

UK Statement

October 2020 marks the twentieth anniversary of UNSCR 1325. This anniversary, in parallel with the Peacebuilding Architecture Review provides the perfect opportunity to raise ambition on WPS and peacebuilding. The two processes are intrinsically linked: peace can only be sustainable if it is inclusive. Women have traditionally been, and continue to be, excluded from peace processes. Not only does this mean that peace agreements do not incorporate the variety of perspectives of a society and are therefore more likely to fail. It also risks women's futures being negotiated away, as their specific needs and priorities are neglected.

We have long known that women's participation is key to the success and sustainability of peace processes and peacebuilding efforts. This means making sure that women are meaningfully included at all stages, and in all levels of decision-making, when addressing conflict. We regularly hear warm words about female inclusion in peacebuilding, but to make this a reality we need to take concrete measures to implement UNSCR 1325, and ensure that women are represented.

The UK believes that the UN should leverage its good offices and technical assistance to increase women's participation in formal peace negotiations, and in the crafting and implementation of peace agreements and political transitions, and to ensure that this inclusion is meaningful, extends to women from different backgrounds and women's civil society. Despite their critical roles in society and the distinct perspectives they can bring, women's participation in formal peace processes has often lagged. Between 1990 – 2017 women made up only 2% of mediators, 8% of negotiators, and 5% of witnesses and signatories in all major peace process.

It is imperative that women and men are equally represented in roles as senior UN officials who facilitate and mediate peace processes, setting an example for all parties to include women in leadership roles. The UN should also seek to apply these standards when working with or supporting other bodies in peace processes, such as regional and sub-regional organisations. As well as meaningful participation, gender-sensitive language in peace agreements, and drawing upon gender-disaggregated data, are critical to setting a foundation for gender-inclusion during the peacebuilding phase. Yet, data shows a downward trend since 2015; only 27% of peace agreements signed in 2017 containing gender-responsive provisions.

The UK believes that UN intergovernmental architecture – including the Security Council and the Human Rights Council – has a role to play in monitoring and holding governments accountable for the inclusive implementation of peace agreements, as well as other laws and policies related to gender equality and peace and security, including WPS resolutions and the CEDAW. Peace agreements cannot be at the expense of Human Rights, for this will not lead to sustainable peace.

The UK welcomes the increased voluntary funding to peacebuilding activities and would like to see clear parameters set for WPS components in PB programming. We welcomed the Secretary General's call for 15% of all UN peacebuilding activity to support gender equality and female empowerment, but we think the international community can go further than this. We need to make sure that women and women's organisations are able to access peacebuilding funds, especially at the local level. This can be through working with networks that pull smaller organisations together and support administrative efforts, as well as the UN providing technical expertise to women's organisations so they are able to bid for funding.

The UK has made concerted efforts to both increase its support to the PBF, and to fund additional projects that support women peacebuilders. In FY 19/20 we funded International Civil Society Action Network (ICAN) £800,000 and Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) £500,000 to support women peacebuilders across the world. We also funded the UN Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund £800,000 to support local women peacebuilders in Iraq. In April 2018, the UK committed £1.6 million to support women mediators and amplify their voices, including launching the network of 'Women Mediators across the Commonwealth', which we continue to fund. As of March 2020, the WMC now has over 46 members from Commonwealth countries, building peace around the world, and working closely with other women mediator networks in existence. We also supported the launch of the Global Alliance of Regional Women Mediator Networks at UNGA 2019, of which the WMC is part.