

Lebanese Mediation Center (LMC)

LMC Mediation Procedure

1. What is mediation?

Mediation is a flexible process conducted confidentially in which a neutral person, the Mediator, actively assists the parties in working towards a negotiated agreement of a dispute or difference, with the parties in ultimate control of the decision to settle and the terms of resolution.

The principal features of mediation are that it:

- involves a neutral third party, known as the Mediator, to facilitate negotiations;
- is quick to set up and is inexpensive, without prejudice and confidential;
- involves party representatives with sufficient authority to settle;
- is flexible, with no set procedure, enabling the process to be designed and managed by the Lebanese Mediation Center (LMC) in coordination with the Mediator to suit the parties, in consultation with them;
- enables the parties to devise solutions which are not possible in an adjudicative process such as litigation or arbitration, and which may benefit all the parties, particularly if there is the possibility of a continuing relationship between them;
- can be used in both domestic and cross-border disputes, two-party and multi-party disputes, and whether or not litigation or arbitration has been commenced.

While mediation is essentially flexible, the LMC Mediation Procedure set out in this document, taken with the LMC Mediation Agreement, will give sufficient certainty to enable the process to be set up and used.

Any contemplated or existing litigation or arbitration in relation to the dispute may be started or continued despite the mediation, unless the parties agree or a Court orders otherwise. If settlement terms cannot be agreed at mediation, the parties are free to revert to litigation or arbitration.

2. Referral to mediation

Referral of a dispute to a mediator for mediation may be as a result of:

- voluntary referral by all parties;
- responding to a Court Order or a recommendation by a judge before trial or appeal
- the provisions of a clause in a commercial or government contract requiring the use of mediation as a step in the parties' agreed dispute resolution process.

3. Choosing the mediator

Parties may choose their own mediator directly from the LMC panel of accredited mediators for a dispute in accordance with the wishes of the parties or any relevant Court Order. If the parties require it, more than one mediator can be appointed by the LMC to work as co-mediators, or the parties can agree on an independent neutral expert to advise the mediator on technical matters.

Any nominated mediator will be required to confirm immediately if there is any matter which might prevent the nominated mediator from complying with the Code of Conduct of Mediators of the Lebanese Mediation Center (Code) in relation to the mediation of the dispute, such as a conflict of interest.

The identity of any assistant mediator or observer proposed by the LMC to attend the mediation will be made known in advance of the mediation to the parties, who are

free to object to any such nomination or decline any such appointment. The mediator's signature of the mediation agreement binds any assistant mediator or observer to its terms.

4. Preparation for the mediation

In coordination with the LMC case management, the Mediator will make the necessary arrangements for the mediation as required or agreed by the parties, including:

- ensuring at all times that the Code is complied with in respect of the mediation of the dispute, reporting any conflict of interest or other relevant matter to the parties (subject to any question of confidentiality or privilege);
- drafting the agreement, submitting it for approval by the parties and preparing the final form for signature, incorporating any agreed amendments;
- facilitating agreement as to the date, venue and start time for the mediation;
- organizing exchange of case summaries and document bundles between the parties and the mediator;
- reading each case summary and document bundle submitted in advance of the mediation by the parties;
- making contact with a representative of each of the parties before the mediation to assist in preparation for the mediation; and
- setting up and attending any pre-mediation meetings on terms and agenda agreed by the parties.

The parties will:

- agree the appointment of the mediator or a process to select or appoint the mediator in coordination with the LMC;
- send to the LMC a copy of their case summary and the document bundles no less than two weeks before the date set for the mediation, making clear whether case summaries have or have not yet been exchanged, and whether all or any part of any case summary or documentation is intended to be confidential for the mediator only;

- agree the date, venue and start time for the mediation;
- pay the mediator's fees and expenses as agreed under the LMC Terms and Conditions of business;
- each prepare and exchange a case summary in respect of their approach to the dispute at the mediation and endeavor to agree with all other parties what documents are needed for the mediation;
- notify the LMC of the names and roles of all those attending the mediation on their behalf in advance of the mediation;
- ensure that a lead negotiator with full authority to settle the dispute (or not) attends the mediation to sign the mediation agreement;
- alternatively notify the LMC and (unless very good reason exists to the contrary) the other parties, of any limitation on authority to settle, for instance lack of legal capacity, or the need for board ratification, in which case the lead negotiator will need to have power to recommend acceptance of any settlement. Late disclosure of limited authority to settle can call into question that party's good faith involvement in the mediation process, and have detrimental effects on the prospects of success of any mediation.

5. Documentation

Documentation intended to be treated as confidential by the LMC along with the mediator (such as a counsel's opinion, an undisclosed expert report, a draft proof of evidence or a confidential briefing for the mediator) must be clearly marked as such, and will not be circulated further without express authority.

One of the advantages of mediation is that its success is not dependent on exhaustive disclosure of documents. Bundles can usually be relatively limited in size, containing only key documents, and case summaries can be quite brief, and can to advantage be prepared jointly by the parties.

While documents brought into existence for the purpose of the mediation, such as case summaries, are clearly privileged from later production in those or other proceedings, the fact that a document which is otherwise disclosable in proceedings is produced for

the first time during the mediation does not normally confer privileged status on it. The parties must take legal advice on such matters if they arise.

6. The mediation agreement

The agreement to mediate provides the essential legal basis for the mediation. Its signatories (the parties to the dispute and the mediator) all agree by signing it that the mediation is to be conducted consistent with both this LMC Mediation Procedure and the Code of Conduct

A draft mediation agreement will be sent by the LMC for approval to the parties as part of the preparation process for the mediation, and any proposed amendments can then be discussed and inserted if agreed. The mediation agreement will normally be signed at the beginning of the mediation day on behalf of each of the parties and the mediator. In any pre-mediation contact with the parties, the mediator will observe its terms as to confidentiality, even though the agreement has not yet been signed.

7. The mediation

It is normal for each of the parties to have a private room for confidential consultations on their own and with the mediator during the mediation. There should also be a further room large enough for all parties to meet with the mediator jointly.

The mediator will chair and take responsibility for determining the procedure at the mediation, in consultation with the parties.

The likely procedure will comprise:

- Preliminary meetings with each of the parties when they arrive at the venue;
- a joint meeting of all attending the mediation, at which each of the parties will normally be invited to make an oral presentation;
- a mix of further private meetings and joint meetings (which may involve all or some of each party's team), as proposed by the mediator and agreed by the parties.

Professional advisers, particularly lawyers, can and usually do attend the mediation. Such advisers play an important role in the exchange of information and opinion on fact, evidence and law; in supporting their clients (particularly individuals) in the negotiations; in advising clients on the implications of settlement; and in drawing up the settlement agreement and any consent order.

No verbatim recording or transcript should be made of the mediation by the parties or the mediator in any form, but participants can make their own private notes which will be undisclosed to anyone else, including in any subsequent litigation or arbitration.

Mediations can last beyond a normal working day and it is important that the key people present for each of the parties remain present or at worst available by telephone for so long as the mediation continues. Any time constraints should be reported to the mediator as soon as known, as any unexpected departure can be detrimental to the progress of the mediation and perceived as disrespectful by other parties.

8. Confidentiality in relation to the mediation

The Mediation Agreement provides that what happens at the mediation is to be treated as confidential by the parties and the mediator, including the fact and terms of settlement. However, the fact that the mediation is to take place or has taken place is not normally made confidential, as either or both of the parties may wish to claim credit for agreeing to engage in the process. If it is desired to make the fact that the mediation is taking place confidential also, the agreement can be amended.

Apart from where the parties agree in writing to consent to disclosure of what would normally be confidential, there may be rare circumstances in which the confidentiality of the mediation process cannot be preserved, such as where:

- Prescribed by the Lebanese code of civil procedure notably articles 264 and 579;

- the mediator reasonably considers that there is a serious risk of significant harm to the life or safety of any person if the information in question is not disclosed; or
- the mediator reasonably considers that there is a serious risk of being personally subject to criminal proceedings unless the information in question is disclosed. Legal representatives themselves be under a comparable duty of disclosure in their own capacity must take full responsibility for advising their clients of the implications of disclosure in relation to any such matters at a mediation.

9. Conclusion of the Mediation

The mediation may end in a number of ways:

- by settlement of the dispute in whole or part, when all agreed matters must be written down and signed by the parties to be binding;
- By one or more parties leaving the mediation before settlement is achieved;
- By an agreed adjournment for such time and on such terms as the parties and the mediator agree;
- by withdrawal of the mediator in accordance with the mandatory and optional circumstances set out in the Code.

The mediator will facilitate the drawing up of any settlement agreement, although the lawyers representing each of the parties normally do the drafting.

The settlement agreement will (if so intended and drafted) be a contract enforceable by legal action. Where the mediation does not end in complete settlement, the Mediator may make contact with the parties thereafter to see whether further progress might be possible. Many disputes which do not settle at the mediation settle later, usually as a result of what occurred or was learned at the mediation.