



Community  
of Democracies



# Summary Report

Women's Participation in Sustaining Peace  
and the Advancement of Goal 16: Practices from Latin America

Side-event held on the margins of the 49<sup>th</sup> Regular Session of the Organization of American  
States General Assembly



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## Introduction

A 2017 Report of the UN Secretary-General on Women, Peace and Security highlights:

*Gender equality and women's empowerment are prerequisites for preventing conflict, a powerful tool for sustaining peace and essential to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly Goals 5 and 16.*

Improving women's participation in peacebuilding became part of the agenda in 2000 with the UNSC Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, and has been reemphasized in numerous international resolutions and agreements since, most particularly UNSCR 1889 (2009) and UNSCR 2122 (2013). Security Council Resolution 2282 (2016) on the Review of the United Nations Peacebuilding Architecture lays the groundwork for a "sustaining peace" framework, where sustaining peace is defined as "activities aimed at preventing the outbreak, escalation, continuation and recurrence of conflict, addressing root causes, assisting parties to conflict to end hostilities, ensuring national reconciliation, and moving towards recovery, reconstruction and development.

Despite the various international agreements and UN resolutions, little progress has been made in including women in sustaining peace. Moreover, too few training and educational material is made available to assist governments in developing strategies for increasing women's political participation in sustaining peace.

To address the need for greater monitoring, tracking and reporting on the achievements of women and their organizations in sustaining peace, the Community of Democracies is currently conducting a project on "Engaging Women in Sustaining Peace (EWSP)". The project, kindly funded by the Republic of Korea, seeks to contribute to international discussion on women in peace and security dialogue, by highlighting some consolidated examples of good practices taking place in countries across Africa, Asia, Europe and Latin America.

In the framework of the EWSP project, the Permanent Secretariat of the Community of Democracies (PSCD) held a side-event on the margins of the 49<sup>th</sup> Regular Session of the Organization of American States General Assembly on June 26, 2019, in Medellín, Colombia.

The event was organized by the PSCD and the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA) in partnership with the Latin American and Caribbean Network for Democracy (REDLAD), a regional civil society platform, member of the Civil Society Pillar of the Community of Democracies and The Mission to Support the Peace Process in Colombia (MAPP/OAS).

The panel discussion on "Women's Participation in Sustaining Peace and in the advancement of Goal 16: Practices from Latin America", addressed the important role that women play in sustaining peace, and in moving forward the implementation of Goal 16 of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.

Challenges and best practices of women's meaningful involvement in peacebuilding in Latin America were also highlighted, focusing on case studies from the region. Additionally, the panel examined the importance of ensuring the effective and active engagement of women in decision making, to allow for the contribution of women in building sustainable peace in the framework of the SDGs.

## Speakers

**Opening Address:**

**Thomas E. Garrett**

Secretary General of the Community of Democracies

**Keynote Speech**

**Bianca Jagger**

President and Founder

Bianca Jagger Human Rights Foundation

**Panelists:**

**Patricia Galdamez**

Senior Advisor of the Community of Democracies

Presentation of the practices in women's participation in sustaining peace from Latin America

**Luis J. Consuegra**

Coordinator, Inter-Regional Dialogue for Democracy International IDEA

Inter-regional vision of gender equality and the political participation of women and its implications for the advancement of SDG 16

**Edelma Gómez**

Coordinator of Peace Building of the Mission to Support the Peace Process in Colombia (MAPP/OAS)

Presentation on "Lessons Learned on the Engagement of Women in Peace Processes in Colombia"

**Patricia Gálvez**

Member of the Coordinating Council of the Latin American Network for Democracy (REDLAD)

Civil society perspective on importance of women's organization's involvement in peace processes

# Opening Address

by Mr. Thomas E. Garrett, Secretary General of the Community of Democracies

It is my pleasure to welcome you on behalf of the Community of Democracies to this panel discussion on “Women’s Participation in Sustaining Peace and the Advancement of Goal 16: Practices from Latin America”.

Advancing women’s political participation has been a core focus of the international community’s agenda since the adoption of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) by the UN General Assembly in 1979. The emphasis of female participation in peacebuilding became part of the agenda in 2000 with the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security.

In its first paragraph, the UNSR 1325 calls for “an increase in the participation of women at decision-making levels in conflict resolution and peace processes”. It also recognizes that “full participation of women in the peace process can significantly contribute to the maintenance and promotion of international peace and security”.

The groundwork for a “sustaining peace” framework was laid by Security Council Resolution 2282 (2016) on the Review of the United Nations Peacebuilding Architecture, where sustaining peace is defined as “activities aimed at preventing the outbreak, escalation, continuation and recurrence of conflict, addressing root causes, assisting parties to conflict to end hostilities, ensuring national reconciliation, and moving towards recovery, reconstruction and development”.

This international commitment to advancing women’s participation in peacebuilding is strongly supported by research. Evidence shows that peacebuilding and reconciliation processes have higher rates of success, and more likely to last, when women are meaningfully involved. A study of 40 peace processes in 35 countries over three decades showed that when women’s groups were able to effectively influence a peace process, an agreement was always reached. Additionally, an analysis of 182 peace agreements signed between 1989 and 2011 showed that a peace agreement is 20% more likely to last at least 2 years and 35% more likely to last at least 15 years if women are guaranteed meaningful participation.

It is clear from research that far more needs to be done to advance women’s participation in sustaining peace and to track the achievements of women and women’s organizations in contributing to peacebuilding - not merely to uphold international commitments, but to enhance both international security and the security of women.

Recently, we have seen advancements as some countries have already adopted National Action Plans to facilitate the implementation of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda at the national level. Others have gone further, such as Canada with the recent appointment of its first Ambassador for Women, Peace and Security - Jacqueline O’Neill.

Since its establishment in 2000, the Community of Democracies has repeatedly affirmed and maintained its commitment to engaging women in all aspects of democratic governance and development, including women’s political participation and inclusion in peacebuilding processes and initiatives.

The importance of female participation in all areas, as a crucial component of a democracy was outlined and recognized as a core value in the Warsaw Declaration, emphasizing that the “informed participation by all elements of society, men and women, in a country’s economic and political life, including by persons belonging to minority groups, is fundamental to a vibrant and durable democracy”.

Seeking to contribute to the important discussion on women and peacebuilding, the Community of Democracies is currently carrying out a project on “Engaging Women in Sustainable Peace (EWSP)”. Under the framework of UN Security Council resolution 1325, the project seeks to contribute to the international debate on women’s involvement in peace and security, by analyzing post-conflict countries in Africa, Asia, Europe and Latin America and identifying good practices found in these regions for engaging women in sustainable peace.

As part of this project, a publication on “Engaging Women in Sustaining Peace: A Guide to Good Practices”, is currently being developed to assess women’s beneficial inclusion in peace processes through a global perspective, building on the 2010 UN Secretary General’s Seven-Point Action Plan on Gender Responsive Peacebuilding.

By highlighting the crucial role of women in decision-making and their invaluable contributions at the local, national and international levels, the CoD aims to highlight the importance of women’s meaningful involvement in all aspects of building and sustaining peace.

Today, the panel discussion will discuss the importance of gender equality; will highlight some challenges and good practices of women’s involvement in peacebuilding in Latin America; present examples of meaningful involvement of women in the Peace Process in Colombia; and discuss the important contribution of women in building sustainable peace in the framework of the UN 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, especially Goal 16.

I would like to extend my utmost gratitude to you all, for your efforts towards promoting the meaningful involvement of women in efforts to prevent, build and maintain peace.

I look forward to a fruitful conversation this afternoon.

# Keynote

by Ms. Bianca Jagger, President and Founder of the Bianca Jagger Human Rights Foundation

Thank you, Secretary General, for your opening remarks and for enlightening us on this very important issue.

Distinguished guests and panelists, ladies and gentlemen, I am pleased to welcome you to this panel today, discussing women's political participation and involvement in peacekeeping in Latin America as well as best practices from the region.

The issue of women's rights is at the heart of the Bianca Jagger Human Rights Foundation's mandate. Therefore, when I was asked by the Community of Democracies (CoD) to attend and speak at this event, I was both pleased and honoured.

I was born in Nicaragua, where 40 years ago we lived through the Sandinista revolution and where we today are witnessing atrocities and crimes against humanity committed by the Ortega regime. Perhaps this is the reason why I understand the importance of women's participation in every aspect of conflict resolution.

Even though gender equality and women's empowerment are currently at the heart of the global agenda, the road ahead continues to be an uphill battle.

A number of key agreements guide governments and advocates in promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Declaration and the Commission on the Status of Women. However, unequal opportunities and conditions for political participation and representation between men and women still exist throughout the world. The low numbers of female participation continue despite decades of efforts by international and regional organizations, as well as by national governments. The International Parliamentary Union (IPU) data show that in the world's parliaments today, women hold on average only 24 percent of the seats.

There are still many reasons for concern. The de facto status of women worldwide has not improved sufficiently, in part due to deeply rooted patriarchal and discriminatory practices that continue to have a negative effect on women and girls. Poverty, financial crises, conflicts, and gender-based violence also significantly affect women, preventing them from a secure and dignified life, lowering job and career opportunities, and thus further reinforcing gender inequalities.

Throughout my life, I have campaigned for women's rights. I was born in Nicaragua, in a household run by my mother, who was discriminated against for being a woman, for being divorced, and for having to work to support her three siblings. This is why I have made a commitment to speak out against the oppression and discrimination against women.

As an advocate for women's rights, I have continuously been shocked by the statistics regarding female participation in positions of power and conflict resolution. Very few women throughout the world had the opportunity to hold a position of power in government or as member of parliament, whilst we have not been able to close the gender pay gap.

Why have we not been able to improve these statistics I ask myself? Why are women not participating in conflict resolution when we are often the victims of these conflicts? Women and children are disproportionately affected by gender-based violence. Yet, we continue to be denied the right to participate in the resolution of such conflicts. Women must be guaranteed the right to have a seat at the negotiating table, not only when these conflicts have been resolved, but throughout the conflict resolution process.

The role of women in peacebuilding has historically been ignored as stereotypes and discrimination have portrayed women as not having the skills or ability to participate in these processes. In fact, until the passing of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 in 2000 which called for a greater role for women in peacekeeping and peacebuilding, women were often entirely excluded from the process.

Data from the University of Edinburgh and the Council of Foreign Relations show that of the 1187 peace agreements from 1990-2017, only 19% made any reference to women and 5% mentioned gender-based violence.

Since 1990, women have only made up about 9% of negotiators in peace negotiations and have been only 5% of witnesses and signatories to peace agreements. Despite numerous studies showing that agreements from peace processes are 35% more likely to last at least 15 years when women participate in them.

In order to stop this discrimination and protect women in general, more efforts need to be made to include women in peace talks and in peacebuilding in all conflicts.

At the Bianca Jagger Human Rights Foundation, we have been campaigning towards ending violence against women and girls, specifically through our global campaign addressing the culture of impunity. With this campaign we have called on governments throughout the world to introduce legislations and put in place mechanisms to prevent violence against women and girls.

Furthermore, we have supported the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence which sets out the minimum standards on prevention, protection, prosecution and services for European countries, but regrettably only 34 of the 47 Council of Europe member states have ratified the Convention.

Thank you all for your presence here today and for all your tireless efforts to end violence against women and girls and for the promotion of women in peacebuilding. Women have occupied a critical role in peace processes and conflict resolutions in Nicaragua and across the world. I ask that you not applaud me, but that you applaud the courageous women of Nicaragua present here today for their extraordinary work.

Thank you very much.



## Summary of the Panel Discussion

### Women's Participation in Sustaining Peace and the advancement of Goal 16: Practices from Latin America

The panel discussion explored the role of women in peacebuilding processes, and in the overall consolidation of peace, justice and inclusive societies, in relation to the advancement of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda. The meeting addressed best practices for advancing women's participation in sustaining peace from Latin America and discussed the Community of Democracies' ongoing research on women's role in building and sustaining peace.

Patricia Galdamez began with a presentation of the preliminary findings of the publication on "Engaging Women in Sustaining Peace: A Guide to Best Practices" conducted in the framework in the Community's current project on "Engaging Women in Sustaining Peace (EWSP)".

The speaker noted that several countries in Latin America have experienced or continue to experience conflict. Despite international pressures to mainstream women's needs and participation into all aspects of peacebuilding, across the region, women remain significantly underrepresented in peace and transitional processes. Women generally are excluded from political decision-making processes for both structural and cultural reasons, leaving them with limited ability to influence post conflict agendas.

Additionally, Ms. Galdamez introduced practices from Colombia, El Salvador, Guatemala and Peru to improve women's participation in efforts to build and sustain peace. The panelist indicated practices from Latin America as integrating gender perspective in peace agreements (Colombia), introducing gender quotas in elections (Colombia), providing targeted funding to women's organizations (El Salvador), engaging women's organizations in negotiations (Guatemala), reforming women's economic rights (Peru).

Ms. Galdamez emphasized various recommendations for the more successful engagement of women in peacebuilding and conflict resolution. These include creating a gender commission which is tasked with assessing peace agreements for their gender perspective, providing regular and immediate support with respect to access by women and girls to justice and law-enforcement institutions, as well as cultivating relationships with women's organizations which may serve as hubs of expertise and community leaders.

Following the presentation by the Community of Democracies, Luis J. Consuegra provided an inter-regional perspective of gender equality and the political participation of women and its implications for the advancement of SDG 16. The panelist emphasized that it is important not only to include women in peace processes, but to ensure that their participation is meaningful. When addressing this issue in various contexts around the world, the speaker noted that it is also crucial to consider the limited opportunities for professional development for women which hinders their ability to participate in conflict resolution or peacebuilding in comparison to men.

The speaker also noted that some women, once in a position of power in which they are able to participate in such peacebuilding and conflict resolution processes, continue to face discrimination which diminishes their ability to perform to their fullest potential. Ensuring meaningful women's participation, thus, is more than just guaranteeing women a seat at the negotiating table.



“IT IS CLEAR FROM RESEARCH THAT FAR MORE NEEDS TO BE DONE TO ADVANCE WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN SUSTAINING PEACE”

To understand the matter at hand, it is imperative that, although we look across regions for similarities and differences, it is analyzed within its national context. Mr. Consuegra emphasized the interesting case of Paraguay, in which International IDEA is implementing a project funded by the European Union focused on the Promotion of Democracy through Capacity Development of the National Electoral Management Body. The project focuses on gender equality and the promotion of women's and youth participation throughout the electoral cycle, as well as professionalization, transparency and improved technical quality of elections in Paraguay.

Panelist Edelma Gómez of The Mission to Support the Peace Process in Colombia (MAPP/OAS) presented lessons learned from the exercise of women's political agency and their role in peacebuilding in Colombia. MAPP/OAS seeks to work side-by-side with women organizations, local communities, conflict's victims, and government institutions towards building peace in Colombia, and respecting diversity and inclusion.

The MAPP/OAS' activities focus on accompanying and monitoring the territories that were left by members of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia—People's Army (FARC-EP). Among the matters assessed regarding women's involvement in peace and security efforts was that former women combatants of the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia, a paramilitary group, were not given enough attention in post-conflict resolution. The speaker stated that gender-blind reintegration processes can fail or further stigmatize women ex-combatants, preventing them from participating fully in society. The MAPP OAS monitors the disarmament and disengagement of women in guerrillas and works towards reintegrating them in post-conflict realities and ensuring proper justice to those affected by gender-based violence.

In the framework of various monitoring activities carried out during these fifteen years, OAS/MAPP highlighted the following recommendations basing on lessons learned regarding the Women Peace and Security agenda (United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325, 2000) and the Sustainable Development Goals 5 and 16:

- To ensure that groups of women that are underrepresented in peace processes acquire necessary tools that enable them to have political agency in the negotiations.
- To guarantee the presence of women within the negotiating teams, as was the case of the negotiations between the Government of Colombia and the National Liberation Army. Women negotiators in both delegations contributed to the fact that the gender agenda was positioned as a top priority issue and provided a greater possibility for women's organizations to present their position and input.
- To insist that women combatants, and former combatants have a voice and representation in the negotiation talks. The above guarantees that the gender agenda becomes a common objective of the parties both for dialogue and for the definition of measures in a future peace agreement.

Patricia Gálvez, Gender expert at REDLAD, reiterated that it is necessary to work on the issue of violence against women from a broad perspective. In practice, that entails dealing with gender-based violence during both times of war as well as with everyday violence which emanate as a result of a patriarchal society. This approach seeks to promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development. In order for it to be successful, it is necessary to identify and denounce the relationship between violence and patriarchy.

## Proposed recommendations

### On women's participation in sustaining peace and the advancement of Goal 16

#### **Ensure women's full and effective participation in peacebuilding and conflict resolution**

It is important not only to include women in peace processes, but to ensure that their participation is of considerable quality. Though some women have been placed in positions of power in which they are able to participate in peacebuilding and conflict resolution processes, the discrimination that they face hinders them from acting to their best ability. Ensuring proper women participation is more important even than guaranteeing women a seat at the negotiation table.

#### **Consult women's organizations at all stages of the peace process**

Involvement of women's organizations at each stage of the peace process is critical to ensuring that women's needs are addressed in any created agreements and in building a more fair, just and inclusive society post-conflict. Cultivating relationships with women's organizations during the peace processes then enables them to serve as hubs of expertise and as community leaders.

#### **Encourage participation of diverse women's groups and individuals**

Diversifying the participation and representation through methodologies that combine the movement of national, territorial and thematic voices expands peace pedagogy efforts and the scope of greater appropriation of the negotiation processes by civil society in the territories. In this way, national pronouncements do not necessarily have to be made from the capital cities, yet they can be spread from intermediate cities or small municipalities.

#### **Enhance gender responsive mediation**

Negotiation parties should be briefed regularly on gender issues relevant to peace-agreement provisions on, inter-alia, humanitarian access, justice, security, wealth-sharing, and implementation mechanisms.

#### **Ensure access by women and girls to justice and law-enforcement institutions**

Respect for the rule of law is paramount for rebuilding society after conflict as it signals the public's faith and confidence in the political process, especially for women and girls. In a post-conflict context, this can be done by providing regular and immediate support with respect to access by women and girls to justice and law-enforcement institutions.

#### **Engage in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of former-combatants**

Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of former-combatants supports peace processes and enhance security so that post-conflict reconstruction and recovery can begin.

## CoD and Gender Equality

Gender equality and political empowerment of women are key elements for the consolidation of sustainable democracies worldwide. Since its inception in 2000, the Community of Democracies has been actively supporting activities dedicated to advancing women's political participation, including the engagement of women in peace-building efforts and countering violent extremism. In the Community's Strategic Plan 2018-2023, gender equality is one of the cross-cutting themes mainstreamed into all activities undertaken by the Community.

### Past activities

#### **Building Sustainable Peace: The Importance of Women's Inclusion**

Event on the margins of the World Forum for Democracy in Strasbourg, November 2018

The panel discussion was built around the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security. Women experts in the field provided specific lessons learned and best practices for advancing women's participation in sustaining peace from Syria, the Balkans, Central Africa and South America. Highlighted issues included: ensuring meaningful participation of women and inclusive decision-making at the national, regional and global levels; the nexus between democracy and security; and the role of just and strong institutions for sustaining peace. Access the [Summary Report](#).

#### **Women: A Powerful Force for Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism**

Policy session held on the margins of the Women Political Leaders Summit in Vilnius, June 2018

Held within the "Engaging Women in Sustainable Peace" project, the session addressed the importance of gender inclusion in preventing and countering violent extremism. With panelists from NATO, OSCE, Women in International Security, and European External Action Service, the discussion aimed to identify good practices for increasing women's political participation. Access the [Summary Report](#).

#### **Democracy and Security Dialogue**

The Final Report of the CoD's Democracy and Security Dialogue, developed by researchers of the Brookings Institution and the Institute for Security Studies, showed that gender equal societies are less likely to engage in both internal and external violence. Policy Brief on Gender and Violent Extremism also emphasized that women can be a powerful force to prevent and counter violent extremism. Access the [Final Report](#) and the [Policy Brief](#).

#### **Advancing Women's Political Participation**

Regional consultations co-organized by the CoD, the United Nations Development Programme and International IDEA, 2016-2017

As part of the project, five regional consultations were held on the margins of large international democracy-related events in Europe, Asia, Africa, Latin America and MENA region. Consultations brought together politicians, state officials, civil society activists, academics, and members of international and regional organizations to discuss gender equality and strategies for advancing women's political empowerment in respective regions. Access the [Final Report](#).

## About the Community of Democracies

Born as a common initiative of former U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and Polish Foreign Minister Bronisław Geremek, the Community of Democracies was founded at the Ministerial Conference held in Warsaw, Poland, where high-level delegations from 106 countries signed the [Warsaw Declaration](#) Toward a Community of Democracies. Signatories pledged to uphold the democratic values expressed in the Warsaw Declaration and to support them through a variety of initiatives.

Since its establishment in 2000, the Community of Democracies gradually developed from a conference initiative into a global intergovernmental coalition of democratic states and a multi-stakeholder platform for dialogue and discussion.

The Community of Democracies provides Member States with a forum in which to work together to learn from each other and identify global priorities for diplomatic action to advance and defend democracy, including through collective diplomatic action at the UN and in other multilateral fora. In addition to facilitating joint diplomatic action, the Community provides an international forum that facilitates mutual dialogue, learning, and exchange of experiences among Members.



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