envoys and practitioners to delve into the implications of the Women, Peace and Security agenda (WPS) for their work. Organised jointly by the United Nations Department for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (UN DPPA), the Peace Research Institute of Oslo (PRIO), and CMI with support from Finland's Ministry for Foreign Affairs, the seminar focused on translating normative commitments into concrete measures in mediation processes.

In 2023, the seminar was convened at a time when there is a global pushback on women's rights.

"In the current context where existing commitments to gender inclusion are being questioned, it is very encouraging to see senior mediation envoys to come together to share real dilemmas in implementing the Women, Peace and Security agenda and think creatively on how to step up efforts," says Johanna Poutanen, Head of Women in Peacemaking team at CMI.

Discussions at the seminar underscored the critical

role of gender-sensitive conflict analysis in laying the groundwork. Failure to consider gender dynamics risks perpetuating existing inequalities and power imbalances within mediation processes.

Several key takeaways on how to design and implement inclusive peace processes were identified. In practice, new methods such as digital tools offer promising avenues for wider representation of people, views, and interests.

"It is important to create platforms for women to converge and engage around the issues that they want to be brought to the table," stated Patience Chiradza – Director of Governance and Conflict Prevention at the African Union.

Overall, the seminar highlighted the imperative of incorporating women's voices and perspectives into peace processes. As practitioners strive for a more just and inclusive peace, the exchange of insights and strategies among peers remains invaluable, underscoring the ongoing commitment to advancing the WPS agenda amidst global challenges to gender equality.

Johanna Poutanen at the seminar. Photo: Maria Santto / CMI



## Developing digital foresight for peace mediation

In 2023, CMI continued its work on the use of foresight for peace mediation, making progress in the development of its pioneering methodology.

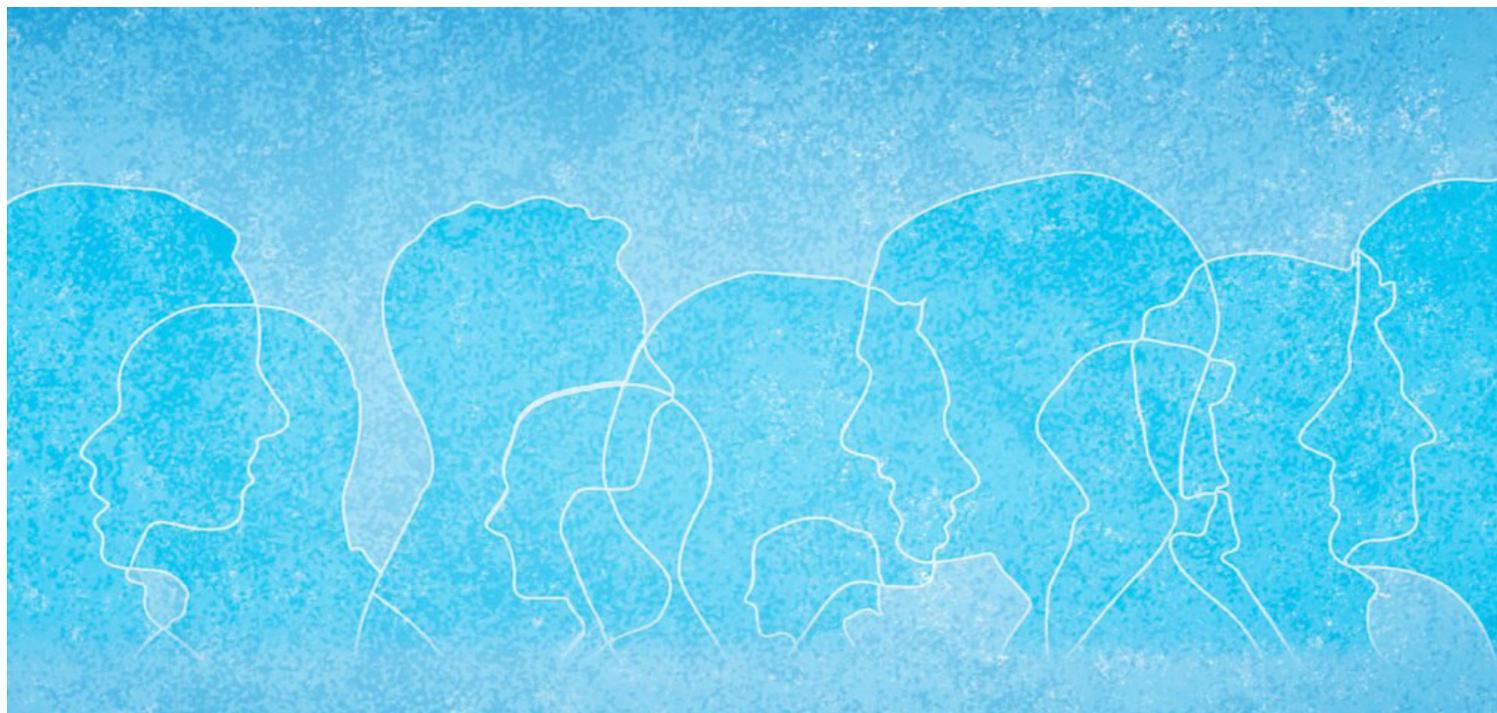


Image by UNDP/PA

Foresight, based on both quantitative and qualitative data and research, is used to anticipate future opportunities and challenges. It enables peacemaking practitioners to better prepare for change by acknowledging the uncertainty of the future and the impact of current actions on potential futures. In today's complex conflict landscapes, structured foresight methods can greatly enhance dialogue efforts by introducing new frameworks and structure to the conversation.

CMI's digitally enhanced foresight approach combines real-world conflict analysis with futures thinking, using tools such as Inklus, an online platform that facilitates data collection, analysis, and visualisation. The platform allows dialogue participants to collaboratively analyse current realities, gather perspectives, and ground discussions in factual conflict dynamics.

Applied to dialogue processes in Armenia, Algeria, and the Maghreb-Sahel region, CMI's digital foresight meth-

odology was used to explore conflict drivers, envision alternative development paths, and build future visions. Through scenario-building exercises, dialogue participants created concrete products such as domain maps and action roadmaps to address underlying issues.

Digital tools play a crucial role in enriching conflict analysis. The tools enable inputs from both dialogue participants and a wider audience, use anonymity to level power dynamics and facilitate the development of tangible alternative scenarios.

In today's digital age, the convergence of foresight and responsible use of technology is essential for effective, forward-looking peace mediation. CMI continues to embrace digital technologies and foresight to support its conflict resolution efforts.



## Martti Ahtisaari 1937—2023

Martti Ahtisaari, President, Nobel Peace Prize laureate and founder of CMI, died on the 16th of October 2023. Martti Ahtisaari was 86 years old. He was born in Vyborg on 23 June 1937.

In many ways, Ahtisaari's life was marked by emigration. He made his first evacuation at the age of two, from Viipuri near Savonlinna during the Winter War, from where the family later moved to Kuopio and later to Oulu. Ahtisaari graduated as a school teacher from the Oulu Teacher Training Institute in 1959. However, his curiosity and interest led him to travel the world. When, after a year on the job, the newly graduated teacher was offered a permanent position, he opted to go to Pakistan to work in development cooperation. In 1960, the only destinations from Oulu were Sweden, some people went to America, but seldom to Pakistan.

After three years in Pakistan, Ahtisaari returned to his studies in Helsinki and became involved in the activities of international student organisations, including as the executive director of Students's International Relief (YKA). He continued to follow international politics actively: on weekends, he bought the Observer magazine from a newsstand at Helsinki's railway station and regularly listened to the BBC World Service on the radio. Eeva Hyvärinen, a history graduate, was impressed by this, and she and Martti soon became engaged. They married in 1968, and their son Marko was born the following year.

Ahtisaari's career in the Ministry for Foreign Affairs began in the mid-

1960s at the new development cooperation department headed by Jaakko Iloniemi. In 1973, the 36-year-old Ahtisaari was appointed Finland's ambassador to Tanzania, and the Ahtisaari family moved to Dar es Salaam. During his time there, Ahtisaari became familiar with the whole African continent, its liberation movements and its leaders. Although the temperature in Dar es Salaam was often close to that of a sauna, the sauna in the official residence was a favourite relaxation ritual for Ahtisaari. Presidents and politicians from all over the world visited the sauna.

From Tanzania, the Ahtisaari family moved to New York in late 1976, when Ahtisaari became the UN High Commissioner for Namibia and later the UN Secretary-General Kurt Waldheim's Special Representative to Namibia. During his years in New York, Ahtisaari became a respected UN official and international diplomat. In 1987, Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuellar appointed him Under-Secretary-General in charge of administrative and economic affairs at the UN while continuing his work on Namibia. Thanks to his and the UN's determined efforts, Namibia gained independence in 1990. Martti and Eeva Ahtisaari became honorary citizens of Namibia in 1992.

He returned to Finland in 1991 and served as State Secretary at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. In 1994, he became the first President of Finland to be elected by direct popular vote. During his presidency, from 1994 to 2000, Finland joined the European Union and halved its unemployment rate amidst the recession.

Photo: Tuukka Koski

Following his presidential term, his focus returned to conflict prevention and peace mediation.

Ahtisaari was extraordinarily resilient. He saw opportunities in seemingly hopeless situations such as the Aceh and Kosovo negotiations. In 2005, he led CMI-brokered peace talks between the separatists in Aceh province and the Indonesian government. After seven months of negotiations, the nearly 30-year conflict ended in August 2005 with the signing of a peace agreement in Helsinki.

In late 2005, Ahtisaari was appointed Special Envoy of UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan to lead negotiations on the status of Kosovo. The negotiations continued until March 2007, when Ahtisaari submitted his plan for Kosovo's future to UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. Kosovo eventually declared independence from Serbia in 2008.

In 2008, Ahtisaari was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for his lifetime achievements. He was one of the world's most successful peace negotiators and left a lasting mark in the national history of many countries. Ahtisaari remains one of the best-known Finns worldwide.

One of his lasting achievements was the establishment of his own peace mediation organisation, CMI, in 2000. He was the heart and soul of the organisation, a wise advisor and a role model for justice. He was also a strong advocate of equality, Nordic values, bilingualism and education.

Ahtisaari was driven by a strong vision that all conflicts can be resolved. He was deeply committed to addressing the root causes of conflict, so that no one would have to flee their homes due to war.

He knew from experience that no one leaves home unless they are forced to, which is why you have to keep working for peace.

Martti Ahtisaari was adept at reading people and situations and anticipating what lay ahead. He could see how big things affected small things, and how the latter are often essential. Everyone who worked with Ahtisaari knows that he was an excellent leader who treated all peo-

ple equally and warmly. He appreciated the opportunity offered by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs to work independently on international issues. His family was his mainstay, and he was profoundly appreciative of their support.

CMI and the Finnish foreign policy, which emphasises the importance of peace mediation, are Ahtisaari's living legacy. In 20 years, CMI has grown into one of the world's leading peace mediation organisations. CMI – Martti Ahtisaari Peace Foundation continues the work of its founder around the world. Ahtisaari's vision from the outset was to make CMI an independent organisation that would continue to resolve conflicts where official agencies cannot, that would broadly involve society as a whole, especially women and young people, in peace processes, and that would work in partnership with international organisations and leaders.

Although CMI was always the closest to Ahtisaari, he also had a significant impact on the development of international peace mediation more broadly. He chaired the boards of numerous international organisations and foundations, including the International Crisis Group, the East-West Institute and Interpeace. He also co-founded the European Council on Foreign Relations and was active in The Elders, among others.

Great peace mediators like Martti Ahtisaari are few and far between. He will be greatly missed not only by his wife Eeva and son Marko but also by the international community and many organisations; by politicians and heads of state, friends in Finland and around the world, and all current and former CMI staff.



Photo: Saima Huusko

# Martti Ahtisaari's living legacy

Martti Ahtisaari (1937–2023) leaves a powerful, living legacy for peace mediation. His core principles are ever more important for advancing peace in an increasingly unstable world.

Martti Ahtisaari, President, Nobel Peace Prize laureate and founder of CMI, passed away on the 16 October 2023, but his example lives on. As Ahtisaari often emphasised, CMI is the most important legacy of his life's work. In 20 years, CMI has grown into one of the world's leading peace mediators, continuing the work of its founder around the globe.

Ahtisaari also had a significant impact on the broader development of peace mediation. In 2024, to honor his contributions to the evolution of this field, CMI aims to stimulate discussion on how Ahtisaari's core principles are relevant to the future of peacemaking.

Ahtisaari's living legacy is essentially about values and ways of working, of which here are three key principles. All of them continue to guide CMI's work.

## TREAT EVERYONE EQUALLY

Ahtisaari was known for not making distinctions between people. For him, everyone was on an equal footing. The most important thing in mediation is to try to listen to others and to put yourself in their shoes. Ahtisaari had an extraordinary ability to connect with people.

Peace is not made between friends, but between enemies, and yet every wrongdoer must be treated with respect. Ahtisaari was sometimes criticised for this approach. This happened, for instance, during the Kosovo peace talks in 1999. Ahtisaari's colleagues wondered at

his courteous treatment of Yugoslav President Slobodan Milošević after the Serb forces had attacked Kosovo on Milosevic's orders. "My reply to my colleagues was: Milosevic is the president. He must be treated with dignity in order for a solution to come about."

Ahtisaari's respect for everyone reflected not only his personality but also his Nordic identity built on equality and justice. For Ahtisaari, these were global values that should belong to everyone.

Ahtisaari often reminded us that without equality, the world will never be free of conflict. That is why a peace process should be inclusive, not only involving elites. Mediation must help build more just societies, for instance by improving the position of women and young people and laying the groundwork for a sustainable economy. Ordinary people must benefit from peace.

Ahtisaari's emphasis on equality is all the more important at a time when burgeoning injustices continue to fuel conflicts around the world. Too often, peace processes are still elite bargains that exclude the wider society. As geopolitical divides become more pronounced, there is also a need to ensure that mediators are able to genuinely talk to everyone.

## PARTIES OWN THE CONFLICT

Ahtisaari often said that there is a tendency to focus too much on the mediators. "With that we are disempower-

## MAJOR MILESTONES OF AHTISAARI'S CAREER

### 1989–1990: Independence of Namibia

As UN Commissioner for Namibia from 1977 to 1981 and later as the UN Secretary-General's Special Representative for Namibia from 1989 to 1990, Martti Ahtisaari played a special role in Namibia's independence from South Africa.

### 1994–2000: President of Finland

Ahtisaari was the first President of Finland to be elected by direct popular vote. In 1999, Ahtisaari, former Russian Prime Minister and Special Envoy Viktor Chernomyrdin, and US Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott negotiated a peace agreement which led to the withdrawal of Serbian troops from Kosovo.

### 2000: Establishment of CMI

Following his term as President, Ahtisaari founded conflict resolution organisation Crisis Management Initiative (CMI). Ahtisaari wanted his legacy to be continued by an organisation able to address the root causes of conflicts.

ing the parties to the conflict and creating the wrong impression that peace comes from outside. The only people that can make peace are the parties to the conflict, and just as they are responsible for the conflict and its consequences, so should they be given responsibility and recognition for the peace,” Ahtisaari said in his Nobel acceptance speech.

Ahtisaari emphasised local ownership at a time when it was not actively used in mediation. He understood that peace requires strong will and determination on the part of conflict parties. Mediators are there only to help them. “We can only provide the atmosphere and venue”, Ahtisaari said in the Aceh peace talks. Mediators’ ability to help is based on the trust that the parties have in them and in the process. One has to work to create an atmosphere in which that trust can be born and create incentives for peace.

Strong local ownership increases the chances of sustainable peace. Local ownership has become a magic word in mediation, but its operationalisation leaves a lot to be desired.

**YOU CAN'T DO IT ALONE**

“You can’t do a damn thing alone.” This was Ahtisaari’s way of saying that peacemaking is all about teamwork. Ahtisaari often pointed out that he had always been privileged to work with skilled people. He turned to such colleagues over and over again. “If you imagine you know how to do everything yourself, it’s best to go in for something else,” Ahtisaari remarked.

Successful mediation also requires extensive cooperation in other areas. Peace does not happen in a vacuum; it requires broad support for it to be realised. Ahtisaari’s work was guided by his ability to cooperate effectively with all those who had an impact on his efforts. He saw clearly how different actors could complement each other in peacemaking.

Key international actors, whether major or regional powers or multilateral organisations, were involved. The commitment of these actors was key to the effective implementation and monitoring of the peace agreement, thus providing the necessary support structure to ensure its viability.

During Ahtisaari’s career, international cooperation played a key role in preventing and resolving conflicts. The United Nations was at the forefront of peacemaking. Ahtisaari was a UN man and continued to strongly believe in the world organisation despite its shortcomings.

Today, the world looks very different. We are witnessing a crisis of multilateralism: the UN and many regional organisations are struggling. The current international system is unable to deal with conflicts. New actors and coalitions are emerging to fill the gap.

Ahtisaari’s spirit of cooperation remains highly relevant today in terms of what kind of partnerships are needed to resolve today’s conflicts.



Photo: Jenni-Justiina Niemi

**2005: Aceh peace agreement**

Ahtisaari and CMI acted as mediator in the peace talks between the Indonesian government and the Free Aceh Movement. The peace agreement signed in Helsinki ended nearly three decades of violence and gave the Aceh province special self-government.

**2005-2008: Negotiations on the status of Kosovo**

In 2005, Ahtisaari was appointed as Special Envoy of the UN Secretary-General to lead negotiations on the status of Kosovo. Negotiations continued until March 2007, when Ahtisaari presented his plan for Kosovo’s future. Kosovo declared independence from Serbia in 2008.

**2008: Nobel Peace Prize**

Ahtisaari became the first Finn to receive the Nobel Peace Prize for his “great efforts, on several continents and over more than three decades, to resolve international conflicts”. In his acceptance speech, he highlighted his idea of peace as a matter of determination (“Peace is a question of will”).

## Ahtisaari Days

CMI's peace education project moves closer to making conflict resolution a civic skill in Finland.



Ahtisaari Days at Educa in 2023. Photo: Maria Santto / CMI

In 2023, CMI's Ahtisaari Days continued its efforts to make conflict resolution a civic skill among teachers and students aged 13–19 in Finland.

Teachers have often expressed a need for conflict-related teaching materials. In January 2023, the Ahtisaari Days and CMI's young peace ambassadors attended the Educa training event to identify the specific needs of teachers. Based on feedback from more than one hundred teachers who were interviewed in depth, the Ahtisaari Days began to develop a new set of readily accessible and curriculum-aligned materials that provide added value to learners and teachers.

The most significant progress was seen in the area of school collaborations, where the Ahtisaari Days created a new facilitation process involving multiple visits to selected schools. These visits comprised lectures, workshops, and conflict simulations.

During 2023, the new school collaborations were piloted in Oulu, Vaasa, Ilmajoki, and Joensuu. Feedback from

learners and teachers has underscored their high quality, effectiveness, and engagingness.

A total of 1564 learners participated in the Ahtisaari Days school visits, of which 969 involved new school collaborations during autumn 2023. Among them, 184 (18%) fully participated in lectures, workshops and simulations. Following the introduction of the new collaborations, CMI observed a significant increase in young people's skills and understanding. Fully participating learners saw an average increase of 1.2 points in their self-rated understanding and knowledge of conflict resolution skills on a scale of 1 to 5.

Following the successful pilot, the new process is set to be fully adopted in 2024.

## Communications

Bringing peace to the forefront of political debate.



Presidential Peace Debate 2023. Photo: Maria Santto / CMI

The year 2023 was exceptionally active for CMI in terms of communication. Communications on President Ahtisaari's lifework and legacy, high-profile events and regular media interviews increased our visibility in Finland, but also internationally. Overall, the year contributed to an increased awareness of peace mediation and its role in building a more stable world.

One of the highlights of the year were CMI's Peace Debates, which were streamed live and co-organised with Ilta-Sanomat, one of Finland's leading news media. The two debates put peace at the centre of the Finnish parliamentary and presidential elections, at a time when violent conflicts are at the highest level since the Second World War. They also reversed the traditional concept of election debates. Unlike regular debates, where participants try to dominate each other, the Peace Debate for the parliamentary elections required candidates to find common solutions, build common ground and listen to each other. In this way, the new format of an election debate set an example for a better political discussion. Janne Taalas, CEO of CMI, emphasises that despite dis-

agreements, political solutions must be found through dialogue and peacefulness. "Finland is internationally known for its conflict resolution skills. The world is moving in a direction where these skills are increasingly needed. Certainly, disagreement is an essential part of political debate, but the search for common solutions is not about avoiding disagreement, but about the ability to find a widely accepted and functional solution," said Taalas.

The presidential debate was organised in cooperation with Ilta-Sanomat and leading EU media Politico Europe, reaching both Finnish and international audiences. The debate featured top candidates, including Finland's current President and former chair of CMI's board Alexander Stubb. In addition to Ukraine and other conflicts, the presidential candidates discussed EU enlargement and the new security architecture for Europe, as well as the role of Finland and the EU in promoting peace.

## Strategic partnerships and funding

Our work is based on long-term commitments in complex conflict settings and simultaneously on our ability to respond quickly to emerging needs. We rely on the strategic support of our long-term core donors (Finland, Sweden and Ireland) and project-based funding from the EU and several other governments. We are committed to maintaining and further developing a diverse funding base – a critical prerequisite for an independent organisation. By forming strategic partnerships, we ensure that our operations are sustainable and that our work in international peace-making has a greater impact around the world.



Signatories of the petition to appeal for a donation to the Martti Ahtisaari Peace Fund and the Chairpersons of all parliamentary groups.  
Photo: Maria Santto / CMI

### INSTITUTIONAL DONORS



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## MEDIA PARTNERS

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## MARTTI AHTISAARI PEACE FUND

The Martti Ahtisaari Peace Fund received its first major donation when the Finnish Government and all the parliamentary groups announced in November 2023 a donation of €10 million from the Finnish Innovation Fund Sitra.

The Peace Fund also received many private donations amounting to over €600,000. More than 500 individuals and nearly 100 companies donated to the Peace Fund. Major donors were Relex Foundation, Ilkka Paananen Foundation, Nokia, EK, UPM, SOK and Posti Group.

The Peace Fund aims to safeguard the life's work and legacy of President Ahtisaari. The Fund was set up in December 2022 with the goal of raising €30 million in capital by the end of 2026.

The Peace Fund's supporters, both corporate partners and private individuals, were invited to many events. The network Ladies for Peace (L4P), involving some 200 women with diverse backgrounds, met with CMI experts and outside professionals to discuss topical foreign policy and peacebuilding related issues.

The services provided by our pro bono partners are vital for the successful running of our operations, both in everyday business and in development of our work. They were especially crucial in collecting memories of Martti Ahtisaari and sharing the appeal to honour his life's work and legacy.



graphics TBWA Helsinki

# Finance Overview

In 2023, CMI's total income was €13.9 million, up 13% from €12.3 million for the previous year. CMI's income profile is mainly public funding, €12,9 million, compared to €11.8 in 2022. Income derived from fundraising was €769 thousand, compared to €235 thousand in 2022.

As in previous years, Finland, the EU and Sweden remained the biggest institutional donors to CMI's work. Funding from the Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs (MFA) amounted to €6.9 million, representing 50% of the total funding. Funding from the European Union was €2.5 million or 18% of the total, and from Sweden €1.5 million or 11% of the total, and from other governments €1.8 million, amounting to 13% of the total)

The partnership with the Finnish MFA is the cornerstone of CMI. 2023 is the second year of the CMI's 2022–2025 programme. The programme work at CMI is arranged through geographical and thematic teams. In financial terms, the predominant geographical regions in CMI's work are Sub-Saharan Africa and Eurasia.

Funding for the projects in the sub-Saharan Africa region amounted to €3.5 million, or 26,2% of total funding, and for the projects in the Eurasia region, €3.4 million, or 25.7% of total funding. The project volumes in other regional teams remained stable for the Middle East and North Africa region at €1.9 million, or 14.6% of the total; for Asia €1.5 million, or 11.4% of the total; and for thematic projects €1.1 million, or 8.1% of the total. Programme support costs, at €0.9 million or 7.1% of the total, and administration €0.9 million, or 6.8% of the total, remained at the same level as in 2022.

The largest expense was personnel costs at €5.1 million, reflecting a moderate growth of 4% mainly due to salary adjustments for index increases. The next largest cost element is consultancy costs of €2,6, a drop of 4% compared to 2022. Travel costs amounted to €2.7 million, a 12.5% increase in line with project activities. Sub-contracting costs involving partner organisations nearly doubled in 2023, from €0.5 million to €0.9 million. Most EU-funded projects are carried out in collaboration with partner organisations. CMI's net result was positive at €0.6 million. This was mainly due to donations raised for the Martti Ahtisaari Peace Fund.

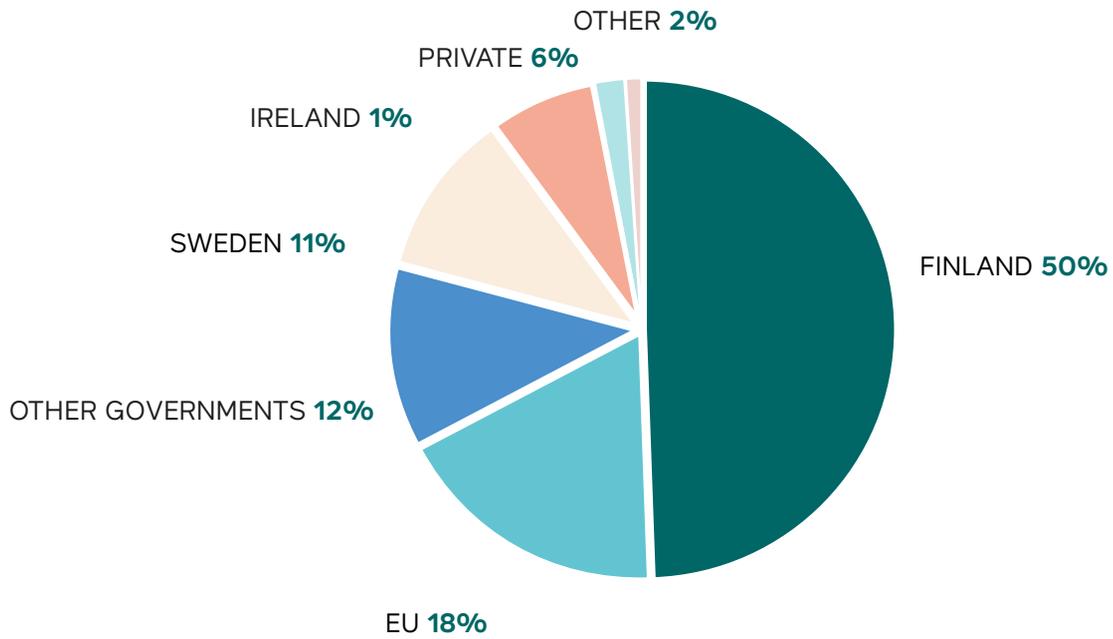
## INCOME AND EXPENDITURE

INCOME	2023	2022
Public funding	12 880 103	11 806 191
Private fundraising	768 762	234 818
Other income	276 246	210 115
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>13 925 111</b>	<b>12 251 124</b>
EXPENSES	2023	2022
Personnel costs	5 094 769	4 884 123
Depreciation	29 628	11 838
Other expenses	8 157 345	7 485 117
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>13 281 742</b>	<b>12 381 077</b>
<b>SURPLUS / DEFICIT</b>	<b>643 369</b>	<b>-129 954</b>

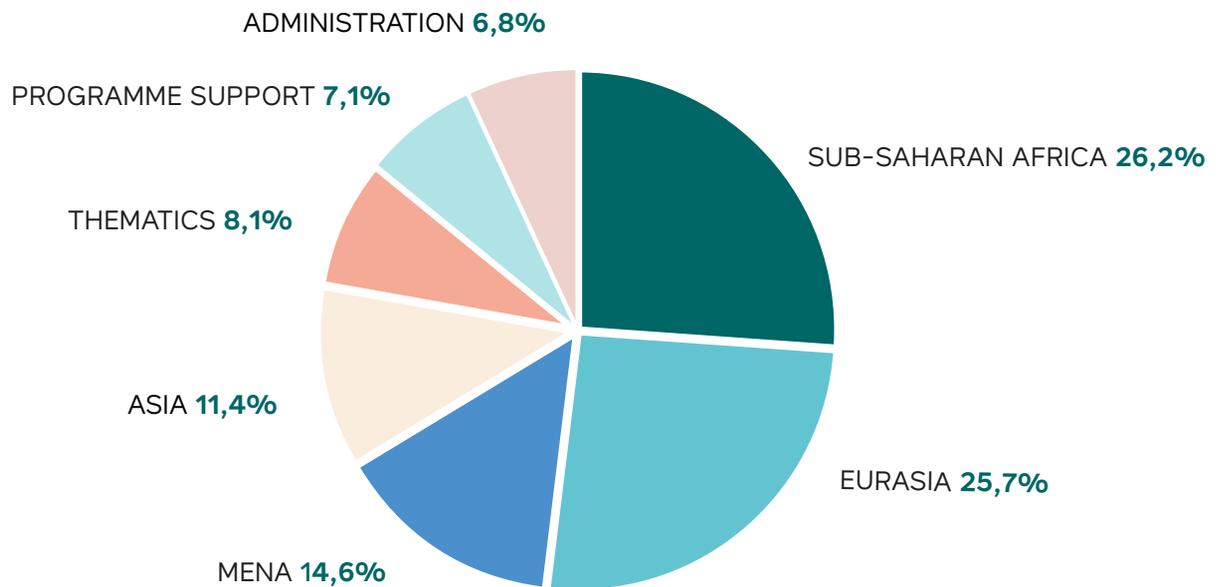
## BALANCE SHEET

ASSETS	2023	2022
Long term assets		
Machinery and equipment	82 157	2 243
Current assets		
Project Income Receivables	755 820	182 038
Other current assets	321 293	101 057
Financial assets	3 340 866	1 596 617
Cash and bank receivables	3 492 671	2 283 446
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b>7 992 807</b>	<b>4 165 401</b>
LIABILITIES		
Equity		
Own capital	50 000	50 000
Endowments	431 405	431 405
Accumulated profits and losses	61 445	191 399
Profit / Loss	643 369	-129 954
Short term liabilities		
Project Income Advances	4 909 001	1 769 936
Accounts payable	893 089	934 315
Other short term liabilities	1 004 500	918 300
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES</b>	<b>7 992 807</b>	<b>4 165 401</b>

FUNDING SOURCES 2023



USES OF FUNDING 2023



# Our people

## CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

CMI's highest decision-making body is the Board of Directors. The Board ensures that the Foundation fulfils its purpose in its operations. The Board also supports and oversees the organisation and ensures that the Foundation is managed appropriately and in accordance with applicable laws and the Foundation's by-laws. The Board is also responsible for ensuring that the accounting and financial oversight of the Foundation are correctly organised. The independent Board met five times in 2023. Its members receive no financial remuneration for their services.

In February 2024, the Board elected Marko Ahtisaari as its new Chair. He succeeded Alexander Stubb as the Chair of the Board. Stubb was elected as the new President of the Republic of Finland.

CMI's Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Janne Taalas, appointed by the Board, is responsible for the overall leadership and day-to-day management of the Foundation, the execution of CMI's mission and the implementation of its strategy. The Leadership Team (LT) and the Deputy CEO Hanna Klinge support the CEO in managing the organisation and institutional decision-making.

Ville Brummer, CMI's Chief Programme Officer (CPO) and a member of the LT, was appointed as Director of Peace Mediation in President Stubb's cabinet in March 2024. Brummer has taken a leave of absence from CMI.

## ONE TEAM - HUMAN RESOURCES AND WELL-BEING

At the end of 2023, CMI employed 84 people. Of these, 77 were based in Helsinki and seven in Brussels. In 2023, the number of employees remained at the same level as in 2022, while the volume of CMI's work increased. Therefore, the number of employees is expected to in-

crease slightly in 2024 to meet the demands of project and programme work. Throughout 2023, CMI had a variable number of long and short-term consultants. These consultants total around 100 at any given point in the year.

In line with CMI's strategy, work continued in 2023 to ensure staff well-being, safety, motivation and commitment in a demanding work environment. CMI continued to create safe and functional post-pandemic ways of working in offices, remotely or on missions abroad. CMI completed the renovation of the Helsinki office to support the current hybrid way of working. House rules were developed together with the employees.

In 2023, the staff well-being survey was conducted in line with its two-year cycle. An additional survey on SEAH (sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment), equal treatment and well-being was also organised. During the year, many SEAH policy related measures were put in place, such as the whistleblowing channel and training. CMI's psychosocial support model was defined and related structures were strengthened.

## SECURITY

CMI's security function supports the safety and safety of our staff, and provides a framework and tools for safe work to be conducted together with partners and stakeholders. Working in challenging and high-risk locations places considerable demands on the effective management of safety and security.

During 2023, many of CMI's operating environments experienced a deterioration in their security situation. CMI developed and strengthened its security management processes for work in high-risk locations, such as Ukraine and Sudan, to address the increased risks.



Celebration of Ahtisaari's 86th birthday, June 2023. Photo: Maria Santto / CMI

## LEADERSHIP TEAM 2023



**JANNE TAALAS**  
Chief Executive Officer



**HANNA KLINGE**  
Deputy CEO



**VILLE BRUMMER**  
Chief Programme Officer

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