Ambassadorial-level Meeting of the Peacebuilding Commission
2020 Review of the Peacebuilding Architecture

1 May 2020

“Full, equal and meaningful participation of women in peacebuilding”

Permanent Mission of Australia to the United Nations

Australia is committed to the sustaining peace agenda and welcomes the Peacebuilding Architecture Review as an opportunity for an objective assessment of progress in implementation, impacts on the ground, and the identification of areas where further efforts are required.

The sustaining peace agenda, with peacebuilding at its core, provides an opportunity to transform the UN’s work – to make it more effective, more coherent and strategically aligned, and better able not only to respond to conflict, but to prevent it. To maximise the impact of this work, it is vital to recognise that women are central to sustaining peace. Women are powerful mediators, peacebuilders and leaders that can make significant contributions to durable peace.

The 2020 Review is taking place at a significant time. The 25th anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action reminds us that the realisation of human rights and gender equality accelerates sustainable development, inclusive growth and community resilience. The 20th anniversary of UN Security
Council Resolution 1325 and the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda also underscores the pivotal role women play in the prevention and resolution of conflicts. Further, as the spread of COVID-19 potentially exacerbates already fragile situations, the urgency of giving greater attention to peacebuilding and prevention is brought into focus.

The full, equal and meaningful participation of women in peace processes deepens the effectiveness of peacebuilding, yet there are many complex challenges to realising this, including power imbalances, exclusion of women from decision-making processes and gender-based violence. Beyond getting women to the table, the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) and other UN actors can support women’s meaningful participation in peace processes by working to develop shared understandings of how women engage, inform and influence in specific contexts.

Partnerships are central to women’s participation in peacebuilding, and women’s organisations and grassroots peacebuilders have important contributions to make. At the country level, women’s contributions can take many forms, including participation in peace processes, capacity building, sharing good practices and engagement in analysis, planning, programming, monitoring and evaluation. All UN actors have a role to play in building strong and productive partnerships, and drawing on them to apply women’s perspectives to their work.

Australia welcomes the efforts of the Peacebuilding Commission to mainstream a gender perspective and commends the Peacebuilding Fund for its work in promoting the meaningful incorporation of both a gender and youth perspective in peacebuilding activities. We encourage the key elements of the
UN peacebuilding architecture to be alert to opportunities to improve coherence with other UN gender strategies, including in peacekeeping, and to collaborate on tracking implementation to ensure a comprehensive picture and increase impact in the field.

Improved transitions of peacekeeping missions are essential for more effective peacebuilding and sustaining peace, and must be gender-conscious. To achieve this, it is important that the UN maintains strong gender capabilities in missions and UN Country team during transitions. The PBC can also play a role in bridging the gap between political and gender analysis. Where applicable, the PBC should include specific gender analysis and recommendations to the UN Security Council to inform and strengthen gender specific tasks in peacekeeping mandates. Data driven evidence generation and reporting is critical to track WPS implementation in peacebuilding activities and move beyond rhetoric.

Just as the sustaining peace agenda goes beyond the traditional peacebuilding parts of the UN, ensuring the full, meaningful and equal participation of women in peacebuilding requires action from Member States and the entire UN system. The 2020 Review is an opportunity to renew our commitment to implementing this agenda.

*Case study: Bougainville*

In the Autonomous Region of Bougainville in Papua New Guinea, women have long been recognised as prominent leaders in civil society, especially in relation to peacebuilding and mediation. The participation of women was a critical part of the Bougainville Peace Agreement, which has guided peace
efforts for 20 years. Women contributed by brokering local-level ceasefires, convening key meetings and persuading men on all sides to engage in the peace talks. Women also played a key role in the successful conduct of the Bougainville referendum in November 2019. As well as providing high level leadership, including on the board of the Bougainville Referendum Commission, many women were engaged as polling officials and scrutineers. Partnerships have proven to be an effective tool in peacebuilding, including to build support for a post-referendum settlement which includes the views of women and the broader community, through increased engagement with women and women’s groups.