



## HIGH LEVEL DIALOGUE BUILDING SUSTAINABLE PEACE FOR ALL



24 January 2017, UN Headquarters, New York

In recognition of the fundamental interlinkages between the 2030 Agenda and Sustaining Peace, President of the General Assembly, Peter Thomson, hosted the High-Level Dialogue entitled “Building Sustainable Peace for All: Synergies between the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustaining Peace Agenda” on 24 January 2017 at UN Headquarters in New York.

The event brought together the representatives of Member States, observers, UN entities, civil society organisations, research institutions with global and regional reach, media, and other stakeholders to discuss the mutually reinforcing linkages between Sustaining Peace and the 2030 Agenda, including at the country level, and ways in which these linkages can be utilised in an integrated framework for implementing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and building Sustainable Peace.

### *Opening Segment:*

In the opening discussion, the UN Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres, emphasised the need for a global response that “addresses the root causes of conflict and integrates *peace, sustainable development and human rights* in a holistic way, from conception to execution.” In that regard, the Secretary-General and leaders of the main UN bodies called for renewed investment in infrastructure, building more effective and accountable institutions, protecting human rights, promoting social cohesion, ensuring the meaningful participation of women and girls and moving towards renewable energy — all of which were ultimately investments in peace. Clearly, there is a shift in the UN's rhetoric that attempts to change the course of the organisation towards prevention, inclusion and Sustainable Peace.

Women were presented as one of the key players in the process of implementing the 2030 Agenda and sustaining peace. As it was further reiterated by Julienne Lusenge, who spoke on behalf of the Fund for Congolese Women and the Female Solidarity for Integrated Peace and Development, *gender inequalities further perpetuate exploitation of natural resources, impunity, and poor governance*. She drew particular attention to the importance of training women to provide clean energy, build practical infrastructure, and teach children about peace and respect.

### *High-Level Segment and Plenary Debate:*

During the High-Level Segment and Plenary Debate, speakers highlighted the Women, Peace and Security Agenda throughout their statements, with particular

focuses on themes of *participation and human rights protections*. There was a consistent acknowledgment and advocacy for empowering women and girls as a method of building peaceful and sustainable societies, whether through education, economic empowerment, or legal protection. Many representatives emphasised the value of engaging women in conflict prevention efforts and peace processes which, as Christian Wenaweser of Liechtenstein noted, is not merely a request, but a prerequisite for the success and durability of peace and security.

Representatives of states, including Sweden and Switzerland, highlighted the vital contributions of *women's civil society organisations* and called for increased cooperation with grassroots peace efforts. Only few highlighted the need to properly finance Sustainable Peace. Yerzhan Ashikbayev, Kazakhstan's Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs, called on Member States to consider channelling 1 percent of their defence budgets to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Meanwhile, Sujata Mehta, Secretary of the Ministry of External Affairs of India, warned that pushback from international donors — who had been walking back from their development commitments — “can harm us all”.

It is worth noting that despite broad rhetoric in favor of addressing the root causes of conflict and women's empowerment, a majority of the statements delivered lacked the depth or context to give meaning to these words. Other key elements for feminist peace such as *disarmament and demilitarisation* were scarce throughout the day's discussion, which only the representatives of Cuba, Colombia, Belarus, and Liechtenstein addressed, though none of these references included a gender perspective.

The discussions conducted during the forum also lacked significant regional focus. Crisis situations in states such as *Syria, Palestine, and Yemen* were afforded scarce attention, the majority of which manifested in brief references to dire humanitarian concerns or condemnations of violence. For example, the Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission illustrated the failure of the government in *the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)* to cultivate opportunities for its young population but failed to address in detail how such situations can and should be addressed.

Some statements, however, were more constructive and detailed. Women civil society representatives from *Nigeria, the DRC, Libya*, and a handful of other states brought profound context, advocacy, and policy prescriptions to discussions throughout the day, relating their experiences in localised action and response to the Member States present. The representative of the World Bank, Mahmoud Mohieldin announced the commitment of Bank funds to peacebuilding architectures, crisis response mechanisms, and refugee programmes, including \$250 Million which will be allocated to building peace in *Yemen*. Additionally, the representative of *Colombia*

related the Santos Administration's efforts peacebuilding efforts, which includes disarmament, demobilisation, and rehabilitation programmes for FARC members, the recognition of victim's rights, the transformation of rural areas, and the provisions embodied in the December Peace Agreement to empower women and girls. These notable exceptions aside, broader discussions concerning building peace were not applied to specific and ongoing conflicts.

*Interactive Panel Discussion on Taking a Comprehensive Approach to Sustainable Development and Sustaining Peace:*

During the panel discussion, participants focused on the co-dependency between development and peace. There was a general consensus that peacebuilding efforts should be centred around the citizens of affected regions and emphasise inclusion. However, it was Joy Onyesoh of WILPF Nigeria that delivered the strongest advocacy for a human security approach. Onyesoh utilised her experience responding to violence in *Nigeria* and developing early response mechanisms with local women peacebuilders to demonstrate the preventative impact of engaging grassroots women's organisations. Her presentation highlighted the differential contexts of local and regional peace architectures, the need for progressive, consistent actions, and the inherent link between arms proliferation and instability. Together with speakers such as Uppsala's Peter Wallensteen, who reminded Member States of the causal relationship between gender inequality and conflict, Onyesoh argued that sustainable peace will only be possible through addressing societal and institutionalised patriarchy, investing in women's empowerment and civil society, and emphasising protection rather than militarism.

*Workshop I: Empowering women and youth for peace and sustainable development:*

One of the workshops was designed specifically to unify the cross-cutting goals of the Security Council's Youth Peace and Security (2015) and Women Peace and Security (2000) Agendas. Through knowledge and best-practices sharing, integrating the intersecting perspectives of women and youth in conflict provides an opportunity for the international community to not merely apply a demographic lens to peace and security efforts, but offers a crucial sustainable peace investment which maximises the agency and contributions of these groups. Hager Shareif, speaking on behalf of Together We Build It and the 1325 Network of Libya, reflected on the consequences of depriving local women's organisations of their voice. Shareif argued that the role of young women in conflict prevention and early-warning systems is often disregarded by the Security Council and the international community. Consequently, this ignorance causes the spread of extremism and contributes to the emergence of protracted crises. The panelists underscored the discrepancies between political rhetoric and measurable action in the field, denoting a lack of implementation and

the need for both increased resource allocations and discursive shifts within the UN system.

*Workshop II: Managing Natural Resources for Peace and Sustainable Development:*

The second workshop was focused on natural resources as drivers of conflict. Participants of this workshop discussed interlinkages between eradicating poverty and sustainable use of natural resources as well as the challenges that arise from climate change and fragile environments. However, differently from the statement made by Julienne Lusenge, participants of this workshop failed to investigate the relationships between gender inequality and conflict. Elliott Harris of United Nations Environmental Programme was one of a few who noted the importance of adequate and equitable access to resources and suggested that effective management is crucial to help communities develop participatory approaches, encourage modes of operation that have minimal impact to habitats and landscape and ensure the equitable distribution of benefits of deployment of resources.



*Julienne Lusenge (at lectern), of Fonds pour les femmes congolaises, an NGO from the Democratic Republic of Congo; the General Assembly high-level dialogue on “Building Sustainable Peace for All: Synergies between the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustaining Peace Agenda”. Credit: UN Photo/Manuel Elias*

*Workshop III: Strengthening transparent, inclusive, and accountable institutions:*

Participants of the third workshop agreed that strengthening accountable, transparent institutions was crucial for building sustainable peace and implementing the 2030 Agenda. Specifically, participation of all stakeholders, including women, LGBTQI and youth, and elimination of barriers to their participation was considered of particular importance by representatives of Member States and civil society organisations present during the discussions. Members of academia and civil society highlighted the need for a strategic approach to measuring progress on SDGs. As per the representative of the International Development Law Organization, proper integrated approach to collecting data will ensure that women and indigenous populations will not be neglected.

*Moving forward:*

Currently, the agenda for Sustaining Peace is framed as a follow up to the 2015 UN peace and security reviews, including the review of UN Peace Operations, the Peacebuilding Architecture Review, and the Global Study on the implementation of Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) on Women, Peace and Security, with a special focus on integration, prevention, and collaboration. In this vein, the forum reinforced recognition of the WPS Agenda's role across the continuum of sustaining peace. Numerous recommendations on building sustainable peace made by participants of the forum included the need to include women and women's organisation in conflict prevention; ensure women's access to justice, labour, and natural resources; empower and educate women; and strengthen inclusive societies. However, some topics that are crucial to building Sustainable Peace remained dangerously left behind.

Improper financing of prevention and the 2030 Agenda challenges the very basis of sustainable peace. Many government officials and civil society representatives welcomed the United Nations recent shift towards conflict prevention, however only a few (as it is mentioned above) underscored the need to ensure proper financing of these efforts.

Disarmament was largely absent from discussions throughout the forum. It is widely established that there is a strong correlation between carrying guns and violence. An analysis of the ways in which the possession and proliferation of weapons are under-prioritised in discussions on Sustainable Peace should enable everyone to see just how dangerous and illusory is an image of Sustainable Peace.

Finally, the recommendations made in the 1325 (2000) Global Study as well as women's experiences on the ground, including in Libya, Yemen, Nigeria and the DRC, attract less attention of Member States and do not usually lead to comprehensive policy outcomes. While believing that women's inclusion is crucial to

development and progress, negative acceptance is not enough. Instead, positive steps must be made to ensure that feminist peace based on equality, justice, and demilitarised security can become a reality.

Concept Notes for workshops are available [here>>>](#)

Programme is available [here>>>](#)