

**Remarks by Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Director of UN Women,
Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, at the online meeting of the Peacebuilding Commission on Women, Peace
and Security**

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Excellencies, it is a pleasure and honour for me to address the Peacebuilding Commission.

I especially recognize Canada's leadership as a PBC Chair and thank ASG Oscar Fernandez-Taranco and his team for long-standing partnership and visionary leadership in promoting inclusive approaches to building peace.

This year we are taking stock of implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and Security Council resolutions on Women, Peace and Security, as well as the Peacebuilding Architecture.

Following the 2015 Peace and Security reviews, the Sustaining Peace resolutions set concrete objectives for addressing inequalities - the long-term structural causes of conflict.

The situation has changed drastically with the ongoing COVID-19 crisis that has revealed again the inequalities and has exacerbated the challenges that women are facing, globally and on the ground. Women make up 70 per cent of workers in the health and social sector and women do three times as much unpaid care work as men. The COVID-19 crisis also impacts the ability of women to earn the minimum income needed for survival. Domestic violence, conflict related sexual violence, trafficking, early marriage, sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse all spike in emergencies.

We know from Ebola crisis experience that women's participation and leadership is a crucial factor in society's ability to respond and reverse an epidemic.

The UN Secretary-General has made a call for a global ceasefire. Indeed, without a focus on conflict prevention, management and resolution, the impact of COVID-19 in conflict settings will be irreversible.

Yet I want to highlight that when it comes to dialogue and confidence-building measures, such as ceasefire, humanitarian access, prisoner exchange/release agreements – women can play a critical role.

We know that women's participation makes humanitarian response more effective, peace processes more durable and conflict prevention a reality.

And that both female as well as male peacekeepers are needed in order for the UN to be able to respond to the needs of communities.

In situations of active or frozen conflicts, women's mediation and peacebuilding efforts at the grassroots level are effective, cost-effective and sustainable.

Today you will hear from local peacebuilders from South Africa and Colombia and I urge you to take their recommendations for action on board.

In 2019, the Secretary-General outlined six action areas to address persistent challenges in Women, Peace and Security. In the context of COVID-19, they are even more essential for Sustaining Peace. They are:

1. Ensure the protection of and engagement with women's human rights defenders and women's civil society organizations and activists, in re-shaping the world after the pandemic.
2. Increase the number and share of women in uniform in peacekeeping and national security services.
3. Ensure predictable, adequate and targeted financing for women peacebuilders – it is even more essential, now when they are adapting to the new realities of COVID-19 impact and are focusing on social cohesion. Lessons from the Ebola response showcase how women were in the forefront of prevention and in slowing its spread. We need to fund women's groups through mechanisms such as the SG's Peacebuilding Fund, Women, Peace and Humanitarian Fund, and Spotlight Initiative.
4. Promote women's economic security and access to resources and decision-making related to peacebuilding, post conflict planning and economic recovery, especially linked to COVID-19.
5. Ensure that COVID-19 response strategies, recovery and peacebuilding strategies are built on gender analysis and data.
6. Ensure women's inclusion in peace processes and negotiations and facilitate women's active participation, focusing on long-term pandemic response, prevention of violence, social cohesion and peacebuilding.

I commend PBC for your tireless efforts to listen to women, consult with women, and support women peacebuilders on the ground.

I also recognize your leadership on accelerating the implementation of WPS agenda and look forward to the next proactive steps in implementing your Gender Strategy, which remains the only strategy of its kind in the UN.

UN Women remains engaged in these important processes and will continue partnering with the Commission and PBSO.

I thank you for your attention.