

Peacebuilding Commission
Ambassadorial-Level Meeting on Women in Peace and Security: Complementarity of the
Roles of Uniformed Women Peacekeepers and Women Peacebuilders
13 December 2022
Chair's summary

1. On 13 December 2022, the Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), H.E. Mr. Muhammad Abdul Muhith, convened an Ambassadorial-level meeting to discuss the implementation of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda with a focus on the role of women in peacekeeping and peacebuilding, and their complementary contributions to conflict prevention and resolution. The meeting was an opportunity to explore the shared roles, successes, challenges, and opportunities of women peacekeepers and peacebuilders to collaborate in advancing women's voices and contributions to sustainable peace especially in the conflict affected countries.
2. In his opening remarks, the Chair, **H.E. Mr. Muhammad Abdul Muhith**, highlighted the increasing recognition of gendered dimensions of the peace and security agenda in the United Nations (UN) since the adoption of the Security Council resolution 1325, pointing to the imperative of women's full, equal and meaningful participation in peacekeeping operations and peacebuilding initiatives. He mentioned important frameworks for the implementation of the WPS agenda, including the Secretary-General's Action for Peacekeeping (A4P), Action for Peacekeeping + (A4P+), and the PBC's Gender Strategy and the results achieved in their implementation. The Chair noted that although the initiatives and policies of the Department of Peace Operations (DPO) have contributed to the gradual increase of the participation of uniformed women in peacekeeping, women still represent only 7.8 % of uniformed peacekeepers and continue to face various obstacles to meaningful participation. He highlighted results through the incorporation of gendered approaches in all aspects of peacekeeping operations, including the increase of women's representation in local peace and reconciliation committees in the Central African Republic (CAR). He emphasized the importance of leveraging the positive contributions of uniformed women peacekeepers in peacebuilding, especially given that women peacekeepers have greater reach to communities, and they can advance empowerment of local women. He underlined the need for enhanced partnerships between peacekeepers and local women community leaders, networks and civil society organizations to advance women's meaningful participation in conflict resolution and sustainable peace.
3. **The Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations, Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix**, stressed the need for collaboration among peacekeeping and peacebuilding actors in supporting host countries to achieve sustainable peace and advance gender equality, especially given the increasingly challenging circumstances under which peacekeeping missions work. He stressed the need of a UN system-wide approach and close cooperation with regional organizations and international financial institutions. Highlighting that women's full participation in political and peace processes is a prerequisite for sustainable

peace and legitimate governance, he noted that strengthening women's meaningful role in peacekeeping facilitates access to women in their communities and their engagement. He informed about the initiatives of the DPO to advance the WPS agenda, particularly in the A4P+, which prioritizes women's full, equal and meaningful participation in decision-making at all levels and in all functions. As noted by the USG, DPOs efforts in this regard are focused on creating enabling environments for women in peacekeeping, gender analysis, and gender responsive measures and include consultations of the mission leaderships with women leaders, peacebuilders, and civil society organizations (CSOs). He provided examples from the field, sharing how MINUSMA has supported women's participation in Mali's transition process. He emphasized that enhancing data driven approaches and gender analysis enables more systematic integration of gender perspectives into political strategies and mission plans. Further, he noted how involving women in early warning mechanisms supported by the missions helped to identify threats for women and girls and to develop gender responsive protection measures for example in the DRC and CAR. He assured that working to advance women's role in peacekeeping and to create conditions for them to contribute at all levels in all roles remains a priority. However, he underlined that challenges remain to women's representation and meaningful roles in peacekeeping, and encouraged Member States to work together with the DPO in identifying and addressing barriers faced by women. He urged them to send female candidates for uniformed and civilian components of peacekeeping, especially for senior leadership positions. In conclusion, he assured DPO's commitment to enhance the links between peacekeeping and peacebuilding and to work with the PBC to advance the WPS agenda.

- 4. The Chair of the WPS Chief of Defense Network, Lieutenant General Waker-Uz-Zaman, SGP, psc** informed that the WPS Chief of Defense Network was established in 2017 and aims to support efforts of Member States to implement the WPS agenda and works on capacity-building and to increase opportunities for women at all levels. He outlined that the network, founded by Canada, United Kingdom, and Bangladesh, has grown steadily and currently consists of 57 members. He noted that the network provides a collaborative platform for Chiefs of Defense to plan and undertake measures to advance the WPS agenda within their respective forces and generate a positive effect by increasing women's participation in UN peacekeeping operations. While emphasizing the benefits of women's participation in military operations, including facilitating contacts with the local civilian population, he stressed existing challenges women face in the defense sector, including many discriminatory practices. Noting the crucial importance of increasing women's recruitment in defense forces, he proposed to increase women's participation in recruitment boards, to establish a minimum target for the selection and to promote gender equality in recruitment including through affirmative actions. He further stressed the need to ensure necessary legal framework for ensuring equality between female and male service members, while continuing to provide gender awareness training at all levels, promote integrated military training for increasing cohesion among personnel irrespective of gender, create gender advisors at individual installations, and establish a committee for addressing

gender issues in the armed forces, among others. Further recommendations included the need to ensure family support initiatives for female service members and appropriate accommodations as well as assignments. Lastly, he underpinned the need for gender sensitive workplace support initiatives and inclusive policy. He shared his experience that failing these basic requirements leads to early discharge of women military personnel, leading to reversal of hard-earned gains. He expressed the commitment of the network to continuing its efforts towards increasing women's participation in defense forces as a means to advance Women, Peace and Security Agenda.

5. **The Director and Deputy Head of the Peacebuilding Support Office, Ms. Awa Dabo**, underscored how women's participation in peacekeeping operations contributes to improving peacekeeping operations' effectiveness, ensures better access to local communities and enhances peacebuilding efforts of the peacekeeping missions. She underlined that several barriers underpinned by structural gender norms, power dynamics, patriarchal structures and value systems prevent women's representation and meaningful participation in conflict prevention and resolution. Ms. Dabo informed the meeting how PBSO has been integrating gender analysis in the PBC's work and also facilitating women's representation in the PBC meetings as briefers in order to incorporate gender perspectives in peacebuilding. Further, she elaborated how the Secretary-General's Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) complements programmatic funding in peacekeeping operations and prioritizes financing for gender equality and women's empowerment interventions to enhance women's participation in peacebuilding. She emphasized the crucial role of the Fund in transition contexts in an effort to ensuring the sustainability of WPS gains beyond peacekeeping operations. Emphasizing gender-sensitive conflict and political analysis, she stressed the need to ensure that women are fully involved as equal partners in all peacekeeping and peacebuilding efforts. She urged to ensure reliable, flexible and long-term investments in local women peacebuilders, their organizations and networks particularly in peacekeeping settings. She called for using the Commission's unique convening and advisory role to leverage its support to WPS and women's engagement in peacebuilding.
6. **The Chief of Peace, Security and Humanitarian Action of UN Women, Ms. Paivi Kannisto**, stressed the need to increase women's participation in UN peacekeeping missions at all levels and in all roles, including senior leadership, highlighting the diversity of knowledge, perspectives, solutions and resources that unfold through gender inclusivity. She underlined the increased effectiveness as well as the improved perception, accessibility and credibility among local populations of gender inclusive peacekeeping missions. She further emphasized the crucial role of women peacebuilders and human rights defenders in peacebuilding and encouraged to strengthen partnerships between peacekeeping missions and local women's networks. She stressed the need to reshape the system-wide responses to peace and security through a more inclusive approach and noted UN Women's creation of a Field Enabling Environment Guidelines to tackle barriers and assisting in the creation of a more enabling environment. She underlined the need for a more concerted effort to

change the status quo and increase women's participation in military contingents. She informed about UN Women efforts, including their hosting of the Elsie Initiative Fund for Uniformed Women in Peace Operations, which aims to support and incentivize efforts to increase women's participation. She mentioned the Female Military Officers Course that provides technical and practical skills to military women in their preparation for deployment for UN peace operations. In conclusion, she underscored that women's full, equal and meaningful participation in all peace processes, peacebuilding and recovery is critical for lasting peace, highlighting the need for contribution and leadership of uniformed women and local women peacebuilders.

7. **The Military Gender and Protection Advisor of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), Lt. Cmdr. Lisa Steel**, highlighted the existing challenges and barriers in advancing the WPS agenda in peacekeeping operations. She stressed the need for a better understanding of the WPS agenda among the military personnel, for a stronger advocacy and commitment to the agenda by the military leaderships and for increased resources for its implementation. She noted that lack of women in decision-making roles of peacekeeping operations remain a major challenge both for increasing the number of female UN peacekeepers and ensuring the full, equal and meaningful participation of those included. With regard to gender-responsive patrolling, she pointed out that solely including women peacekeepers to a patrol is insufficient to enhance engagement with the local communities, if the patrols are not equipped with the language skills and accessibility needed to engage with them. Referring to how cultural biases within militaries hinder the implementation of the WPS agenda in the UN peacekeeping missions, Lt. Cmdr. Steel stressed the importance of educating and guiding military peacekeepers in gender sensitive approaches. She underlined the need for dedicating more resources and expertise such as WPS and gender advisors, in Member States as well as in UN capacities. She called for creating structures and processes to overcome existing barriers to mainstreaming the WPS agenda in peacekeeping operations and enhance a collaborative and integrated approach.
8. **Ms. Lea Biason, representing the Elsie Initiative Fund for Uniformed Women in Peace Operations**, introduced the multi-partner trust fund facilitated by UN Women that was established in 2019. She informed about the Fund's mechanism to encourage Member States to adopt gendered approaches and promote the UN system-wide initiatives to overcome obstacles that prevent the sustained deployment of women military and police in UN peacekeeping operations. Pointing out the slow pace of achieving gender parity in different positions of UN peacekeeping operations, she introduced the Fund's goal of accelerating efforts to increase the participation of uniformed female personnel in these missions. She shared that the 20 projects the Fund has supported since 2019 tackle barriers throughout the deployment cycle addressing various levels simultaneously to support sustainable and transformative change within security institutions. She shared examples of results and impact from their projects in 15 troop and police contributing countries, which included increased deployment of trained women to UN peace operations, reinforced policy frameworks on gender equality in security institutions, as well as improved

infrastructure and receptive environments for uniformed women. She concluded by thanking the donors of the Elsie Initiative Fund, and pointing that the Fund's annual report provides further examples of good practices gathered during the implementation of their projects.

9. **Ms. Mavic Cabrera Balleza, the Chief Executive Officer of the Global Network of Women Peacebuilders (GNWP)**, introduced the network that comprises grassroots women's rights organizations working in crisis and conflict-affected local communities across the world as well as her role as co-chair of the Board of the Compact on Women, Peace & Security and Humanitarian Action, which contributes to the attainment of gender parity in peacekeeping. She identified women's participation in peacekeeping operations as a key pillar of the WPS agenda and the New Agenda for Peace. While welcoming the increase of military and police gender experts and focal points in 2021, she called for addressing the lack of female representation at the Head of Mission level in peacekeeping operations. Highlighting women peacekeepers' impact in strengthening the mission's accessibility to local populations and encouraging local women, she urged the UN and Members States to step up collective efforts to increase the number of female uniformed peacekeepers, including through implementing the DPOs Uniformed Gender Parity Strategy. She welcomed the Elsie Initiative Fund in this regard. She further called for the integration of the WPS agenda in the Terms of Reference of all senior leaders of peacekeeping operations and stressed the need for those missions to enhance partnerships with local women peacebuilders. She emphasized that dedicated staff capacity and technical expertise on WPS and close collaboration with women civil society organizations is needed for effectively integrating the WPS agenda in peacekeeping operations and requires political commitment and adequate financial resources. She called for the UN, with close collaboration with the host government in peacekeeping settings, to develop integrated analysis of human rights, women's rights and gender to guide mission planning and transition plans ensuring accountability on the part of the UN and the government. She further called for mandating peacekeeping operations to monitor and respond to risks, attacks and reprisals faced by women peacebuilders and women human rights defenders. In conclusion, she stressed the need for joint efforts of women peacebuilders and women peacekeepers to amplify women's voices in conflict prevention and resolution thereby ensuring a locally owned and led implementation of the WPS agenda.

10. The members of the Commission welcomed the briefings and made the following observations:

- They recognized the important role played by women peacekeepers and peacebuilders for building and sustaining peace. They emphasized the effectiveness and sustainability of peace efforts when women peacekeepers and peacebuilders collaborate with each other and are effectively included on the ground.

- They recognized the progress on the implementation of the WPS agenda and welcomed the A4P, A4P+, the UN system-wide Strategy for Gender Parity, and the PBC Gender Strategy to mainstream gender in the work of the Commission. Member States underlined the importance of women's full, equal and meaningful participation in all aspects of peace processes at all levels.
- They acknowledged the important contribution of uniformed women in peacekeeping, including through their engagement with local populations. They called for addressing remaining challenges, including the low number of female uniformed personnel in peacekeeping operations and the lack of representations of women, especially in leadership positions. They welcomed the work of the Elsie Initiative Fund to tackle these challenges. They highlighted the importance of strengthened efforts to facilitate a conducive environment for women peacekeepers, including mitigating discrimination and developing retention strategies.
- They recognized that efforts to involve women in peacekeeping and peacebuilding begin at the national level. They noted the importance of national barrier assessments to shed light on the obstacles that hinder women's increased participation in the security sector that have an impact on the low number of female peacekeepers.
- Member States, including troop and police contributing countries, shared their experiences of women's participation in national armed forces and UN peacekeeping operations, and the inclusion of women and gender perspectives in peace negotiation and agreements as well as in their National Action Plans on WPS.
- They emphasized WPS as a key pillar to the Commissions work and expressed the need to collectively increase efforts to strengthen women's meaningful participation in peacekeeping and peacebuilding and scale up existing good practices. They noted the importance of integrating WPS issues in the Commissions' written advice to the Security Council, especially regarding transitions. They also encouraged increasing the visibility and amplifying the voices of women peacekeepers and peacebuilders, including through the PBC platform.
- They commended the PBF's efforts to promote gender equality and women's empowerment in peacekeeping and transition settings, including through its Gender and Youth Promotion Initiative.
- Noting with concern the insufficient dedicated financial resources for women peacebuilders and women-led organizations and initiatives, they stressed the need for upscaling funding initiatives that mainstream the WPS agenda in peacekeeping and peacebuilding at all levels. They highlighted the importance to strengthen the capacity and provide support to women leadership and women CSOs at the local level. Many of

them called for protection of women peacebuilders and women human rights defenders, including from sexual and gender-based violence.

11. In his closing remarks, the Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission stressed the need for attention of all stakeholders to the WPS agenda. Regarding advancing the agenda, he noted contributions of existing policies and initiatives of Member States and the UN as well as examples of successful collaboration between peacebuilders and peacekeepers. He expressed hope that Member States' interventions will inform the work of the Commission on promoting WPS. Furthermore, the Chair pointed to the need to address existing challenges and barriers to women's full, equal and meaningful participation in peacebuilding and to strengthen the engagement of women peacebuilding actors, starting on a local level. He expressed the commitment to advance the Commission's advisory, bridging and convening role in implementing the WPS agenda and in this regard assured that the Commission's advice to other relevant UN bodies, including the Security Council, will take the briefings of the women briefers into account.