



DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL AFFAIRS (DPA)

Best practice

In West Africa, DPA's Africa II Division has worked closely with UNIFEM and UNDP to support the Mano River Women's Peace Network's work on conflict prevention, early warning, and mediation. They have provided them with funding to attend regional meetings and summits, and have helped enable them to come and speak before the Security Council. This represents a positive start to intensify efforts to work with regional and sub regional civil society organizations to support the work of civil society and women's groups in early warning and conflict prevention. In Guinea-Bissau, DPA partnered with local women and women's organizations that made contact with leaders of warring parties through their own family ties. It was through these efforts that these leaders were eventually brought to the peace table.

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Recent policy statements

One of the core policy statements pertaining to the work of DPA is the "Report of the Secretary General Prevention of armed conflict" (A/55/985 – S/2001/574) of June 2001. The report contains a section on 'Gender Equality', which details the work of the UN in this area and focuses on the role that the Security Council, serviced by DPA, can play: "In its resolution 1325 (2000), the Security Council recognized the differential impact of armed conflict on women and the need for effective institutional arrangements to guarantee their protection. The Council further recognized that the full participation of women in peace processes can contribute significantly to the maintenance and promotion of international peace and security. It also expressed its willingness to incorporate a gender perspective into peace operations, and called for measures that ensure the protection of and respect for human rights of women and girls, particularly as they relate to the constitution, the electoral system, the police and the judiciary. The Secretary General recommends "the Security Council, in accordance with its resolution 1325 (2000), to give greater attention to gender perspectives in its conflict prevention and peace-building efforts".

At the second Working Level *meeting between the United Nations and Regional Organizations*, convened in New York from 30 April to 2 May 2002, as a follow up to the high-level meeting of February 2001, gender was a key concern. The final report of the meeting notes that participants, including DPA, "emphasized the need for increased awareness of women, youth and children's issues in conflict prevention and peace-building".

Programme objectives

From a programmatic perspective, DPA is committed to gender mainstreaming in four key ways. DPA is ensuring that its activities related to preventive action, peacemaking, peace building and good governance reflect a gender perspective. It facilitates increased participation of women in both informal and formal peace processes/negotiations and ensures that UN-brokered peace agreements take into consideration the needs and concerns of women and girls. DPA is creating increased gender sensitivity in field offices and encouraging increased dialogue with civil society. Finally, DPA is committed to supporting efforts by the Security Council to give greater attention to gender perspectives in its conflict prevention and peace-building efforts

In the political affairs programme budget for the biennium 2002-2003 (A/56/6), DPA noted that its focus would be "on the reinforcement of the Organization's capacity for early warning, good offices and non-military measures to prevent disputes from escalating into conflicts and for resolution of conflicts that have erupted" and, to that end, the department would produce "analytical papers, assessment notes and background papers focusing on early warning, options and recommendations for preventive action and peace-building, keeping in mind gender perspective" and maintain "contact with Member States, regional organizations, parliaments, individuals and experts on conflict prevention, peacemaking, peace-building, electoral assistance and regional issues, including aspects related to gender mainstreaming"

Other recent activities

Developments in Afghanistan following 11 September 2001 allowed DPA and the SRSG, Lakhdar Brahimi, to pay special attention to the needs and role of Afghan women in the transition to a post-Taliban, post-conflict society. Innovative ways of encouraging the participation of women in the talks held at Bonn gave several Afghan women an opportunity to raise issues of concern to women and to play an active role in the peace negotiations. The talks resulted in an explicit commitment to the role of women in government and created for the first time a Ministry of Women's Affairs in Afghanistan. The Vice President of the resulting Afghan Interim Administration was a woman, and women were appointed ministers of Health and Women's Affairs. The participation of women in the Loya Jirga, which took place in June 2002 was unprecedented, with 220 women out of a total of 1,600 participants. The fact that more than 20 of these women were directly elected is not insignificant, given the severe oppression of women by the Taliban over the last five years. Within the UN, DPA chaired the Integrated Mission Task Force (IMTF) created to facilitate a coordinated and system-wide United Nations response to the crisis in Afghanistan, which included a representative of the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women. The UN Assistance Mission to Afghanistan (UNAMA) includes a Gender Advisor. ■