Summary Report

Women for Peace: Recognizing Women’s Role in Peacebuilding

Side-event held on the margins of the 74th UNGA session held by the Community of Democracies and hosted by the Republic of Korea
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Introduction

The Permanent Secretariat of the Community of Democracies held a side-event on “Women for Peace: Recognizing Women’s Role in Peacebuilding” on the margins of the 74th session of the United Nations General Assembly, on September 26th, 2019. The event was carried out in the framework of the Community's project “Engaging Women in Sustaining Peace (EWSP)”, generously supported by the Republic of Korea. It consisted of a presentation of the publication on “Engaging Women in Sustaining Peace: A Guide to Best Practices” followed by a panel discussion on the importance of women’s meaningful participation in peace processes and political agreements.

The United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 adopted in October 2000 represents the cornerstone of gender equality and women’s empowerment throughout the process of the conflict cycle. In 2010, it was followed by an action plan for gender-responsive peacebuilding, developed to enhance responses to women’s needs and priorities in the aftermath of conflict and to support women as equal participants in shaping their communities and societies. It is organized around seven commitments: conflict resolution, post-conflict planning, post-conflict financing, gender responsive civilian capacity, women’s representation in post-conflict governance, rule of law, and economic recovery.

The CoD's published guide presented at the side-event is organized around these seven commitments and identifies both supportive practices for engaging women in sustaining peace as well as the challenges they have and continue to face. It is based on desk research conducted in post-conflict countries in Africa, Asia, Europe, and Latin America and offers recommendations based on the research conducted in these regions. The panel discussion that followed expanded on the guide and further contributed to international debate on women in peace and security by inferring consolidated research conducted in these regions. The panel discussion that followed expanded on the guide and further contributed to international debate on women in peace and security by inferring consolidated research conducted in these regions.

The discussion addressed:

• Women’s engagement in sustaining peace within political bodies, e.g., via the implementation of the women, peace and security agenda at the national level;

• Women’s involvement in post-conflict resolution processes, e.g., peace talks, transitional justice, mediation;

• Further recommendations and areas of future research on engagement of women in sustaining peace.

The recommendations proposed at the end of the report are drawn from the panelists discussions and aim to ensure women’s meaningful participation in peacebuilding.
Finally, thank you to our panelists, partner organizations and attendees, for contributing their time and vision-making at the local, national and international level. The conversation will also aim to explore concrete ways of building on the 2010 UN Secretary General’s Seven-Point Action Plan on Gender Responsive Peacebuilding.

I would also like to extend my utmost gratitude to the authors of this publication: Mona Lena Krook, building on the 2010 UN Secretary General’s Seven-Point Action Plan on Gender Responsive Peacebuilding.

As part of this initiative, a publication on “Engaging Women in Sustaining Peace: A Guide to Best Practices” has been developed to assess women’s beneficial inclusion in peace processes through a global perspective, with the resulting agreement 64% less likely to fail and 35% more likely to last at least fifteen years.

In fact, my government attaches great importance to the agenda of Women, Peace and Security. We are proud that the Republic of Korea has financially contributed to this important research project. At the same time, we convened the International Conference to discuss issues under the agenda of Women, Peace and Security.

Indeed, as revealed by the Women, Peace and Security Index, supported by the Governing Council Member State Norway and developed by Peace Research Institute of Oslo and Georgetown Institute for Women Peace and Security, among 153 countries ranked there is no state that has an excellent score on all dimensions of women’s inclusion in peace and security.

In his message for this year’s International Day of Democracy, UN Secretary General said, and I quote “At heart, democracy is about people. It is built on inclusion, equal treatment and participation – and it is a fundamental building block for peace, sustainable development and human rights (unquote).”

Today we will focus on one of the most vulnerable groups in terms of democratic participation; women. The publication before us explores a part which women could play in building and sustaining peace. Based on first-hand accounts and case studies, it presents a comprehensive picture of the positive role women can play in the whole continuum of peace process. I believe this product of hard work will serve as a useful reference and guide for policy makers, civil society organizations and international humanitarian and development actors engaged in peace processes and post-conflict transitions.

We are proud that the Republic of Korea has financially contributed to this important research project. In the face of various challenges, the engagement of our Governing Council Members has been pivotal to the work of the Community of Democracies aimed at increasing gender equality in all areas of public life. The recent initiative of the CoD is a good example of 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 in these regions for engaging women in sustainable peace.

As part of this initiative, a publication on “Engaging Women in Sustaining Peace: A Guide to Best Practices” has been 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.

We will briefly present our publication and its findings following by a panel discussing challenges and good practices in women’s involvement in conflict resolution, post conflict planning and financing, and decision-making at the local, national and international level. The conversation will also aim to explore concrete ways to increase women’s engagement in peacebuilding.

Finally, thank you to our panelists, partner organizations and attendees, for contributing their time and knowledge to today’s important discussion. I look forward to a fruitful conversation.

I warmly welcome you all to this event on “Women for Peace” Today we are launching the publication on “Engaging Women in Sustaining Peace: A Guide to Best Practices.” First of all, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the authors of this publication: Mona Lena Krook, Rita French, emphasized, when women do meaningfully participate in a peace process the impact is profound, with the resulting agreement 64% less likely to fail and 35% more likely to last at least fifteen years.

When addressing the 42nd Human Rights Council meeting earlier this week, UK Ambassador for Human Rights, Rita French, emphasized, when women do meaningfully participate in a peace process the impact is profound, with the resulting agreement 64% less likely to fail and 35% more likely to last at least fifteen years.

Next year the international community will be looking back at the progress made regarding the implementation of the first UN 1325 Resolution and nine subsequent resolutions that form the Women, Peace and Security Agenda. Recently, we have seen advancements as 82 UN Member States have already adopted National Action Plans to facilitate the implementation of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda at the national level. However, more needs to be done.

Opening Address

By H.E. Mr. Jeong-sik Kang, Deputy Minister for Multilateral and Global Affairs
Summary of the Panel Discussion

Women for Peace: Recognizing Women's Role in Peacebuilding

Following the presentation of the publication on “Engaging Women in Sustaining Peace: A Guide to Best Practices” by CoD Senior Advisor Patricia Goldiamond, Dr. Abigail Ruane began the panel discussion by stating the need for a power shift to take place in the society from discrimination to justice, and from violence to peace. She emphasized the critical role feminist movements play in unlocking system change, noting the correlation between activities of feminist movements and the decrease in violence against women. Providing an example from Colombia, the panelist informed that the absence of women from the 2012 peace talks resulted in women mobilizing and working together with the Gender Sub-commission to successfully include over 100 gender provisions in the 2016 Peace Agreement. Their analysis of discrimination through a gender lens resulted in a more holistic agreement, with commitments to zero tolerance for Gender Based Violence and justice for these discriminations. Women peacebuilders also called for further transformation through their “Mas Vida, Menos Armas” (“More Life, Less Arms”) campaign, which called not only for the demilitarization of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), but for the demilitarization of society as a whole.

Continuing to offer a global perspective, Dr. Ruane presented the value of women’s participation in sustaining peace efforts in the Korean Peninsula. In 2015, women crossed the Demilitarized Zone to call for a political solution to officially end the Korean War (1950). They envisioned a political process before others thought it was possible. Today, despite major challenges, political space for dialogue is opening, and the #KoreaPeaceNow campaign continues to urge for a peace agreement with women at the table and a disarmed Korean Peninsula.

Dr. Ruane further warned against excluding women from peace processes by bringing to attention analysis conducted in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which found that doing so reinforces injustices and builds bases for new conflicts. Today, feminists continue to advocate for post-conflict reconstruction to ensure women’s meaningful participation, redress inequalities, and promote social protections. Intentional budgets aimed at well-being of people and planet are possible. Countries like Costa Rica and Thailand show that this can include reducing and reallocating military expenditure to social protections.

Regarding the role that governments, parliaments and international organizations can play in promoting the Women, Peace, and Security agenda, Ms. Genon highlighted the added value of working with youth organizations and reiterated the need to continue challenging the idea of hierarchy, the top-down approach. Lastly, the speaker called on states to continue supporting youth organizations and reiterated the need to continue challenging the idea of hierarchy, the top-down approach.

Dr. Kathleen Kuehnast began her presentation by recalling the paradigm shift brought upon by the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 and the positive impact it had in urging the international community to look at challenges that women face in war differently. The panelist suggested that as we approach the 20th anniversary of the Women, Peace, and Security Resolution, we should prepare and encourage the development of another paradigm shift that would bring issues of masculinity and men in violent conflict into the lens of our analysis. We cannot make a societal cultural shift without all of us working toward gender equality, especially in our peacebuilding efforts.

Dr. Kuehnast observed that women’s participation has been and remains an issue due to the fact that the perspective of power has not been placed. That is, in order to have a participatory peace process, it must be inclusive. Dr. Kuehnast suggested that with the next decade, we need to find better pathways to the next generation, and identify new conceptions of what it means to be a society — especially in societies coming out of conflict. The speaker stressed the importance for men to be part of the efforts toward gender equality and serve as positive agents of change. Elaborating on her experience working in Kyrgyzstan following the collapse of the Soviet Union, Dr. Kuehnast warned about the rapidity with which gender equality backsliding can happen when these efforts fail to include men. She recalled that, despite initial high rates of gender equality in the country, the standards of women in Kyrgyzstan were quickly swallowed in the resurgent nationalism movement in which there was a return to 19th century ideals of men as protectors and women as the protected. Dr. Kuehnast stressed the need for greater partnership bringing together women and men in the processes of Women, Peace and Security to avoid the latter being mis-understood as a zero-sum game benefiting only women.

Regarding the role that governments, parliaments and international organizations can play in promoting the Women, Peace, and Security agenda, Dr. Kuehnast stressed the need for the international community to frame understanding of problems through a gender perspective. To that end, she recommended developing a better toolkit to help build empathy and gender inclusive framework. She also stressed the need to dismantle bygone ideals of masculinity particular difficulty in conflict settings. Lastly, the panelist concluded by reminding those present not to think in the binaries but instead to look at the intersections and leverage those intersections for power and change.

It is simply not enough to add women and stir. We must truly engage men in the effort to promote and achieve gender equality.

NOT JUST PUTTING YOUNG WOMEN AT THE TABLE BUT GIVING THEM THE OPPORTUNITY TO RESHAPE THE TABLE.

It is not the UN that is at its best when it identifies and facilitates local peacebuilding rather than duplicating and recreating the wheel. Sustained peace requires a bottom approach that supports local women leadership for peace, disarmament and justice.

the importance of organizing youth community discussions to improve awareness of youth in civic responsibilities, increase low voters’ turnout among the youth and educate young voters on the systemic implications of voting.

Additionally, Ms. Genon argued for the need to recognize and support existing initiatives of youth engaged in sustaining peace and amplify them by addressing the multiple and cross-cutting barriers that young women face from birth to womanhood, such as gender stereotypes and unpaid care work. Among others, the panelist brought to attention the negative influence of existing patriarchal values, the lack of financial resources, the few capacity building and mentorship opportunities available and the insufficient access to relevant networks.

Regarding the role that governments, parliaments and international organizations can play in promoting the Women, Peace, and Security agenda, Ms. Genon highlighted the added value of working with youth organizations and reiterated the need to continue challenging the idea of hierarchy, the top-down approach. Lastly, the speaker called on states to continue supporting civil society and work in a collaborative way with relevant UN entities and non-governmental actors on the ground.

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Ms. Marina Kumskova began her presentation by stressing the complementarity between sustaining peace and conflict prevention when working toward peaceful, just and inclusive societies (SDG 16). The speaker emphasized the importance of pursuing conflict prevention for peacebuilding through complete community-based approaches. Drawing from her experience in the South Caucasus where Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC) supports young women working with male chiefs to sensitize on gender equality. The panelist further highlighted the importance of women’s empowerment through the example of GPPAC’s work in Cameroon where they support women in advancing peace education in school and in empowering wives of non-traditional leaders. Regarding gender and youth promotion initiatives, Ms. Kumskova called for more action at the international level to support and amplify the work done by women peacebuilders and communities to ensure peace is sustained and rooted in communities.

Building on the result of two GPPAC-led studies conducted on the implementation of SDGs in Cameroon and in Ghana, Ms. Kumskova noted that people in different countries and situations face various challenges that need to be addressed on a case by case basis. Ms. Kumskova concluded by calling on the international community to promote sustainable, complementary and effective conflict prevention by advancing inclusive and regular engagement that give space for women of various backgrounds and experiences to come and inform the process. That requires: 1) stronger capacity of all peacebuilding actors to understand and address gender harms and causes of conflicts; 2) long-term sustainable funding and political support for conflict prevention and peacebuilding initiatives and; 3) joint and complementary efforts to advance sustaining peace and conflict prevention at the national, regional and international level.

Panel Recommendations

To improve women’s participation in sustaining peace

Creating new funding opportunities and implementing resourcing commitments:
- Providing long-term sustainable funding and political support for conflict prevention and peacebuilding initiatives;
- Urging International Financial Institutions to support social protection rather than austerity;
- Considering shifting the focus of the budget away from military expenses towards gender equality and inclusion.

Increasing capacity of actors and providing better post-conflict environment assessment:
- Improving capacity of peacebuilding actors at all levels;
- Creating a platform to share and develop expertise supporting women and youth;
- Linking women’s, youth and other organizations together to amplify individual efforts;
- Providing assessment of post-conflict settings to better understand and address gender harms and causes of conflicts.

Ensuring collaboration at all levels between the stakeholders involved:
- Uniting efforts to advance sustaining peace and conflict prevention at the national, regional and international level.
- Providing better coordination between actors involved to avoid duplication of activities.

“WHAT IS NEEDED IS CREATING SPACE FOR WOMEN IN COMMUNITIES TO REDESIGN THE TABLES AND REBUILD PEACE IN THEIR COMMUNITIES”
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