



Permanent Mission of Italy
to the United Nations



United Kingdom
Mission to the
United Nations

**UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL OPEN ARRIA MEETING ON
Women, Peace and Security and Mediation
“Increasing the participation of women in global conflict prevention and mediation:
Towards the Creation of a Mediterranean Women Mediators Network”**

27 March 2017

Concept Note

The Permanent Mission of Italy to the UN, in partnership with the Permanent Mission of the United Kingdom, will organize an Arria formula meeting on Women, Peace and Security and Mediation, on March 27 in the ECOSOC Chamber, from 3:00pm to 5:30pm.

1. Background

In a shifting international peace and security context, the three UN reviews conducted in 2015 provided new ground to re-examine traditional ways of addressing conflict and building peace. In particular, the Global Study on the Implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security (WPS),¹ which preceded the High Level Review of the groundbreaking resolution by the Security Council, reaffirmed the critical contribution of women’s meaningful participation to the success and sustainability of peace and security initiatives. Women’s effective participation and influence at the negotiation table leads to higher peace dividends by broadening peace processes beyond fighting parties and spoilers; facilitating social acceptance and commitment to the peace deal from communities and those affected by the conflict; and by ensuring a gendered and inclusive perspective on issues of security, justice and governance that are often among the root causes of violent conflict.

Another important finding of the Global Study is the instrumental role, mediators, and women mediators especially, play in facilitating women’s active involvement and determining the quality of women’s participation in peace talks. This was illustrated by the

¹ Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing the Peace. A Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council resolution 1325. UN Women, 2015

role played by Mary Robinson in her efforts to bring together women from the Great Lakes region of Africa in 2013.² This was also the case for Graça Machel in facilitating the inclusion of women and gender perspectives as a member of the mediation team led by Kofi Annan following the post-election crisis in Kenya in 2008. As mediators (in the broad sense of bridge-builders between parties), women can identify early warning signs of deterioration, document human rights abuses, provide humanitarian services, facilitate political transitions, and formally mediate between sides. They often bring to the table new and different issues that are relevant to their constituencies and may not have been considered.

Since the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000) that urged Member States to increase women's representation at all decision-making levels in institutions and mechanisms for the prevention, management, and resolution of conflict, the Security Council has, on several occasions, reaffirmed the need to increase women's participation and the consideration of gender-related issues in all discussions pertinent to the prevention and resolution of armed conflict, the maintenance of peace and security, and post-conflict peace building. In resolution 2122 (2013), the Council requested the Secretary-General to support the appointment of women at senior levels as UN mediators and within the composition of UN mediation teams. More recently, resolution 2242 (2015) reiterated the call for Member States to ensure increased representation of women at all decision-making levels in national, regional and international institutions and mechanisms for the prevention and resolution of conflict. The resolution encouraged those supporting peace processes to facilitate women's meaningful inclusion in negotiating parties' delegations to peace talks.

The UN General Assembly, through its resolution on strengthening the role of mediation in the peaceful settlement of disputes, conflict prevention and resolution adopted every two years, also recognizes women's role as mediators, the contribution women make to the peaceful settlement of disputes, conflict prevention and resolution; and recently reaffirmed that further efforts are necessary to appoint women as chief or lead peace mediators in order to achieve gender balance.³ Increasingly, regional organizations are also promoting the WPS agenda by appointing dedicated senior leaders to drive action forward. This includes the African Union's Special Envoy on women, peace and security, and NATO's Special Representative for women, peace and security, whose mandate covers reducing barriers for the active and meaningful participation of women in matters of peace and security across the Alliance. In the framework of the G7, leaders have also highlighted the importance of women's active and meaningful participation in conflict prevention and resolution, and in

² Mary Robinson and Hiroute Guebre Sellassie from Ethiopia, who was appointed the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Sahel in April 2014, are to date the only female special envoys appointed by the UN.

³ General Assembly, Resolution on Strengthening the role of mediation in the peaceful settlement of disputes, conflict prevention and resolution, adopted on 9 September 2016, A/RES/70/304

mediation. Recognizing women's underrepresentation among international conflict mediators, the G7 is committed to increasing the number of women in such positions.⁴

2. Challenges and Opportunities

Despite the availability of expertise, and the fact that peace initiatives are often promoted by civil society and in particular women during conflict, the inclusion of women and gender issues in peace processes is still not viewed by most conflict parties and male mediators as an essential component of the negotiation and implementation of such agreements. Women remain significantly underrepresented in formal conflict prevention, resolution and peacebuilding efforts. The shortage of women's nominations by Member States is a contributing factor and further delays the recognition of women's capacity and expertise to serve as mediators and Special Envoys. In 2012, a study by UN Women indicated that out of a representative sample of 31 major peace processes between 1992 and 2011, only 2% of chief mediators, 4% of witnesses and signatories, and 9% of negotiators were women.⁵

In this context, the establishment of networks of women across regions is an emerging practice that has the potential to increase women's leadership and influence in peace negotiations. Inspired by a South African initiative, in November 2015 the Nordic governments launched a Nordic Women's Mediation Network. The network consists of four national networks, all with the purpose of promoting inclusive and sustainable peace processes.

Building on these developments, the Arria formula meeting will seek to discuss ways to strengthen the role of women in peace processes and in all decision-making processes, including by paving the way for the creation of a Mediterranean Women Mediators Network, building on the work of already existing initiatives on mediation, in particular the "MedMed Initiative" on the promotion of mediation in the Mediterranean.

The Arria will further provide an opportunity to reaffirm the potential of networks of women mediators to increase the number of women actively involved in international peace-making efforts. In particular, the roles, opportunities and constraints of existing networks will be discussed, including in relation to the UNDP-managed roster of mediation experts; ongoing peace processes led by the UN and other international and regional organizations; as well as the capacity and availability of women mediators and peace actors. It will also seek to encourage collaboration and coordination among existing networks of women mediators. And it will lay the groundwork for the creation of a Mediterranean Women Mediators Network, to be launched late 2017.

⁴ G7 Ise-Shima Leaders' Declaration, 27 May 2016, available at: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2016/05/27/g7-ise-shima-leaders-declaration>

⁵ Pablo Castillo Diaz and Simon Tordjman, "Women's Participation in Peace Negotiations: Connections Between Presence and Influence," in UN Women Sourcebook on Women, Peace and Security, UN Women, 2012

3. Key Questions

- ❖ How can the UN best utilise the growing network of international, national and local non-governmental organizations, especially women's groups, with in-depth knowledge and experience in mediation and reconciliation, to increase the gender balance of UN mediators and mediation teams? What outreach strategies are currently used?
- ❖ What lessons can be learnt from existing women's mediators' networks regarding their creation, role, experience and challenges to date?
- ❖ What is preventing the nomination of more female candidates by Member States to top UN positions, including mediation roles, and what approaches have been used to address this – such as national outreach campaigns and strategies?
- ❖ What action can the UN take to appoint more women to senior mediator roles, including through encouraging applications from beyond just those with traditional backgrounds of government, defence and security which are typically male-held, using joint mediation teams where appropriate, or other initiatives to change the status quo?

4. Briefers

Interventions by:

- Hon. Benedetto Della Vedova, Undersecretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Italy
- The Rt Hon Baroness Anelay of St Johns DBE, Minister of State for the Commonwealth and the UN, Prime Minister's Special Representative for Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

Briefers:

- Ms. Kyung-wha Kang, Senior Advisor on Policy for the UN Secretary-General;
- Dr Specioza Naigaga Wandira Kazibwe, member of the Panel of the Wise of the African Union and coordinator of the Network of African Women Mediators for Peace;
- Ms. Sigrid Kaag, Special Coordinator UNSCOL;
- Ms. Irene Fellin, President WIIS Italy - Women in International Security.