

Increasing the
Representation of Women
Peace Mediators:

Collaborative Leadership Models for Ensuring Equality



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This paper considers the under-representation of women in high-level mediation and peacemaking positions. Set in the context of successive normative commitments to increase the representation of women in high-level mediation, the paper considers why peace process mediation appears to be an outlier in the general trend towards gender parity in UN senior posts in particular. It then considers whether, given the low numbers of women visible in high-level mediation positions, the model of co-mediation would be a specific, measurable, accountable and time bound (SMART) approach to women's representation in mediation.



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The paper presents a number of recommendations for increasing women's representation in high-level mediation which go beyond the co-mediation model. This discussion informs the following recommendations, which suggest that a wider range of measures should be used in a complementary way to advance inclusive leadership practices in peace mediation.

1. **Commit to support for ongoing efforts to reach gender parity in high-level mediation appointments.**
2. **Have clear and publicly available Terms of Reference for all mediator positions across all organisations. Ensure that these Terms of Reference include a mandate to include women in the negotiations and ensure that they adopt a 'gender perspective'.**
3. **Have clear and transparent skills requirements of mediators which, where appropriate, can be met by 'non-traditional' entrants.**
4. **Adopt Temporary Special Measures, including where necessary of co-mediation or Panels of mediators, to ensure rapid gender parity in senior mediation roles.**
5. **Invest in gender parity for the future across the mediation system, developing a more equal new generation of mediators.**
6. **Commit to sharing data on women in senior mediation positions from 2011 to 2020 to ensure that, from 2021 onwards a contemporary baseline is in place from which to gauge progress.**
7. **Review whether existing rosters and women's mediator networks could have a more formal role in proposal of candidates, and the interview and selection processes for international or regional mediators.**

1. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT



Photo © UN Women/ Emad Karim

The under-representation of women among the ranks of high-level mediators is well documented. The stark figure that only 2.4% of chief mediators in peace processes between 1992 and 2011 were women highlighted the scale of the challenge.¹ A further study by the Centre for International Co-operation (CIC) in 2013 found that only 3 of 52 Envoys appointed by multilateral organisations were women – a figure of 5.8%.² Recruitment to senior leadership positions in these organisations has brought positive results in the drive towards gender parity, for example, in the UN system 44% of appointments to the rank of Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG) or Deputy Special Representative (DSRSG) have been women.³ Data shows a significant improvement over time in the percentage of high level appointments across all international organisations going to women.⁴

1 UN Women (2012) 'Women's Participation in Peace Processes: Connections Between Presence and Influence.'

2 Gordon, Nora (2015) 'Meet the Envoys: Trends in Envoy Profiles and Appointments' Global Peace Operations Review. December 7, 2015. <https://peaceoperationsreview.org/thematic-essays/meet-the-envoys-trends-in-envoy-profiles-and-appointments/> <Accessed 15 September 2020>.

3 <https://www.un.org/gender/content/un-secretariat-gender-parity-dashboard>.

4 See <https://cic.nyu.edu/UN-Senior-Appointments-Dashboard> for an up to date dashboard of data on senior appointments across all major international organisations, mapping not only gender but other factors such as country and region.

A number of women have been appointed to high-level positions in the Middle East, including Major General Kristin Lund as Head of Mission of the UN Truce Supervision Organisation (UNTSO) Jeanine Plasschaert as Special Representative of the UN Secretary General for Iraq and Head of UNAMI and Alice Walpole and Lise Grande as Deputy Special Representatives (DSRSGs) in Iraq, Stephanie William and Khawla Matar as DSRSGs respectively for Libya and Syria⁵. However, gender figures for mediator roles are difficult to find across organisations and mediation appears to remain visibly male-dominated. Mediation and peacemaking therefore appear as outliers in gender parity efforts that have had clear results in improving representation in the senior leadership of international organisations. It is clear that there are significant structural barriers to women's participation in high level mediation, and these need to be addressed. Increasing the number of women mediators appointed by the UN would be an important symbolic first step in communicating that women should be included in mediation at all levels.

5 <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/middle-east>

2. WHY INCREASE REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN AS MEDIATORS?

Increasing women's representation in mediation is an integral component of gender equality. However, it cannot in and of itself be assumed to increase the gender responsiveness of peace and transition processes. It is important to note that the participation of women, cannot be assumed to be sufficient to address structural barriers to women's inclusion. Two forms of representation can be distinguished:

Descriptive representation requires the presence of women in key political and decision-making spaces. Descriptive representation responds to the need for gender equality, the right of women to participate in all political decision-making fora, and the symbolic importance of having women visible politically. It is less concerned with what these women contribute to achieving gender equality outcomes in the negotiations.

Substantive Representation requires that matters that particularly concern women's equality and rights should be included on the agenda of talks. Arguments

for substantive representation are based on the need to ensure gender sensitivity in the outcome of peace processes. These arguments are less concerned with the gender of those advancing these perspectives.

Both forms of representation are necessary, and in practice descriptive and substantive representation are often linked, although not always.⁶ This paper focuses on co-mediation, and primarily addresses increasing women's descriptive representation in senior mediation positions globally (although we note the possible connections to substantive representation).

Gender equality in mediation has been strongly endorsed by international norms. Successive commitments have been made by the United Nations (UN) and its Member States to increase the representation of women in high-level positions, affirming the importance of descriptive representation. The Women Peace and Security Agenda has highlighted in successive Security Council Resolutions, the need to appoint more women as Envoys.

UNSCR 1325 (2000)

Encourages UNSG to appoint more women to pursue good offices on his behalf.

UNSCR 1889 (2009)

Stresses the need to ensure women are appropriately appointed as high-level mediators and within mediation teams.

UNSCR 2122 (2013)

Reiterates calls from SCR 1889 to appoint women to high-level mediation posts and include them in mediation teams.

Similarly, the Secretary-General's Report on Enhancing Mediation and its Support Activities, which laid the foundation for much of the expansion of the UN's mediation activities in the past decade, highlighted the need to ensure that more women were appointed to high level positions.⁷ Other regional organisations have made similar commitments to gender parity and women's equality. Achieving parity requires political commitment.

Envoys and other senior mediators are appointed to act on behalf of the appointing organisation or State, and they must act to uphold the values of that organisation or State. All major multilateral international and regional organisations engaged in peace initiatives have adopted commitments to gender parity within their own organisations. These values also align with core principles of international law in relation to women's rights. Commitments include those contained in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Beijing

⁶ See Turner, Catherine (2020) 'Soft Ways of Doing Hard Things: Women mediators and the question of gender in mediation' 8:4 Peacebuilding 282-401. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21647259.2019.1664369>

⁷ UN Doc S/2009/189 preamble.

Platform for Action, now in its 25th year⁸- as well as agreed normative frameworks such as Women Peace and Security (WPS) to which international organizations are committed. Most recently the Secretary General's Human Rights Call (2020) has committed to applying a gender lens to the work of the United Nations, including asking if women are in positions of leadership, and identifying and addressing gendered stereotypes which are holding them back.⁹ Therefore, a commitment to co-mediation as a mechanism for achieving gender parity in high-level mediation is simply a commitment to uphold institutional values and use existing strategies for achieving gender parity,¹⁰ including, if necessary, Temporary Special Measures.

A **Temporary Special Measure** is a mechanism that is used to accelerate de facto equality between men and women.¹¹ TSMs can include measures such as quotas, targeted recruitment, hiring and promotion, or setting numerical goals for the participation of women. The purpose of these measures is to address prevailing and persistent gender-based stereotypes and under-representation that affect women.¹² The measures are discontinued when equality has been achieved.

8 United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women: Beijing Platform for Action (1995) Strategic Objective G1. Requiring the United Nations to 'develop mechanisms to nominate women candidates for appointment to senior posts in the United Nations, the specialised agencies and other organisations and bodies of the United Nations System.'

9 United Nations (2020) The Highest Aspiration: A Call to Action on Human Rights. https://www.un.org/sg/sites/www.un.org.sg/files/atoms/files/The_Highest_Aspiration_A_Call_To_Action_For_Human_Right_English.pdf

10 Special Measures for the Achievement Of Gender Equality (ST/AI/1999/9 also Gender Equality A/I), to strengthen and expedite measures to achieve gender equality, especially in posts in the Professional category; Gender Equality A/I (ST/AI/1999/9), 1 October 1999; Secretary General Annual Report to the General Assembly (2012) 'Improvement of the status of women in the United Nations system' (A/67/347) stating that Special Measures are "procedures designed to accelerate the achievement of gender parity at the Professional levels and above" and the aim of these procedures is to ensure "gender balance in recruitment and promotion" and rectify "past and current forms and effects of discrimination against women"(para 67-68) The Secretary General reiterated that Special measures for gender equality would remain in effect until the "goal of gender parity is achieved, and would be sustained for a period of time" (para 67).

11 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women Art 4(1).

12 General recommendation No. 25, on article 4, paragraph 1, of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, on temporary special measures.

3. WHO ARE TO BE CONSIDERED PEACE PROCESS ‘MEDIATORS’?

There has been a rapid increase in the number of organisations offering peacemaking and peace support services in the past two decades. This has created what has been termed a ‘crowded field’¹³ of mediation organisations and the concept of who is a ‘mediator’ can depend on the way the process is constructed, the stage talks are at, and how the process of negotiation is unfolding. One reason for the lack of consistent data on the number of women in high-level mediation is that the term ‘mediator’ is subject to different understandings, both within the UN system itself, and across different international organisations. Mediation policy and practice has tended to define ‘mediator’ in narrow terms as only individual Envoys personally appointed by international organisations. By definition, the role of Envoy is occupied by a small political elite that almost entirely excluded women.¹⁴

a. The Political Envoy

Political Envoys sent by third party states, the UN and regional organisations to offer ‘good offices’ to assist conflict resolution are often involved in mediation between conflict parties. While the headline figures for women mediators are low, it is difficult to determine exactly how many women are playing mediation roles without being labelled as such, in part because it is not always easy to tell what Envoys are present, and who is genuinely ‘mediating’.

However, often political Envoys are the figure heads of international mediation initiatives. All of the major international and regional multilateral organisations – including the United Nations, the African Union, the European Union and the Arab League – appoint Envoys to represent them in peace processes. Many sub-regional organisations – such as the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) also engage Envoys. Appointments to these positions involve nomination of an individual to the position, followed

by endorsement of that person by the relevant political stakeholders.¹⁵

Envoys are political appointments. This means that they are discretionary, sitting outside the normal staffing rules and procedures of organisations. They are also open to political influence by Member States, notably in the UN Security Council members can shape appointments. As a result, Envoys tend to be drawn from the ranks of high-ranking politicians, such as former heads of state or foreign ministers, or high-ranking diplomats and as such, they are drawn from a relatively narrow pool. They may or may not have mediation experience, but use their power and influence to convene talks.

b. Special Representatives, Deputy Special Representatives, and related positions

A range of broader senior head of mission posts may, in practice, involve conducting mediation. In the case of the UN, the Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG) is tasked with leading a political mission or office on behalf of the UN. This may include engaging in mediation with local parties for example, to ensure compliance with agreements, development of further agreements, and managing recurrent or new sources of conflict,¹⁶ but the role is not formally designated as that of ‘mediator’. However there is increasing emphasis on the role of the SRSG in the sustaining peace agenda, and the need to co-ordinate activities across the system to support peace efforts.

c. Mediation Support Teams

Special Envoys and other senior personnel such as SRSGs are now routinely supported in their work by teams of professionalised experts, advisors and assistants whose role is to provide support on all aspects of mediation – from process design to substantive areas of concern such as gender sensitivity, power-sharing arrangements, or transitional justice, and the often highly challenging work of convening and logistics. These teams can be

¹³ David Lanz and Rachel Gasser (2013) ‘A Crowded Field: Competition and Co-ordination in International Peace Mediation’. Mediation Arguments No.2. Centre for Mediation in Africa. University of Pretoria.

¹⁴ Catherine Turner (2018) ‘Absent or Invisible? Women Mediators and the United Nations’ 9:2 Global Policy 244

¹⁵ Bart MJ Szewczyk (2015) ‘Choosing Envoys Wisely’ Global Peace Operations Review (November 23, 2015). <https://peaceoperationsreview.org/thematic-essays/choosing-envoys-wisely/> <Accessed 13 September 2020>

¹⁶ United Nations (2009) (S/2009/198)

appointed internally by the organisation, such as from mediation support units within organisations including the UN, the African Union, or IGAD, or they can be drawn from rosters of external experts who are available for support on a case-by-case basis. Increasingly, regional organisations and States are establishing dedicated units to co-ordinate and support the provision of technical expertise, creating an additional entry point into mediation and peace support practice.

d. State-led mediation

In addition to mediation undertaken by international and regional organisations, many States will also offer their own ‘good offices’ to parties in conflict. These appointments tend also to be political, drawn from the ranks of senior politicians or ambassadors. There have been a number of high-profile women engaged in these positions, notably from the United States, where the role of Foreign Secretary has been held by a woman. However on the whole women are under-represented in these roles, and so using them as a ‘pool’ for mediators builds-in these gender inequalities to appointment of international mediators.

Often mediation arises from a diplomatic function, and in some States - such as Germany and Switzerland- a model of co-ambassadorship already exists and could be used as a model for understanding co-mediation. Further, some States and their civil society partners are now promoting mechanisms such as Women’s Mediator Networks to try and increase the number of women involved in the peace mediation field, and to disrupt the male-dominated pipeline into senior positions by raising the profile of women for roles. These Networks seek to increase the visibility of the work of women mediators who are already experienced in high-level political and mediation processes and highlight their expertise in

the field, although their effectiveness as a recruitment ground for formal mediation roles remains to be seen.¹⁷

e. Track 1.5 Mediation

There is also now an expanding field of non-governmental peace support providers that can engage in mediation and offer support to peace and conflict prevention initiatives.¹⁸ The work undertaken by these actors is no less important than that which is undertaken in official processes. Non-governmental actors now undertake both Track 1, and track 2 mediation, often linking these efforts in what are known as Track 1.5 initiatives. They often have a flexible approach which can undertake vital formative work and secure agreements that other larger international organisations working within the constraints of member states cannot.¹⁹ These organisations are also of interest because they are the pipeline into the system where young and mid-career professionals develop their professional skills. The pool of available candidates therefore relies on strong and gender balanced teams at all levels within these organisations.

17 Key women mediator networks include: FEMWISE Africa (<https://globalwomenmediators.org/femwise-africa/>); the Arab Women Mediators Network - League of Arab States (<https://globalwomenmediators.org/awmn/>), the Mediterranean Women Mediators Network (<https://womenmediators.net/>), the Nordic Women Mediators Network (<https://nordicwomenmediators.org/>) and the Women Mediators across the Commonwealth (<https://www.c-r.org/programme/women-mediators-across-commonwealth>). These are all now included in a Global Alliance of Regional Women Mediator Networks (<https://globalwomen-mediators.org/>).

18 See Catherine Turner and Martin Wählisch (eds) (2021) *Rethinking Peace Mediation: Challenges of Contemporary Peace Making Practice* (Bristol University Press).

19 Such organisations include the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (CHD), Crisis Management Initiative (CMI), Intermediate, the Berghoff Foundation, and Conciliation Resources.

4. CONTINUED BARRIERS TO WOMEN ACCESSING TRACK 1 MEDIATION ROLES

While mediation roles and opportunities are increasingly diverse, there remain some persistent barriers to greater gender equality:

- Another key obstacle here is women's lack of representation at the highest level in related fields that are the pipeline of senior mediation. Lack of women heads of state, ministers, USG, ASGs, etc.
- Decreasing budgets and missions (in particular in the UN) can lead to 'recycling' of staff through missions, rather than new recruitment, perpetuating leadership that is still disproportionately male and creating a barrier to women's promotion.
- The mediator role is often to liaise between armed groups that are understood as mostly male, and often have gender stereotypical views of women, meaning that States may be reluctant to push women into such roles. There is strong evidence of a small number of male mediators repeatedly being involved in different mediation processes. Indeed, as negotiations in conflict situations are not only sensitive but also often arise rapidly, organisations tend to reach out to the same mediators over and

over, with past experience being considered an essential prerequisite.

- A general culture of secrecy in the field leads to a lack of transparency as to who is doing what form of mediation, and where women are present.
- Entrenched views about what forms of 'inclusion' the process can bear, including the appointment of new or female mediators, or adopting novel forms of mediation (such as co-mediation) are difficult to challenge.
- The pipeline from political positions into mediation positions reduces the number of women, by virtue of the low number of women in high-ranking political and diplomatic positions more generally, and shrinking mission sizes, which can lead to senior men in the system being disproportionately given new mission jobs.

Against this backdrop, could co-mediation offer mechanisms capable of surmounting these criticisms, and creating a specific, measurable, accountable and time bound (SMART) approach to gender representation in mediation?

5. THE MODEL OF CO-MEDIATION

This paper considers two possible options for co-mediation:

1. Co-mediation where two people are appointed on an equal basis to lead a mediation.
2. Co-mediation by a Panel of mediators who bring complementary skills and expertise, and more diverse backgrounds to the role.

Co-mediation as a Temporary Special Measure responds to a number of barriers created by the current system:

- Narrow understandings of what counts as relevant experience (often related to high political office) create gender-based stereotypes that affect women.
- The lack of elasticity about the value of transferable experience versus experience as necessary qualities in a conflict mediator that privilege those already senior inside the system, who are predominantly men.
- The influence of Member States who prioritise State interest over merit and diversity considerations.
- Criteria for promotion within the UN system that requires experience in field positions that are often more difficult for women to take and to be considered.

This report suggests that all high-level mediation appointments, across the UN, regional organisations and private diplomacy actors, should be made on the basis of gender parity. We have been asked to explore whether and how the appointment of co-mediators could achieve this.

Co-mediation could usefully serve three purposes in respect of senior mediation appointments.

1. Co-mediation (one man, one woman) would be a Temporary Special Measure to ensure the appointment of equal numbers of men and women in mediation leadership roles.

Co-mediation:

- Combines the skills of a number of people
- Brings an extra pair of eyes and ears to complex conversations
- Brings diversity of skills, experience and expertise to the process
- Increases the chances of parties establishing trust with one or more of the mediators by seeing themselves represented
- Reduces the potential impact of mediator bias on the process
- Enables mediators to take care of what is happening inside and outside the room and have a shared understanding of those dynamics
- Provides peer support to the mediators as they engage parties in difficult conversations
- Creates opportunities for the mentoring of new mediators

The need for geographic and religious diversity has shaped high-level appointments, and while the need for gender diversity has been well acknowledged in policy, it has been much less observed in practice. Co-mediation would establish gender parity as routine practice, directly addressing the historically male-dominated nature of the field, and the gendered stereotypes affecting women mediators. As a TSM, co-mediation could be used until the 'playing field' is more representative and more equitable for women.

2. Co-mediation by a Panel of experts could usefully address the need for a more intersectional approach to inclusion.

Whereas co-mediation between two people prioritises the need for gender parity, the appointment of a panel of mediators offers the opportunity to combine a more diverse range of backgrounds, skills and expertise. A

model for how this might work is the Panel of Eminent African Personalities which mediated the post-election conflict in Kenya in 2007. This panel, mandated by the African Union, combined authority derived from international reputation with geographic proximity and gendered insights from experience in the region. The team brought together diverse diplomatic and conflict resolution skills and was able to draw on a depth of experience in the region to establish their credibility.²⁰ Panels address not only gender balance but also the need for cross cultural representativeness and legitimacy. By moving from the idea of 'co-mediation' as being two people and focused on a gender binary, it addresses the need for greater intersectionality and representation in mediation appointments.

3. Co-mediation, by two or more people, would reflect the need to diversify leadership styles and recruit people with different but complementary leadership skills to mediation posts.

It is increasingly recognised that a range of different skills and competencies is needed for a successful mediation process. The professionalisation of senior leadership recruitment and the recognition of the need for skills, such as emotional intelligence, is a welcome development.²¹ Senior mediation appointments have tended to prioritise political skills and personal attributes such as power and authority at the expense of other skills such as communication and emotional intelligence. Both sets of skills are needed in mediation, and they are not always easily combined in the same person. Therefore, the appointment of co-mediators who together combine these skills, can strengthen mediation capacity by working as a team.

In the context of the barriers faced by women in peace mediation, a commitment to gender parity through co-mediation models would also be a commitment to a more inclusive leadership style that recognises the value of diverse skills and competences. It should be noted that co-mediation will make little difference to the style of leadership or prevalent gender-based stereotypes in the field of peace mediation unless it is coupled with a greater emphasis on diversity in the recruitment and

promotion of mediators more generally.²² One way to achieve diversity is to move towards a more transparent process of skills-based recruitment which prioritises the necessary skills for mediation over other considerations.

4. Co-mediation as a step towards inclusive leadership

Commitments to gender parity in mediation and peace process support must be operationalised, both for senior political appointments and across the different levels of peace process support. Political leadership within all the organisations and state who appoint leaders will be required to challenge attitudes that women are not suitable mediators. This leadership is needed both on the part of multilateral organisations and on the part of Member States, through their support for women candidates through an open and transparent nomination and appointment process. Possible ways to achieve this include:

- Increasing the transparency of the nomination and appointments process.
- Using co-mediation as a Temporary Special Measure to appoint senior mediators on a co-mediation basis of two or more people appointed on a co-equal basis with a view to combining diverse skills and competencies within the team.
- Reviewing the current Terms of Reference (ToRs) for senior mediation posts to ensure they match the requirements of inclusive leadership.
- Making proven commitment to principles of human rights and gender equality a mandatory competence.
- Recruiting from both within the system and externally, to find the most suitable candidates.
- Establishing a high-level independent review panel to scrutinise senior political appointments.²³

Peace process support is an important professional field. The range of issues and the types of conflicts that are prevalent today require an investment in the next generation of peace mediators. This means identifying a

20 See Juma, M K (2009), 'African Mediation of the Kenyan Post-2007 Election Crisis' 27:3 *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 407-430

21 Joensson, J (2017), 'Strengthening the Selection, Preparation, Support and Appraisal of Senior Leadership in UN Peace Operations' Policy Brief 2017: 3.

22 See <https://cic.nyu.edu/UN-Senior-Appointments-Dashboard> for data on the need to increase diversity generally, but in particular in relation to geographic influence.

23 Many of these recommendations, including the specific review panel recommendation were made by the Report of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations on uniting our strengths for peace: politics, partnership and people, A/70/95, S/2015/446. New York: UN, pp 40-42, available at https://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/2015/446.

broader range of skills to engage effectively with more diverse conflict parties and stakeholders (e.g. languages, technological and social media skills, analytical depth, conflict sensitivity and cultural nuance, and more). In addition to parity in senior appointments, gender parity is needed in senior positions within mediation support teams, irrespective of whether they are part of a multilateral organisation, attached to a State, or a private diplomacy organisation. This is necessary because:

1. It addresses the blocked and 'leaky' pipelines for women into senior leadership positions;
2. It cultivates a new generation of peacemakers; and,
3. It generates an institutional culture of respect for diversity, challenging implicit biases and preferences for certain types of people, outlooks, experiences, education, and skills.

One way of achieving this is to ensure that the process of skills or 'competency' based recruitment and promotion accurately reflects the range of skills necessary in peace support.²⁴

Of particular importance is the need to challenge adversarial models of mediation, and work towards a diversity of approaches to conflict resolution. A process clearly based on skills and competency can also support the appearance of neutrality of the mediator, rather than one that understands the mediator as appointed because external parties with vested interests in the conflict or region were prioritised over those with more diverse mediation experience, contextual understandings of the conflict and mediation skills.

A commitment to more diverse teams requires an audit of what skills – including 'soft' skills - are necessary to deliver a successful mediation initiative, and the use of a much broader spectrum of skills and expertise within the mediation team. This focus on diversity, transferable experience and competence rather than gender also helps to challenge gendered assumptions about the type of skills women and men bring to mediation and the favouring of some skills as more important than others. For example, traditional processes which favour seniority over expertise, which require significant time spent in 'hardship' postings, and the re-deployment of existing staff, all serve to reinforce gendered barriers to women's participation in mediation at all levels. The roles of SRSRG and DSRSRG are important in this context, and offer scope

Skills based recruitment:

- Increases the transparency of the process by which people access positions in the peace mediation field
- Helps to overcome structural biases within the system which favours certain types of people and certain types of skills
- Enables greater diversity within mediation teams not only in relation to gender, but also age, language, ethnicity and other identity lines
- Shifts the emphasis on recruitment towards competency in the skills needed for effective mediation
- Challenges the gendered division that emerges between men doing the mediation and women enabling it in support roles that are considered to be less prestigious
- Takes a forward-looking approach to the need to develop a new generation of mediators

for greater acknowledgement and development of the mediation functions of these positions which means different skills and expertise, and life experience, are important for these roles including more transparent and competitive recruitment processes that contribute to giving women access to the 'playing field'. A skills-based audit and review of the competencies required for mediation in the twenty first century would highlight the ways in which traditional approaches have been exclusionary.

Embedding these principles throughout the system – from political Envoys to private Track 1.5 actors and mediation support teams - is needed to ensure that gender parity in junior positions is maintained in senior positions and that women are not being squeezed out of the system before they become eligible for senior political appointments. Peace process support, including mediation support teams, is one way of delivering an early intervention to ensure that investment is being made in the right people and the right skills to allow the field of peace mediation to adapt to new realities.

²⁴ See Catherine Turner & Fleur Heyworth, (2019), 'Advancing Inclusive Mediation Through the Lens of Leadership' Strategic Security Analysis No. 4. (Geneva Centre for Security Policy).

5. Institutional benefits of the model of co-mediation

Adopting the model of co-mediation as one approach to increasing gender parity in high-level for peacemaking offers the following benefits to international organisations:

a. *Working within the system*

- A political commitment to parity, achieved through the use of co-mediation, builds on existing legal and normative commitments already made by international organisations and their Member States. Committing to co-mediation does not rely on any normative commitment beyond what has already been agreed.
- Adoption of the model of co-mediation makes a strong statement of commitment to the values of international organisations and of international law. Such a commitment is an opportunity to enhance the representational leadership of adopting organisations and States.
- Co-mediation is a single and straightforward model around which renewed efforts to increase the number of women in mediation could coalesce. From this perspective, focusing efforts on one discrete mechanism is easier than working with a number of diverse approaches. While it doesn't remove the need for a range of approaches to increasing diversity in mediation appointments, it could be used as an alternative to the status quo of a single male mediator until such times as other models and approaches begin to make an impact.
- Co-mediation as an approach is easily explained, easy to mandate, and easy to monitor. Clear guidelines can be provided that gradually move bureaucracies and individual actors from a place of compliance towards embedding parity through co-mediation as an ideal.
- Co-mediation could alleviate some of the political pressures on the appointment process, as there would be more 'senior posts' to go around, and if inclusion of women was key to one of the two appointments, then this could reshape State nominations to all posts.

b. *Improving mediation processes*

- The model of co-mediation could bring about a fairly immediate change in the representation of women in senior roles and signal the importance of their inclusion in peace processes more generally.
 - Increasing the number of mediators responsible for process design could encourage greater attention to broader aspects of inclusion. For example, different mediators within a Panel could be dedicated to specific aspects of the process, including the diplomatic aspects and the inclusion aspects such as ensuring connections between track 1, track 2 and track 3 mediation spaces.²⁵ This would help to align design process more closely with the expectations of parties and external stakeholders.
 - Appointing more women could enhance the diversity of skills, experiences, and leadership and management approaches within the peace mediation field. Including women as co-mediators on an equal basis would make a statement that different types of skills and experiences are equally necessary and equally valued.
 - Increasing the number of women in mediation roles would significantly increase their visibility in that role, with the potential for challenging negative stereotypes and shifting attitudes towards women's suitability for political leaderships roles writ large.
- ### c. *Signalling equality as important to peace processes more widely*
- Puts pressure on the parties, and does not undermine UN and international organisation messaging regarding the importance of the peace process including women.

6. Risks and challenges with the model of co-mediation

a. *Effectiveness*

- It is not guaranteed that requiring co-mediation in the sense of two or more co-equal, co-tasked, individuals, will create effective working partnerships in all cases. Some senior mediators, for example, have raised the issue that the 'buck must stop somewhere', and that 'pure' mediation depends on building relationships of trust with the mediator, which might be difficult if there were two or more

²⁵ See Bell C and C Turner (2021), 'Track One Mediation in Peace and Transition Processes: Models for Women's Inclusion'. (UN Women)

‘chief mediators’. There are risks of personality clashes, and with one mediator dominating or being unwilling to embrace the model. There is also the risk that leadership and management styles clash rather than complement each-other.

- Employing two or more senior mediators instead of one, increases the cost of the position. In a time of constrained budgets and with little evidence of tangible success from high-level mediators, it could be argued that money could be better invested in other peace support activities. This could potentially be mitigated through the removal of a ‘deputy’ post.
- The appointment of co-mediators would be subject to the same political considerations as the current system of Envoy appointments, and increasing the number of top-level posts may not alleviate this pressure. The risk applies equally to the appointment of women as it does to men, and the co-mediation commitment would be likely to be expanded to other forms of representation, meaning that it might ultimately not bring more women, but more men.
- There is a risk that in the division of tasks within the team, tasks perceived to be less important or less prestigious are assigned to the woman, leaving her open to the allegation that she is not an equal contributor in the mediation, or to being side-lined or pushed into a default ‘deputy’ role, diminishing her influence as a result. There is a particular risk that the woman would be given the portfolios that are perceived to be ‘soft’, such as gender, thus perpetuating gender-based stereotypes about women mediators.
- Where a co-mediation team is assigned to a conflict where the political and cultural context is hostile to women in political roles, there is a risk of informal bias where the parties work de facto with the man and not the woman, regardless of the mandate. This may also be tacitly encouraged by external parties who have influence with the conflict parties and who are hostile to the WPS Agenda more broadly. Such a situation would result in the exclusion of the woman from a position of leadership and influence within the process and undermines the utility of the co-mediation model. A key test for the model is how the male co-mediator, to whom the parties are relating, chooses to deal with this exclusion- whether he chooses to allow it to continue, or chooses

to challenge it and insist on the woman’s full participation and emphasise her equal authority.

b. Gender Sensitivity

- Co-mediation would increase the symbolic representation of women, but would not necessarily increase the gender expertise available to, or gender responsiveness of, the mediation efforts. Counting the number of women in Envoy or SRSG positions could become a tick-box exercise that suggests progress on enhancing inclusivity in peace mediation but which conceals deeper problems in relation to women’s inclusion more broadly. Ensuring gender inclusivity in process design and outcomes requires an emphasis not on the gender of the mediator, but on their commitment to values, and legal and normative standards on gender equality.
- There is likely to be some pressure on women mediators to be seen to be advancing a gender agenda, which may conflict with their own professional identity or background.
- There is a risk to women mediators that a perception will arise that they were appointed on the basis of gender equality only, and not on the basis of merit. Such a perception can be used to undermine and challenge women’s authority, although it is often alleged as a barrier to all types of Special Temporary Measures, even those which have, in practice, proved effective in bringing strong and competent female leadership.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. **Commit to support for ongoing efforts to reach gender parity in high-level mediation appointments**

- b. Continue to build on successful parity initiatives to date, including commitments to target dates for achieving parity in high-level mediators
- c. Seek to limit State influence in seeking to appoint 'preferred' candidates over ones with the best skills for the job, and who best reflect the diversity of the populations served by the international organisations
- d. Commit to transparency in the appointment process
- e. Challenge States and conflict parties where they are unwilling to engage with women mediators.

2. **Have clear and publicly available Terms of Reference for all mediator positions across all organisations.**

- a. Ensure that these Terms of Reference include some mandate to include women in the negotiation and ensure that they adopt a 'gender perspective' (as required by UNSCR 1325), including, if possible, a reference to implementation on UNSCR 1325.
- b. Ensure an integrated approach to gender inclusive mediation, including not only women mediators but expert gender advisors (with gender expertise and process design skills) and institutional commitments to women's representation and participation in peace processes, and in effective and high-quality consultation mechanisms and processes.
- c. Ensure that responsibility for gender sensitivity does not a priori fall on women mediators but is shared equally by the co-mediation team.

3. **Have clear and transparent skills requirements of mediators, which, where appropriate, can be met by 'non-traditional' entrants.**

- a. Review skills and competencies for recruitment to all mediation positions to remove exclusionary criteria and ensure diversity of experience.
- b. Include commitment to women's equality as a core competence in the selection process.

- c. Ensure that periodic performance review tracks against the Terms of Reference for the mediation position.

4. **Adopt Temporary Special Measures, including where necessary of co-mediation, or Panels of mediators, to ensure rapid gender parity in senior mediation roles**

- a. Use Temporary Special Measures to appoint senior mediators with complementary leadership skills and experience (building on UN Secretary General's Human Rights call).
- b. Require equal nominations from Member States, and balance on short-lists
- c. Engage with mechanisms such as regional Women's Mediator Networks to identify external candidates for positions, and ensure that candidates selected from the Networks are given clear political support for their nomination from the nominating State and regional organisations.
- d. Include gender experts in the selection panel for senior mediation appointments to interview each candidate with a view to (a) informing them of the spectrum of the job, to be sure that they are willing (b) test their credentials (c) test their commitment to values such as gender equality. This could be re-enforced by a 'pre-screening' panel, to push candidates on their commitment to the role.

5. **Invest in gender parity for the future across the mediation system, developing a more equal new generation of mediators**

- a. Review recruitment and promotion criteria to remove exclusionary requirements and practices, and place an emphasis on transferable insights and experiences, diverse work and life histories.
- b. Invest in a 'mediator' training track within international organisations, which targets in particular, under-represented groups such as women.

- 6. Commit to sharing data on women in senior mediation positions from 2011 to 2020 to ensure that from 2021 onwards a contemporary baseline is in place from which to gauge progress.**
 - a. Encourage private and non-governmental bodies involved in mediation to adopt public codes of practice which include gender diversity in mediation, and to publish statistics on women in their organisations
- 7. Review whether existing rosters and women's mediator networks could have a more formal role in proposals, interview and selection processes for international or regional mediators.**
 - a. Ensure that the establishment of women's mediator networks is tied to clear mechanisms for improving gender representation in mediation by the supporting State and/or regional organisations.