

MEETING REPORT

# WOMEN'S MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION IN PEACE PROCESSES

## MODALITIES AND STRATEGIES ACROSS TRACKS

29-30 November 2018  
Geneva, Switzerland

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Global peace has been in decline for four consecutive years, with the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region having numerous high-intensity armed conflicts and regarded as the world's least peaceful region. Despite significant efforts by the UN and others, including civil society and regional organizations, high-level peace processes in the region remain largely stalled and women's meaningful participation limited, hampering the likelihood of reaching a durable agreement. Indeed, making strides towards women's effective participation and gender-inclusive peace processes continues to be a persistent challenge with relatively little progress since the passing of the landmark Security Council resolution 1325 on women, peace and security (WPS).

In November 2018, UN Women convened the conference 'Women's Meaningful Participation in Peace Processes: Modalities and Strategies Across Tracks' with support from the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development. Discussions included over 60 practitioners, analysts, and advocates from around the globe, including the MENA region. It provided an opportunity to explore good practices on modalities and strategies to secure women's meaningful participation in peace processes, with a strong emphasis on contributing toward new and existing peacemaking efforts in the MENA region. The primary focus was to explore innovations, trends and challenges in the interplay between official, high-level processes at the track 1 level and unofficial processes in which civil society often plays a leadership role at the track 2 level.

While no report can fully do justice to the extensive and varied discussions over the course of two days, this document highlights key thematic areas, ideas and issues raised, as well as recommendations for greater progress. Topics discussed ranged from the continued need to ensure women's direct participation at track 1 level, the role of gender commissions and women's advisory boards and the challenges associated with promoting gender-inclusive peace agreements. Moreover, to share knowledge and experiences in under-explored and often critical areas in high-level peace processes, three comparative learning sessions were held in parallel on women's meaningful participation and gender-inclusivity in the pre-talks phase of mediation efforts, ceasefire arrangements and political power-sharing agreements. In addition to the recommendations

developed from these three sessions, overarching recommendations have also been presented to guide future efforts. They are summarized as follows:

1. Foster formal and informal linkages across peace tracks
2. Explore all efforts to ensure women's direct and meaningful participation in high-level peace processes
3. Develop and share gender-sensitive knowledge that addresses key gap areas
4. Promote gender inclusivity and expertise in peace agreements at all stages
5. Provide gender-responsive budgeting and core civil society funding

Building on the prior discussions and efforts of many others working to create feminist change in this space, the recommendations offered here are designed to re-emphasize and/or suggest further opportunities for coordination, prioritization and strategic investment. The moment now brings renewed energy and momentum to address the gaps and obstacles for conflict prevention, management and resolution in the framework of the upcoming 20th anniversary of UN Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action (1995) in 2020. Transformative and deeply inclusive approaches to deliver positive peace are urgently needed, and there is no better time than now.

# INTRODUCTION

Global peace has been in decline for four consecutive years, with the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region having numerous high-intensity armed conflicts and regarded as the world's least peaceful region.<sup>1</sup> Despite significant efforts by the UN and others, including civil society and regional organizations, high-level peace processes in the region remain largely stalled and women's meaningful participation and influence in official processes limited. This under-representation and participation of women has a deleterious effect on prospects for reaching durable agreements.<sup>2</sup> In the context of a large number of protracted conflicts and stalled peace processes in the MENA region and across the world, women and communities affected by violent conflict, peace and security practitioners and decision-makers are increasingly calling for transformative approaches to conflict resolution, including the need for more inclusivity, stronger coordination amongst a broader array of actors and a consistent commitment to preventative approaches.<sup>3</sup>

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## Multi-track processes & linkages across tracks

In considering tracks 1 and 2, multi-track processes are considered to exist wherever there is a high-level mediation effort concurrent with efforts by community and civil society leaders to build peace, typically in parallel. While the efforts can be connected, they frequently occur separately and in parallel due to a range of challenges, including coordination among and across many actors, the constraints of confidentiality and competition for resources and attribution of efforts, amongst other factors.

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1 Global Peace Index 2018 (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2018).

2 Statement by the President of the Security Council on the Maintenance of international peace and security (S/PRST/2018/1); Jana Krause, Werner Krause and Piiä Braenfors. 2018. Women's Participation in Peace Negotiations and the Durability of Peace. *International Interactions*, 44:6, 985-1016.

3 E.g. United Nations and World Bank, *Pathways for Peace: Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict* (World Bank, 2018).

Even where there are linkages across different peace process tracks—through points of influence, communication and feedback loops between tracks—there is a difference between those that reflect formal, track 1-led initiatives under the framework of a broader mediation strategy and those that occur less formally with civil society in the ‘driver’s seat’ aiming to influence track 1 decision-making without necessarily having a formal mandate to do so. Each may occur using different strategies and approaches and will likely reap distinct and ideally complementary results.<sup>4</sup>

Whatever their precise shape, linkages with track 1 are particularly important since, despite all the efforts, women and other segments of society, such as youth, tend to be largely excluded and present in greater numbers and influence at the informal level rather than the formal. Acknowledging that efforts to promote inclusive participation within each track should continue, conference discussions focused on the idea of building linkages to identify good practices and transformative approaches that serve to broaden the ways in which inclusivity is considered. These discussions occurred in the context of largely stalled efforts around the world to build peace and increased attention toward the idea of creating linkages across tracks to promote conflict resolution and revitalize faltering political processes.

Evidence increasingly suggests that where peace negotiations are stalled, track 2 actors—including women’s rights groups and leaders—can add pressure toward reigniting talks through, for example, broad-based coalitions and public mobilization.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, women and civil society leaders may be more likely to raise issues concerning human rights and justice, that are imperative in building sustainable peace, but may not otherwise be raised by the male-dominated,

conflict parties in their official negotiations. Track 1.5 and 2 activities can also serve as smaller-scale forums for dialogue, problem solving and issue framing, increasing levels of confidence between parties to a conflict and even going as far as possibly creating political space for the conflict parties to engage in technical discussions.<sup>6</sup> Finally, when information and perspectives are regularly exchanged between tracks 1 and 2, it can help actors—civil society and women’s groups as well as track 1 actors—to “sharpen their ideas, ground their positions in reality, and develop the relationships necessary to have their vision of peace better represented in final agreements.”<sup>7</sup> For track 1 actors in particular, greater information-sharing and feedback with track 2 counterparts can help to design inclusive and effective processes, promote ownership and thereby encourage long-term sustainability for any outcome(s) achieved.

There is a critical need to deepen thinking, policy and practice on the linkages that can exist between track 1 and 2 levels.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, conference participants exchanged knowledge and perspectives relating to the status of peace processes globally and in the MENA region, as well as strategies and challenges to women’s meaningful participation across different tracks and modalities in Colombia, Cyprus, Georgia, Iraq, Kenya, Kosovo, Libya, Myanmar, Nepal, Northern Ireland, Syria and Yemen.<sup>9</sup> Through enhanced comparative knowledge and shared learning, a variety of insights and recommendations relating to the specificities of challenges and opportunities for advancing women’s meaningful participation within and across peace tracks were discussed. The conference also included an active learning element with three parallel, pilot learning sessions on the following themes: (1) preparation phase for peace talks; (2) ceasefire arrangements; and (3) political power-sharing agreements.

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4 Building linkages and entry points for influence between tracks should not be restricted to initiatives coming from the formal level or at the expense of the continuing and urgent need to protect and fund civil society for independent organizing and mobilization.

5 Thania Paffenholz et. al, *Making Women Count* (UN Women, 2016).

6 Christina Buchhold et al., *Oslo Forum 2018: The End of the Big Peace? Opportunities for Mediation* (2018), p.14.

7 Anjali Dayal, *Connecting Informal and Formal Peace Talks: From Movements to Mediators* (Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security, 2018), p.3. Noting, however, that the author only refers to these benefits for track 2 actors.

8 At a June 2018 workshop organized by UN Women with women from Iraq, Syria and Yemen, participants repeatedly raised the need to focus on creating linkages between all tracks of peace processes.

## A timely juncture

The event occurred at a timely juncture in global policy on the women, peace and security (WPS) agenda. It drew from the outcomes of the Global Study on the Implementation of UN Security Council resolution 1325 and the sustaining peace resolutions,<sup>10</sup> **while also building upon the latest UN** Secretary-General's annual report on women and peace and security<sup>11</sup> and an expert group meeting titled 'Women's Meaningful Participation in Negotiating Peace and the Implementation of Peace Agreements', which provided inputs for the Secretary-General on this topic and provided much needed clarity on a core concept and demand that is at the heart of the WPS agenda.<sup>12</sup>

There is now a renewed momentum to focus on the progress and remaining gaps related to this central pillar of the WPS agenda and consider upcoming opportunities to advocate for transformative and inclusive approaches in conflict prevention, management and resolution in the framework of the upcoming 20th anniversary of UN Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action (1995) in 2020.

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9 References to Kosovo shall be understood in full compliance with UN Security Council resolution 1244 (1999).

10 General Assembly resolution 70/262(2016) and Security Council resolutions 2282(2016) and 2413 (2018).

11 Report of the UN Secretary-General on women and peace and security (S/2018/900).

12 Women's Meaningful Participation in Negotiating Peace and the Implementation of Peace Agreements: Report of the Expert Group Meeting (UN Women, 2018).



# WOMEN'S INCLUSIVITY IN PEACE PROCESSES: KEY LESSONS LEARNED, EMERGING TRENDS AND PRIORITIES

While track 2 processes have served as a relatively productive, safe and more accessible space for women to put forward their recommendations and advocate for their priorities, there is a question about whether track 2 has effectively become a 'glass ceiling' for women's participation with much rhetoric associated with women's important roles at the local level that is not translated into consistent commitments to women's participation at all levels of peace processes. Discussions acknowledged the value of building linkages between tracks. At the same time, noting the persistently low levels of access and participation in formal peace processes by women, discussions had a strong focus on women's direct participation at the track 1 level.

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## Comparison of women's participation across tracks

A representative from Georgetown University's Institute for Women, Peace and Security shared the results of a new study on global trends of women's inclusion in peace processes, helping to frame the nature of the challenges for women's meaningful participation. The study found that 38 out of 63 post-Cold War peace processes have identifiable informal initiatives, of which almost three-fourths (27/38) have clear evidence of involvement from identifiable women's groups. The research found that more than half of all peace processes are accompanied by informal efforts, and most informal peace processes involve concerted efforts by women's groups to forge peace.<sup>13</sup>

This stark difference in women's participation across formal and informal processes was reflected in discussions. Participants highlighted the many ways in which women contribute to building peace at track 2 and track 3 levels. For example, women have played a notable role promoting social cohesion in Iraqi communities affected by Da'esh, bringing people together from different backgrounds to overcome factionalism and division in their societies.

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<sup>13</sup> For further details on the research discussed, please see Anjali Dayal, Connecting Informal and Formal Peace Talks: From Movements to Mediators (Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security, 2018).

The priorities being addressed by women in these informal tracks range from issues of human rights, justice and community rebuilding, which are key issues that are often not effectively and holistically raised and addressed in track 1 processes. By creating multiple and deeper connections between across tracks, it is more likely that these critical concerns will be raised in high-level processes as well.

### **Barriers to women's direct and meaningful participation**

Looking at the formal, high-level and the continued need for increased direct and meaningful participation by women, participants highlighted specific challenges. First, many participants highlighted the additional scrutiny that women receive related to their qualifications, experience and skills, which is not equally applied to men participating in peace processes. This serves to disregard women's active roles and abilities in negotiating peace at all levels and ignores the unique experience of violent conflict on their lives. Other participants shared their experiences of being told that politics are 'a dirty and corrupt business' with no place for women. Second, women from conflict-affected countries face many practical obstacles to their attendance at negotiations held outside their countries (e.g. Italy, Kuwait). Participants pointed to the frequent need to obtain visas on short notice, as well as the failure of hosts and organizers of such talks to invite and support their participation. These concerns echo those raised in the aforementioned 2018 expert group meeting about the need to lower the practical hurdles to women's participation. Women may not always be able to organize or fund last-minute travel with late invitations and tight timeframes, and they may be faced with family care responsibilities and other personal obligations.<sup>14</sup>

### **Overcoming Barriers**

Participants exchanged strategies and good practice in promoting women's inclusion in peace processes in their own countries. In Kosovo, in response to their marginalization from the formal conflict resolution processes, hundreds of thousands of women from different backgrounds and political views formed a movement to advocate for the end of the war. This activism gained women credibility and ultimately helped to bring some form of women's representation to the negotiation process, albeit belatedly. The example of Northern Ireland was also cited. There, the activism of the women's movement led to significant women's participation in the lead up to the signing of the Good Friday Agreement in 1998, including the formation of the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition, which secured two seats in the Northern Ireland Forum for Political Dialogue. This Forum was the body for all-party talks which eventually negotiated the Good Friday Agreement in 1998.

### **Considering various actors**

Generally, participants from conflict-affected countries noted that women's participation in political decision-making was not well established pre-war and further complicated during war as the 'logic' of gender roles still largely restricts women in public life. In contexts where there are international and regional actors involved in an intra-state conflict, the obstacles for women's participation can be even greater because international and regional decision-makers can be an additional layer removed, inaccessible and unsupportive depending on their principles and approach for engagement. The differing roles of regional actors was discussed in depth.

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<sup>14</sup> Women's Meaningful Participation in Negotiating Peace and the Implementation of Peace Agreements: Report of the Expert Group Meeting (UN Women, 2018), p.12.

For example, in considering Yemen and other country situations, a strong call was made to end the sale of weapons that are fuelling many of the conflicts in the region.

Indeed, the nature of conflict and the variety of actors involved should be fully engaged to support gender equality, inclusivity, diversity and effective representation of all affected populations. Members of the business community, religious groups and academia are frequently seen playing a diverse set of roles in peace processes. A Colombian participant noted the need for an evaluation of the political power of multi-national corporations who participated in the ongoing Colombian peace process. Similarly, the role and influence of the media as either supporters for, or deterrents to, women's efforts in various peace tracks was raised by participants from several countries. In considering Cyprus, it was suggested that the media was largely a hindrance for women's efforts at the track 2 level, as it painted an image of these efforts as 'soft work' and irrelevant to the high-level.

Acknowledging the many barriers to women's meaningful participation across regions, a rise in women mediator networks was cited as one positive global trend. These largely take the form of regional networks, such as the Network of African Women in Conflict Prevention and Mediation (FemWise-Africa) and the Mediterranean Women Mediators Network (MWMN).<sup>15</sup> Indeed, the role of mediators, whatever the gender they may identify with, can be influential in peace processes, including by helping to build the necessary bridges between different processes and tracks, facilitating the inclusion of women and others, as well as their diverse perspectives and group interests. In Colombia, Norway played a notable role as a facilitator in promoting inclusivity by supporting women's direct participation at the peace table along with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia, FARC) and Government, which ultimately influenced the text of the final peace agreement. The Gender Sub-Commission then played a powerful role in formulating gender-sensitive inputs to peace agreement text, highlighting the multifaceted nature of efforts to secure gender-inclusive peace processes.<sup>16</sup>

## Pushing ahead

Many participants urged that women need to create the space for their participation when broader political will to do so is lacking. A common theme that emerged was the need to push for inclusion predicated on the fact that women will rarely be given or offered opportunities to participate without advocating for their own representation. A popular saying that was repeated by Middle Eastern participants from Iraq and Syria was: "If they close the door, you come in through the window."

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In this sense, the whole notion of peace process 'tracks' should be interrogated. Women can and do work across these often-theoretical divisions in fluid and strategic ways. There is also a need to remain open and imaginative about the very conception of what a high-level peace process looks like, rather than limiting the discussion to thinking about women's meaningful participation within an existing model. Participants suggested that a holistic intervention to push forward women's meaningful participation with feminist approaches is best, however that may be contextually imagined, pursuing multiple entry points and mixed methods simultaneously. For example, a women's advisory board mechanism could be combined with a gender quota, knowledge generation and capacity development for men and women in subject matter areas where gender-sensitive analysis is often non-existent (e.g. decentralization), along with financial support to civil society for organizing and mobilization. Meanwhile, a third-party civil society organization may lead a country-wide consultation process, and the recommendations from there could prove valuable and essential to building positive and lasting peace. The key to high impact is coordination, communication and collaboration across the tracks.

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15 In practice, women mediator network members offer either direct experience in mediation and/or the broader array of skillsets and experiences that are valuable in supporting inclusive peace processes.

16 Dag Nylander and Hilde Salvesen, *Towards an Inclusive Peace: Women and the Gender Approach in the Colombian Peace Process* (NOREF, 2017).

# COMMISSIONS AND ADVISORY BOARDS: VALUE AND CHALLENGES

The establishment of gender commissions and women's advisory boards to support track 1 peace processes is a relatively new phenomenon. With the replication of these models amidst a continued resistance to women's direct participation, conference participants demonstrated increased interest and debate in their empirical roles, contributions and limitations. Discussions explored the roles of gender commissions (Colombia, Sri Lanka) and women's advisory boards or similar groups (Syria, Yemen and proposed for Iraq at the time of the conference<sup>17</sup>) in peace processes and their potential for advancing women's meaningful participation, promoting the integration of gender perspectives and creating linkages across tracks. While a number of these mechanisms have enabled more diverse priorities, needs and perspectives of women to be brought into peace negotiations and processes more broadly amidst tremendous resistance to women's direct inclusion, they do not serve as a substitute for direct participation. A concern is that these mechanisms may relegate women to indirect roles with limited influence (women's advisory boards in particular). It is, however, important to consider their purpose and context amongst other factors. To date, gender commissions have been established as part of the negotiation architecture to promote gender mainstreaming, while the advisory boards and similar groups have been developed and/or supported by UN lead mediators to remedy the steep exclusion of women from negotiations and decision-making.

Moreover, these mechanisms are not invariable in their design and functioning and have the potential to evolve over time. They are established using different modalities with varying objectives, memberships, timeframes, ways of working and ultimately different impacts. Women in these mechanisms have also played vital roles in keeping a focus on women's direct participation as part of the ultimate standard to meet.

## Comparative examples

Discussions included reflections of both the challenges and successes of these mechanisms, while considering the different ways in which these mechanisms have been designed and operationalized in each context. In the case of Sri Lanka, the Sub-Commission for Gender Issues (SGI) was created in 2002, during the third round of negotiations in Oslo, as one of four committees engaged in the formal peace process. The main function of the Sub-Commission was to support gender mainstreaming, formally reporting to the plenary of the peace talks. However, the SGI was not able to realize its potential as the official talks quickly collapsed in 2003.<sup>18</sup>

The Gender Sub-Commission in Colombia was formed in 2014. As it was created two years into the process, there were established negotiations in which to feed inputs. It also managed to play a role in re-igniting the talks when they were at risk of stalling; this was in part

<sup>17</sup> The Women's Advisory Group on Reconciliation and Politics for Iraq was established in March 2019.

<sup>18</sup> Kumudini Samuel, *The Importance of Autonomy: Women and the Sri Lankan Peace Negotiations* (Women at the Peace Table: Asia Pacific Opinion Series, Issue No. 2, Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, 2010).

due to its efforts to create gender equality allies across party lines. The Sub-Commission was specifically tasked with reviewing and mainstreaming gender perspectives in all areas of the draft peace agreement. While the Sub-Commission, along with national and international gender advisors, succeeded in offering gender-sensitive advice and suggestions in each area, these were not always taken up. One of the features that remains notable is that the Sub-Commission was bolstered by the enormous groundswell of support and mobilisation by feminist organisations and movements in Colombia, providing external pressure on the conflict parties to bring in gender perspectives, contributing to its relative success. Women's advisory boards and similar models were also discussed with several case examples. The Yemeni Women's Pact for Peace and Security (Pact) was created in 2015 with approximately 60 women from across the country to serve as an inclusive platform for women to organize, debate and leverage their collective voices to call for women's engagement in decision-making. It was created by UN Women and the UN Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen (OSESGY) to serve as a consultative body to the Special Envoy. The Syrian Women's Advisory Board (WAB) to the UN Special Envoy for Syria was created in 2016 with twelve members, emerging in large part as the result of lobbying from the Syrian Women's Initiative for Peace and Democracy (SWIPID). It served as the first formal women's advisory group to a UN Special Envoy and is mandated to regularly consult with the Special Envoy on gender issues during the political process. In its advocacy and insistence on a minimum of 30 percent for women's representation in the process, the WAB provides an example of how these mechanisms can be used to support women's direct participation in peace processes as well.

More recently, a Technical Advisory Group (TAG) of eight Yemeni women was formed by the OSESGY in August 2018. Six of the eight members of the TAG are also members of the Pact, highlighting the relationship between the two initiatives. Similar to the WAB, the TAG is designed to provide advice to the Special Envoy and his office, in particular when negotiations

and/or consultations are occurring. In October 2018, the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) established a Women's Advisory Group on Reconciliation and Politics to secure greater inclusion and participation of women in decision-making. It includes 22 women selected on the basis of their policy expertise, geographical representation and related considerations. Reflecting on the design, reactions, function and ongoing evolution of these mechanisms, panel and participant discussions were rich.

Comparing to the commission model, a distinguishing characteristic of women's advisory board-type bodies is that they are comprised only of women and, at the same time, aim for diversity in their composition with representatives from across multiple political spectra in each country context. The diverse membership of such initiatives can serve as a strength and enable these bodies to convey perspectives from different levels and layers of society, providing confidence building across political lines and serving as a laboratory for the testing of ideas. However, there is a perception that members of such mechanisms should reach consensus views despite there being no formal requirement in any of these bodies to do so. The desire for consensus is part of a broader perception that women should 'speak with one voice'.

## Design features and initiatives

Conference discussions also raised questions and concerns about membership in both the advisory board and commission mechanism models. For the Sri Lankan SGI, the fact that the SGI members were nominated exclusively by the Government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), was considered by some to be one of its weaknesses; others may regard this as a strength as there might be a greater degree of ownership in the mechanism by parties to the conflict. The SGI was limited to an advisory role and had membership largely, though not entirely, aligned with the political agendas of the two sides. In comparison, the Gender Sub-Commission in Colombia was comprised of five to six delegates from each negotiating party, including

at least one man, with technical expertise and support from national and international gender advisors.<sup>19</sup> This served the purpose of broadening the ownership of the Sub-Commission's work. Membership, however, changed as the members of the delegations changed. The members themselves and the scope of their involvement in a peace process can have direct implications for how citizens relate to a mechanism and its influence.

The practice of rotating membership in these mechanisms was debated by conference participants who highlighted both the pros and cons. On the one hand, it was suggested that members may not have enough time to accumulate knowledge and experience and may wish to stay involved. On the other hand, rotating membership can help to broaden diversity and representation (of women), particularly within an advisory board body. Important questions were also raised in different country contexts about the criteria and procedures for membership selection, both initially and in the context of rotations, and the degree of public transparency around selection, including through consultations that may occur. It was suggested that a diverse membership that includes women actors with networks to the track 2 level allows these bodies to create informal linkages with women's mobilizing on the ground, upwards to the technical groups and ideally into official mediation processes more broadly.

This role of providing links between women in conflict affected areas and formal track 1 dialogues, was highlighted by various participants as a significant benefit of these mechanisms. The Colombian Gender Sub-Commission served as a communication mechanism with the women's movement and facilitated linkages between tracks 1 and 2 to ensure the voices of women were considered at the highest levels—a success of having broad representation of grassroots and politically-active women's movements. Both efforts to support the members of the Gender Sub-Committee with information and skills-development and to create physical and virtual spaces for women to submit their proposals and priorities, such as the Women's

Summit and a dedicated website, were contributing factors to its success. The ability of the Gender Sub-Committee to form alliances with different groups of women, including women in the military, also helped to advance a gender equality agenda.

At the same time, an important point of concern was raised about the expectations and demands placed on women who are involved in these processes and who have had to balance their participation with their work in their own organizations and family responsibilities with little money or support. For many women, this has resulted in exhaustion, burn-out and health issues. Further thought and action are needed to reduce and redistribute these responsibilities for women and to ensure equal compensation and recognition for their work. In part, these concerns feed into a broader global push to recognize the challenges of much-needed work that is being undertaken in conflict contexts and the importance of mental health for those doing it—not just for women. Expert practitioners also highlighted the challenges posed by multiple security threats for members of these mechanisms to do their work together.

### Further reflections and forward-looking thoughts

In all cases, the commissions and advisory boards faced challenges and while generating some successes.

One factor that these mechanisms all share is that they were each created as a result of persistent advocacy by women's groups, along with the support of the international community. Some mechanisms also had support from parties to the negotiations. A history of women's activism in a country or their early involvement in efforts to resolve conflict and engage in political processes also opened space for their subsequent entry into a formal peace process.

Participants expressed varying opinions on the influence of these mechanisms, especially when their success can be predicated on the discretion of a few, key actors. Questions were posed concerning the

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19 Dag Nylander and Hilde Salvesen, *Towards an Inclusive Peace: Women and the Gender Approach in the Colombian Peace Process* (NOREF, 2017); Kristian Herbolzheimer, *Innovations in the Colombia Peace Process* (NOREF, 2016); Virginia Bouvier, *Gender and the Role of Women in Colombia's Peace Process*, United States Institute for Peace and UN Women, 2016).

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possible measures needed to ensure the sustainability of women’s efforts and gains in these processes and commissions; for example, when a Special Envoy changes or there is a shift in political parties in power. It was suggested that a transition could serve as an opportunity to elevate women’s objectives even further and for these mechanisms to evolve, assuming additional responsibilities. Participants recommended continued efforts to engage men, targeted leadership and technical skill building for women and an increase in women as observers/monitors to peace talks as a last resort when efforts towards meaningful participation fail. The need to increase the participation of young women in these mechanisms was also highlighted.

Considering that most of these mechanisms are relatively new, consistent and well-funded monitoring and evaluation initiatives will be crucial to fully understand the benefits and possible detriments of advancing gender equality and women’s participation in peace processes through such mechanisms. Shared learning has already been an ongoing process across these mechanisms with practitioners from Yemen commenting that they have learned many lessons from the experiences of Syria and the WAB. Many participants had also been following the relative successes of the Colombian process and expressed appreciation in hearing about the strategies applied in that context. While there are positive examples of these mechanisms advocating for the direct participation of women in formal negotiations, there are still unanswered questions as to whether these mechanisms are relegating women to advisory roles and perpetuating their marginalization. Participants further discussed whether it is enough to increase women’s representation in peace processes—more women regardless of their political outlook—or if efforts should focus more on including women who are feminists and committed to elevating women’s rights and interests into these processes.

# GENDER-INCLUSIVE PEACE AGREEMENTS: PATTERNS, PRACTICE, POSSIBILITIES AND PITFALLS

Integrating gender-sensitivity into the language of peace agreements has been challenging as evidenced by the slow and fluctuating results over time, with a notable downward trend since 2015.<sup>20</sup> The Gender, Peace and Security Centre at Monash University has been conducting research to analyze the inclusion and strength of gender provisions in peace agreements as well as their implementation and the relationship with women's participation.<sup>21</sup> Research findings suggest that almost half of all peace agreements between 2000 and 2016 contain no references to gender or women. Even when peace agreements contain gender provisions, the majority are considered weak. The research also confirms that peace agreements are more likely to have strong gender-specific provisions when women's participation in track 1 and 2 processes, national parliaments and civil society increases. It was also noted that constitutions and comprehensive or 'end-of-the-road' agreements are more likely to have strong gender provisions incorporated than non-binding and partial agreements. This research, alongside several other studies, confirms a key weakness in the area of ceasefires and other preliminary or partial agreements vis-à-vis gender perspectives.<sup>22</sup>

The role of CSOs and their impact in shaping the Colombian peace agreement was highlighted repeatedly as a good practice example. Building on a history of women's activism for peace throughout the 50-year violent conflict, women utilized their various strengths and networks across diverse constituencies (i.e. as Afro-Colombians, indigenous women, young women, etc.) to mobilize for the recognition of their rights. By applying an intersectional approach, Colombian women recognized their diversity and need for differentiated measures to address the effects of the conflict. They formed alliances and applied pressure on government and FARC negotiators to insist on the consideration and inclusion of women's rights and a gender-inclusive approach for the process and outcomes.

## **Innovations**

Providing for women's representation and participation in transitional and process-oriented agreements, which lays a framework for the way forward in a peace process, is one innovative way to promote women's participation and more gender-inclusive outcomes in subsequent agreements. While

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20 Report of the UN Secretary-General on women and peace and security (S/2018/900), para. 42. The data listed tracks both partial and comprehensive peace agreements.

21 For example, see Katrina Lee-Koo and Jacqui True, Policy Brief: Towards Inclusive Peace: Mapping Gender Provisions in Peace Agreements (Monash Gender, Peace and Security, 2018).

22 Women's Meaningful Participation in Negotiating Peace and the Implementation of Peace Agreements: Report of the Expert Group Meeting (UN Women, 2018), p.8.



women remain largely absent from formal peace negotiations for Yemen, they did gain traction in earlier interim processes. The transitional agreement brokered by the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) called for the creation of a National Consensus Government with the obligation to consider the participation of women. The Agreement also called for the convening of a Comprehensive National Dialogue Conference for all political forces and specified that women should be represented among all participating parties;<sup>23</sup> a 30 percent quota for women's participation in delegations was thus established. In the end, women constituted 28 percent of the 2013-2014 National Dialogue delegates and led three out of the nine working groups. A women-only delegation was also formed to represent the needs of women and girls in the National Dialogue without the restrictions of party affiliation. Women worked alongside men and managed to include various recommendations, including for a 30 percent quota for women's participation in all state institutions.<sup>24</sup> While implementation of the national dialogue outcomes, including the quota, continues to be a significant challenge, women's participation and influence in the earlier Dialogue set a precedent that women continue to point towards as they advocate for greater numbers of women in the formal peace process today.

Considering efforts to push for gender-responsive approaches that go beyond a focus on the numbers of women, Colombia's autonomous Special Gender Unit, which followed after the Colombian Gender Sub-Commission mentioned earlier, was cited as an innovative institutional mechanism for peace agreement implementation. This Unit was provided for in the 2016 peace agreement between the Colombian government and FARC. The Special Gender Unit aims to ensure a gender-responsive approach to the implementation of the peace agreement by

ensuring consistent communication with women's groups and providing inputs and recommendations for follow-up. However, the challenge of ensuring sufficient allocation of resources for the successful implementation of a gender-inclusive approach, including for monitoring and documenting implementation and preparing for high-level political engagements, remains. Ensuring that the work of the Special Gender Unit is informed by the views of women's groups and grassroots community for broader legitimacy also requires resources for communication and meetings throughout the country.

### **Interventions to secure gender-responsive laws, agreements and policies**

Many participants referred to the next phase of peace agreement implementation being marked by challenges to secure legislation and policies to fully implement the agreements and ensure women's meaningful participation in political decision-making is not compromised or overlooked again. As a first step to ensuring women's rights and gender perspectives are even considered in such processes, women must secure seats at the new 'tables'—parliaments, constitution-making bodies, reconstruction and recovery commissions, local councils, etc. This has, in some cases, been enabled through quotas, like Iraq and Nepal's constitutionalized parliamentary quotas. A general lesson learned is to use legal instruments to secure a quota while the political balance is favorable, as the required momentum and support may change with political elections. Effectively enshrining enabling provisions, such as quotas, into legislation during positive political power balances is a key strategy, with the aim that they become politically difficult—if not impossible—to remove later, should more conservative movements come to power.

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23 Agreement on the Implementation Mechanism for the Transition Process in Yemen in Accordance with the Initiative of the Gulf Cooperation Council (2011), provisions 10a and 20.

24 Case Study Series on Women in Peace and Transition Processes: Yemen (2011–2015) (Inclusive Peace and Transition Initiative at the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, 2018).

Yet, even in Iraq, where the quota ensures 25 percent women’s representation in parliament, there have yet to be enough efforts to engage women in decision-making at the executive level. The case of Iraq demonstrates that quotas, and numerical representation in parliament specifically, does not necessarily yield societal change in and of itself. Multiple, complementary and long-term efforts are needed for broader, deeper and lasting change.

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## Monitoring implementation

Citing Colombia’s Special Gender Unit as an example of the variety of efforts that can be undertaken to support gender-responsive peace agreement implementation, participants pointed to the need for both political will and stability to make advances in implementation. It was also noted that violence does not necessarily stop with a peace agreement; indeed, it often increases, especially in relation to sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV).<sup>25</sup> There are continued attacks on and murders of women human rights defenders and women in politics in so-called post-conflict countries and countries in transition. Importantly, practitioners noted that, in many grassroots communities, violence continues to increase with implementation of ceasefires or peace agreements as power relations and dynamics are disrupted and contested. Therefore, monitors of peace agreements should be more attuned and aware of recognizing, documenting and addressing gender-based violence and other forms of gender-based discrimination associated with violence. This is another area where long-term and strategic funding for local groups working directly on the monitoring and implementation of such agreements is vital.

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<sup>25</sup> Aisling Swaine, *Conflict-Related Violence Against Women: Transforming Transition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018); Naomi Hossain, *Security and the Pathways of Women’s Empowerment: Findings from a Thematic Synthesis of the Pathways of Women’s Empowerment Research*, IDS Working Paper 406 (Brighton: Institute of Development Studies, 2012).

# PARALLEL LEARNING SESSIONS

Forums and discussions where women and gender equality advocates find entry points and opportunities to create linkages across tracks are frequently not pertaining to core issues being addressed at the track 1 level. However, it is precisely such substantive issue areas where inclusivity is needed most. Conference participants, therefore, had the opportunity to select one of three themes that each represent a particularly challenging area within which to promote women's meaningful participation, the integration of gender perspectives and linkages across tracks for broader inclusivity. These were pilot sessions adding a more active, shared and comparative learning element to the conference that was achievable in smaller groups. The themes were as follows:

1. Women's inclusion and gender perspectives in the phase of **pre-talks** and options for dialogue building;
2. Women's participation and gender-responsive **ceasefires**; and,
3. Women, gender equality and political **power-sharing** agreements.

Each group discussed and developed recommendations for the international community to help take forward, noting that these three thematic areas remain quite weak in terms of policy and practice-relevant analysis and require significant attention and investment.

## Pre-Talks

In the early phases of a peace process, high-level efforts to support peace tend to focus on information gathering and analysis, planning and consultations with the conflict parties (e.g. shuttle diplomacy) with the goals of reducing violence and beginning official peace negotiations.<sup>26</sup> These efforts often take place outside of the public eye with relatively little attention. Yet, this phase of a peace process is crucial in defining the framework of any process to follow, and thus also has significant impact in deciding the future space for women's meaningful participation and the integration of gender perspectives. For example, conflict assessments may be undertaken, which often exclusively focus on and thereby privilege parties to the conflict at the expense of actors for peace in processes that follow. Similarly, methods of selection (procedures and criteria) to decide on participants for future discussions and consultations may be decided upon, laying the ground for the scope of inclusivity that will occur going forward.

While factors such as the need for confidence building among parties to the conflict and confidentiality are often cited as reasons to keep the official process relatively closed, especially at this early stage, there are various ways in which women and others may influence for inclusivity starting at the very beginning. From the development and sharing of strategies and visions for peace, to network building, mass mobilization and back-door elite deals, history shows that women have successfully influenced at this stage, whether invited

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<sup>26</sup> Peace processes do not necessarily move forward in a linear manner, however.

or not, and there is potential to do much more still. The facilitator and participants shared various examples in this regard. In Nigeria's plateau conflict, women developed a peace declaration across divides and presented it prior to the drafting of an official peace agreement, influencing the shape of the final text.<sup>27</sup> In contexts of intercommunal dialogue elsewhere in the Plateau State (Jos), women who were designated by their local communities lobbied their male counterparts in advance of talk outcomes to support women's rights and concerns. In Libya, the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue led pre-national conference consultations with some meetings assigned for women only to create an enabling space for women to meet and prepare ideas and recommendations.<sup>28</sup> In Liberia, a group of influential civil society women representatives travelled to neighbouring countries to meet with the leaders of the conflict parties to convince them to start negotiations.

Other examples, such as those from the Philippines, Mozambique, El Salvador and Afghanistan, were used to demonstrate that humanitarian entry points can prove particularly useful for processes of violence reduction, which women have leveraged as well.<sup>29</sup>

The need for justice, including gender justice concerns, to be raised from the very beginning was also emphasized. The question of 'justice versus peace' was posed in the context of Iraq, which has never seen an international or domestically mandated official peace process despite years of ongoing conflict. Participants debated whether peace could really be sought if not understood as responsive to the notion of justice. One participant warned that simply "making peace with violent actors" would do nothing to bring justice to civilians caught by conflict. Indeed, it was suggested that without justice, the risk of another cycle of conflict and violence remained.

### Five actionable recommendations:

1. Elevate the principle, policy and practice of consistent gender-sensitive conflict analysis to inform all phases of peace and security processes, including the more opaque dialogue promotion phase of pre-talks and preliminary dialogues.<sup>30</sup>
2. Financially support women's organizations, coalitions and networks to grow sustainably and seize opportunities to shape, influence, initiate and participate in early phases of peace processes.<sup>31</sup> This would require long-term funding, beyond a 12 to 24-month project cycle.
3. Build public campaigns for gender inclusivity in pre-talks (e.g. online campaigns) and work with influential allies (men, mediating institutions, etc.). At the same time, harassment and attacks against women should be closely monitored.
4. Develop and operationalize shadow processes to reframe and influence the agenda during the pre-talks phase where feasible. This could include, for example, parallel negotiations with women-only delegations and mediator(s), inclusive constitution-making bodies, etc.
5. Generate innovative thinking and practice and policy recommendations to inform efforts around broader meaningful inclusion in the early phases of peace processes. For example, a focus relevant to the MENA region would include thinking about the complexities of regional and international involvement and the shuttle diplomacy that occurs with global powers.

27 The Kafanchan Women Peace Declaration, 2016.

28 The Libyan National Conference Process: Final Report (Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, 2018).

29 For example, a ceasefire was negotiated in Afghanistan in 2001 to allow for polio immunisations to be administered.

30 See also Report of the UN Secretary-General on women and peace and security (S/2018/900), para. 19.

31 The persistent underfunding of women's organizations has been widely recognized. See, for example: Liz Ford, Funding for Women's Rights Groups in Poor Countries Falls by More than Half (The Guardian 2016).

## Ceasefires

With track 1 processes around the world often stalled, and high levels of violence in many conflicts, there is an increased focus on violence reduction, with ceasefire agreements and arrangements garnering greater attention, including in the MENA region. Yemeni, Libyan and Iraqi participants were particularly seized of the challenges with securing effective ceasefires in the region. At the same time, a possible correlation between stalled processes and prolonged ceasefires was noted, the risk being that conflict dynamics can be negatively affected along with broader efforts towards positive peace.

Participants in this working group, therefore, reviewed key concepts and terminology on ceasefires as well as practice points related to gender inclusion, including the need for gender-specific agreement language on ceasefires and their mechanisms and ways to better monitor and evaluate ceasefires from a gender perspective. Inclusion strategies for the negotiation phase of ceasefires, for increased diversity of mediation or facilitation teams and for monitoring mechanisms were also highlighted.

As part of the comparative learning approach, participants shared their experiences and perspectives. In Georgia, while there is a ceasefire agreement to end the violence in the Georgian-Abkhazian conflict, there are reportedly frequent violations, with incidents of kidnappings, illegal detention and murder. These incidents serve to limit the human security of people in the region. An example from Cyprus was also mentioned. Cypriot women protested peacefully while dressed as Cinderellas to apply pressure to open a checkpoint on the green line dividing the Turkish North and Greek South. This was to respond to the limit on freedom of movement between the two territories, which hindered efforts towards reconciliation and direct communication. The restriction was successfully lifted within a week.

In Myanmar, progress in the ceasefire has not been as notable. Only one-third of the armed groups signed the so-called 2015 Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (many other groups are operating under bilateral ceasefires). Alongside the stalled formal process there remains a persistent lack of respect for the human rights of different identity and ethnic groups across the country. Women's political participation and representation in decision-making bodies also remains low with the Myanmar Government not supporting the development of gender quotas across public institutions and in the formal peace architecture.

Participants also discussed the positive aspects of technology and social media to document violations of ceasefires as well as human rights abuses, though important questions were raised about the ability to successfully protect victims and those who come forward with accusations of abuse. The media can serve as an effective tool to inform the public about the details of ceasefire agreements particularly when armed actors are reluctant to communicate with civilians. New technologies can also help with civilian monitoring of agreements and social media can be used to build trust among communities, such as a portal documenting the number of days a ceasefire has held, positively reinforcing adherence. On the other hand, it was pointed out that social media can be erroneously manipulated and serve as a tool for misinformation, furthering misunderstanding and animosity between conflicting groups.

## Five actionable recommendations:

1. Generate a body of policy and practitioner-relevant analysis on gender inclusion and ceasefires to identify where the gaps commonly lie and support further efforts to integrate gender perspectives into ceasefires from agreements to implementation.
2. Create a rapid-response desk to generate quick, multilingual feminist reviews of proposed or agreed upon ceasefire texts, including implementation suggestions and examples of good practice, data and evidence. This could also be offered for local violence reduction plans and strategies.<sup>32</sup>
3. Translate the forthcoming UN guidance on mediating ceasefires into multiple languages prioritizing contexts where a ceasefire is being agreed, implemented or potentially on the horizon. The guidance is set to include operational suggestions for actors at the national and local levels to secure gender-inclusive outcomes from ceasefires and violence reduction processes.
4. Develop a global training course for women and men from conflict-affected contexts on gender perspectives in ceasefires and violence reduction processes. The course should be evidence-informed, delivered by proven expert practitioners and made available at national and regional levels.
5. Consider the benefits of all-female monitoring teams or committees and women-friendly justice mechanisms to facilitate reporting by women, girls and boys, and men as appropriate in ceasefire and violence reduction processes.

## Political Power-Sharing

Political power-sharing is central to peace processes and often highly contested, as it concerns how power will be held and exercised in and through state institutions. As a space for compromise between parties to a conflict and usually agreed upon through an elite pact, women's meaningful participation and gender equality considerations are rarely part of these discussions. There is also a lack of understanding about what it means to bring a gender-responsive approach to political power-sharing. The working group explored the concepts and forms of political power-sharing, with a focus on interim or transitional political power-sharing arrangements, along with challenges to its operationalization from a gender perspective.

Women have often been at a distinct disadvantage in interim political power-sharing processes, with the results granting power to those who have been at the heart of a conflict, providing parties to a conflict with control over the transition period and frequently without election. Moreover, power-sharing negotiations often take place behind closed doors where women are excluded. Women's advocacy for representation in a resulting government or transition process may be further challenged by a lack of consensus among women's groups and a shared vision. The question of who should represent women can serve as a sticking point, especially if elections are not taking place. However, any such challenges around issues of consensus and representation are themselves a reflection of the limited political space that women operate within and the pressures that appear as a result—these are not challenges that

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<sup>32</sup> For an example of the sort of review and analysis that could occur, see Alliance for Gender Inclusion in the Peace Process, *If Half the Population Mattered: A Critique of the Myanmar Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement and Joint Monitoring Committee Framework from a Gender Perspective* (2018). It is available in English and Burmese.

men as a group typically face since there is room for a diversity of opinion and representation amongst them.

Elections can offer an advantage for women's representation and participation, though it would depend on the election system and other contextual factors. The example cited in discussions was that of Northern Ireland's special election in 1996, which decided on party delegates to participate in peace talks. The women's movement capitalized on women's networks and advocacy skills with the campaign '100 women-100 votes'. It was to their strength that a call for inclusion was not only put forward by them, but also by a broader civic movement on human rights. The broader appeal of advocating for equality beyond only gender equality helped to build wide, political support.

The use of negotiated and agreed upon quotas in Nepal's first Constituent Assembly and the subsequent creation of a women's caucus is also a notable example of women's roles in transitional, political power-sharing. The women's caucus provided space for women members to discuss and agree on some common agenda points for which they advocated at the time, such as a right to proportional and inclusive representation in parliament to carry forward efforts towards women's equal participation in decision-making.<sup>33</sup> Iraq's constitutionally mandated 25-percent quota for women's representation in parliament was also discussed, along with an acknowledgment that much more remains to be done to support women's participation and representation in state institutions and processes in the context of efforts towards post-conflict rebuilding and reconciliation.

### Five actionable recommendations:

1. Develop easily accessible and introductory knowledge resources on gender and political power-sharing (e.g. a list of common challenges and strategies to overcome them, a short checklist or introductory training programme for men and women).<sup>34</sup>
2. Conduct further research and exploration in areas of political power-sharing that have common relevance for women, such as elections and appointments for interim power-sharing arrangements.
3. Provide financial, political and other support to civil society to formulate concrete proposals for women's inclusion in political power-sharing and mobilize to develop strategic alliances. For example, stances should be developed towards questions such as: should parties be required to appoint women to transitional government positions?
4. Model political power-sharing options and agreements for their gendered impact. This should be supported by mediators, civil society and other actors.
5. Consider temporary special measures, including quotas where relevant and appropriate, to promote the inclusion and meaningful participation of women in key state institutions and processes (e.g. parliaments, constitution-making bodies, etc.). It should be made clear that quotas offer a minimum requirement, rather than a cap on women's representation.

33 Women Members of the Constituent Assembly: A Study on Contribution of Women in Constitution Making in Nepal (International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, Nepal Law Society, Women's Caucus, the Constituent Assembly Secretariat, 2011).

34 For an initial resource, see Christine Bell, *Accessing Political Power: Women and Political Power-Sharing in Peace Processes* (UN Women, 2018).

# CONCLUSION

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Conference discussions highlighted the remarkable strides made by women in creating spaces for their priorities to be heard despite persistent marginalization. Women have also shown the courage to promote a gender perspective in male-dominated and patriarchal spaces when represented in formal processes. While many challenges remain, a growth in women's regional mediator networks, women's participation and influence in the Yemeni National Dialogue Conference and the inclusive path towards a Colombian peace agreement in 2016 are just a few of the inspiring examples where women are 'entering through the window' in the face of closed doors. They also highlight the important role of international support, gender expertise, work with allies, movement building and a solid strategy, among other important factors.

In concluding the conference, participants reiterated their belief in the power that women possess when they unify—recognizing and respecting their differences—to promote a transformative vision and agenda for achieving peace. Alliance-building, including working at different levels, with men, across party lines, and with various networks and movements, was also highlighted as key to advancing gender perspectives and increasing women's

meaningful participation in peace processes. There is a need to be strategic at every stage of a peace process, as experiences show that even with the successful inclusion of gender provisions in peace agreements, implementation requires persistent vigilance, monitoring and accountability mechanisms.

This is an opportune time for reflection on women's experiences, for shared and comparative learning and for strategic advocacy to address concerns and provide recommendations for inclusive peace at the highest levels, including in various forums for the 2020 anniversaries of the Beijing Declaration and UN Security Council resolution 1325. While pathways to peace will differ in each context, one constant is the need for women's meaningful participation in peace processes and in all related decision-making spaces to help guarantee a just, inclusive and sustainable peace. In addition to the recommendations shared earlier on pre-talks, ceasefires and political power-sharing, a few overarching, priority recommendations have been drawn from the two-days of conference discussions and are presented below. Some of these reiterate and reemphasize recommendations made in other fora, while others suggest further opportunities for coordination, prioritization and strategic investment among actors working in this space.



## Overarching Recommendations

- 1. Foster Formal and Informal Linkages Across Peace Tracks:** Multiple formal and informal mechanisms that enable linkages between tracks should be established wherever possible to feed and develop ideas and suggestions, brainstorm challenges and problem-solve. Such mechanisms might include periodic brainstorming and consultation sessions, study tours, two-way briefings, co-facilitation and more.<sup>35</sup> These might occur starting from the very beginning around agenda setting, in relation to technical discussion areas and to support the implementation of ceasefire arrangements, framework agreements and other issues that arise. Consideration should be given to both the number of such initiatives as well as the amount of influence afforded.<sup>36</sup> Meanwhile, there is a continued need for critical reflection, evidence-based research and identification of lessons learned on the practice and outcomes of creating linkages across peace tracks, such as in relation to women's advisory boards, gender commissions and other such mechanisms that are being replicated.<sup>37</sup> Further research and thinking should also consider whether certain mechanisms may have detrimental effects depending on their design features and contexts.
- 2. Explore all Entry Points to Ensure Women's Direct and Meaningful Participation in High-Level Peace Processes:** Participants highlighted a longstanding and urgent need to ensure women's direct and meaningful participation in high-level peace processes. The rise of regional women mediator networks and the repeated emphasis on direct participation by participants in conference discussions reflects a growing impatience among women leaders. Including greater numbers of women at the track 1 level, however, does not detract from the need to establish linkages between tracks, create broader inclusivity and ensure gender expertise is part of the knowledge and experience applied to support efforts towards peace. In addition to continuing to build political will for women's direct participation in high-level processes, further research and advice could be provided on different entry points, such as how to design and apply quotas, especially considering the frequency with which women and gender equality supporters advocate for the establishment of gender quotas.
- 3. Develop and Share Gender-Sensitive Knowledge:** Given the gaps in knowledge and positive feedback from conference participants on the parallel learning sessions, efforts should continue to further develop gender-sensitive knowledge in key, technical areas that arise in the context of high-level mediation processes and expand shared learning and capacity building initiatives in these areas for men and women. The technical focus areas of the conference (pre-talks, ceasefires, political power-sharing) are deserving of further research, attention and discussion along with other areas as well (e.g. decentralization). Conference participants also suggested that there is a high priority on making knowledge products and training more widely available in Arabic in particular, including on negotiation, mediation and the integration of gender perspectives generally.

35 For further suggestions on promoting linkages between tracks, see Anjali Dayal, *Connecting Informal and Formal Peace Talks: From Movements to Mediators* (Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security, 2018), pp.5-6.

36 On promoting influence in consultations, see for example: *Beyond Consultation: A Tool for Meaningfully Engaging with Women in Fragile and Conflict-Affected States* (UK Gender Action for Peace and Security (GAPS) network, Women for Women International, Amnesty International UK, Saferworld and Womankind Worldwide, 2019).

37 For an example, see the following research on national dialogues: Thania Paffenholz et al., *What Makes or Breaks National Dialogues* (Inclusive Peace and Transition Initiative, 2017).

- 4. Promote Gender Inclusivity and Expertise for Peace Agreements at All Stages:** With inconsistent gains being made in gender-specific language in partial and comprehensive peace agreements and a recent downward trend,<sup>38</sup> much more remains to be done. Evidence shows that partial agreements, such as ceasefire agreements, tend to lack integration of gender perspectives in particular,<sup>39</sup> which is likely reflective of the still common mediation strategy of almost exclusively prioritizing an elite bargain at the early stages of a peace process. Investments towards inclusive processes and available gender expertise need to be prioritized for partial agreements as well, especially since they are the more common type of agreement witnessed today in the MENA region and because they lay an important foundation for an inclusive process to follow. Moreover, to secure the prior investments made in the form of time, effort and financing to promote inclusive peace processes and agreements, continued international support should be given to implementation mechanisms and monitoring, including regular engagement with civil society and women's roles therein.<sup>40</sup>
- 5. Provide Gender-Responsive Budgeting & Core Civil Society Funding:** Donors and leading peace process actors should ensure gender-responsive budgeting for their activities, taking note of the UN standard of a minimum 15 percent for initiatives primarily advancing gender equality in programming. For women's meaningful participation and gender equality to receive the necessary political, technical and other support required in peace processes, greater resources are required. Related to this, there is a need to increase longer-term, flexible and core funding to support increased preparedness, strategic planning and early action by women's organizations, movements and gender equality advocates in conflict and post-conflict contexts. The initiatives of the many women present at the conference need further investment and support to harness and multiply the impact of the work that they are courageously advancing. In turn, this could lead to enhanced gender-responsive, civil society monitoring and implementation of ceasefire and peace agreements, for example, to continue the push towards lasting and inclusive peace for all.

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<sup>38</sup> Report of the UN Secretary-General on women and peace and security (S/2018/900), para. 42.

<sup>39</sup> Katrina Lee-Koo and Jacqui True, Policy Brief: Towards Inclusive Peace: Mapping Gender Provisions in Peace Agreements (Monash Gender, Peace and Security, 2018).

<sup>40</sup> For further recommendations on the development and implementation of peace agreements, see Women's Meaningful Participation in Negotiating Peace and the Implementation of Peace Agreements: Report of the Expert Group Meeting (UN Women, 2018), p.42.

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