

Concept Note  
Peacebuilding Commission - Working Group on Lessons Learned

Gender and Peacebuilding: Enhancing Women's Participation

Objectives and Rationale for the Meeting

The founding resolutions of the Peacebuilding Commission mandate gender mainstreaming in all of its work. This mandate is based on the recognition that equal participation of women and men in peacebuilding processes can strengthen local ownership and can contribute to greater equality between women and men in post-conflict societies. In this context, the Commission has identified gender equality and human rights issues as cross-cutting priorities for peace consolidation in both Burundi and Sierra Leone—the first two countries on its agenda. In order to support the work of the Commission in these countries, the Working Group on Lessons Learned will consider the topic of women's participation in peacebuilding and will explore existing lessons and good practices drawing specific recommendations for the cases of Burundi and Sierra Leone.

Background

It took the international community almost fifty years before gender and gender differences became an integral element in peace and security work. The 4<sup>th</sup> World conference on Women (Beijing 1995) reaffirmed that violence against women is an obstacle to the achievement of the objectives of equality, development and peace. The Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security adopted in October 2000 recognized that men and women experience wars differently and that to build sustainable peace women need to be fully involved.

Women – like men – are both victims and actors in wars and armed conflicts, but usually in different ways. They are also resources in peacebuilding processes. And yet, even today women are often marginalized when it comes to formal post-conflict peace-building processes, on the national and the international levels. Women still face structural, cultural and economic barriers to their full participation. On the other hand, women's engagement in peace-building is sometimes based on the assumption that women and girls are not associated with violence. Greater awareness and documented knowledge of the various roles played by women during conflicts is needed to fully assess their potential for contributing to the building of a sustainable peace.

Violence against women remains one of the most persistent obstacles to women's full and equal participation, including in post-conflict peacebuilding and reconciliation processes. Acts of gender-based violence committed in conflict affected situations fundamentally violate the enjoyment by women of their human rights and fundamental freedoms. But the devastating socio-economic consequences of such violence also have a longer-term impact on the post-conflict stability and development of a country.

Gender-based violence will never be properly addressed until there are sufficiently high numbers of women in decision-making positions at the peace table, or in post-conflict national and local

governments. But women are frequently prevented from assuming these positions, as well as participating in the full range of post-conflict processes, by the effects, or continued threat, of the violence committed against them. The meeting will explore the following key questions:

Why is the participation of women critical to sustainable peacebuilding?

What are the main impediments to women's full participation in peacebuilding processes?

How does SGBV undermine sustainable and inclusive peace-building?

What are the lessons learned and good practices in promoting greater participation of women in peacebuilding processes?

What are emerging lessons and good practices in addressing SGBV in post-conflict setting in an integrated and holistic manner?

How can the PBC better mainstream gender perspectives in its country-specific work?

#### Format and Structure

The meeting will be held from 10 am to 1 pm on 29 January 2008 in the UN Conference Room 6. It will involve short presentations (10 minutes) by several panelists and a facilitated dialogue.

#### Chair:

H.E. Mrs. Carmen María Gallardo Hernández, Permanent Representative of El Salvador to the United Nations

#### Panelists

Ms. Françoise Nduwimana, project manager for Civilian Police Capacity Development Program in Central and South Africa.

Dr. Dyan Mazurana, Research Director for Gender, Youth, and Community, Tufts University

Dr. Anne-Marie Goetz, Chief Advisor, Governance, Peace and Security, UNIFEM

Ms. Winnie Byanyima, Director of the Gender Team, Bureau for Development Policy, UNDP

Ms. Jennifer Klot, Senior Adviser on HIV/AIDS, Gender and Security, Social Science Research Council

#### Output

A Chair's summary report will be publicly available after the meeting.

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