

## FOREWORD

Dear Young Mediator,

Almost ten years ago, the first volume of “Letters to a Young Mediator” aimed to inspire those who dedicated themselves to the art and craft of mediation. It provided lessons from experienced mediators who shared their insights with the next generation. Today, more than ever, such inspiration is needed. We are living in challenging times. The number of violent conflicts is on the rise, we are witnessing a democratic backsliding and a changing climate that impacts peace and security. In this context, we must strengthen those who can navigate the different and difficult aspects of a mediator’s work: the skills to build trust where there is hatred, to bridge divides where there is no understanding, and to enable conflict parties to forge a path towards peace.

Volume II of “Letters to a Young Mediator” is a compilation of letters written by ten women mediators from around the globe. These women build peace within their communities as insider mediators, they take initiative to bring conflict parties to the negotiation table, and they forge agreements in processes involving the highest levels of political decision-making. In their individual way, each author provides us with a glimpse into their understanding of the role of a mediator. Reading these letters, the word humility comes to my mind. A feeling these mediators share in the face of the enormous task before them. Yet, without shying away from detailing the hard work, frustration, and sacrifices it takes to stay in this field, they give us hope and motivation.

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In these times of conflict and crisis, there is a need for new ideas and innovative practices. These must be integrated into the fundamentals highlighted by the mediators: the importance of building peace together. Not only is mediation a team effort, but inclusivity is key. Communities affected by conflict must be included on the path towards peace. The understanding that there are grievances, pain, and expectations behind every person at the negotiation table. It takes honesty, humility, and the ability to listen in order to build trusting relationships between conflict parties. It takes courage to build a new common future.

The formidable challenges of today require that we consider and integrate these elements in our efforts. The authors give us powerful accounts of this. I hope that, like me, you will be inspired by their words.

Viola Amherd

President of the Swiss Confederation