

29 August, 2018 UNSC Open Debate on “Maintenance of international peace and security: Mediation and settlements of disputes”

Key points on women, their rights, and efforts to prevent and resolve conflict

For the UNHQ Group of Friends of WPS

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[Research](#) increasingly shows that peace processes that are inclusive of women—crucially, where it is more than token—tend to result in more durable and sustainable peace. Research also indicates that the strong influence of women in negotiation processes positively correlates with a greater likelihood of agreements being implemented. There are thus clear benefits to including women in the process of negotiating peace.

Women’s exclusion continues despite established [international obligations](#) and norms regarding the right of women to participate and growing evidence that women and girls are targeted for specific, gendered types of violence in conflict—including sexual violence—and are often affected differently by abuses committed during conflict. The rights of women and girls are often an afterthought, if they are considered at all, in peace agreements and in the implementation of accords. Not addressing these violations, in formal and informal agreements, runs the risk of impunity and repetition.

The 29 August, 2018 UNSC Open Debate on “Maintenance of international peace and security: Mediation and settlements of disputes” is a key opportunity for members of the Group of Friends of WPS to reiterate that [women’s rights and status](#) are central to conflict prevention, and crucially to the building of sustainable and peaceful communities. Conflict resolution, but even more importantly conflict prevention, is reliant on gender equality, the advancement of the status of women, protection of women’s rights and support for women’s meaningful participation in peace and security processes, particularly women doing local peace work.

Key points and recommendations for statements at the 29 August, 2018 Open Debate

1) Not about “adding women and stirring” into a mediation process

Women’s participation in peace processes is not solely about adding one or two women to existing negotiation teams—an approach that is often called “add women and stir.” Rather, women’s participation refers to the multifaceted and [various ways women and their rights](#) are reflected in these political processes. From this perspective, the significance of technical advisors, civil society advocates, gender advisors (who need not be women), and women on negotiation teams are all better understood. This type of inclusion also entails the ongoing representation of women on negotiation teams (e.g., as in Colombia); the provision of gender expertise—both training and technical input—to mediators and negotiation teams to understand how women’s rights are part of issues under discussion (whether that

be ceasefires, political power sharing, justice efforts, etc.); and mechanisms for civil society to input ideas, concerns and proposals (e.g., as in Guatemala).

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MEMBER STATES:

Commit to supporting (financially, politically, rhetorically) this breadth of inclusion in all processes your government is currently engaged in, be it as a party to the conflict or as a facilitating partner. This support should include addressing security risks for women participants;

Adopt a comprehensive approach to women's participation in peacebuilding that meaningfully links high level peace processes and grassroots women's movements, leveraging the roles of national institutions that support women's rights and gender equality.

At the national level, work towards gender parity, as women's inclusion in peace processes has greater chance of being realized if women are fully engaged in national decision-making processes;

Support concrete incentives to negotiating parties to ensure women and gender experts are meaningfully included in all delegations to negotiations;

Express support for women civil society organizations and human rights defenders, especially those operating at the grassroots level, and recognize the critical role they play in local mediation efforts, peacebuilding and building resilient communities.

Provide financial support and technical assistance, including comprehensive training in advocacy and negotiation, for women participating in peace processes. This could include documenting and harnessing the expertise of women at the community level, inter alia leveraging this expertise in the design and the conduct of peace processes; and

Provide financial support and technical assistance, including training in advocacy and in track 1 negotiation skills, for women participating in the design and monitoring of the implementation of peace accords. This should be fundamental to a commitment to ensure that women and gender experts are included in all mechanisms that implement and monitor peace agreements.

2) What strategies have worked?

Women's expertise can provide nuanced insight and analysis that can strengthen peacebuilding efforts through policy, diplomatic action, and programmes at all levels. There are multiple ways to support women and their rights in even the most complex conflicts. In [Colombia](#), women had been mobilized for years to push for peace, resulting in multiple levels of engagement in negotiations, including in the official talks. In [Syria](#), this includes dialogue between leaders of negotiation processes and women who are struggling to have their voices heard. This means all negotiating parties [should include women](#) in

their delegations, in addition to the [Women's Advisory Board](#) and additional future mechanisms for women's inclusion. In [Yemen](#), it entails raising concerns when women were not allowed to travel to participate in initial discussions, and calls for victims to be respected in negotiations. In [Myanmar](#), it means inclusive negotiations and political reform, with inclusion of women's rights, while not neglecting the urgent Rohingya crisis. Specifically, previous agreements on quotas for women should be implemented, not [rolled back](#). In [Libya](#), it has meant, in part, women's political participation in post-Ghaddafi transitions. In [Afghanistan](#), it means accountability for governments and donors regarding their pledged commitments to women's rights and women's participation in peace talks at all levels, and at all stages. And, on the regional and global stage, [new networks of women mediators](#) provide a promising opportunity to make women's participation not only a regular occurrence, but a transformative one, particularly if they are core actors in the design of negotiation processes as part of a gendered approach.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MEMBER STATES:

Provide resources (financial, political) to enable women's rights supporters to convene and strategize around modalities to enhance women's participation, and to ensure the centrality of women's rights in negotiations;

Ensure all actors in Member State peace and security efforts are aware of women's rights and roles in peace efforts as a priority, and provide support at national and community levels;

As conflict prevention starts at the grassroots and local levels, and given the dearth of funding for local actors, Member States should increase their support for local women's organizations, particularly those working on developing early warning mechanisms for signs of violent conflict, leading local initiatives to counter and prevent violent extremism, and providing essential services to survivors; and

Be a standard bearer in safeguarding women's rights by leading the way, both domestically and in foreign policy and aid, on gender equality, inclusion and non-discrimination regardless of race, religion, sexual orientation and gender identity, ability, age or another status.

3) Where can UN Member States, particularly Security Council members, do more? What tools are at the Council's disposal?

The Security Council has at its disposal numerous tools to better address the dearth of women and women's rights in peace efforts. The Informal Expert Group on WPS for example, has proven to be a useful tool for sharing information on successes and challenges for women and girls a number of country situations on which the Council regularly engages. But this is not an issue that should be addressed solely in gender-focused fora. The Ad Hoc Working Group on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa, for example, has the potential to address the connection between women's participation and prevention efforts.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MEMBER STATES:

Encourage the appointment of more women and gender experts as UN chief mediators, and integrate senior and empowered gender experts in all UN peace operations and offices of Special Envoys of the Secretary General;

Promote the importance of raising the recruitment, retention, and professionalization of women across all justice and security sector components in order to improve and advance rule of law based institutions;

Require the integration of WPS as a cross-cutting issue in all reports of the Secretary-General on country-specific, regional, and thematic issues, including by ensuring comprehensive gender-sensitive conflict analysis;

Systematically integrate recommendations from the Informal Experts Group on Women, Peace and Security (IEG) into deliberations in the Council, including specific questions to UN headquarters and field leadership during consultations; and support the regular engagement of all Council members in the IEG meetings. Implement and follow up on recommendations of the IEG in peacekeeping and special political missions;

Develop a comprehensive conflict prevention strategy in consultation with local women's organizations that includes, inter alia, early warning, preventive deployment, mediation, peacekeeping, disarmament, accountability measures as well as peacebuilding, and recognize that these components are interdependent, complementary, and non-sequential;

Support substantive cross-pollination between the IEG and other subsidiary bodies, e.g. the Ad Hoc Working Group on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa, via information sharing and shared analysis; and

Support cross-pollination and information sharing between relevant subsidiary bodies of the UNSC and the regional networks of women mediators. For example, the Ad Hoc Working Group on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa and FemWise, the AU PSC women mediators network.