

A High-Level Thematic Debate of the UN General Assembly on UN, Peace and Security.

On May 10-11, 2016, the President of the General Assembly, Mogens Lykketoft, organised a High-Level Thematic Debate of the UN General Assembly focused on UN, Peace and Security. This debate built on the common trends and synergies from the most recent UN peace and security reviews, including the review of UN Peace Operations [on the basis of both, the [High Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations](#) and the [Secretary-General's report on the future 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](#).

The event brought together the representatives of Member States, observers, UN entities, civil society, research institutions with global and regional reach, media, and other stakeholders to discuss the ways to implement the ambitious and wide-ranging 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as well as the Paris Agreement on climate change. Among other important topics, participants have debated who – as the next Secretary-General – will lead the UN in this and other equally vital tasks.

In the opening discussion, President of the General Assembly H.E. Mr Lykketoft reflected on several key issues which are critical to moving forward on issues of peace and security. “It is more cost-effective and more humane to invest in prevention before a cure is needed,” he stated. Secondly, he noted that the Global Study on UNSCR 1325 paints a “grim picture” on Women, Peace and Security, and called for action to ensure gender perspective incorporated into overall approaches and ensure women are part of preventing and resolving conflict. Finally, he also brought attention to the need for better partnerships around building stable and peaceful societies and building UN capacity to tackle emerging threats such as terrorism and violent extremism. .

Other keynote speakers for the opening discussion included: Espen Barth Eide, Member of the Managing Board of the World Economic Forum; Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, former President of Indonesia; Leymah Gbowee, 2011 Nobel Peace Laureate and a Sustainable Development Goals Advocate; and Amre Moussa, former Minister for Foreign Affairs of Egypt and former Secretary-General of the League of Arab States.

H.E. Mr. Jan Eliasson, Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations reflected on the three peace and security reviews of 2015 which provided a “roadmap” for peace. “Prevention is our central mission,” he stated.” Why wait for mass atrocities if we can act at early warning signs?” Eliasson claimed that the UN secretariat is implementing 90% of the response to the peace operations (HIPPO) report, raising questions over what percentage of recommendations from the UNSCR 1325 Global Study have been actioned, and why such a gap in priorities continues to exist between the two agendas.

Leymah Gbowee, 2011 Nobel Peace Laureate, spoke powerfully about the need for increased funding and attention for peace processes. She reminded the General Assembly that peace isn't an event that magically occurs; rather it's a collaborative process between nations and sectors. She also appealed to the General Assembly to respond to threats to peace using non-violent solutions, rather than militarism. "We made the mistake of trying to fight fire with fire," she said. “As long as we see military solutions as only solution to building peace globally, the militias will increase, because the

world order is that guns are the only way to solve problems... The time is now. We have a Sustainable Development Goal, we have all of the political options, nonviolent options, to bring our world to a better place. It is time for each and everyone one of us to take action.”

Keynotes speakers pointed out that as the international community revitalises the entire UN peace and security approach, it must ensure that a gender equality perspective is incorporated into that overall approach and that women are more involved in both preventing and resolving conflicts.

The High-Level Debate consisted of four main sessions that allowed participants to identify key threats and engage in a strategic reflection about today’s challenges to international peace and security as well as to allow for a consideration about the means, tools and instruments available within a UN-context to tackle these challenges as well as the responsibilities and institutions required for an effective collective security architecture.

These sessions included: 1) A High-Level Plenary Session, 2) An Interactive Session on the Effectiveness of the UN in Preventing and Managing Conflicts, 3) An Interactive Session on Innovative Partnerships and Responses, 4) An Interactive Session on the Responsibility for Implementation. In addition to the main events, a variety of parallel events took place, including around issues of Women, Peace and Security. The event on Women & Mediation: Experiences in Ensuring Wider Participation of Women in Peace Processes, in this vein, highlighted the importance of mediation and advancing women’s leadership and inclusion.

1) High-Level Plenary Session: "In a world of risks: Today's Threats to international peace and security"

On 10-11 May, a high level plenary was held entitled, "In a world of risks: Today's Threats to international peace and security.”

During this session, participants defined the New World order with its inherent threats, such as violent extremism, climate change, among others, that are fuelled by demographic components, geopolitical tensions, poor governance, lack of social cohesion and world interconnection. In this vein, the representative of Germany recommended to also improve UN prevention mediation, women’s role in peace processes and synergy leverage between Member States for safeguarding peace.

Speakers touched upon the need to involve all stakeholders, including marginalised actors such as women and youth. In this vein, one participant encourage the UN to engage and collaborate with organizations that work with these groups. A strong focus was made on addressing threats in a holistic and preventive manner: e.g. addressing all threats and not only terrorism (e.g. climate change) as well as post-conflict situations, as the representative of Sri Lanka said. In this regard, addressing social, economic and political inequalities and injustices are of crucial importance to maintain stability and peace. Finally, speakers explored opportunities and limits of reforming militarised industries to strengthen action for gender equality and peace. In this vein, the

representative of Kazakhstan called for reduction of conventional arms by encouraging Member States to allocate 1% of their military budget to development.

2) An Interactive Session on the Effectiveness of the UN in Preventing and Managing Conflicts: “Sustainable peace in a world of risks: is the UN effective in preventing and managing conflicts?”

On 10 May, an interactive session was held entitled, "Sustainable peace in a world of risks: is the UN effective in preventing and managing conflicts?."

Moderated by Dr. Bruce Jones, Vice-President and Director, Brookings Institution, it featured presentations by

- Sigrid Kaag, United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon;
- Alexandre Marc, Chief Technical Specialist, Conflict and Violence, World Bank Group;
- Youssef Mahmoud, Senior Adviser, International Peace Institute;
- Saba Ismail, Executive Director, Aware Girls, Pakistan; and
- Sarah Cliffe, Director, New York University Centre on International Cooperation.

Other speakers included the representatives of Ethiopia, Mali, Norway, Eritrea, Sweden, Thailand, African Union, Brazil, Egypt, Uganda, France, Ecuador,

During this session, participants explored the means, tools and instruments available within a UN context to tackle today's threats to international peace and security adequately; they also assessed whether they sufficiently incentivise coherence and consistency in the UN's support. According to the representative of Ethiopia, the UN cannot and should not handle challenges without cooperation with regional and international cooperation. Supporting this statement, the representative of Sweden directly highlighted the need to cooperate with women's organisations in the international and national arenas.

The panelists also pointed out that women's presence results in more "approachable peace." As long as women continue to face discrimination in both the political sphere and on the ground, conflict prevention and resolution will remain difficult. The current context of increasing militarisation and the fact that the role of women in conflict prevention is often missing in highest-level discussions about peace and security is problematic. However, participants focused on the need to increase effectiveness of the UN in preventing and managing conflicts, paying attention to the critical importance of gender equality.

3) An Interactive Session on Innovative Partnerships and Responses: “Leading by Example: Innovative partnerships and responses”

On 11 May, an interactive session was held entitled, "Leading by Example: Innovative partnerships and responses."

Moderated by Susana Malcorra, Minister for Foreign Relations of Argentina, the Session heard introductory remarks by

- Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga, former President of Sri Lanka and current Chairperson of the Office for National Unity and Reconciliation, and
- Abdusalam Hadliyah Omer, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Somalia.

Interventions were also heard by

- Gert Rosenthal, Chair of the Advisory Group of Experts on the 2015 review of the peacebuilding architecture,
- Magdy Martinez-Soliman, Assistant Administrator and Director of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and
- Asma Mansour, Tunisian Centre for Social Entrepreneurship.

This session focused on examples from the field, looking beyond widely applied approaches in efforts to bring about peace and reconciliation. The speakers discussed what partnerships are required for achieving sustainable peace; where responsibility and accountability lies; and how this relates to the existing UN institutional structures. The panelists discussed the peace processes in Sri Lanka and Somalia, among others, highlighting the idea of promoting inclusivity in gaining peace and the importance of political will even with mediation efforts in achieving peace. They pointed out that after the end of the war, when the countries are moving towards a peaceful and inclusive future that includes reconciliation, transnational justice, reparations and non-recurrence, the engagement of women and youth are crucial.

The session touched upon the notion that local ownership was necessary for peace processes and streamlined UN processes need to be fixed. Other participants from Kenya, Finland, Algeria and Paraguay further suggested all stakeholders must be included in the process and that long term thinking needs to be implemented in peace processes. Of particular interest was Kenya's note that women and children must be involved. Whilst women and women's participation was briefly mentioned throughout the high level discussion, it was not a focal point given substantial focus.

4) An Interactive Session on the Responsibility for Implementation: "Responsibility for Implementation: Beyond the current conundrum"

On 11 May, an interactive session was held entitled, "Responsibility for Implementation: Beyond the current conundrum."

Moderated by Espen Barth Eide, Member of the Managing Board of the World Economic Forum, the fourth session heard statements from panellists

- Jose Ramos-Horta, Chair of the Independent Panel on Peace Operations;
- Alain Le Roy, former Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping and current Secretary-General of the External Action Service of the European Union; and
- Alvaro Esteban Pop, Chair of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues.

The focus of this session was the implementation, partnership and accountability for delivering on commitments. Participants discussed prevention and the nature of commitments towards peacekeeping. Mr Alain Le Roy discussed peacekeeping financing and noted that the implementation

of UNSCR 1325 is underfunded. Additionally, the issue of financing in general was further highlighted by other participants. Speakers noted that upholding women's equal human rights requires not just token allocations (such as 15% of security aid for gender equality), but structural changes to investment that prioritises political economies of gender justice and peace over militarism and war. The sexual exploitation and abuse committed by peacekeepers should be understood within a framework of a zero tolerance policy. Both lack of realization of the commitments along with the lack of funding dedicated to the WPS agenda requires overcoming "the lack of political will", strong financial commitments, and the removal of structural, political and bureaucratic barriers that prevent women's participation and rights.

5) Women & Mediation: Experiences in Ensuring Wider Participation of Women in Peace Processes

On 11 May, a parallel event was held entitled, "Women & Mediation: Experiences in Ensuring Wider Participation of Women in Peace Processes."

This event was organized by Permanent Missions of Norway, Sweden, Finland, Iceland, and Denmark to the United Nations in cooperation with the Nordic Women Mediators' Network and their operational partners. This side-event heard speeches from panelists

- Mr. Mogens Lykketoft, President of the General Assembly;
- Mr. Børge Brende, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Norway;
- Ms. Margot Wallström, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sweden;
- Mr. Jeffrey Feltman, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, UN;
- Ms. Lakshmi Puri, Deputy Executive Director, UN Women;
- Mr. Staffan de Mistura, UN Special Envoy for Syria, and a representative of the Syrian Women's Advisory Board;
- Ms. Lourdes Ortiz Yparraguirre, Permanent Representative of Philippines to the UN;
- Lulama Rulumeni, Deputy Director, Department of International Relations and Cooperation, South Africa;
- Ms. Elisabeth Rehn, Minister of State, CMI/Advisor;
- Ms. Greta Gunnarsdottir, Ambassador for Human Rights, Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Iceland.

This event put together mediation and WPS agenda as aspects that the three reviews were focused on. The goal of the event was to identify gaps, challenges, successes and ways to increase the number of women participating in peace processes, particularly as mediators, while discussing experiences and lessons learned from the Philippines and South Africa. The panelists made practical proposals to enhance on the pillars of UNSCR 1325, women's participation in peace processes, which as it was highlighted, increases in 35% the chances of peace lasting up to 15 years. As it was agreed, there are already expert women ready to be mediators and who do not need more training, which is the excuse that it is given in order not to appoint women for this role. What they need is confidence and capacity enhancement. The importance to create possibilities for women to become mediators overcoming the current challenges was also highlighted. Speakers highlighted the problems attached to this process. First, women lack visualization by UN and national governments

and thus, they are not appointed as mediators. Secondly, there is a lack of services and flexibility in terms of schedule that women need when they are mothers, and all this bring many of them to give up on senior positions. Another remark pointed out how short we are falling in implementing UNSCR 1325 after 15 years of adoption, otherwise this event would have never been convened. The support of men in empowering women was also highlighted. In this vein, participants recommended to create an environment where men listen to women, and one first action could be involving men in the conversation.

Moving Forward

While building on the common trends and synergies from the most recent UN peace and security reviews, dialogue at the High-Level Thematic Debate On Peace and Security reinforced recognition of the WPS agenda's role across the continuum of sustaining peace. Participants, both States and civil society organizations called for transformative political, rather than technical, solutions for effective implementation and accountability.

In his closing statement, Mr Lykketoft recalled the word of Leymah Gbowee, who reminded the audience that if the international community will keep spending peanuts on prevention and trillions on war, then the world cannot expect to achieve peace. Lykketoft called for greater resources, analysis, research to be dedicated to the UN's diplomatic and preventive functions.

He also stated: "Practically everyone agrees that women must be more involved right across the continuum of sustaining peace. But agreement is not enough. Leadership and targeted steps to make this happen are needed now."