

## **52<sup>nd</sup> Session of the Commission on the Status of Women**

*Draft Statement by*  
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### **Interactive Dialogue on the Review of the Implementation of the 2004 Agreed Conclusions on "Women's equal participation in conflict prevention, management and conflict resolution and in post-conflict peacebuilding"**

*Friday, 29 February 2008, 10 a.m. – 1 p.m.*

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It is a pleasure to participate in this interactive dialogue and discuss developments in gender perspectives of peacebuilding since the adoption of the CSW's 2004 agreed conclusions.

In my presentation today, I will address ongoing efforts and challenges to integrate gender perspectives into peacebuilding processes, drawing on the work of the Peacebuilding Commission in Sierra Leone and Burundi—the first two countries on its agenda.

With regard to women's equal participation in conflict prevention and peacebuilding, the 2004 CSW agreed that,

“the international community should use lessons learned from actual experience to identify and overcome barriers for achieving women's equal participation.”

The conclusions called for “measures to prevent gender-based violence, including sexual violence against women and girls, arising from armed conflict situations and to prosecute perpetrators of such crimes.”

In the context of peacebuilding, the conclusions focused on the importance of elections, the social and economic empowerment of women.

A key development since the adoption of these agreed conclusions in 2004, has been the establishment of the UN peacebuilding architecture, comprising the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) and the Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO).

The creation of the peacebuilding architecture was among the key outcomes of the 2005 World Summit.

At the Summit, governments again recognized that women play an important and necessary role in conflict prevention, resolution and peacebuilding, and called for the full and effective implementation of Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women and Peace and Security.

Additionally, governments agreed that development, peace and security and human rights are interlinked, and committed to an integrated approach to peacebuilding.

The Peacebuilding Commission was created as an advisory body mandated to integrate the UN's capacities and experience in peacebuilding, human rights, the rule of law, humanitarian assistance, reconstruction and longer-term development.

The PBC's founding resolutions (A/RES/60/180 and S/RES/1645(2005)) mandate it to advise on, develop and promote integrated strategies and approaches to peacebuilding for countries on its agenda.

The PBC includes gender equality as a thematic mandate, thus "focusing attention and consolidating good practice on vital cross-cutting issues...for which effective programmes must draw on the capacities and plans of actors across the full range of political-security-humanitarian-development activities," one of the PBC's primary aims.

Significantly, gender equality is the PBC's only thematic mandate.

It took the international community nearly 50 years to recognize, in the seminal Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (October 2000), that gender and gender differences are an integral component of effective peace and security work. Resolution 1325 calls for the equal participation of women in all areas and levels of peacebuilding, however, it does not systematically provide for that equal participation.

Now, the PBC's gender mandate will ensure policy guidance and adequate resources for gender equality in peacebuilding.

The systematic inclusion of women and gender analysis in peacebuilding is intrinsic to both the just reconstruction of political, legal, economic and social structures and to the advancement of gender equality goals.

By developing gender equality in peacebuilding processes, economic growth along with human and social capital recovery, have the potential to be more durable and effective. Local women have first-hand understandings of the needs of the community.

Additionally, because peacebuilding aims to reconstitute political, legal, economic, and social structures, it has a concentrated potential to remedy previous structural gender inequalities while constructing a more just society. Because gender inequities sometimes shape forms of violence used in a conflict, addressing them also has the potential to prevent certain manifestations of violence in the future. It is important to take advantage of the opportunities presented by a post-conflict situation and resist efforts to return to the pre-conflict status quo which may have been discriminatory towards women.

Despite much lip service to women's roles in peacebuilding, women's contributions have rarely been fully recognized. Hopefully, the well-known instance of awarding, in 2003, the United Nations Prize in the field of Human Rights to the Mano River Women's Peace

Network (MARWOPNET) marked the beginning of increased recognition of women's peace work.

The PBC stands to more fully engage women in the design and implementation of peacebuilding policies, and thus secure more attention and resources for women's active engagement.

The PBC has begun to put theory into practice at the country level in the first two countries on its agenda: Sierra Leone and Burundi.

For example, in January 2007, UNIFEM and PBSO convened a *National Consultation for Enhancing Women's Engagement with the UN's Peacebuilding Commission in Sierra Leone* in January 2007. This consultation informed women leaders and civil society organizations about the PBC, and helped establish a national peacebuilding agenda for women. As a result, the Mano River Women's Network for Peace was one of two civil society representatives on the Peacebuilding Fund National Steering Committee.

In Sierra Leone, a visiting senior PBC delegation successfully advocated for the adoption of laws to promote gender equality, thus providing the political support needed to outlaw domestic violence, and ensure women's right to inheritance and to own property. In December of 2007, the PBC and the GoSL adopted a Peacebuilding Cooperation Framework that recognizes gender equality as a critical cross-cutting peacebuilding issue. The Framework lists specific commitments to advance gender equality such as providing support to the Family Support Units of the Police, capacity building of national gender institutions and implementation of the laws pertaining to domestic violence, inheritance and property rights.

In Burundi, women participated in the peace process, integrating gender equality in the framework for democratic governance and peacebuilding. Due to the quotas in the peace agreement and new constitution of Burundi, women are now well represented in government: 30% of parliamentarians and seven of 20 ministers are women. Women have also been elected as chiefs of communes for the first time. In Burundi's PBF Priority Plan, women (and youth) are explicitly called on as actors to strengthen peace and social cohesion. The Monitoring and Tracking Mechanism of the Burundi Peacebuilding Strategy Framework has an effective system for tracking gender-disaggregated data. It could be used as a template for tracking this data in the future.

These are significant achievements, however, much more needs to be done.

We have learned that our ability to affect real change in gender equality through peacebuilding greatly depends on how the international community establishes its priorities and uses its resources.

Capacity weaknesses at the country level can be a major impediment to achieving gender equality goals. This is a problem in both Burundi and Sierra Leone. UNIFEM has only a modest presence in both countries due to resource constraints and neither of the Gender Advisors in the integrated offices (UNIOSIL and BINUB) has predictable support.

While the attention given to women and gender issues in the PBC Frameworks in Sierra Leone and Burundi indicates a promising awareness of the importance of these issues, it is only the first step towards achieving these goals.

Effective implementation requires a host of supporting elements, including appropriate policies, technical skills, gender-sensitive programme design, strategic planning, operational capacity, capable partners, appropriate human resource and communications strategies, knowledge creation and management, monitoring and evaluation, resource mobilization, and gender-sensitive financial management and reporting.

While the PBC can advocate for gender-sensitive approaches and policies, and encourage collaboration with appropriate operational partners with a view to mobilize resources and help establish appropriate benchmarks and indicators of success, it alone cannot meet all the above requirements for achieving the goals of gender equality.

In this regard, on 29 January 2008, the Peacebuilding Commission Working Group on Lessons Learned held a meeting to discuss *Gender and Peacebuilding: Enhancing Women's Participation*. The Working Group made recommendations for possible follow-up actions, including:

- Cultivation of **research capacity** in countries of interest to the PBC. This would help improve data-collection and build an evidence-base on gender and peace-building issues. Local groups can play an important role in monitoring and reporting on women's role in peace-building, and the capacity of women's organizations should be strengthened in this regard.
- Identification of women's **progress in elections** as a vital objective in medium to long-term planning. In this regard, constitutional quotas and gender-sensitive public sector reforms – including incentive systems to motivate responses to women's needs – are vital to overcoming obstacles to women's participation in public life.
- Employment of the post-conflict window of opportunity to reconstitute the social order and advance economic recovery to **empower women and advance gender equality**. To this end, economic policy advisers should be sensitized to gender issues.
- Integrate **women's access to justice** into efforts to resurrect the rule of law and end impunity. There is a need to develop institutional capacity within the UN system to marshal resources to provide **reparations** and **services** for women survivors of gender-based violence. It is imperative to ensure that SSR efforts address gender perspectives in a holistic manner.
- While gender mainstreaming is often part of the planning phase of projects and initiatives, more attention needs to be paid to **monitoring** mechanisms for results-based reporting on **implementation**. In this context, lessons can be drawn from national action plans to implement Security Council Resolution 1325.
- As the involvement of women and inclusion of a gender perspective have been recognized as essential to achieving the objectives of the PBC, **another meeting** on this matter should be convened in the context of the Working Group on Lessons Learned.

We have come a long way in terms of awareness raising and generating political commitments to gender equality and justice. The experience from the PBC's work on these issues shows that we are gaining ground in our struggle for recognition and understanding. As a next step, it will be important for the PBC to deliver in a deliberate manner on its gender equality mandate in Burundi and Sierra Leone.

There and elsewhere, much work remains to be done to implement gender equality commitments. In this regard, we must continue to advocate for adequate resources. We must monitor the implementation of commitments and insist that the international community follows through on its plans to create more just and equal societies.

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