Women Influencing Multi-Stakeholder Peace Dialogue, Processes and Policy Spaces

UN WOMEN SERIES:
Women's leadership for promoting peace and security in Europe and Central Asia

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1. Introduction

Multi-stakeholder peace dialogues, processes and policy spaces are used in the broad sense of the words to include security and human security related issues, including processes related to concluding peace agreements and implementing them but also other emerging issues related to a broad understanding of peace. This includes not just the absence of conflicts and war (negative peace), but also dealing with root cases and societal attitudes that could prevent future violence which are needed for long-term sustainable positive peace.

This brief paper looks at women's contribution, influence, and participation in peace processes under four areas:

- **Peacemaking**
  Including the participation of women in multi-track peace processes

- **Peacekeeping**
  Including the participation of women in peacekeeping

- **Peacebuilding**
  Including building a more just political process in the aftermath of conflicts and championing security sector reforms

- **Prevention**
  Including engagement of women in prevention of disputes, in preventing and countering violent extremism, engendering the humanitarian space, and preparing National Action Plans on UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 on Women, Peace and Security

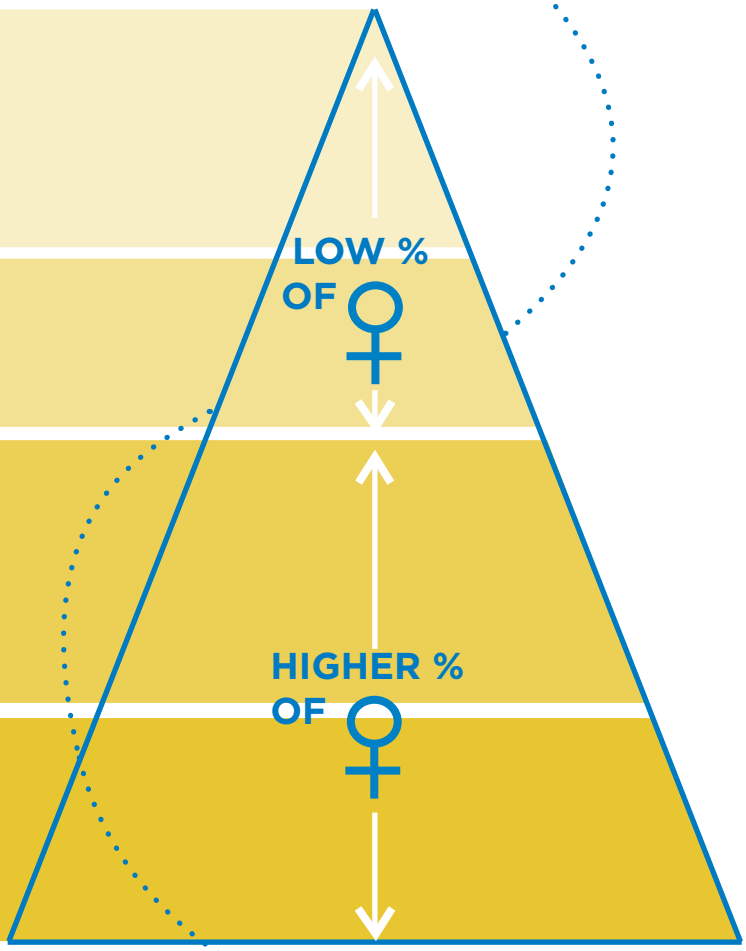
This paper seeks to draw lessons on how women have been participating as actors in influencing peace dialogue and processes related to the women, peace and security agenda in Europe and Central Asia. It also highlights challenges that need to be taken into consideration and offers recommendations to promote their greater contribution, influence, and participation in peace processes.

2. Peacemaking

2.1 Increasing the participation of women in peacemaking processes

When discussing the meaningful contribution and influence of women to peacemaking, we need to first distinguish between the different peace track processes:

- **Track 1**
  Refers to formal high-level mediation processes conducted between officials of warring parties, typically involving high-level political and military leaders with focus on ceasefires, peace treaties, and other agreements
- **Track 1.5**
  It is a form of informal mediation conducted when official and non-official actors engage with each other in peace negotiations
- **Track 2**
  Refers to unofficial dialogues and activities to build relationships and encourage new thinking to inform official peace processes and involves influential actors from civil society, non-governmental organizations, women's' rights groups, academia, religious institutions etc.
- **Track 3**
  Refers to people-to-people contacts between individuals and private groups, normally at the grassroots level, to encourage interaction and understanding between hostile communities.



These tracks, and especially Track 1 and 2, are all essential to peace negotiations and can be held in parallel. Track 2 peace processes can support and complement, directly or indirectly, Track I peace negotiations. While they serve different purposes and involve different actors, making sure that the diplomacy tracks are connected is essential to the peacemaking and peacebuilding process.

Today, women remain largely excluded from formal Track 1 peace processes, while they play a major role in Track 2 and informal peace processes.

Regional Forum on Sustainable Development 2022 Roundtable on the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5: Gender Equality. Photo: UN Women/Antoine Tardy

Women's contribution and influence in Track 1 processes

Women can have direct and meaningful participation in official Track 1 diplomacy, at the negotiation table, in three roles:

• As Negotiators

Women can participate in negotiations and formal discussions as members of delegations and representatives of the conflict parties. Since women usually placed low in the ranks of political parties, they are mostly excluded from formal high-level security or political negotiations and in peace agreements that start with a ceasefire followed by a political settlement. However, where civilians are engaged in negotiations on security issues, spaces are opened for women's participation.

• As Mediators

Women can participate in peace processes as external and local facilitators and moderators. Mediators can have an important role to play in forging connections between formal and informal peace processes, thereby democratizing the peacemaking process. As such they can change the dynamics of peace negotiations. However, the proportion of women mediators remains low despite some representation in an increasing number of peace processes.

• As Advisers

Women can participate with the mediator's team as political advisers and thematic experts and can have an indirect influence on the negotiations as compared to women as mediators or negotiators. Among the role of advisors, there are opportunities for women to participate with the necessary skill set, which includes knowledge of the mediation process and political analysis, but also of the local context and languages, in additional to technical knowledge on thematic areas. While including women advisors may be a good strategy, the influence they have as political advisers in negotiations will always remain weaker than the influence of mediators and negotiating parties.

Women's contribution and influence in Track 2 processes

While women remain underrepresented in Track 1 processes, informal Track 2 diplomacy has offered women a space to meaningfully contribute, influence and participate in peacemaking processes:

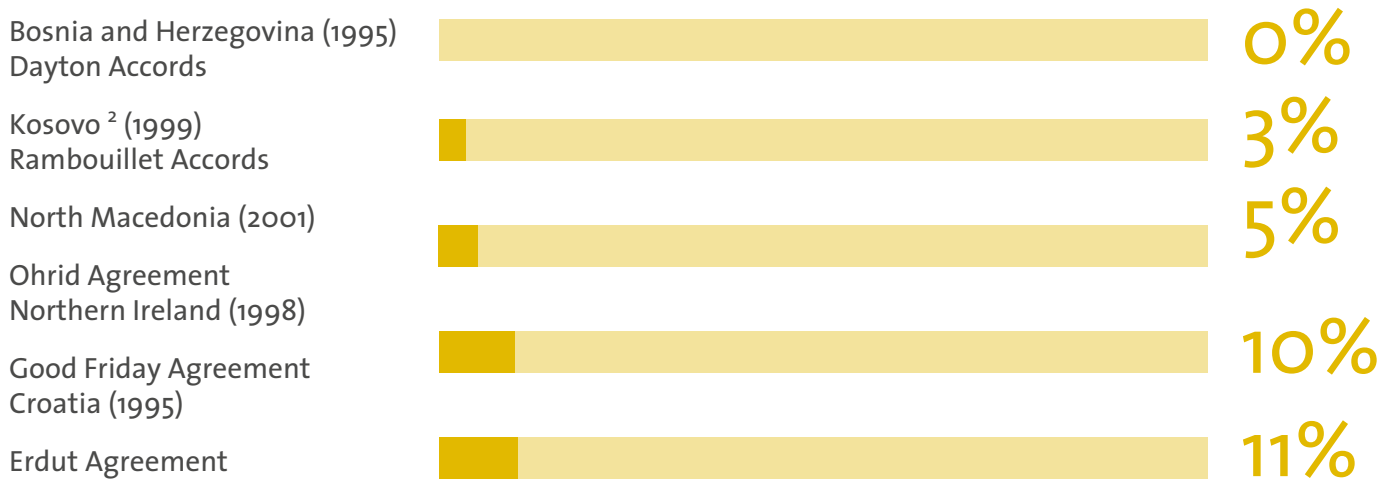
- Women are considered less threatening to some warring parties. At the same time, they can leverage their authority in peacemaking as "outsiders" with proximity to communities.
- Greater opportunities for gaining skills and knowledge, expanding networks, and transferring expertise and critical information, both to local communities and to Track 1 negotiators.
- Women can also use the platforms created through Track 2 to call for women's inclusion in Track 1 and build relationships and trust between warring parties when the Track 1 process is at a standstill.
- Civil society can develop positions that are realistic and acceptable once the outcomes of the Track 1 process are transferred down to women excluded from the formal peace process.

Underrepresentation of women from Track 1 and Track 2 processes, and in diplomatic ranks as mediators and negotiators

- A 2012 UN Women global study of 31 peace processes between 1992-2011 noted that only 4 per cent of signatories, 2.4 per cent of chief mediators, 3.7 per cent of witnesses and 9 per cent of negotiators were women.[1] Of these peace processes, five were from the Europe and Central Asia region (Table 1). No women were included at all in the negotiating process that ended the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina and led to the Dayton Peace Accords in 1995.

1 UN Women (2012) *Women's Participation in Peace Negotiations: Connection between Presence and Influence*

Table 1. Participation of women from Europe and Central Asia in peace processes (1992-2011)



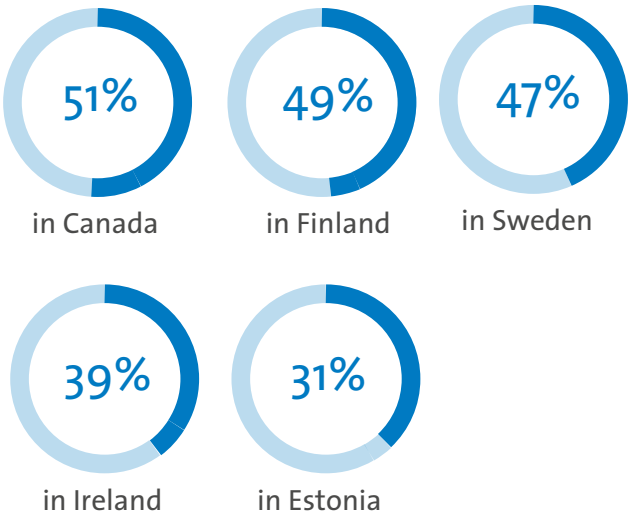
- In Europe and Central Asia, women's participation in peace processes in past remains low, despite some progress in past. Ten years after the launch of the Geneva International Discussions, established in 2008 on the conflict in **Georgia**, women comprised 30 per cent of negotiators[3]. But now , there is only 8 per cent of women among negotiators. In **Ukraine** before 2020, low women's engagement has been evident in high-level talks on the settlement of the international armed conflict in certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, as well as in peacekeeping.[4]
- In the region, women are also underrepresented at the highest diplomatic ranks. In a report on 32 countries with data from 2012-2017, women accounted for just 21.7 per cent of all Ambassadors. Female representation was also generally higher in the western part of the region[5]. A great degree of variation exists, with female representation being generally higher in the western part of the region.

For women to be part of negotiation teams, they need to feature high on their party lists or must have participated in the conflict. In both instances, the odds work against women.

Women often need to prove themselves in largely male-dominated contexts and are always judged more severely than men. Negotiations can also be a heavily male dominated space, where female

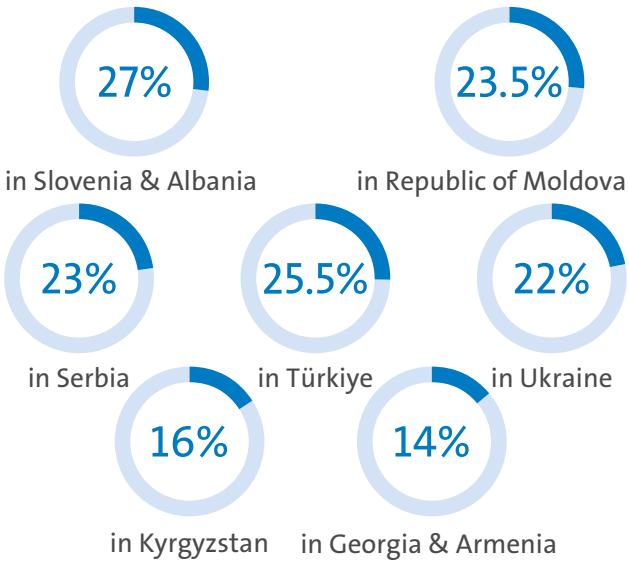
In 2023 Women Ambassadors are...

Source: *Women in Diplomacy Index, 2023*



Women Ambassadors are only...

Source: *Women in Diplomacy Index, 2023*



2 All references to Kosovo should be understood in the context of UNSCR 1244 (1999)

3 UN Women (2020) *Keep the promise, Accelerate the change - Taking stock of gender equality in Europe and Central Asia 25 years after Beijing*

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid.

UN Women Executive Director Meets with Ukranian Refugees in Moldova. Photo: UN Women/Aurel Obreja

participants may be subjected to stereotypical and demeaning treatment, which demonstrates the stigma attached to women for having their own political agendas and agency.

The job of mediation or being part of mediation or negotiation teams can be time consuming, labour and travel intensive. This could discourage women who feel they must choose between their private and family lives and a career in conflict resolution.

Some of the reasons for the low participation are structural in nature. In societies where formal and informal power structures are male dominated, structural factors (such as gender stereotypes) often limit women's opportunities to play a meaningful role in public and political life, including in peacemaking processes, prompting women to focus their efforts on civil society, Track 2 diplomacy.

Women often need to prove themselves in largely male-dominated contexts and are always judged more severely than men.

Other reasons for the low representation of women in some Track 1 and 2 peace processes have to do with restraints felt by women themselves. As confirmed by a variety of studies, including a global survey from the Global Network of Women Peacebuilders,[6] women feel they lack the following:

- Knowledge about the peace process, language and terminology used in the formal peace process.
- Skills including networking, leadership, negotiation, and analytical skills.
- The adequate resources to participate, which means that institutions need to facilitate by covering the costs of travel, transportation, and communications.
- Concerns about their personal security.

6 Global Network of Women Peacebuilders (2019): *Building and Sustaining Peace from the Ground Up: A Global Study of Civil Society and Local Women's Perception of Sustaining Peace*

Participation of women in peace-making increases chances for peace

A UN Women global study on implementing UNSCR 1325 between 2020-2015 noted that women's participation increases the probability of a peace agreement lasting at least two years by 20 per cent, and by 35 per cent the probability of a peace agreement lasting 15 years.[7] The report also highlights that globally, peace agreements are 64 per cent less likely to fail when civil society representatives participate, yet in 15 of 16 national dialogues examined in the Global Study on implementation of the UNSCR 1325, decision-making was left to a small group of male leaders.

Regional cases of women's contribution and influence in Track 1 and 2 peacemaking processes

An analysis on the relation between women's influence on peace processes in Europe and Central Asian conflicts shows mixed results for women's involvement.[8] Women have rarely head delegations to formal negotiations, but there are a few exceptions:

- In Moldova, two women from the Government have been acting as lead negotiators in the ongoing negotiations process between Chisinau and Tiraspol within the Transnistrian settlement process. In the Republic of Moldova, the Transnistrian settlement process prolongs since 1992 under a three-level format of the talks: (1) the "5+2" format that includes the two Sides of the conflict negotiations – alongside the OSCE, Russia and Ukraine as mediators and the US and the EU as observers; (2) the 1+1 meetings at the level of political representatives of the Sides and (3) 11 thematic working groups and 3 subgroups on the expert level. Women are under-represented at all three-levels of peace talks, both in decision-making and at the level of working groups and, where present, mostly on social (healthcare, social protection, education) and humanitarian areas. As of February 2023, women co-chair 13 out of the 14 Working Groups from Chisinau side[9], while the data from Tiraspol side can not be evidenced.

  As of 2018, human rights issues are approached under a dedicated sub-working group, the Sides focusing mainly on issues of persons with disabilities, children at risk, human trafficking, violence on Internet, domestic violence, persons living with HIV/AIDS. However, the issue of women's rights, including in the Transnistrian region, and the participation of women in peacebuilding processes and women's social inclusion have not been approached yet.

- Women have had a moderate influence on the Macedonian process (2001-2013) where an agreement was reached and partially implemented.

- In Türkiye-Armenia (2008-2011), Georgia-Abkhazia (1997-2007), Moldova-Transnistria (from 1992) and Cyprus (1999-2004), where women had either no or weak influence on peace processes, agreements have either not been reached or not been implemented.

- Women had very weak participation in the political reforms in Kyrgyzstan (beginning in 2013 through to the present) and in peace negotiations on Tajikistan (1993- 2000).

- In the Tajikistan peace process (1994-1997), women tried to influence political parties, and some were lobbying on behalf of the United Tajik Opposition on the one side, and on the Government on the other. However, no women were officially part of the Track 2 Inter-Tajik dialogue nor the Track 1 negotiations.

Organization of Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)-supported formal negotiation in the region have also had a mixed record: [10]

> *Women's participation increases the probability of a peace agreement lasting longer.*

7 UN Women (2015) *Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing the Peace: A Global Study on the Implementation of Security Council resolution 1325*

8 UN Women (2015) *The Global Study on 1325 Fact Sheet: Europe and Central Asia Region*

9 For the Working Group on Human Rights, the chief negotiator from Chisinau side has not been nominated.

10 OSCE, Inclusion of Women and Effective Peace Processes: A Toolkit, Organization of Security and Co-operation in Europe.

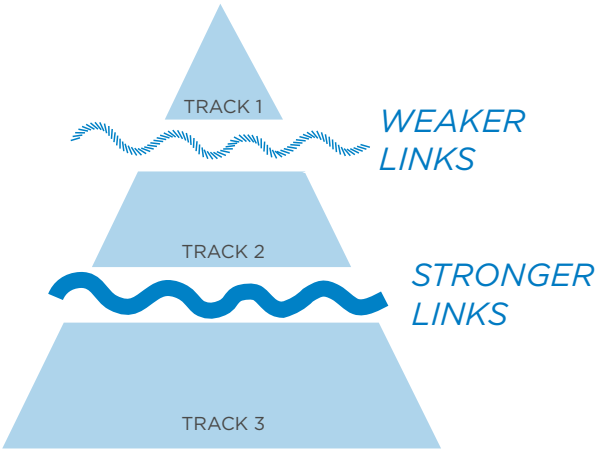
- The two oldest processes, the Transdniestria settlement process and the OSCE Minsk process, which tries to contribute to finding a peaceful solution to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, were established in the early 1990s when the need to consider the role of women in peace processes had just started to be recognised. [11]
- After the development of the relevant international normative framework, including the adoption of UNSCR 1325 and the agreement of gender related OSCE commitments and Ministerial Council decisions, there has been little increase in the participation of women in formal negotiation or settlement processes in the region.
- Within the Geneva International Discussions and the Trilateral Contact Group, established in 2014, few women have had a seat at the table. One woman represented the OSCE as Co-moderator of the Geneva International Discussions Working Group 2 on Humanitarian Issues. From the co-mediating organizations, one woman served as UN Co-Chair of the Geneva International Discussions and one as EU Co-Moderator of the Geneva International Discussions Working Group 2.
- Only 1 out of 14 heads of the OSCE Mission to Moldova, mandated to facilitate the negotiation process within the framework of the Transdniestria settlement process, was a woman.
- In the context of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, women are leading informal initiatives along Tracks 2 and 3 but have limited engagement with official negotiations as part of negotiation teams or through the Minsk Group Co-Chairs.
- In the Georgian context, where initiatives concentrate on dialogue between Georgians and Abkhazians, most civil society organizations (CSOs) are led by women. Members of the teams of the Geneva International Discussions (GID) Co-Chairs and the negotiation participants have sometimes been invited to attend Track 1.5 discussions in an unofficial capacity. When visiting the region, the Geneva International Discussions Co-Chairs have also begun meeting women's organizations in a more systematized way. In such ways, messages can be transmitted to the GID, which provides women some access to the official process.

11 OSCE, *Inclusion of Women and Effective Peace Processes: A Toolkit*

Research by OSCE highlighted that links between informal peace initiatives and official processes remain weak.

2.2 Connecting formal and informal peace processes by engaging women's organizations

In general, it may be difficult to assess how informal processes directly or indirectly influence Track 1 negotiations. Research by OSCE highlighted that links between informal peace initiatives - regardless of whether they are led by men or women - and official processes remain weak. The more peacebuilding initiatives are community based, the less exchanges there tend to be with Track 1 processes.[12] As a result, while women are generally well represented in civil society initiatives, their ability to influence official negotiations remains limited.



To overcome these challenges, it is especially important to support and formalize the two-way relationship between Track 1 and Track 2 processes so that transfers between stakeholders can take place. Linkages can be facilitated through several mechanisms:

12 Ibid

- Fostering local buy-in and ownership for peace through open and constant communication and consultation with women's groups and CSOs.
- The creation of networks (national, regional, and international).
- Coordination between Track 2 processes, by sharing information, goals and experts and exploring synergies to develop a common women's platform.
- Enhancing training, such as in negotiation skills, leadership, self-confidence, for women peacebuilders.

2.3 Engaging women's organizations and groups in peacemaking processes

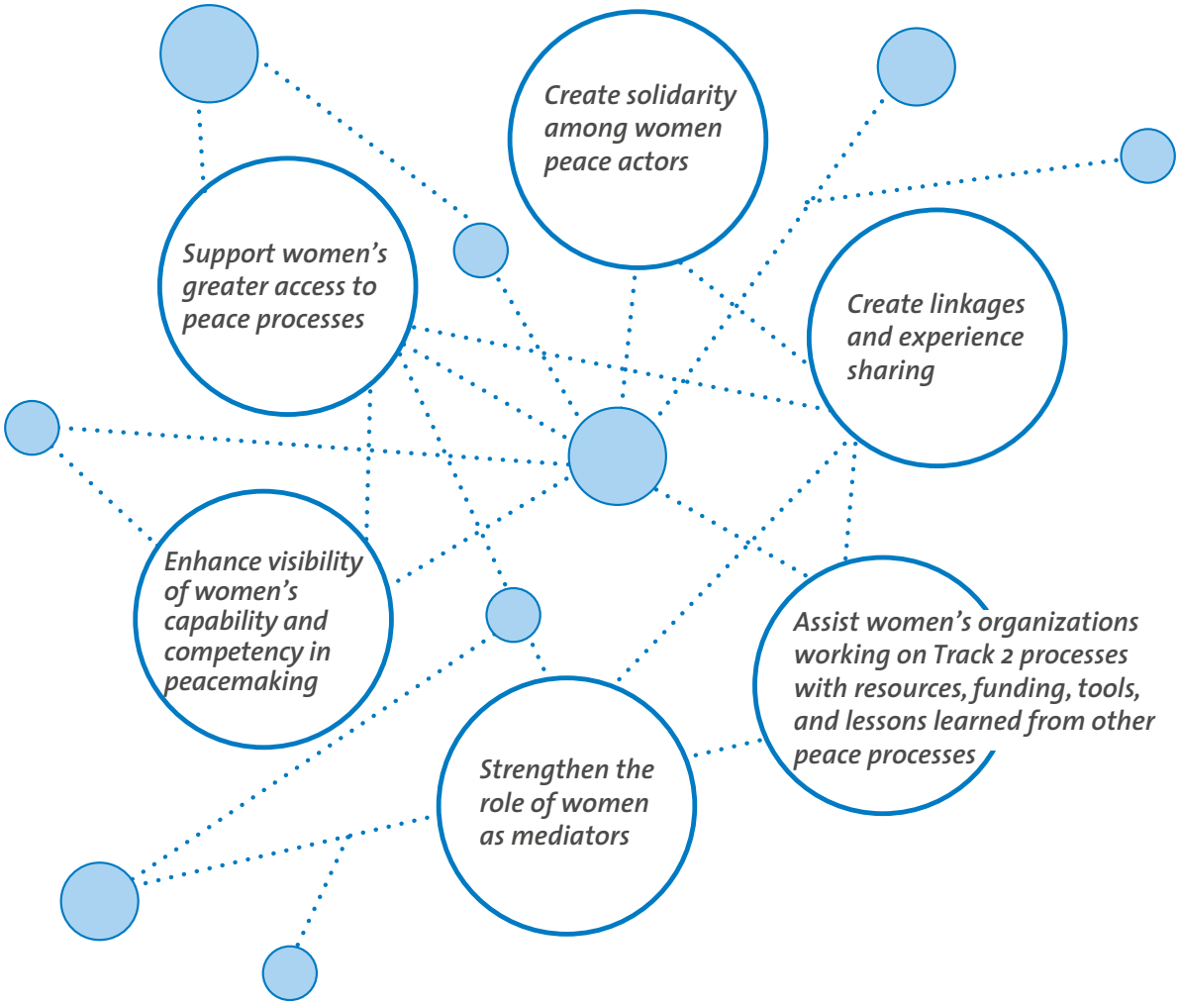
Women's organizations - women's groups and CSOs - are allies within informal and formal peacemaking processes - Tracks 1 and 2 - because they are active stakeholders who can develop alternative political solutions to the conflict, build trust and engage in sustainable peace building.

Women's organizations are active stakeholders who can develop alternative political solutions to the conflict, build trust and engage in sustainable peace building.

Women's organizations are also a rich source of information and support for both design and implementation of peace agreements. They bring the voices of traditionally marginalized sectors of society to the dialogue table. At the same time, mediation mechanisms must complement other efforts to increase women's meaningful contribution and participation in peacemaking dialogues and processes to ensure that women are not just consulted but also play a direct role themselves.

Enhancing women's meaningful participation in peacemaking spaces

Women are more likely to participate meaningfully in peacemaking spaces when they can operate in coalitions or networks. International and regional women's networks can provide a variety of opportunities, including:



Mediators can work with women's organizations to:

- Deliver and exchange information
- Identify negotiating topics
- Facilitate training
- Organize common activities
- Create parallel fora for women, platforms, and networks
- Set up consultation mechanisms
- Organize meetings for women

Examples of regional women's mediator networks

The UN Women Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia supports networks in the region:

- **The Regional Women's Lobby for Peace, Security and Justice in Southeast Europe** promotes gender equality, influences political decision-making and forges cultural solidarity and mutual understanding between different groups in post-war settings of the Western Balkans, since 2006. The Lobby (supported by UN Women) includes women leaders from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia from diverse backgrounds - politicians, parliamentarians, governments officials and civil society.
- **The Western Balkans Security and Gender Coordination Group** (chaired by UN Women) promotes coordination, information sharing and joint strategic actions to increase women's safety and security in Kosovo. In 2009, the Group of local and international organizations contributed to the Kosovo Security Strategy and in 2010 drafted a Joint Action Plan.
- **The Central Asia Women Leaders' Caucus** created in 2020 to boost political, economic, and social participation of women in Central Asia and enable them to increasingly influence the decision-making process on issues related to peace, stability, and sustainable development. Dialogues are convened with high level women officials, women leaders, peacebuilders, mediators and activists from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan with special emphasis prevention of conflict and stabilization.

2.4 Including gender perspectives in peacemaking processes

It is not sufficient to focus only on increasing the number of women in peace negotiations. The emphasis should also be put on integrating a gender perspective into a peace process, to make sure that substantive topics contained in agreements are designed and implemented to be equally beneficial to men and women and would neither undermine nor harm them.

While gender-related issues are touched upon in discussions on humanitarian issues, they usually play little, if any, role in discussions about the security or military aspects of a conflict, where discussion revolve around disarmament, reintegration of armed factions etc., as if gender did not matter.

A study by Inclusive Security shows that there is no mention at all of gender in most peace agreements and ceasefire agreements, with the only gender references found related to sexual violence in conflict or the protection of civilians. [13]

The few women who are in negotiation teams may not be empowered enough to put forward their views. Instead, they may advance the political objectives of the parties they represent.

A UN Women research paper [14] shares that:

- Globally only 18 per cent of peace agreements signed between 1990-2015 referred to women.
- Before UNSCR 1325, only 11 per cent of peace agreements referenced women, while after UNSCR 1325, 27 per cent of peace agreements referenced women.
- Only very few agreements which reference women provide evidence of a robust 'gender perspective' having been adopted.
- Often agreements with the most 'holistic' references to women are often highly internationalized agreements in which there is little real 'agreement' between the parties to the conflict, and where as a result there is a chronic implementation failure, both of the agreement and of its women provisions.

13 Inclusive Security (2016) *Inclusive Ceasefires: Women, Gender and a Sustainable End to Violence*

14 UN Women (2015) *Research Paper: Text and Context: Evaluating Peace Agreements for Their 'Gender Perspective*

Women's organizations are active stakeholders who can develop alternative political solutions to the conflict, build trust and engage in sustainable peace building.

Gender Data Workshop, Kyrgyzstan
Photo: UN Women Kyrgyzstan

3. Peacekeeping

3.1 Increasing the participation of women in peacekeeping

There is great value in having more women in peacekeeping missions and security sectors. Women peacekeepers have better access to women in local communities, especially to gender segregated spaces. They can gain their trust and enable better reporting of incidents of sexual based violence etc. Women heads of UN peacekeeping missions are also a good example for women's empowerment.

On the other hand, security sectors continue to be heavily male dominated. This has to do with structural issues related to physical demands, inability to combine work with family, but also under-budgeting of the sector and in general a lack of incentives to appoint more women in different ranks of the police and military.

As the Global Study on UNSCR 1325 notes, while security actors have increasingly introduced a range of actions to mainstream gender, such as embedding professional gender advisors in military institution, these efforts have not yet led to impactful transformations in military structures and military cultures. They are often ad hoc and remain limited in scope and scale, constrained by under-resourcing within peacekeeping budgets, and entrenched gender inequality in mission contexts. [15]

The UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations has repeatedly argued for the inclusion of women in uniform to improve the effectiveness of peacekeeping operations. Some of the reasons draw on gendered stereotypes that women peacekeepers are supposedly pacific or empathetic.

Yet, beyond this stereotype, there are other more efficiency-based arguments. The Global Study on UNSCR 1325 notes that women's presence in the security sector significantly lowers rates of complaints of misconduct, rates of improper use of force, and inappropriate use of weapons. The Study shows that women in peacekeeping operations enhance force credibility, enables access to communities and vital information, and leads to an increase in reporting of sexual and gender-based crimes.[16] Women peacekeepers can access social spaces and situations that men cannot, such as conducting women body searches, screening women combatants during disarmament, demobilisation, and reintegration processes, and communicating with local women in traditional and segregated societies.

Other studies have found that women's participation contributes to a better situational understanding of conflict contexts, higher reporting of sexual and gender-based violence, improved intelligence gathering, better local legitimacy, increased civilian outreach and a greater focus on gender-based violence.

The presence of UN Peacekeeping in the conflict-affected country is associated with a higher likelihood of adopting gender provisions including protection from sexual exploitation and abuse.[17]

> ***Women peacekeepers have better access to women in local communities, especially to gender segregated spaces.***

15 UN Women (2015) *The Global Study on 1325 Fact Sheet: Europe and Central Asia Region*

16 UN Women (2015) *The Global Study on 1325 Fact Sheet: Europe and Central Asia Region*

17 Report of the *UN Secretary-General (2017) Special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and abuse: a new approach*

Women police officers to graduate from the ICITAP-UN Women training in 2015 in Albania. Photo: UN Women/Besnik Bak

There are almost 7,000 international civilian staff in field missions, and less than 30 per cent are women.

Underrepresentation of women in peacekeeping missions

- Data from 39 countries shows a positive correlation between the proportion of female police and reporting rates of sexual assault. Yet out of a total of 33 benchmarks adopted by five peacekeeping missions, none specifically referred to gender-specific issues or gender equality. Out of 105 indicators attached to these benchmarks, only five refer to gender issues, and of these most relate to sexual violence.[18]
- There are almost 7,000 international civilian staff in field missions, and less than 30 per cent are women (and only 20 per cent in senior management positions). Women make up only 17 per cent among national staff, which make up an even larger share of the workforce in missions.
- As an example, women are significantly underrepresented in Moldova's defence and security sectors. In 2022, out of the total number of people engaged within the Military Army, only 22.3 percent were women. The Military Academy only started to enroll female candidates since 2012. Although women are currently enrolled in some pre-deployment missions, the number of women peacekeepers remains low. In 2022, there were 5.5 percent of women participating in international missions/operations.

18 UN Women (2015) *The Global Study on 1325 Fact Sheet: Europe and Central Asia Region*

4. Peacebuilding

4.1 Towards a more just political process in the aftermath of conflict

The period after conflict is a window of opportunity to build back better - to accelerate gender equality, advance women's empowerment, promote meaningful participation in all aspects of reconstruction and to advocate in general for a more just post-conflict society.

Women can play an important role in the management of the post-conflict political space to prevent further cycles of violence, for example by working to ensure the protection of human and women's rights, freedom of media, helping bridge divides, etc. Evidence suggests that women are more likely than men to work across party lines, and they tend to adopt a more participatory and collaborative approach to decision-making. [19] They can also contribute to the constitution making process which is a major entry point for a legal framework to build inclusive institutions. When involved they can advance progressive and gender-responsive constitutional provisions that pave the way for women's participation in post-conflict governance.

The post-conflict political process can accommodate for the participation of women in national and local level governance bodies, including cabinets, parliaments, and election commissions. Often, women's participation is supported through temporary special measures and mechanism, such as gender quotas. Experience shows for example that women's share in parliament tends to rise over successive elections in countries with quotas as in Kosovo, whereas a sustained increase in women elected officials is less evident in post-conflict countries without quotas. Political parties can also promote the participation of women through quotas, leadership training, funding, nominations etc. [20]

Increasing women's participation in political processes

- According to the "Women in Politics 2023" Map, [21] while the proportion of women parliamentarians has globally increased to 26.5 per cent from 25.5 per cent in 2021, politics is still far from equality. At the regional level, as 1 January 2023:
  - Albania stands has 66.7 per cent (highest in the region of UN Women presence countries/territories), Türkiye has 5.9 per cent and Azerbaijan has none.
  - Belarus has 40 per cent of women in the Lower or single house (highest in the region of UN presence countries/territories) and 25 per cent of women in the Upper house or Senate, and Türkiye has 17.4 in the Lower or single house and none in the Upper house or Senate. Tajikistan has the highest number of women in the Upper house or Senate at 25.8 per cent.

As of 1 July 2023, there are 16 (10.6%) women heads of state and 15 (7.8%) women heads of government. 27 countries in which a woman holds the position of head of state and/or government.

- In conflict-affected and post-conflict countries with legislated gender quotas, women's representation in parliament stands at 24 per cent, compared with less than 18 per cent in countries where quotas have not been introduced.[22] Serbia, is among one of the very few post-conflict countries with the highest representation of women.

19 Inclusive Security (2018) *How Women Influence Constitution Making After Conflict and Unrest Advancing Women's Participation*

20 OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (2019) *Handbook on Promoting Women's Participation in Political Parties*

21 UN Women and the Inter-Parliamentary Union *Women in Politics: 2023:Map*

22 UN Women (2015) *The Global Study on 1325 Fact Sheet: Europe and Central Asia Region*

Underrepresentation of women in political processes and peacebuilding

Despite the attention and the quotas, women remain grossly underrepresented as lawmakers at all levels. Even quotas do not guarantee that women will have a significant impact on decision-making in the long haul. Challenges persist in terms of:

• Gender discrimination and adverse norms

Traditional gender-based norms and attitudes about women's roles in public and private tend to persist in post-conflict societies. Such norms may discriminate against women in electoral systems, casting them for example as unqualified, emotional, lacking experience etc.

• Political parties as gatekeepers

Political parties have historically been dominated by men. Their structure and patronage networks can be strong obstacles to women's political participation who can be intimidated, marginalized, discouraged etc.

• Violence against women in politics

From mental harassment to physical violence and threats, violence in all its forms and manifestations against women voters, candidates, and political representatives is one of the most significant barriers to female participation in political processes and is often exacerbated by the insecurity that reigns in post-conflict contexts.

• Relegation to soft policies

Women are often appointed to positions seen stereotypically as women's issues in a narrow way: health, education, social protection etc. They are seldom involved in law enforcement, security institutions and courts despite the need, given that violence against women persists and often increases in post-conflict situations.

Despite the attention and the quotas, women remain grossly underrepresented as lawmakers at all levels.

Regional cases of women's participation in post-conflict political spaces - challenge and opportunity

Violence hampering participation - In Bosnia and Herzegovina, women have remained underrepresented in part because of a semi-open ballot list system but overwhelmingly because of traditional perceptions. Women made up 24 percent of all members of parliament between 2014-2018 and 17 percent of the executive branches (ministries). Violence against women engaged in politics is also one of the biggest obstacles to their participation. A survey found that 60 per cent of the 83 women respondents had experienced some form of violence while in politics, and 46 per cent had experienced gender-based violence.[23]

Preparing future leaders - In Kyrgyzstan, the Institute for Peace and Development established a module to organize extra-curricular activities in schools through establishing 32 peace clubs with more than 400 students and 50 teachers, out of which 75 per cent (of students and teachers) are female leaders. These clubs aim to promote tolerance, and respect for others, regardless of differences based on religion, ethnicity, and social origins. Another project on building a constituency for peace, taught human rights, gender, the rule of law and leadership skills to 300 peer educators and 3,000 secondary school students in 61 schools in 24 out of Kyrgyzstan's 40 districts.

23 Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security (2019) *Advancing women's participation in post-conflict reconstruction*

4.2 Championing Security Sector Reforms

Women can play a critical role in bringing attention to issues of gender-based discrimination and sexual and gender-based violence to reforms in security institutions that take place after conflicts. Their contributions can ensure that security institutions are more inclusive. Security sector reforms include a wide range of activities, such as legislative initiatives, awareness-raising campaigns, capacity-building, and infrastructure development, all of which need to be gender-responsive so that women and girls feel safe in post-conflict environments.

There is also some evidence that women's greater participation in national security forces (military and police), much like in peacekeeping forces discussed earlier, increases overall operational effectiveness, accountability, and local support[24]. Women are for example able to perform some tasks that men cannot do due to entrenched social norms, including establishing contacts with both local men and women, screening women during searches etc. More women in police forces can also reinforce public trust and action against violence in society and in homes.

Including women in reforms of security sector, including military and law enforcement, is both empowering for women and effective for the sector. Women can carry out functions that men cannot, including gaining the trust of communities.

Underrepresentation of women in security sector reform processes post-conflicts

Despite opportunities from women's contribution, inclusion, and participation in peacebuilding processes post-conflicts, women are often omitted from security sector reform processes because they take place within the male-dominated cultures of military and security institutions which tend to exclude women.

Gender stereotypes and social norms also create barriers to women accessing high-level security positions and leadership roles in security agencies, such as chairs of defense and security committees or law enforcement agencies.

Adherence to traditional gender norms by community members and the police force can also pose challenges to inclusive security sector reforms.

Regional case of women's participation in security sector reform

UN Women has been working with the Ministry of Defence in Georgia on mainstreaming gender in the security sector reform process.

Major Kurtanidze is an example of a role model who obtained her first military rank of officer in June 2008. and began her career as an engineer-operator at the air defense's artillery branch when the August War, or Russian-Georgian War, broke out in 2008. After gaining a lot of experience in air defense, she became interested in headquarters operations. She had to overcome obstacles given that the military is a male-dominated field, but her path served as example to other women and girls.

Today the Ministry of Defense is a model as it prioritizes gender equality and the successful implementation of projects focusing on women's empowerment. Currently, Major Kurtanidze serves as a career manager at the Ministry of Defense's Military Personnel Management Centre, where she assists personnel with qualified advice for the planning and advancement of their careers in the military, and where she acts as gender advisor for the Gender Equality Monitoring Group.

Women's contributions can ensure that security institutions are more inclusive.

24 Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF), Policy Paper 29 (2008) *Integrating Gender in Post-Conflict Security Sector Reform*

5. Conflict Prevention

5.1 Engaging local women in the prevention of cross-border conflicts, including violent extremism

Cross-border disputes and conflicts are often billed as matters of national security because they involve international borders and question the sovereignty and territorial integrity of states. When different ethnic groups straddle the borders, the disputes could be protected as inter-ethnic clashes, which then feed into nationalistic positions. However, many if not most cross-border clashes can be boiled down to what they are: community disputes over the sharing of natural resources etc.

Women tend to be active in communities around border areas. In some parts where men have migrated, as is the case in many countries in Europe and Central Asia, it is the local women who run the farms, households, and markets.

Concentrating on these local dimensions can help identify common human insecurities across borders and seek solutions that can diffuse tensions based on sharing of natural resources and local infrastructure, as a common example. Where conflicts are over the distribution of natural resources, the involvement of women at an early stage on issues around land, water, and roads becomes necessary. Since women tend to the be the ones who deal with the use of natural resources and infrastructure, they are aware of the problems and have at the same time ideas for the resolution of the conflicts. This makes it necessary to involve them and consult with them, the soonest the better.

One way of turning local women into positive agents of change is to let them identify and analyse their own insecurities and listen to the recommendations they make for practical and strategic solutions for alleviating the impacts on their everyday lives.

Women across border communities also tend to share knowledge about their insecurities: They can be brought together for Track 3 dialogues to develop cross-border brigades and implement joint initiatives that will be beneficial for their own communities in preventing conflicts, conflict resolution, and peacebuilding dialogues.

Underrepresentation of local women in cross-border conflict prevention

Challenges persist in terms of:

- **Limited dialogue spaces for local women** - The main challenge hindering local women's participation in conflict prevention is limited space for dialogue and discussion. When tensions are high, there are limited opportunities for convening and co-operating due to safety and security concerns or closures of bordering crossing points. Cross-border conflicts soon become issues of national security, closing the space for the involvement of local communities themselves, even if the issues are very local.

- **Limited interest by decision-makers** - There is also in general limited interest by decision-makers in women's reflections, as they are seldom involved in matters of national security. Interlocutors from both sides of the contact line in Donetsk and Luhansk regions for example told the OSCE Mission in a series of interviews in April 2021 that women residing in non-government-controlled areas who were engaging in peace dialogue initiatives feared for their and their relatives' safety, and often felt unsafe talking publicly about their work.

- **Limited support for women-led activities** - There is also unsustainable support for women-led preventive activities related to peace and security: the domain is relegated to the activities of donors and international organizations who are limited by funds and permissions to work among communities in dispute. The limited space for dialogue and public discussions at the local level is a missed opportunity.

Regional cases of women engaged in cross-border conflict prevention roles

Since the beginning of 2014, clashes have been recorded among border communities in the Ferghana Valley (in the Batken region in southern Kyrgyzstan and northern region of Sughd in Tajikistan), despite close geographical, economic, and cultural relations between Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. Motivations for the clashes were most related to disputes over land and water and unresolved territorial disputes because of the lack of proper delimitation of borders. Competition over natural resources, in a region where these are rare and poorly managed, could potentially lead to more durable inter-ethnic conflicts. In a region highly marked by the migration of men, women had been left to tend the lands, run the household expenses, including by entering the labour market in full force, and as such, they participated in the border clashes as both instigators and victims. At the same time, however, their contribution to peacebuilding had great potential. They had been excluded from the decision-making processes, be it on the resolution of the conflict or the allocation of projects for reconstruction and trust building. Yet, women of the border communities were fully aware of their needs, their fears, and the indignities inflicted about their lives. They were also aware of their own capacities and vulnerabilities. To this aim, UN Women launched a project in 2016 to help women living in both sides of the borders in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan to better understand and address their everyday insecurities together to prevent the further acceleration of cross-border conflicts. During six months, women on both sides of the borders prepared human security reports in consultations with their communities based on the 7 areas of human insecurities as identified by the UNDP 1994 Human Development Report. The women were then brought together to compare their notes and decide together on what they could resolve together through joint activities to prevent further violence.

During the 2014 Kyrgyzstan-Tajikistan border conflict, a platform of dialogue was further created that united CSOs from both countries, supported by several UN organizations through the UN Peacebuilding Fund. However, the work of the platform stopped due to the positions of political leadership in both countries, which elevated the border disputes to the level of national security. This unfortunately stopped the on-going dialogue between communities across the borders, something that could have been useful when fighting picked up again in 2022.

5.2 Engaging women in the preventing and countering violent extremism

Women can play a vital role preventing conflicts. They also can play a vital role in the preventing and countering of violent extremism (P/CVE). Women are frequently seen only as victims of violent extremism. In reality, women play multiple roles, they are on the frontlines of prevention and response. They lead CSOs and bolster community resilience. They can be an invaluable source of community information sharing and awareness raising, and in educating their families and peers about the dangers of extremism.

Promoting women as agents of peace recognizes their contributions to peacebuilding and prevention of violence and upholds respect for the human rights of everyone in areas afflicted by violent extremism.

Women are often able to recognize early signs of radicalization, including anger, anxiety, and withdrawal, and can use their traditional role to shape norms that promote tolerance, non-violence, and resilience or to assist radicalized youth in navigating challenges. Caution is however called for when asking women to act as security informants of their communities or families.

Women are frequently seen only as victims of violent extremism. In reality, women play multiple roles, they are on the frontlines of prevention and response.

Countries are preparing their National Action Plan (NAP) for the implementation of the UN Global Counter Terrorism Strategy or for preventing violent extremism (PVE) following recommendations made by the UN Secretary General.[25] Most of NAPs of the Europe and Central Asia region include sections dedicated to the involvement of women and women's organizations in PVE activities. They call for the support of national machineries, such as the women's committees and their regional branches, in educating girls and young women to the dangers of radicalization to violent extremism and building their resilience to engage in prevention. The preparation process, implementation and monitoring of NAP on P/CVE are occasions for mainstreaming gender concerns.

Underrepresentation of women in the preventing and countering violent extremism

In countries where countering of violent extremism or counter terrorism is considered the domain of the military, there is usually no space for the inclusion of women or of CSOs in the agenda to prevent and counter violent extremism.

Furthermore, women are also impacted by security-oriented counter terrorism tactics: securitization can increase women's insecurity. For example, restrictions on the movement of people and financial resources can negatively impact support to women's organizations. Vague and overreaching counter terrorism legislation can lead to the closing of civic space and repression of civil society activity in the name of national security.

Women peacebuilders, who already carry significant risk due to their willingness to work across divides and challenge power structures, are particularly impacted by these legislative measures. Their work remains underfunded, unrecognized, and unprotected. Where women's advocacy becomes too closely associated with a government's counter terrorism agenda, the risk of backlash against women's rights defenders also increases.

The preparation of bureaucratic plans also often fails to address the injustice, inequality and exclusion that lie at the root of radicalization to violent extremism. Experts from the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons note that "Rather than meaningfully addressing complex structural issues such as governance, economic inequality, and human rights, PVE practice favors shorter-term, less politically sensitive technocratic solutions."

Lastly, responses are also often inadequate. Violent extremist groups are excellent communicators who target different groups, including women, through specific recruitment strategies and tactics. They provide a sense of belonging and agency to those willing to join them and promise anything from salvation to justice. The counter terrorism and PVE community however still struggles to offer an alternative vision and narrative that can stand up to this highly sophisticated propaganda and instead keeps on adopting inadequate, short-term and gender-neutral problem-oriented approaches.

- By most estimates, between 2,000 and 5,000 Central Asians traveled to the Islamic State Daesh-controlled territory between 2013-2015. According to a July 2018 study by the International Centre for the Study of Radicalization, of the 41,490 people from 80 countries who affiliated with the Islamic State specifically, 5,965 came from Central Asia, and 30 per cent of those were women.[26]
- Since 2019, globally, the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism has intervened in over 119 cases in 20 countries on behalf of women human rights defenders targeted under the guise of counter terrorism.[27]

25 UN Secretary General's *Plan of Action to prevent violent extremism*

26 International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation (2018) *From Daesh to 'Diaspora': Tracing the Women and Minors of Islamic State*

27 UN Women (2015) *The Global Study on 1325 Fact Sheet: Europe and Central Asia Region*

Regional cases of gender-inclusive National Action Plans and initiatives on preventing and countering violent extremism

Engendering NAPs on P/CVE:

- The Kosovo Action Plan for the Implementation of the Strategy on Prevention of Violent Extremism and Radicalism Leading to Terrorism 2015-2020, adopted in 2015, spells out activities that foster employment, education of young people, economic development, and support for vulnerable and affected populations, but says little about women specifically.
- Tajikistan adopted a National Strategy on Countering Violent Extremism with its NAP with specific recommendations and activities on how to engage women in its P/CVE efforts in November 2016 and renewed it for 2021-2025. The Plan contains three main objectives related to outputs with a gender dimension: (1) Strengthening of social activity and role of women; (2) Raising political, religious, cultural and legal awareness among women and prevention of their involvement into violent extremism; and (3) Promotion of broad participation of women in P/CVE and terrorism." The Strategy notes that "special attention should be given to the political, religious and cultural education of women, the elimination of the factors contributing to their psychological dependence, recruitment by their close relatives and extremist elements, prevention of radicalization and extremism among women."
- For the preparation of the Turkmenistan National Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism Strategy, guidelines on gender responsive prevention and countering violent extremism and gender disaggregated data were made available through international partners. UN Women published studies on women and violent extremism in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, together with recommendations for gender-responsive prevention and countering violent extremism.[28]

Initiatives on P/CVE involving women:

- The Association of Women in the Kosovo Police, a membership association with well over 700 female police members, is a particularly successful example of strengthening women's roles in the police force. Female-led police associations and female officers who are representative of the population they are tasked to protect are well positioned to help with P/CVE efforts.
- Established in 2000, the Women's Progressive Social Union (WPSU, "Mutakalim") has been at the forefront of promoting women rights in Kyrgyzstan with a goal of using religion to unite the various ethnic groups in the country. The group has been working with law enforcement to intervene in the cases of both those already exhibiting early signs of radicalization and those identified as well on the extremist and terrorist trajectory. The organization also aimed to protect and promote Muslim women's rights. Female religious authorities are paired with individuals active on social media and to run helplines and rapid intervention teams to counter propaganda and recruitment into extremist and terrorist groups. Mutakalim ran madrassas for girls in Kyrgyzstan, educating them to counter violent extremism. Representatives also entered female prisons to work with violent extremists in attempts to move them out of radicalization and their commitment to violent extremism.[29]
- The Committee on Women and Family Affairs in Tajikistan, with 110 Information and Consultation Centers across the country, is engaged in raising awareness against violent extremism in the country. In Dushanbe, it has trained women to detect signs of growing extremism within their families. It produced a documentary on P/CVE depicting mothers whose children left to join the Islamic State which it showed through its local branches. The Committee also runs Women Advice Centers which encourage women to share their problems, including those concerning violent extremism, and promises confidentiality. A non-government organization with close ties to the Committee, Bovari ba Fardo,

28 UN Women (2017) *Women and Violent Extremism in Europe and Central Asia*

29 UN Women (2017) *Women and Violent Extremism in Europe and Central Asia: The Roles of Women in Supporting, Joining, Intervening in, and Preventing Violent Extremism in Kyrgyzstan*

also works with families affected by violent extremism, including through the provision of support from psychologists and lawyers. [30]

- The Mother's School in Tajikistan grew out of the fears and concerns of local women in Khujand, Tajikistan for the spread of extremism in their families. In response, Women Without Borders and Sisters Against Violent Extremism developed the Mother's School, where they offered mothers training in communication, and parenting skills so they can recognize and react to early warning signs of possible radicalization in their children. The program entailed several workshops and forums conducted over a ten-week period, where mothers learned to provide counter narratives and offer alternatives that foster positive youth development and resilience. Initially started in Tajikistan, the program spread to several countries worldwide, including India, Nigeria, Belgium, England, Pakistan, and Indonesia.[31]

5.3 Engendering the humanitarian fallout of conflicts

Humanitarian situations provide both an opportunity and a challenge to advance the empowerment of women and their participation. Wars change divisions of labour in communities and households, often casting women in more decision-making roles.

While women cannot stop wars and conflicts, they make great efforts in helping families relocate conflict zones, access humanitarian aid, and receive psychosocial support and physical support for protection. Women's CSOs and women volunteers are mobilized quickly to ensure that their communities as well as displaced people receive the needed support to access critical and humanitarian services. By virtue of their close relationships with communities and their specialist knowledge, women's CSOs can be important contributors to the humanitarian fallout of conflicts and humanitarian response. At the same time however, this increased responsibility at the household and community levels often comes on top of the care that they provide in the first place. At the national level, issues of social development and gender equality tend to be side-lined, and the voices of women are not included meaningfully in planning and decision-making around the humanitarian response or wider peace processes.

When crisis hits, women's leadership and their role in decision-making tends to increase at the family level and partially at the community level. Evidence suggests that the period during and post-conflict presents opportunities for women to take on new roles in the economy as traditional gender norms change and household incomes decline. Post-conflict areas where women are more empowered also experience more rapid economic recovery and poverty reduction. [32]

In their ability to access communities and their key roles in families, women's CSOs and women volunteers are often sub-contracted or join international organizations to assist in aid delivery. This presents an opportunity for women's further empowerment.

It is worth adding here that:

- Bilateral aid to fragile and conflict-affected contexts stood at $48 billion in 2020. Of that aid, $21.8 billion (42 per cent) was committed to support gender equality in these contexts – a share that remained steady as the COVID-19 pandemic hit.[33]
- However, only $2.3 billion of international aid was dedicated to gender equality as a principal objective, corresponding to 5 per cent of aid to fragile contexts.
- Contrary to the recommendations made by the UN Secretary-General in 2020 [34] (S/2020/946), bilateral aid in support of feminist, women-led and women's rights organizations and movements in fragile or conflict-affected countries decreased: $150 million (0.3 per cent of bilateral aid) in 2020, compared with $181 million in 2019.[35]

30 UN Women (2017) *Women and Violent Extremism in Europe and Central Asia: Women and Violent Extremism in Tajikistan*

31 UN Women (2021) *Women in Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism, A Training Guide*

32 United States Institute of Peace (2011) *Women's Empowerment Arising from Violent Conflict and Recovery: Life Stories from Four Middle-Income Countries*

33 UN Women (2015) *The Global Study on 1325 Fact Sheet: Europe and Central Asia Region*

34 Report of the Secretary-General on Women, Peace and Security, (2020), *(S/2020/946)*

35 UN Women (2015) *The Global Study on 1325 Fact Sheet: Europe and Central Asia Region*

Underrepresentation of women in decision-making in humanitarian responses

While women tend to play a key role, they are not fully involved in decision-making in the humanitarian fallout of conflicts and in humanitarian response. Challenges persist in terms of:

• Exclusion from decision making

As the war in Ukraine has shown, the centralization of power at the formal decision-making level, and increased role of the military, have made it more difficult for women to exert influence in formal political and administrative decision-making processes, thus decreasing women's overall participation.[36] During intense military operations, issues of social development and gender equality tend to be side-lined, and the voices of women are not included meaningfully in planning and decision-making around the humanitarian response or wider peace processes.

• Additional burdens and exacerbated inequalities

Women also face the exacerbation of pre-existing gender and intersectional inequalities during wars. For example, their increased domestic and family responsibilities reduce their opportunities to participate in public decision-making or take on leadership roles. Internally displaced persons and women without documentation do not have access to employment. For certain groups, such as Roma women, women heads of households, displaced women and older people, their relatively more limited access to technology is a specific barrier. Discrimination against refugees and internally displaced persons also acts as obstacles to their social inclusion and integration into the host communities

• Shortcomings in funding

Inadequate, restricted, and short-term funding and bureaucratic funding procedures can undermine the autonomy and agendas of women's CSOs. The focus of funding on humanitarian response and lack of financing for their core and operational costs also impede their ability to continue their pre-war mandates while meeting the additional humanitarian needs.[37]

• Lack of capacity

In humanitarian emergencies, there is also pressure to start activities without proper preparation, knowledge, and training. Many women's CSOs do not have experience or training in protection or gender-based violence but are often engaged on this path without preparation.

• Lack of information

In situations where multiple humanitarian actors operate because of emergencies, there may be a lack of transparency and influence over decision-making regarding the allocation and management of humanitarian aid which can create frustrations. Where there is limited access to the internet and mobile telephone connections, lack of information also negatively impacts decision-making of young women, while also limiting their ability to engage in decision-making and volunteering activities and their access to benefits and opportunities.

Regional case of women's contribution and influence in humanitarian response

In Ukraine, [38] and bordering countries, women's organizations and volunteers are performing vital work in responding to the needs of internally displaced persons and refugees. Women mobilized to ensure that marginalized people and communities have access to essential services and humanitarian assistance, and they often do this in addition to caring for their families, carrying out their regular jobs and maintaining the services and activities their organizations were providing before February 2022.

The war in Ukraine has affected decision-making in various ways. High levels of volunteerism have allowed for more flexible gender roles, including women's increased participation in the household, informal and community decision-making and management of resources. The role of civil society has become more visible, clearer, and more influential overall.

However, women's roles as volunteers and first responders have not adequately translated into their increased or active participation and leadership in formal decision-making processes with

36 Care and UN Women (2022) *Rapid Gender Analysis of Ukraine*

37 Regional Gender Task Force, (2022) *Making the Invisible Visible An evidence-based analysis of gender in the regional response to the war in Ukraine*

38 Ibid.

international and government actors. Although women's leadership and decision-making have increased at the family and community levels in Ukraine, the war has centralized and militarized power and decision- making, making it more difficult for women and their organizations to influence formal political and administrative decision-making processes.[39]

At the informal community level, people's participation in decision-making and management of resources has increased due to the active self-organizing efforts of volunteers and civil society. This is especially true for women, who lead and manage most humanitarian response measures and volunteer groups, including those providing support to displaced people. In many cases, grass-roots self-organizing is seen as complementary to the work led by local administrations.

At the household level, the war has led to some redistribution of decision-making power and labour. Women's influence over decisions at the family level seems to have increased overall. In some families, there is more engagement in joint decision-making processes around issues of security, displacement, and financial priorities, whereas before these decisions were divided according to gender.

At the national level, women's participation in decision-making is also notable. While most decisions related to military defense are made and communicated by men, women also play an important role, as for example seen by the work of the female Deputy Prime Minister in charge of negotiations and the management of evacuations and humanitarian corridors, by the female Prosecutor General in charge of documentation and investigation. Women Members of Parliaments are also active on the front line of international diplomacy, given that Ukrainian men aged 18-60 are not allowed to leave the country. Women constitute 20.5 per cent of the current Parliament and 22 per cent of the Government (five women among 23 positions in total). [40]

39 UN Women and Internews Ukraine, (2022) *Challenges encountered by young women affected by the war in Ukraine*

40 Regional Gender Task Force, (2022) *Making the Invisible Visible An evidence-based analysis of gender in the regional response to the war in Ukraine*

UN Women Executive Director Meets with Ukranian Refugees in Moldova. Photo: UN Women/Aurel Obreja

5.4 Preparation of National Action Plans on UN Security Council Resolution 1325

The implementation of the WPS Agenda through the preparation of a NAP on UNSCR 1325 can be an important tool for conflict prevention and an opportunity to highlight women's concerns as well as provide space for their contribution in the planning process.

NAPs can provide guidance to mediators on how to best address women's concerns as part of peace negotiations. It can also help raise gender concerns and include explicit references and clear targets to include women in peace negotiations, peacekeeping, and peacebuilding efforts.

However, challenges persist in the preparation, implementation and monitoring of NAPs on UNSCR 1325 in general and in conflict countries in particular. These have to do with limited capacity and commitment of key stakeholders involved in NAP preparation and implementation, lack of adequate consultation, and, especially, lack of financial commitments and budgeting of the NAPs from national resources.

Regional cases on preparing UNSCR 1325 National Action Plans

A positive example of the UNSCR 1325 NAP preparation process is from Bosnia and Herzegovina. Prepared under the overall conceptual approach of human security, the plan facilitated a move away from a traditional, militarized concept of national security to focus on civilian safety and protection from all forms of intimidation and threats. The Agency for Gender Equality worked with local government and civil society actors, with technical support provided by the Institute for Inclusive Security, to develop local NAPs in five pilot municipalities that address women's daily security concerns, including protection from gender-based violence and discrimination, human trafficking, access to legal protection, education, healthcare, natural and economic resources, and environmental and infrastructure concerns such as recent floods, landmines, street lighting and public transportation. The NAP funding mechanism was supported by Austria, Sweden and Switzerland, and other international organizations including UN Women, UNDP, NATO, the European Union Police Mission, and the European Union force. [41]

The preparation of a NAP on UNSCR 1325 can be an important tool for conflict prevention and an opportunity to highlight women's concerns and provide space for their contributions.

In Central Asia, UN agencies, especially UN Women, continuously gather women leaders and women's organizations for exchanges at the regional level A regional network is being created for the implementation of UNSCR 1325.

In Moldova, the National Program on Implementation of UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security for 2018-2021 and the Action Plan on its implementation were adopted. UN Women supported national authorities in this endeavor by providing extensive technical support to the Government in raising awareness and knowledge on the women, peace and security agenda and mainstreaming gender equality in the security and defense sectors, as well as in the preparatory processes. The cooperation between UN Women, the Ministry of Defense and the Ministry of Internal Affairs were consolidated with the signing of two 3-year Memorandum of Understanding in 2018. A new 5-year Memorandum of Understanding was signed with the Ministry of Internal Affairs on 29 May 2023. The next Action Plan was developed for 2023-2027. Approved by the Government in March 2023, the Plan suggests some new approaches to the implementation of the WPS Agenda, including decentralizing commitments and engaging the security zone local public authorities, while building upon previous efforts for meaningful involvement of women at all levels of the peacebuilding process.

41 UN Women (2015) *The Global Study on 1325 Fact Sheet: Europe and Central Asia Region*

6. Enablers and impediments
to women's leadership for promoting peace and security in Europe and Central Asia

6.1 What has worked: Enablers

Supporting and enabling the participation of women in prevention of conflicts and violent extremism, in resolution of conflicts, and in peacebuilding and peacekeeping processes have a number of added advantages.

Firstly, the principles of gender equality and women's empowerment are firmly grounded in international law and must be addressed in all legislation, policies, and processes. This principle is even more important in situations of conflict. Enabling the participation of women follows international formative frameworks, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the UNSCR 1325 on women, peace, and security, as well as the Beijing Plan of Action.

Secondly, women are not necessarily more peaceful than men. Considering women only as agents for peace reinforces gender stereotype, and yet, including their voices and taking into consideration the diversity of needs and perspectives will increase the effectiveness of peace processes by building on inclusivity and diversity. After all, women represent on average half of the population in any given country.

Thirdly, women are the most impacted by conflicts, wars, violent extremism, displacement etc. They not only suffer as victims of violence, but they also take on added responsibilities during times of crisis. Involving them is a just thing to do.

Beyond justice however, the participation of women in all stages of peace processes can add to the efficiency of measures taken:

Women have the ability of gaining the trust of communities and as such, build bridges and allow for ownership.

- They know best the needs of other women in their daily lives and can represent their concerns, needs and insecurities but also their capacities and contributions.
- Women are often able to perform some tasks that men cannot perform due to entrenched social norms, including establishing contacts with both local men and women, screening women during searches etc. More women in police forces can also reinforce public trust and action against violence in society and in homes.
- They can join forces with other women sharing the same concerns along divided lines and work together towards local solutions.

Enablers to women's effective participation in promoting peace and security

• Leadership

Having women in leadership positions positively influences the adoption of a gender lens in policy making, including in peace processes. The proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments is positively correlated to the likelihood of adopting gender provisions in peace agreements. The higher women's share in parliament, the more female legislators can articulate their diverse experiences of war and visions of peace. To become leaders, women need to be given opportunities to develop their careers and to be promoted to high level positions that can give them the necessary expertise. Education is therefore a key asset that could act as enabler for the participation of women in public life.

• Capacity and skills

Education, formal and inform, training and professional development initiatives are critical in advancing women's careers. Opportunities for training on topics such as public office, conflict analysis, leadership and constitution building

can help broaden skill sets. Training however by itself is insufficient unless the systemic barriers that prevent women's access to formal peace negotiations and political spaces are addressed.

• Quotas
Often, women's participation is supported through special measures and mechanisms, such as gender quotas, which can be adopted by parliaments, the executive branches at the national and local levels as well as by political parties. Quotas may be temporary measures, but they do provide a window of opportunity for women to build their skills, exercise leadership, and influence others.

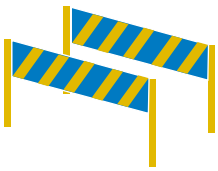
• Formal but also informal support
Informal support from senior leadership within organisations is often critical for progressing women's careers. Having good professional mentors who can provide advice boosts confidence. Women leaders sharing their experiences can help. Initiatives to facilitate knowledge exchange and informal support mechanisms can create spaces for women to engage. Informal support is also key to boosting confidence and allowing participation: Informal support may come from within the community, the workplace, or the family, including encouraging supportive roles played by a husband or partner which can shape the experiences of women.

• Networks
Networks at the local, state, and international levels are crucial for bringing women together across borders, professions, and identity groups. Networks may function as an efficient system for fostering cooperation and support among women mediators and peacebuilders, for providing support, for building a collective voice and as a support system for career growth.

• Visibility and recognition
To broaden the visibility of women's contributions to peace processes, non-government organizations, national governments, and international and regional organizations should promote the visibility of women in senior positions in peace negotiations to a greater extent. They should also highlight good practices and role models through the media to provide positive examples for other women.

• Role models
Role models often act as an important source of inspiration and encouragement for women in peace mediation. They may come from within the family, the workplace, the community, or indirectly via the media.

• Funding and donor support
Funding is vital for women leaders, and women's CSOs. Funding should be sustained, appropriate and not create dependency. The approaches and practices through which donors make funding available are as critical to its effectiveness as the money itself.



6.2 What has not worked: Obstacles and impediments

Despite the opportunities that the participation of women present, they are often omitted from political processes around peacemaking, peacekeeping, peacebuilding and prevention of conflicts and violence. Some of the reasons for the low participation are political in nature and have to do with the male dominated political and security environments reining in conflict situations. Others have to do with structure factors such as negative social norms and gender stereotypes. Yet again other reasons for the low participation of women have to do with lack of support for them.

Obstacles and impediments to women's effective participation in promoting peace and security

Political factors:

• Centralization of decisions
The case of Ukraine showed that during wars, there is a tendency towards the centralization of decision making, militarized power, competing priorities and relegations of women to the private sphere, making it more difficult for women and their organisations to influence formal political and administrative decision-making processes. Other cases, such as the breakdown of dialogues between state parties can trump people-to-people exchanges among communities, where women would be leading.

• Exclusion from male dominated high politics and international politics
Women and civil society actors are often excluded from pre-negotiations talks and agreements, which are also often top secret and settled among men. They are also intimidated, divided, and side-lined at international high level international platforms where matters of peace, counter terrorism etc. are discussed.

• Violence
The insecurity and lawlessness that reign in conflict and post-conflict situations can be intimidating for women who keep a low profile out of concerns about their personal security and that of their families. Women who venture out into public domain may also be subject to mental harassment, physical violence, and threats.

• Narrow conception of peace
Most peace processes focus on ending violence or political violence but fail to acknowledge the different forms of violence experienced by women. As a result, they fail to address the human security concerns of half of the population.

Structural societal factors:

• Gender discrimination and adverse norms
Traditional gender-based norms and attitudes about women's roles in public and private tend to persist in post-conflict societies. Such norms may discriminate against women in the public sphere, casting them for example as unqualified, emotional, lacking experience etc.

• Structural inequalities
In societies where formal and informal power structures are male dominated, structural factors such as gender stereotypes, gender-based discrimination and inequalities often limit women's opportunities to play a meaningful role in public and political life. These then prompt women to focus their efforts on civil society participation.

• Lack of access
Inadequate access to accurate information, limited access to technology and services are direct barriers to participation in decision making.

• Lack of skills
Lack of knowledge and skills including networking, leadership, negotiation, and analytical skills created deficits and obstacles.

• Relegation to soft policies
Women are often appointed to positions seen stereotypically as women's issues in a narrow way: health, education, social protection etc. They are seldom involved in law enforcement, security institutions and courts despite the need, given that violence against women persists and often increases in post-conflict situations.

Deficit in support:

• Inadequate funding
The low level and poor quality of funding for women's CSOs, activists and advocates is a key barrier to women's meaningful participation and leadership. Inadequate, restricted, and short-term funding and bureaucratic funding procedures can undermine the autonomy and agendas of women's CSOs. Women need adequate support to participate, which means that institutions need to facilitate by covering the costs of travel, transportation, and communications.

• Lack of capacity and focus
Lack of capacity and lack of adequate focus on capacity development is another critical gap. During conflicts, women carry out multiple new roles for which they may not be properly trained.

• Stereotypes and norms
Negative stereotypes and traditional values may also mean that members of the community and the family may not accept a public role for women.

The event organized by UN Women on the occasion of World Humanitarian Day. Photo: Aurel Obreja/UN Women

7. Conclusions and recommendations

7.1 Peacemaking

Women's contribution, inclusion and participation in formal peacemaking processes is not a given.

Track 1 processes are heavily male dominated and can be intimidating for women, Women's involvement in informal Track 2 processes, while more the norm, does not mean that they can influence decisions being made in formal processes.

Greater efforts are necessary to break through barriers essential to multi-track peace negotiations so that women and their concerns are better promoted and represented in conflict resolutions, in peace agreements and in overall sustainable peace processes.

GOAL 1

Enhance women's contribution, influence, and participation in Track 1 and 2 processes

What **governments** can do:

I. Identify and assess the extent of political, cultural, and institutional factors inhibiting women from being included in peacemaking and political decision-making processes.

II. Ensure that all such barriers and discriminatory practices are identified and lifted, as per the recommendations of all international human rights and women's rights frameworks to which they have committed.

III. Report to the public, using the media, on the representation of women in peace and decision-making processes and by doing so, counter negative stereotypes and social norms on women's participation and promotion in peace and security dialogues and processes.

What **women peacebuilders, activists and civil society** can do:

I. Women need to organize themselves into collectives and build allies, both with other women and with men. The more united they are, the better chances they have to be heard. They will also gain confidence by being among peers on the same path.

II. Avail opportunities to participate in political activities - civic education to formal party participation.

III. Develop networks at the national and regional level and try to create synergies with international networks.

IV. Develop realistic, actionable demands so that they can collectively lobby to be heard.

V. Build platform for action that clearly sets out what they hope to achieve and how.

VI. Create a network of gender experts on peacebuilding, mediation etc, under the aegis of a regional academic or research institutions (independent of the UN).

What **mediators** and **external actors** facilitating negotiations and peace processes can do:

I. Encourage the introduction of quotas for women in delegations for Track 1 processes, and for the participation of women to peace negotiations, national dialogues etc.

II. Convene meetings early on to encourage systematic interactions from the start of the process between women peacebuilders, negotiating parties and mediator(s) and their teams.

III. Encourage political parties to have quotas for women among their members, including and especially among the top ranks, as possible Track 1 negotiators, mediators, and advisors.

IV. Set up consultative mechanisms and women's boards to support negotiating parties. Convene women's groups to encourage them to come up with concrete gender solutions to issues being negotiated.

V. Foster formal and informal mechanisms inclusive of the participation of women that enable linkages cross peace tracks.

VI. Explore all entry points to ensure women's direct and meaningful participation in high-level peace processes.

VII. Liaise with women involved in Track 2 processes to create a two-way information sharing between formal and informal processes.

VIII. Listen to and escalate demands of women and pass them to the parties engaged in negotiations.

IX. Provide briefing papers on the gender aspects of all thematic topics on the agenda, so delegates understand how women and men are affected by and respond to the conflict.

X. Invite women peacebuilders and gender experts to regularly speak to delegations about issues on the negotiation agenda

XI. xInvite women as official observers to Track 1 processes.

What **international organizations, donors, UN,** especially **UN Women** can do:

I. Build capacity of women to participate in Track 1 diplomacy as negotiators, mediators, and advisors, and to participate in Track 2 diplomacy as professional cadres and decision-makers.

II. Appoint women as mediators, negotiators, and in senior positions within the UN peacebuilding or peacekeeping missions to set the right examples.

III. Provide regular gender training for senior management in organizations and institutions, both within government institutions and among international organizations on women's greater leadership for promoting peace and security.

IV. Conduct more studies on the role of women in peace processes in the Europe and Central Asia region to contribute to knowledge on case studies from the region. Compile a compendium of case studies from the region.

V. Commission more studies on the role of women in peace processes in the region and help prepare gender expertise and studies for mediators and negotiation teams.

Increase consultative mechanisms with the public and between women's organizations

What **women peacebuilders, activists and civil society** can do:

I. Women's organizations and leaders should provide gender expertise and conflict assessment that could help mediators make educated choices.

II. In consultation with grassroots and other women's CSOs, women peacebuilders and activists must come up with a set of specific, realistic, actionable demands so that they could then lobby to be heard.

III. Devise and implement a strategy for collecting demands and lobbying through relevant actors and institutions, through petitions for examples. Women's groups and networks should come up with a platform for action that clearly sets out what they hope to achieve and how.

IV. Existing regional networks (supported by UN Women) should consider having more specific demands and go beyond a gathering of women leaders with generalized recommendations.

V. Existing networks, which consist mostly of government officials, should more clearly disseminate their activities with local organizations.

VI. Organize consultative mechanisms with different groups among the public, informing them of peace processes and gathering their views.

What **mediators** and **external actors** facilitating negotiations and peace processes can do:

I. Establish consultative mechanisms and women's boards to support negotiating parties.

II. Engage women's groups and leaders and facilitate their access to people and organizations involved in formal and informal peace processes.

What **international organizations, donors, UN,** especially **UN Women** can do:

I. Organize meetings between women and women's groups from different peace process to help build networks, exchanges etc.

II. Build capacity of women's organizations to facilitate feedback and actions between the public - local women - and those involved in formal and informal negotiations.

III. Build capacity of women's CSOs capacities to play a greater role through training on gender expertise, gathering views from grassroots, advocacy etc.

IV. Ensure gender-responsive budgeting for activities supported by women's CSOs and non-government organizations and build their capacity to monitor and implement ceasefire and peace agreements at the local level.

V. Support a cross-generational approach of regional networks of women mediators and youth peace activists as key alternative platforms for cooperation among different tracks and sectors.

VI. Build the skills of members of networks, provide information, and organize contacts between them at the national, regional, and international levels.

VII. Establish/organize e-platforms to solicit ideas and demands from women's and youth groups to inform the content of negotiations.

VIII. Refrain from setting up networks owned and run by UN (including UN Women) without ensuring the sustainability and ownership of these. Too many networks set up by the UN fail to continue their operation and connections once support runs out.

IX. Where there is a mix of participants in consultation groups or networks, international actors should not dominate national ones. They should also be sufficiently coordinated in order not to create confusion, dissipating of priorities etc.

Include gender perspectives in peacemaking processes and peace agreements

What **mediators** and **external actors** facilitating negotiations and peace processes can do:

I. Promote gender inclusivity and expertise for peace agreements at all stages.

II. Ensure gender mainstreaming by sharing the responsibility. Mainstreaming gender into agreements should not be the responsibility of women representatives only.

III. Move way from having one gender expert to a mediation team or put the burden of gender mainstreaming in peace -making processes on women only.

IV. Increase the gender expertise of all participants involved in negotiations and in mediation teams through training and coaching.

V. Ensure that all elements of a peace agreement have a gender component: provision of security, disarmament, reintegration of combatants, return of refugees etc.

What **international organizations, donors, UN,** especially **UN Women** can do:

I. Conduct joint and comprehensive analyses on the impact of the conflict on women and men, and on power relations between men and women, their different roles, needs, vulnerabilities and contributions. Consider intersectional problems, how multiple forms of discrimination - related to gender, age, ethnicity etc. – overlap, and sex-disaggregated data.

II. Support mediators and external actors facilitating negotiations and peace processes with knowledge and skills on the gender dimension of issues negotiated for sustainable peace.

7.2 Peacekeeping

More women in peacekeeping means more effective peacekeeping. Women peacekeepers improve overall peacekeeping performance, have greater access to communities, help in promoting human rights and the protection of civilians including from sexual exploitation and abuse, and encourage women to become a meaningful part of peace and political processes. They can also cooperate with local women to facilitate Track 3 local peace agreements.

Yet, women are routinely underrepresented in peacekeeping operations, even though their participation has been shown to improve mission effectiveness and advance stability. Greater efforts are needed in terms of recruitment and systematic and sustained inclusion of women peacekeepers.

GOAL 1

Increase the number of women in peacekeeping

What **governments** can do:

I. Encourage more women to participate in the police, army, and security forces, including quotas and military training.

II. Ensure the presence of more women in troop contingents in local and international peacekeeping missions.

What **international organizations, donors, UN,** especially **UN Women** can do:

I. Promote women leaders from the region as international staff in peacekeeping missions in other parts of the world to give them visibility as well as exposure to new experiences.

II. Intensify training for women peacebuilders, in skills such as leadership, advocacy and in technical skills related to conflict resolution, conflict analysis, mediation etc.

III. Provide adequate, sufficient, and regular financial support for women's civil society organization to realize ideas and projects for innovative solutions.

IV. Assist with issuance of and expediting visas and other travel support to enable women's travel to and participation in peace talks/pre-talks.

V. Build capacity of women to participate in local and national politics, electoral processes etc. on political negotiation, lobbying, leadership, consensus building etc.

VI. Create a pool of women experts on women, peace and security across the Europe and Central Asia region.

7.3 Peacebuilding

Peacebuilding actors namely negotiators and mediators and post-conflict peacebuilders, are usually recruited from among political decision-makers in Member States and international organizations. This means that women's general underrepresentation in politics and high political levels can also limit the supply of potential female participants in peacebuilding and other peace processes.

While temporary measures such as quotas are the surest way to increase the participation of women in political processes, quotas are not enough to ensure their long-term participation in peacebuilding.

Also, women deciding to enter political spaces are often the target of intimidation, discrimination and violence in societies coming out of conflict. More needs to be done so they are supported, educated, and defended.

Increase the number of women in peacekeeping

GOAL 1

What **governments and government institutions** can do:

I. Introduce quotas, targeted recruitment campaigns etc. to increase the number of women in institutions such as political parties, law enforcement, the legislative, executive, and judicial branches at the national and sub-national levels, for them to be better positioned to assume roles of negotiators and mediators and even post-conflict peacebuilders.

II. Encourage political parties to have quotas for greater inclusion of women among their members, including and especially among the top political ranks.

III. Report on the participation of women in peace and security in CEDAW reports, etc.

What **political parties and political institutions can do:**

I. Support women in their top tiers to enter formal politics through party lists.

II. Organize trainings and education campaigns by political parties to increase women in politics and peacekeeping.

III. Create opportunities for women political activists and leaders to make use of government and party mechanisms such as quotas, funding for political campaigning, etc.

IV. Mobilize women to form a coalition, across party lines, and prepare a declaration setting women's priority for the constitutional reform process prior to the election of the constituent assembly.

What **women peacebuilders, activists and civil society** can do:

I. Support women and their families, communities, households etc. to engage in political activity. Women leaders play an important role in preparing families, lobbying, defending, and supporting women who wish to enter politics.

II. Engage the media in promoting the participation of women and protecting them from violence in voting and political processes.

III. Organize national and local awareness rasing to encourage women to vote, providing information on electoral registration and voting procedures, especially in rural areas.

IV. Facilitate women to seek out opportunities to educate themselves on concepts of peace, peacebuilding etc. and organize trainings for other women, especially from rural areas who may not have opportunities to engage in peace dialogues.

V. Set-up a national and regional on-line platform, bringing together resources in Russian and other national languages, under the aegis of networks suggested in the recommendations.

What **international organizations, donors, UN,** especially **UN Women** can do:

I. Support the creation of a network of gender experts in peacebuilding and mediation in the region. The network should be set up through an independent organization, outside of the UN.

II. Lobby for the constitutional process to formally include women in draft and review committees of legislations, policies, strategies, etc.

III. Support capacity building of women as voters, as electoral administrators and/or as candidates.

IV. Organize trainings on gender-sensitive election security for electoral security providers and law enforcement forces deployed during elections.

Increase number of women in security sector reforms

What **governments** can do:

I. Identify and assess factors inhibiting women from joining or being promoted within security institutions.

II. Undertake strategies like quotas and conduct recruitment campaigns etc. to increase the number of women in security and law enforcement sectors, at all levels.

III. Security sector reforms can be supported by networking and political advocacy efforts among women leaders at the national, regional, and global levels.

IV. Promote women in the security sector and in law enforcement, including as role models to the public. The media can be used to propagate a positive image.

7.4 Conflict Prevention

GOAL 1

Increase the number of local women engaged in cross-border conflict dialogues and roles

What **mediators and external actors** facilitating negotiations and peace processes, women's organizations, international organizations, UN, especially UN Women can do:

I. Provide spaces for dialogue and cooperation for local women in divided communities to share their community's insecurities and put forward their concrete recommendations on how they can work with women 'on the other side'.

GOAL 2

Involve more women in preventing and countering violent extremism

What **governments** can do:

I. When developing current and future NAPs and strategies on P/CVE, Governments should do more than 'token' engagement and involvement of women-led CSOs and women experts on peace and security.

II. Governments should engage women-led CSOs in the monitoring and evaluation of their NAPs, and as implementers of relevant grassroots level activities.

What **mothers, community members and women peacebuilders, activists and civil society** can do:

I. **i.** Educate family members and local communities on indicators of violent extremism and how to sensitively respond to them.

II. **ii.** Support mothers, family members or schools - closest to vulnerable individuals' - as the first line of defense on policies on P/CVE. Share information and guidance on support services in radicalization and recruitment cases.

III. Educate mothers to detect early signs of engagement with violent ideas or activities.

IV. Set-up consultative mechanisms with different groups among the public, informing them of peace processes, sustainable peaceful societies and gathering their views.

V. Engage in or initiate campaigns on non-violence. Use the media, including social media, to launch regular campaigns for peace, non-violence, and prevention of extremism.

VI. Educate the public, including through the media, about the benefits of the participation of women in responding to negative stereotypes.

What **mediators and external actors** facilitating negotiations and peace processes, **women's organizations, international organizations, UN,** especially **UN Women** can do:

I. Prepare and disseminate more gender analysis of emerging issues in the region: violent extremism, transborder conflicts, wars, violence in society etc.

II. Develop strategies based on findings, to counter radicalization into violent extremism - gender-blind and one-size fit all general strategies are not effective.

III. Ensure that these studies are widely disseminated by considering the development of an independent online library on UNSCR 1325 literature, housed in a regional or national research or academic institution, think tank or non-government organization.

IV. Sponsor joint studies between researchers in the region.

V. Foster trust-building with local communities, consult with and involve them, and have them take responsibility in prevention and countering of radicalization efforts.

VI. Encourage and engage women peace-builders as mediators to disseminate peaceful,

gender-sensitive and positive narratives in local culture, religion, and traditions - dissemination can be through local trusted interlocutors.

GOAL 3

Engage more women in planning and decision-making in humanitarian response and the humanitarian fallout of conflicts

What **women peacebuilders, activists and civil society** can do:

I. Women's CSOs and women's groups need to mobilize, collaborate with each other, and inform one another of opportunities to contribute, influence and participate in humanitarian response and conflict situations.

II. Women's CSOs and women's groups must continue their lobbying activities and not only become implementation agencies for donors and humanitarian actors.

III. Women's CSOs should ensure clear delimitation of their project implementation roles and their advocacy ones. Too often donors prefer to gear most of the funding towards distribution of aid and project implementation, but women's lobbying is even more necessary during wars.

What i**nternational organizations, donors, UN,** especially **UN Women** can do:

I. Use local CSOs and community-based organizations to distribute humanitarian assistance instead of going through parallel UN or international organizations-created structures.

II. Consult with women's CSOs and women's groups to hear their suggestions and consider funding their humanitarian work.

III. Enhance visibility of the work of women's CSOs, local women's organizations, individual and groups of local women mediators. Efforts should be undertaken with caution, given that in some contexts, media attention could increase risks to the individual and/or organization.

GOAL 4

Engage more women in contributing to and influencing National Action Plans on UNSCR 1325

What **governments** can do:

I. Ensure an inclusive and transparent preparation process of the NAPs on UNSCR 1325 in consultation with various government and non-government organizations, women's CSOs, academics, and community representatives. This consultative process should ensure national ownership.

II. Coordinating government institutions should ensure the concerns of women in rural areas are directly reflected in the NAPs to avoid the Plans being developed based on urban concerns and priorities.

III. Networking opportunities should be fostered at the regional and sub-regional levels to exchange information on NAPs on UNSCR 1325. This will provide space for representatives of counties to share historical trajectories and identify bordering and neighbouring initiatives for joint actions.

IV. Ensure that the NAPs are prepared together with implementation plans, Monitoring and Evaluation indicators and benchmarks against which progress can be assessed.

V. NAPs need to be properly budgeted from a variety of resources: National budget allocation, allocations from local governments, donor contributions, in-kind contributions from CSOs and even the private sector.

VI. Preparation of NAPs should be nationally owned and nationally followed up and not be seen as donor-driven, donor requested or a donor-funded activity.

VII. Consider the preparation of localized NAPs on UNSCR 1325.

VIII. The national adoption of NAPs must be complemented with awareness rising at local levels in both rural and urban areas.

Women from refugee and host communities painting a mural to mark the International Women's Day in Gaziantep, Türkiye. Photo: UN Women/Ikin Eskipehlivan

UN WOMEN IS THE UN ORGANIZATION DEDICATED TO GENDER EQUALITY AND THE EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN. A GLOBAL CHAMPION FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS, UN WOMEN WAS ESTABLISHED TO ACCELERATE PROGRESS ON MEETING THEIR NEEDS WORLDWIDE.

UN Women supports UN Member States as they set global standards for achieving gender equality, and works with governments and civil society to design laws, policies, programmes and services needed to implement these standards. It stands behind women's equal participation in all aspects of life, focusing on five priority areas: increasing women's leadership and participation; ending violence against women; engaging women in all aspects of peace and security processes; enhancing women's economic empowerment; and making gender equality central to national development planning and budgeting. UN Women also coordinates and promotes the UN system's work in advancing gender equality.

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