**Draft News Release**

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**Global expert on conflict resolution urges Scots politicians, businesses and communities to support Commitment to Respectful Dialogue**

One of the world’s leading experts on conflict resolution will be in Scotland this week to encourage members of the Scottish Parliament and the communities they represent to subscribe to a *Commitment to Respectful Dialogue*.

Ken Cloke, founder of the US-based Center for Dispute Resolution and internationally recognised NGO, Mediators Beyond Borders, will be in Scotland this week to meet MSPs and share his unique perspectives on reducing political and other forms of hostility in contentious decisions in Scotland’s communities, business and public life.

Devised by Collaborative Scotland, an independent not for profit initiative promoting better dialogue in political and other decision making, the *Commitment to Respectful Dialogue* encourages people involved in debates about the future of Scotland and its communities to behave with respect and dignity toward people with whom they disagree.

Ken Cloke will join Collaborative Scotland founder John Sturrock QC, one of Scotland’s leading mediators, for a programme of events promoting the Commitment, including a reception at the Scottish Parliament hosted by Margaret Mitchell MSP and a Day of Storytelling at the Storytelling Centre in Edinburgh.

John Sturrock QC commented:

“Since its founding in 2014, Collaborative Scotland has looked at new ways to bring people together, regardless of their political outlook, to think constructively about tackling the challenges faced in Scotland’s communities, business and public life.

“The Commitment to Respectful Dialogue is one useful tool to help people grapple with those challenges in ways that help reduce political and other forms of hostility that so often serve to distract people from achieving positive change in everyone’s best interest.

“That’s why I’m delighted that Ken Cloke, one of the world’s foremost authorities on practical conflict mediation, has offered to back Collaborative Scotland’s drive to get more people to subscribe to the Commitment. Indeed, Ken has agreed to become our first patron."

Ken Cloke commented:

“Whatever our justifications for treating each other as enemies or remaining silent when political ideas are discussed, our ability to address the highly complex, increasingly challenging issues that characterize modern political life is no longer optional. As our world shrinks, these issues impact us in increasingly significant ways, allowing distant social, economic and political decisions, environmental choices, and technological changes to acutely affect our lives.”

Ken Cloke and John Sturrock QC will jointly address parliamentarians and representatives of civic organisations at an event in the Scottish Parliament on Wednesday 27 September. The pair will also appear at Collaborative Scotland’s ‘Day of Storytelling’ on Friday 29 September, during which attendees will have the opportunity to learn about a wide range of conflict resolution techniques.

**Notes to Editors**

**About Collaborative Scotland**

Founded by leading commercial mediator John Sturrock QC, Collaborative Scotland was set up in 2014 in to bring together individuals from various professional and personal backgrounds with a common belief in the value of respectful dialogue among all those engaged in the ongoing debate surrounding Scotland’s constitutional future.

It is an independent and not for profit initiative aiming to encourage people to listen and respect the views of others, to choose language carefully and engage constructively as Scotland and its communities look to the future – and to consider what kind of Scotland people want to live in.

In 2014 Collaborative Scotland launched its [Commitment to Respectful Dialogue](https://collaborativescotland.org/respectfuldialogue/), setting out eight key principles for holding constructive conversations about Scotland’s future.

**About Ken Cloke**

Ken Cloke has written 10 books on conflict resolution and mediation. He is recognised as a pioneer and leader in the field and one of its deepest thinkers. He works with the Center for Dispute Resolution in Santa Monica, California, and the globally based Mediators Beyond Borders. Ken has applied that substantial resume to conflict resolution work in more than 20 countries, including Greece, Nicaragua, Ukraine, Zimbabwe, India, Pakistan, Cuba, Brazil, Ireland and the former USSR. His specialty is in resolving complex, multi-party conflicts. Some of these have involved major disputes: between Armenians and Azerbaijanis, Ukrainians and Russians, Muslims and Hindus, Palestinians and Israelis.

**About John Sturrock QC**

Since leaving active practice at the Scottish Bar in 2002, John has pursued a full-time mediation career in business, the professions, sport, the public sector and senior management and, as its founder and chief executive, has established Core Solutions Group as a pre-eminent provider of mediation, training, negotiation and facilitation services. His mediation practice extends throughout the UK, mainland Europe and the Middle East and he also practices from Brick Court Chambers in London. Considered a “thought leader” and “one of the best teachers of mediation”, he specialises in negotiation and conflict management training and has facilitated many high-level political and policy dialogues. For many years he has worked with various parliamentary bodies throughout the UK on effective scrutiny of policy. He has been a special adviser on dialogue to the House of Commons Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee and works regularly with senior officials in the Scottish Government. He facilitated the 2020 Climate Change Delivery Group in Scotland from 2009 to 2013. He is a founder of Collaborative Scotland, which promoted respectful dialogue before and after the 2014 Scottish independence referendum. In 2009 John became a Distinguished Fellow of the International Academy of Mediators. He received the Honorary Degree of Doctor of Laws from Edinburgh Napier University in 2010 in recognition of his work in the field. He has also recently been appointed a Visiting Professor by the University of Edinburgh.

**The Commitment to Respectful Dialogue**

We believe that it is a privilege to be able to engage in discussions about our future. How we engage with each other may be just as important as any outcome. We believe that it is in the interests of a flourishing Scotland and our own community that our discussions are conducted with civility and dignity. Therefore, we undertake to do our best and encourage others to do their best, and to:

* **Show respect and courtesy** towards all those who are engaged in these discussions, whatever views they hold;
* Acknowledge that there are **many differing, deeply held and valid points of view**;
* **Use language carefully** and avoid personal or other remarks which might cause unnecessary offence;
* **Listen carefully** to all points of view and seek fully to understand what concerns and motivates those with differing views from our own;
* **Ask questions** for clarification and when we may not understand what others are saying or proposing;
* Express our own views **clearly and honestly with transparency** about our motives and our interests;
* Respond to questions asked of us with clarity and openness and, whenever we can, with **credible information**;
* **Look for common ground and shared interests at all times**.

**Contact**

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**Ends**