

Peacebuilding Commission
*Electronic consultation on the 2020 review: Full, equal and meaningful
participation of women in peacebuilding*

Statement by Portugal

Portugal fully aligns itself with the statement of the European Union and, in its national capacity, would like to add the following points:

The challenges posed by the current global pandemic underscore the centrality and prescience of the Women, Peace and Security agenda to contemporary global peace and security challenges. We echo the Secretary-General's call for an effective implementation of the WPS agenda to remain a priority through this period. In fact, as stated in the SG Policy Brief on Women and COVID-19, the SC resolution 2242 (2015) recognized a health pandemic as part of the peace and security landscape, and highlighted the need for the principles of prevention, protection and equal participation and leadership of women to be part of all responses. Women have been at the forefront of the fight against COVID-19, making up most of the globe's healthcare workforce and shouldering the overwhelming majority of caregiving tasks.

The ongoing COVID-19 crisis is already exacerbating inequalities and challenges, especially in countries undergoing humanitarian crises and armed conflicts, in particular for populations in vulnerable situations. It is crucial that all the responsive measures being adopted and to be adopted to face this pandemic are gender responsive. Inequalities will still be here when we defeat this pandemic. And they will continue having an impact on international peace and security.

We need to understand the gendered implications of the new realities arising from the COVID-19 crisis – and the PBC should reflect them in its own Gender Strategy, through a gender analysis of the crisis, based on data disaggregated by sex, age and other relevant parameters, as well as a mapping of stakeholder and actors. This analysis could contribute to ensure adequate preparation and mitigation and to inform response and recovery strategies. This should, of course, go hand-in-hand with ensuring the equal representation, leadership and meaningful participation, at all levels, of women and young girls in COVID-19 response planning and decision making.

The PBC has been at the forefront of advancing the WPS agenda and promoting the full, effective and meaningful participation of all women at all levels in peacebuilding efforts. Examples like the PBC's Gender Strategy or the priority given by the PBF to projects promoting the role of women in peacebuilding should be recognised in their full extent, also as examples of sound management, cost-effective and with genuine impact on the ground. As such, they must indeed inspire us to do more and better.

A gender-perspective is fundamental for successful peacebuilding, as preventing the recurrence of conflicts and sustaining a lasting peace can only be achieved if peacebuilding efforts consider the needs of all segments of the population, in particular women and girls.

Women are key actors in prevention and resolution efforts. We need, therefore, to ensure the meaningful participation of women in all the stages of peace processes: from conflict prevention and mitigation to formal and informal peace talks, through to the implementation phase of peace agreements and beyond. Engaging female civil society leaders and increasing the number of women mediators is an important step which should be mainstreamed throughout all the stages of peace processes. In this context, we encourage the UNSC mission mandates to maintain and whenever possible to reinforce the language on WPS agenda.

The empowerment of women peacebuilders must be a priority across the peace continuum, from peacekeeping to peacebuilding and sustaining peace. In that regard, and though we have witnessed some progress in recent years, further efforts are needed to increase the number and share of women in uniform, both in peacekeeping and in national security services.

We welcome the relevant work that has been done for the empowerment of women's organizations and networks, as they have important contributions to offer for peacebuilding efforts. Despite the successes achieved by women's movements and women's efforts, ensuring that women are decision-makers, negotiators and mediators, particularly in formal peace processes, remains a challenge. Better coordination is needed to ensure and sustain women's full, effective and meaningful participation at all levels.

Ensuring predictable, adequate and targeted financing for women peacebuilders and promoting women's economic security and access to resources and decision-making are two of the WPS agenda's priorities which become even more essential as we are adapting to the new realities of COVID-19 impact and are focusing on social cohesion. The PBC may have a relevant role to play, in this regard, mobilizing funds and contributing to

increased coherence and coordination, while seeking to ensure that the economic response to COVID-19 benefits men and women equally.

Those two priorities should also be factored-in in the context of transitions of UN presence on the ground. Transition plans and development frameworks, which tend to be important documents for the promotion of the participation of women in peacebuilding, would benefit from a renewed focus on women's economic empowerment as a contributing factor to peacebuilding. A closer involvement of the UN agencies, funds and programs in some of the PBC's discussions could bring value in that regard.

Taking advantage of the PBC's advisory role to the Security Council and of the welcome commitment of country-specific configurations in providing written advice in advance of Security Council discussions, we believe that could also be a way to further the inclusion of the questions on the empowerment of women peacebuilders into concrete discussions on peace and security.

The PBC's country-specific configurations remain crucial in enabling the promotion of local appropriation and a better integration of regional and international efforts. The gender perspective needs to filter down through the country-specific configurations and inform every aspect of the peacebuilding work on the ground.

In face of the challenges brought about and exacerbated by COVID-19, the full implementation of the PBC's Gender Strategy becomes even more relevant. As we try to adjust to new realities and to provide answers to the foreseeable spikes in domestic violence, conflict related sexual violence, trafficking, early and forced marriage, sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse, the convening power of the PBC may play an important role. The biannual experts' meetings and the yearly meeting of the PBC on gender issues foreseen in the Gender Strategy would benefit, we believe, from being open to the wider membership. As the Executive Director of UN-Women so eloquently put it, the PBC must indeed keep listening to women, consulting with women, and supporting women peacebuilders on the ground – in a wide-ranging and inclusive way, mobilizing also the knowledge and voices from within and without the UN system.