



WOMEN'S MEANINGFUL
PARTICIPATION IN NEGOTIATING
PEACE AND THE IMPLEMENTATION
OF PEACE AGREEMENTS

REPORT OF THE EXPERT GROUP MEETING



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UN Women would like to thank our partners at the United Nations Department of Political Affairs (UN DPA), the International Peace Institute (IPI), the Inclusive Peace and Transitions Institute (IPTI), the Political Settlements Research Programme (PSRP), and the Global Network of Women Peacebuilders (GNWP) who provided inputs to the meeting design, identification of participants, drafting of background papers, and presentations. The report was prepared by Katarina Salmela and Megan Manion with inputs from Cate Buchanan.

Disclaimer: This is not a consensus document. The views expressed herein are illustrative of the discussions amongst the participants, however, they do not necessarily represent the views of the United Nations, UN Women or any Individual.

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BACKGROUND & OBJECTIVES

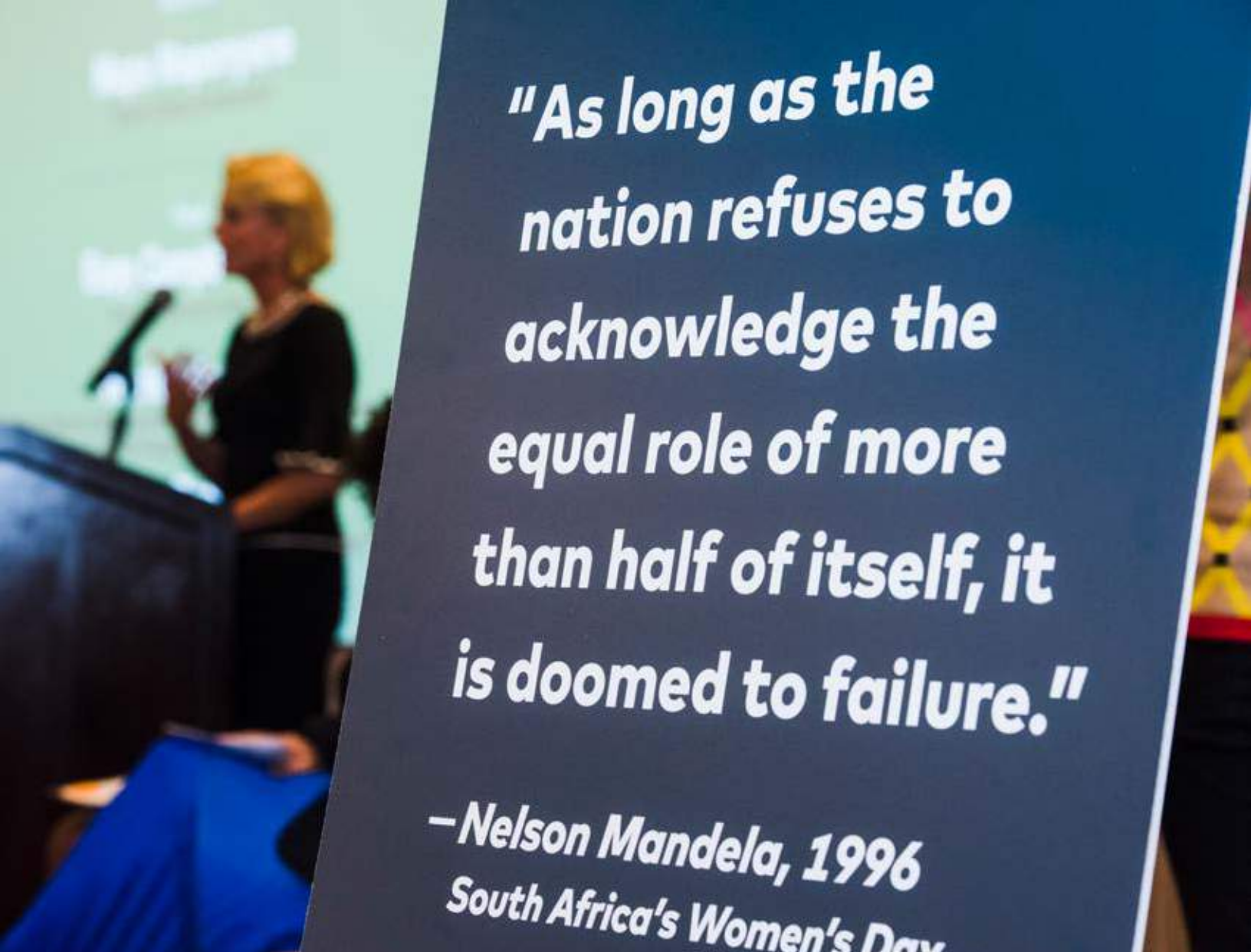
Based upon the Secretary-General's 2017 commitment (S/2017/861), the 2018 annual report of the Secretary-General on women and peace and security to the Security Council places special emphasis on the meaningful participation and representation of women in peace processes, including institutions tasked with implementing peace agreements. In preparation, and to take stock of current research, good practice and lessons learned, UN Women convened an Experts Group Meeting (EGM) to inform this "in-focus" section of the 2018 report. The meeting also catalyzed discussions for the upcoming 20-year anniversary of United Nations Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) in 2020 outlining where acceleration efforts are most needed.

The EGM aimed to be inclusive in focus and in practice with some 50 experts from a range of levels and layers of peace and security processes and institutions, including practitioners, women from nations affected by conflict and violence, academics, advocates, analysts, and staff from across the United Nations.¹ Participants shared experiences and approaches used in settings as diverse as Bosnia, Colombia, Kenya, Kosovo,² Georgia, Mozambique, Myanmar, Philippines, South Sudan, Syria and Yemen. At the same time, the organizers and the participants highlighted the need to broaden diversity in our convenings and practice.

Participants discussed the barriers to and enablers of women's representation and meaningful participation at all stages of peace and security processes. The scope of the discussions reflected the reality of contemporary peace and security processes and included discussion of ceasefires, informal and local/community level peace-building processes, negotiations and formal peace agreements, implementation mechanisms, transitional or constitutional arrangements, disarmament and demobilization arrangements, humanitarian access agreements, the growing focus on counter-terrorism operations and more.

The meeting had four essential aims:

- **Exchange** current research and good practice on women's representation and "meaningful" participation in peace processes;
- **Explore** the concept of "meaningful participation" – what it includes, and how the UN, Member States, civil society and other relevant actors can best effectively advocate for it, and consistently operationalize it;
- **Discuss** the barriers to women's meaningful participation at all stages of peace processes including implementation hurdles; and
- **Assess** the trends and challenges in gender-responsive provisions of peace agreements and implementation.

A woman with blonde hair, wearing a dark top, is speaking at a podium. The background is a light green screen with some text. A large, dark blue, tilted rectangular overlay contains a quote in white text.

**"As long as the
nation refuses to
acknowledge the
equal role of more
than half of itself, it
is doomed to failure."**

**– Nelson Mandela, 1996
South Africa's Women's Day**

Photo: UN Women/Amanda Voisard

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GLOBAL CONTEXT

1. GLOBAL CONTEXT

As part of gauging the status of gender-sensitive peace and security processes, participants reflected on trends in the global context. Although women’s meaningful participation in negotiating peace and conflict resolution is one of the most fundamental components of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda, it remains one of the least advanced areas and one where advances are highly vulnerable to regression.

Global politics is marked by failures to protect and promote the most fundamental human rights in conflict and conflict-affected settings. Without addressing fundamental issues of inequality and exclusion for women and lack of respect for international human rights, humanitarian and refugee law, many participants were skeptical that any significant advancement in meaningful participation or even increases in women at the table could be made. Instead such processes may continue to privilege and represent elite actors rather than those most affected by conflict and broader civil society or women’s human rights movement. Despite widened acknowledgment of how the WPS Agenda contributes to conflict prevention and sustained peace³, and its role as a “prerequisite”⁴ for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) there has been little progress on the decades of Member State commitments to ensure the meaningful participation of women in these processes.⁵ Women are not consistently included and engaged in negotiating peace—they are consistently excluded. Across the pillars of the WPS Agenda, overall, participants were deeply troubled by the highly uneven progress and the corresponding sidelining of women to often-parallel development processes, shrinking political space, and lack of consistent financing for women’s civil society organizations.⁶

Through these discussions, the participants identified seven major global challenges and trends shaping the current limits to progress, including:

- Patriarchal systems and persistent gender inequality
- Nature of contemporary conflict
- Shrinking political space and threats against women’s human rights defenders

- Funding challenges and insufficient investment in gender expertise
- Limited recognition of women’s expertise and lived experience
- Tension between transformative and technocratic approaches
- Knowledge gaps

Patriarchal Systems & Persistent Gender Inequality

Institutionalized patriarchal and militarized systems, that are not only based upon, but contribute to and perpetuate gender inequality, are one of the most basic and persistent barriers to women’s meaningful participation in efforts to resolve conflict. Women remain under and un-represented in all categories where international legal and normative commitments, including the WPS Agenda, envisage their full, equal and meaningful participation. The lack of women’s presence and ability to meaningfully participate in these fora begin with ongoing failures to include women mediators and peacebuilders who stand ready to participate, whether due to hostility, negligence or both. In addition, persistent levels of gender inequality that predate and are exacerbated by conflict, such as prevalence of sexual and gender-based violence, lack of women’s equality before the law, access to rights in land ownership and tenure, lack of access to education and basic services, poverty, unpaid care work, food insecurity, parlous women’s political participation, and more, all contribute to women’s inability to meaningfully participate and the reality that those women who are included also carry distinct forms of privilege.

Concurrently, systems of governance and many political leadership positions remain under the control of elite men, including within the UN and other international organizations, where patriarchal cultures, discrimination and related bias not only persist, but continue to be defended. In addition, given the increasing overlap between conflict and counter-terrorism, even greater exclusion exists within the relevant counter-terrorism policy architecture that inhibit women and women's civil society from engaging consistently and at the highest level. There are some efforts underway within the UN to apply gender perspectives to counter-terrorism initiatives, including through the nascent and top-down calls for gender mainstreaming and engagement with women's civil society within the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism,⁷ or the implementation of normative commitments, such as Counter-Terrorism Executive Directorate's (CTED) increasing mainstreaming of gender, achieving overall gender parity among staff, and inclusion of gender expertise across its Member States assessments.

Among the participants, there was deep concern that without institutional and cultural shifts with dedicated and robust investment in gender mainstreaming and gender equality, little could change. The participants highlighted the limitations of relying on a limited number of actors within senior level positions in institutions and frameworks that champion gender equality and women's empowerment. In addition, the reality of conflict resolution and the influence and practical reach of high-level envoys and senior mediators within the most intractable conflicts was recently highlighted by Mossarat Qadeem, Co-founder of PAIMAN Alumni Trust, in her briefing the Security Council during the thematic debate on mediation.

The participants also highlighted recent positive developments, including the UN Secretary-General's Gender Parity Strategy, which has fostered an unprecedented number of women senior level appointments. In May 2018, for the first time in the history of the UN, gender parity was reached among Resident Coordinators—the public face of the UN all over the world.⁸ Other notable developments include the feminist foreign and international assistance policies pioneered by the Governments of Sweden and Canada, respectively⁹; and the enhanced focus on the WPS Agenda by the Security Council through the Informal Experts Group that provides a direct space for peace operations and/or UN country team's leadership and Security Council representatives to interact on women, peace and security policy and practice. The multitude of conversations and policy change sparked by the seismic effect of the #MeToo movement has led to greater, and long overdue attention to sexual harassment, sexual assault, abuse of authority and the sidelining of women's talents, rights and involvement in public life, the arts, academia, international organizations, and numerous other sectors.

Nature of Contemporary Conflict

The proliferation of actors and complexity of contemporary conflicts demand novel approaches to their prevention and resolution. Many conflicts remain in cycles of humanitarian access and ceasefire negotiations, raising hurdles for gender inclusion and women's meaningful participation, particularly as ceasefires are often still regarded as the preserve of security actors understood to be men. In addition, Member States continue to engage and respond to contemporary in terms of preventing violent extremism and counter-terrorism rather than international

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