

MEETING REPORT

GENDER PERSPECTIVES AND CONFIDENCE BUILDING FOR INCLUSIVE PEACE:

GETTING PARTIES TO A SHARED
NEGOTIATION TABLE THROUGH TRUST



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**PEACE, SECURITY AND
HUMANITARIAN ACTION SECTION**

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INTRODUCTION

With largely stalled high-level peace processes around the globe, violent conflicts persist, and communities continue to suffer in the absence of political settlements and sustainable peace. In many cases, the original actors and grievances informing the design of formal mediation processes feature patterns of evolution, complexity intensification, fragmentation and transformation as more actors and new generations become involved. While women are significantly affected by such conflicts and often play a leading role in local peacebuilding, their experiences and contributions continue to be generally unrecognized and their formal participation in peace processes limited. In this context, policy actors around the world are calling for inclusive peace processes, new approaches to conflict resolution and effective conflict prevention.¹ This call demands smarter design and the involvement of women, youth and others traditionally excluded from shaping pathways to peace.

Confidence building is one area that is receiving significant attention as formal, track I mediation processes are largely stalled. Fulsome feminist analysis of confidence building is nascent. With the outbreak of COVID-19, the urgency for confidence building and accompanying feminist analysis have only increased. The United Nations (UN) Secretary-General's call for a global ceasefire in March 2020 highlights the issue, as ceasefires are considered a typical confidence building measure. Many women and civil society organizations were the first to call for a ceasefire, whether independently or jointly, to allow for a chance at peace and a chance for an effective COVID-19 response.²

Before the pandemic, in November 2019, UN Women convened a conference entitled 'Gender Perspectives and Confidence Building for Inclusive Peace: Getting Parties to a Shared Negotiation Table through Trust.' The aim was to explore good practices and strategies for women's meaningful participation in confidence building initiatives for peacemaking, including through an examination of the ways in which women are already shaping and proposing such initiatives across tracks I and II in various capacities. Discussions carried an emphasis on contributing toward new and existing peacemaking efforts, particularly in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), which remains the world's least peaceful region.³

The conference brought together approximately 60 participants, including women who have engaged in peace processes for Iraq, Libya, Syria and Yemen,

as well as from elsewhere around the world, such as Colombia, Kenya, Sri Lanka and Georgia. With technical inputs and facilitation from experts and thought leaders, discussions promoted a sharing of experiences and cross-fertilization of ideas among practitioners with deep knowledge across different country contexts. This summary conference report does not begin to do justice to the breadth or nuance of the discussions that took place; rather, it serves as an attempt to capture some preliminary gender perspectives on confidence building to kickstart further research and discussion.

The year 2020 brings with it the 20th anniversary of the first Security Council resolution on women, peace and security (WPS), and substantive and transformative implementation remains the central challenge. Women's meaningful participation in peace processes has proven particularly resistant to change, where the norm remains one of exclusion and gender perspectives tend to be an add-on in formal, high-level track I discussions instead of an integrated part of agenda design and discussion. According to conference participants, the time for urgent change is now.

1 [E.g. Pathways for Peace: Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict](#) (World Bank, 2018).

2 [Press Release: Women's organizations in the Arab States region join UN Secretary-General António Guterres's call for ceasefire in the face of COVID-19](#) (UN Women Arab States, 2020).

3 [Global Peace Index 2020](#) (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2020).

I. ABOUT CONFIDENCE BUILDING—DEFINITIONS AND PERSPECTIVES

In brief, *confidence building initiatives* aim to build rapport and connection between conflict parties and between communities. As track I peace processes around the world in the MENA region are largely stalled, often without direct negotiations occurring, questions about effective confidence building between parties has become a priority for track I mediators and many others, including those operating at tracks II and III. For the purposes of this discussion, ‘confidence building’ or ‘confidence building initiatives’ include both confidence building ‘measures’ and confidence building ‘gestures’, each having several and often distinct dimensions.

While there is no universally accepted definition, *confidence building measures* (CBMs) can be defined as “actions or processes undertaken in all phases of a conflict cycle . . . with aim of increasing transparency and the level of trust and confidence between two or more conflict parties.”⁴ The most common and often exclusive focus is on the actions negotiated between official conflict parties. CBMs do not usually address drivers and root causes of conflict, but they can support short to medium-term efforts towards peace, such as humanitarian access agreements, ceasefires or local violence reduction arrangements. They are usually formal and span a myriad of possibilities covering political, military, diplomatic, cultural and economic initiatives. Examples might include joint infrastructure repair, forms of demilitarization, demining, prisoner exchange and preservation of heritage sites, amongst other possibilities. Informal CBMs might include study tours, seminars and other efforts to promote human interactions and build rapport across conflict lines. CBMs can be brought into a process that has stalled, or where trust is lacking from the outset, or diminished over time.

Gestures, on the other hand, can be understood as the symbolic, often intangible positive signals that parties and communities in conflict send to one another through a public handshake, the recognition of

commemorative days or events and the turning of an eye to transit through technically restricted or off-limit areas, among other examples. These are inherently more informal in many aspects and an area where women bring considerable insight and influence precisely because women are excluded from formal processes and are most active in less formal tracks.⁵

Confidence building initiatives, particularly formal CBMs, should not replace or supersede peace negotiations; nor are they designed to address the fundamental drivers of violent conflict, which is needed to achieve sustainable peace. Confidence building, however, when carefully designed or opportunities well-seized upon, can “improve relationships, humanize the other, signal positive intentions and commitment, and avoid escalation.”⁶ The effect may be to have transparency around the use of armaments, compliance with rules of engagement and more to build a sense of minimal security during ongoing conflict.⁷ In an ideal scenario, they will infuse fresh momentum, revitalize perspectives or help develop a shared purpose. However, confidence building initiatives can be fraught to negotiate, agree upon and further challenging to implement. They can also be manipulated and misused to buy time, strengthen the status quo or undermine more substantive negotiations.

Some examples of confidence building initiatives are presented below, each with a dimension related to women’s participation. Many of these examples occur

4 [Guide on Non-Military Confidence-Building Measures](#) (OSCE, 2012).

5 For recent data on women’s roles in tracks two and three, see: Anjali Dayal and Agathe Christien, [Reframing Women’s Roles in Peace Processes: Beyond the Negotiating Table](#) (Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security, April 2020).

6 [Guide on Non-Military Confidence-Building Measures](#) (OSCE, 2012).

7 [Confidence Building Measures: Beyond Intractability](#) (Michelle Maiese, 2003).

at the less formal track II level, where women’s participation appears in greater numbers.⁸ The examples cited here and elsewhere in the report demonstrate

that women’s participation can occur in different levels, phases and roles, whether outside formal processes or through direct participation within them.

| | |
|------------------------|--|
| <p>Yemen</p> | <p>Yemeni women have long been identifying and advocating for confidence building options. For example, women’s groups made a recommendation that maps of areas affected by landmines should be jointly created as a confidence building measure for peace talks.⁹ Yemeni women have also raised awareness around, and strongly advocated against, the military recruitment of child soldiers, calling on all parties to the conflict in Yemen to put such recruitment to an end in keeping with international law and as something that all parties to the conflict should be able to agree upon.</p> <p>WOMEN’S PARTICIPATION: advocacy; technical suggestions for confidence building.</p> |
| <p>Cyprus</p> | <p>In 2003, Cypriot women from a civil society group called ‘Hands Across the Divide’ protested peacefully while dressed as ‘Cinderellas’, urging military authorities to allow crossings after midnight through the Ledra Palace checkpoint. The checkpoint is located on the green line dividing the Turkish North and Greek South. The protesters were responding to limitations on freedom of movement between the two territories, which hindered efforts towards reconciliation and direct communication. The restriction was successfully lifted within days.</p> <p>WOMEN’S PARTICIPATION: advocacy (physical mobilization); informal, direct interactions across conflict lines.</p> |
| <p>Kenya</p> | <p>‘Women situation rooms’ are another example of women’s engagement in confidence building. For example, in the context of anticipated election violence on the basis of ethnicity and gender as well, a women’s situation room was established in Kenya for the 2013 elections. It was established to be neutral and independent, with a diversity of Kenyans participating in its work as real-time election monitors on the ground. The election monitors sometimes resolved threats of violence on-the-spot, otherwise the information was channeled to secretariat members, who would in turn channel news of violence to support early warning and response. A team of eminent persons coordinated with the Women’s Situation Room and intervened as appropriate to prevent outbreaks and escalations of violence.</p> <p>WOMEN’S PARTICIPATION: direct monitoring, reporting and mediating of conflict; interactions across conflict lines; emphasis on conflict prevention.</p> |
| <p>Colombia</p> | <p>After the signing of a comprehensive peace agreement between the Colombian government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (<i>Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia</i>, FARC), the UN Security Council established the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia. The Mission is jointly comprised of international observers, the Government of Colombia and FARC, which provides opportunity for interaction, regular communication and confidence building in the implementation of the peace agreement. With a mandate to verify aspects of peace agreement implementation, including the reintegration of former FARC members, it has a critical role in ensuring that the longer-term work of confidence building continues into the implementation phase. Last reported, women’s participation in the Mission was only about 20 percent,¹⁰ but their role has been essential even so in enabling the Mission to gain access to women, some of whom are former combatants. The mission’s work is also supported by gender advisors, who contribute to the mainstreaming of gender perspectives across efforts. The work of the UN Mission continues today amidst many challenges and threats to peace in Colombia.</p> <p>WOMEN’S PARTICIPATION: members of the UN Verification Mission in Colombia to verify peace agreement implementation; gender experts; interactions across conflict lines.</p> |

8 Perspectives on women’s participation should be considered even where there is little reporting or analysis of women’s participation in a given example of confidence building, especially in cases that are led from tracks II or III where women’s participation is higher and their roles more visible.

9 [Changes Ahead: Yemeni Women Map the Road to Peace](#) (WILPF, 2018).

10 [Colombia Peace Still Being Consolidated, But Progress Serves as Beacon for Others Trying to Exit Conflict](#) (UN Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, 2018).

II. (RE-)CONCEPTUALIZING CONFIDENCE BUILDING

The starting point for discussions on confidence building was one of critical interrogation. First, participants raised concerns around a broader lack of trust in official peace processes. While confidence building is typically about confidence between conflict parties or communities, questions about broader societal trust in formal processes were said to form a critical part of the landscape. A basic level of trust between actors involved in and impacted by peace processes is necessary to sustain attention and engagement with any given peace process. This includes women; they should have trust in the process that their rights, needs and interests will be taken into account for them to want to fully invest in supporting a given peace process.

“Trust is the currency of peace; if you don't have trust, you can't have peace.”

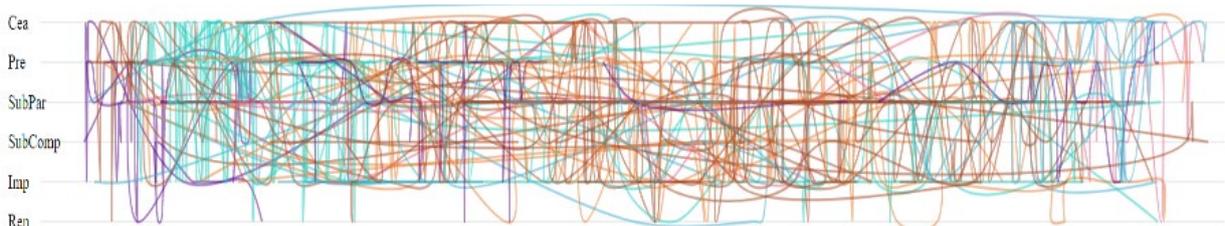
Experts and practitioners alike also pointed to the need for a re-thinking of the traditional linear model of conflict and peacemaking, questioning the idea that peace processes have defined beginnings and endings. Peace processes should be imagined more as perpetual journeys; including multiple starts, stops and turns, and periods of winding backwards or in circles. Once this is how they are imagined, then confidence building initiatives become important not only for kickstarting stalled processes in the so-called ‘early’ phases of peacemaking, but also for continued trust building and

conflict prevention efforts into implementation phases. A Colombian participant commented that: “Successful implementation demands a constant process of not just building trust but validating that trust—we must confirm the contributions of the parties to peacemaking. They must be as satisfied with the outcome as they were with the settlement.” She further added that regular and meaningful consultation with women’s movements in the process of implementation will increase accountability and trust in the outcome.

Some participants also questioned the terminology of peace ‘tracks’, suggesting that it may be reductive and unhelpful in some cases, especially when the concept is employed as a tool to falsely justify siloed approaches and exclusionary practices. Indeed, elite and exclusionary ideas around what is required for track I inclusion are often precisely what prevents a more inclusive approach. The changing nature of conflict, with shifting catalysts (a contemporary example being climate change), is another reason to think critically and re-visit many traditional notions about peacemaking writ large and core elements and ‘techniques’ such as confidence building.

Going beyond these conceptual interrogations that carry practical consequences in defining the practice of confidence building, women participants strongly re-iterated that they have a right to participate in formal peace discussions, including on confidence building. The message is not a new one; indeed, it is repeated time and time again and with rising levels of frustration. Despite over 20 years of dedicated research,

Visualizing Peace Processes as Non-Linear Processes

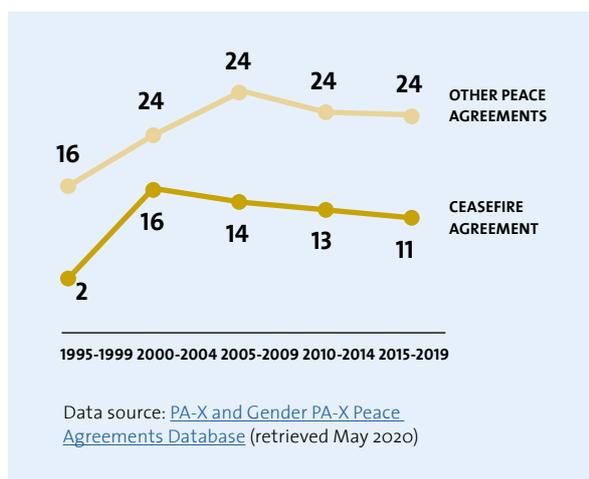


Source: [PA-X Peace Agreements Database](#) (accessed May 2020).

advocacy and programming initiatives, gender inclusivity in formal peace processes has been at best patchy. Between 1992 and 2018, data on women’s inclusion in formal processes shows that women comprised only three percent of mediators, four percent of signatories and 13 percent of negotiators.¹¹

Where confidence building processes at track I are concerned, there is no specific data available on women’s participation and influence. However, all suggestions, including women’s articulated experiences, point to a bleak picture. Research commissioned by UN Women suggests that only 11 percent of ceasefire agreements include gender provisions, which is only half of that in other peace agreement types, including partial, comprehensive or implementation agreements.¹²

Percentage of peace agreements with gender provisions, 1995-2019



Still, when women are not directly participating as mediators, members of negotiating party delegations or agreement signatories, they play active roles in peace-building. Among other modalities, they are mobilizing and advocating to apply pressure on conflict parties, building momentum to develop a moment of political ‘ripeness’ that could yield progress or an agreement on any given issue. In 2003 in Liberia, for instance, women mobilized and blocked the exit of the negotiation room until men inside were pressured enough to finally agree upon and sign an agreement.¹³ Women may also be directly involved in negotiations in less visible ways. In Syria, women from the organization *Damma* negotiated with armed actors in Zabadani to establish prisoner releases, a civilian safe zone and a ceasefire

initiative. They eventually “secured government buy-in for a new round of negotiations,” but were unable to take those negotiations further themselves because the local council established a male negotiating team to replace them.¹⁴

Conference discussions also highlighted women’s experiences directly participating in confidence building in less visible spaces, often outside of track I. Participants cited a number of cases to show that, as political space is limited for women, they are forming and leading women-only coalitions or groups across political divides to influence peace processes, including in relation to CBMs. One example is that of the Syrian Women’s Advisory Board, a diverse group of Syrian women advising the UN Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria. They have provided inputs on confidence building topics, such as prisoner exchange and release issues. Another example comes from Wajir County, Kenya, where women peace activists mobilized women from opposing clans to meet and build negotiating relationships, returning to the male leaders of their clans to influence them towards a formal process of negotiation that led to the 1993 Al Fatah Declaration.¹⁵

In the context of women groups or coalitions working across divides on conflict resolution, one woman posed the following question to the group: “How are we building confidence in each other if we’re on opposite sides of the table as women?”. Often, women’s coalition building and the development of a women’s agenda for change are prime examples of confidence building across conflict lines. These examples bear a variety of successes and challenges from which to draw insight, even if they are not often acknowledged, reported or typically described as legitimate ‘confidence building’.

11 [Women’s Participation in Peace Processes](#) (Council on Foreign Relations and UN Women, Accessed April 2020).

12 Data is based on analysis of worldwide peace agreements between 1990 and 2016. [Robert Forster and Christine Bell, Gender Mainstreaming in Ceasefires: Comparative Data and Examples](#) (UN Women, 2019).

13 Thania Paffenholz et al., [Making Women Count – Not Just Counting Women](#) (UN Women, 2015)..

14 Hanan Tabbara and Garrett Rubin, [Women on the Frontlines of Conflict Resolution and Negotiation: Community Voices from Syria, Iraq and Yemen](#) (UN Women Arab States, 2018).

15 Abjata Khalif, [How Women’s Efforts Brought Cessation of Hostilities to Northern Kenya](#) (The Kenyan Woman, 2014).

“Women have the courage to build bridges.”

Moreover, women are directly leading confidence building initiatives outside of formal spaces. One notable success from Yemen is the work of the Association of Mothers of Abductees and Detainees in tracking political prisoners and advocating for their release. This group often acts as an intermediary between families of the disappeared and political prisoners, humanitarian organizations and authorities. They also utilize social media to share the stories of abductees.¹⁶ Yet, such instances where women’s leadership is at the forefront tend to be overlooked.

Conference participants urged that there be further consideration of women’s meaningful participation in confidence building. In addition to women’s right to participate in decision-making for their societies, women can often offer insights into their communities that are helpful in identifying shared struggles across dividing lines and thereby offering entry points for confidence building (e.g. campaigning for a better water supply). Moreover, participants suggested that increased knowledge generation on gender equality perspectives in confidence building is necessary, whether it be in relation to humanitarian access or prisoner exchange agreements that could build interaction between conflict affected groups and communities.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS

Conference discussions highlighted impressive leadership from women in confidence building processes despite continued hurdles and systemic discrimination. The 20th anniversary of Security Council resolution 1325 provides an opportune moment for critical reflection of women’s experiences and shared, comparative learning and decisive action to address recommendations for inclusive and sustainable peace.

Many oft repeated and central recommendations on women’s meaningful participation in peace processes were repeated, such as the need for increased political will and greater investment in women civil society movements. Conference participants also put forth valuable recommendations on confidence building that are presented below. Annexes A and B include further recommendations on designing meaningful consultations with women and creating linkages in confidence building work across tracks I, II, and III. Some recommendations reframe points made in other fora on inclusive peace processes, while other recommendations suggest further opportunities for coordination, prioritization and strategic investment among actors working on confidence building initiatives:

1. Build broader trust in processes themselves:

In designing, facilitating and contributing to peace processes at all levels, peace process actors should consider the issue of trust more broadly. Sufficient transparency, public communication, feedback and opportunities to meaningfully

engage and influence can create trust in processes by those who are otherwise marginalized and excluded. When there are multiple entry points to engage in and influence peace processes, society members, including women, are more likely to experience a sense of ownership and buy-in to help towards building peace.

2. Shift to a strategic, gender-inclusive multi-track approach:

Women are playing significant roles in peace processes through civil society and less formal spaces. A survey of 63 formal peace processes resulting in peace agreements found that 60 percent of cases had parallel informal peace processes, with 71 percent of those informal processes showing clear evidence of the involvement of women’s groups.¹⁷ In recent years, the mediation community has witnessed a shifting emphasis toward multi-track peace processes.¹⁸ Still, confidence building is typically viewed as an

16 Ahmed Yassine, [The Mothers of Abductees Association: A Model of the Courage of Yemeni Women](#) (Al-Madaniya, undated).

17 Anjali Dayal and Agathe Christien, [Reframing Women’s Roles in Peace Processes: Beyond the Negotiating Table](#) (Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security, April 2020).

18 For an example of such emphasis, see Julia Palmiano Federer et al., [Beyond the Tracks? Reflections on Multitrack Approaches to Peace Processes](#) (Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue and others, 2019).

elite-driven and male-centered process, taking place predominantly behind closed doors with little to no consultation outside those doors. Further research and thinking continue to be needed. There has yet to be comprehensive or deeper research exploring what a multi-track approach to confidence building initiatives means in practice and could mean with innovative reimagination.

3. Invest in evidence-based research, including on women's participation in local confidence building:

Due to the traditional understanding that confidence building takes place almost exclusively in formal, national spaces, there is a need for further research on the opportunities and risks of women's participation in confidence building initiatives in less formal and often more local level processes. Local ceasefires and violence reduction initiatives could be a priority area to explore, especially with the new and dangerous dynamics of COVID-19 and conflict, which can mutually exacerbate one another. Any research undertaken should provide concrete recommendations, including for programming and mediation efforts.

4. Undertake gender-responsive conflict analysis to underpin confidence building: In order for confidence building initiatives to have real and lasting impact, the variety of women's needs, rights and perspectives need to be taken into account.

Fifty percent of the population's views will make a difference in determining whether confidence building succeeds and fails, if not in the short-term, then surely in the medium to long-term. Gender-responsive conflict analysis should be undertaken regularly to inform the design and planning for confidence building initiatives. Such analysis should not only map women's groups, their interests and political reach, but also the creative inclusion options that could exist according to different scenarios. Conflict analysis exercises should also meaningfully include women and civil society in the analysis process itself.

5. Support women's meaningful participation to prevent conflict, implement peace agreements and sustain peace:

Confidence building goes beyond identifying and using entry points to build trust between conflict actors and communities; it is also an essential part of the continuous work required to prevent conflict, implement peace agreements and sustain peace in the longer-term. Formal confidence building measures, such as ceasefire agreements, need monitoring and follow-up to prevent new outbreaks of conflict, promote transparency and accountability and sustain confidence between conflict parties. It is time that women's full, equal and meaningful participation be considered part of confidence building at all levels.

ANNEX A:

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MEANINGFUL CONSULTATIONS WITH WOMEN

Conference working groups had rich discussions on meaningful consultations with women in the design and delivery of confidence building initiatives. They considered the substance of the term ‘meaningful participation’ and the role of consultations as one tool to secure inclusivity in a peace process. Group members also considered confidence building measures specifically, and how consultations might be designed to expand and deepen inclusivity. Most delegates expressed frustration at the lack of women’s involvement in the design and implementation of consultations, which then leads to inadequacies in how consultations include women participants.

They concluded with the following recommendations:

1. Context-specific and gender inclusive

consultations: In addition to modalities for direct women’s participation, formal peace processes should all include consultation modalities. These should be regular and serve to include a wider group of stakeholders, including on confidence building topics.

2. Clarity in purpose: To have meaningful consultations, the consultation must be designed with a clear and consistent political goal, which must be communicated to those participating in advance.

3. Diverse representation: Consultations must be inclusive to have legitimacy. Women must be included. Moreover, in determining selection criteria for participants, consultation organizers should focus on what demographic/community a person represents, not only on the specifics of their perceived identity.

4. Preparation time: To be truly inclusive, a consultation must include fair warning and time for individuals and organizations to prepare in advance. Such preparations include consultations within their own organizations, groups and communities to be effective representatives.

5. Protection measures: Adequate protection measures must be in place for those who wish to participate in consultations to allow them to speak freely without constraint.

6. Logistical support to enable participation: Necessary logistical support must be offered to those invited to participate in consultations. Financial and coordination support with travel, visas and childcare were specifically cited as examples.

7. Feedback and monitoring mechanisms: Consultation should not consist of one-time and one-way communication. Feedback, regular updates and monitoring mechanisms to follow-up on how inputs are used should form part of the consultation design to create accountability and ensure ideas shared are sufficiently reflected in outcomes.

8. Training for all on gender inclusivity: All actors participating in formal peace processes, whether they be members of mediation teams or conflict party delegation members, should undergo training on gender-inclusive approaches to conflict resolution. Efforts to increase awareness, knowledge and skill sets on gender expertise should go beyond mere gender-sensitivity and encourage transformative approaches.

ANNEX B:

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVING LINKAGES ACROSS PEACE TRACKS

Conference working groups discussing the challenges and opportunities to link sub-national and national confidence building initiatives approached the topic with a critical, yet constructive, frame. The opening premise was that community peacebuilding is essential, but does not receive enough attention, funding or political weight.

Working group members debated definitions of local peacebuilding, noting that the definitions themselves may require contextual localization. They also discussed some of the specific barriers and political dynamics that occur in creating linkages between particular tracks. For instance, if and when local peacebuilding groups are connected to national-level initiatives, their work may become politicized in new ways, possibly detracting from the efficacy of their work at local levels. Notably, working group members agreed that local peacebuilding work continues whether or not it is connected to initiatives at the national level.

They gave the following recommendations:

1. Driving factors and root causes: While confidence building initiatives are more about conflict management than they are about resolution, and about building initial trust to move toward peace, they can still be guided by an assessment of driving factors and root causes of conflict. Where it is possible to shape confidence building with such factors and causes in mind, it may not only be more effective, but also guide the creation of useful entry points for relevant engagement across peace tracks.

2. Careful design and analysis: Relating to the above point, a robust and gender-responsive conflict analysis must underpin all peace efforts, including confidence building and multi-track initiatives. Such analysis must have the purpose of creating, nurturing and working to build effective linkages across peace tracks. This purpose must be clear to all actors involved, and will impact analysis of, for instance, the type of agreement being sought, and the identification of specific points where consensus will be difficult. The interests of actors involved should also be mapped and used to inform the design of multi-track approaches, including those actors who are spoilers to inclusive, multi-track approaches. Similarly, the substantive issues that are relevant

across tracks should be identified, as well as those that are not. A false notion of homogeneity among and within women's movements should be avoided.

3. Strengthen women civil society movements, especially at local levels: Women civil society presence and activism at tracks II and III is essential for any multi-track approach to be inclusive and yield sustainable results. Increased dedicated funding is needed. Between 2017 and 2018, OECD Development Assistance Committee members dedicated USD 4.6 billion on average per year to gender equality women's empowerment as the principal objective of the programme, corresponding to four percent of bilateral aid.¹⁹ In addition to increased financial and political support from the international community, flexible and long-term funding are required to sustain and build upon the strength of women peacebuilders.

4. (Re-)Consider where the center of peace efforts lies: Sub-national peace processes can be used to reinvigorate national peace processes that are

¹⁹ [Aid Focussed on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment](#) (OECD, 2020).

struggling or stalled. As protracted conflicts become increasingly fragmented and characterized by localized elements and dynamics, however, the traditional goal of a comprehensive, nation-wide peace agreement seems to be in decline. The most recent example of such an agreement is the 2016 peace agreement between the Colombian government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (*Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia*, FARC). Even then, it did not go so far as to include the National Liberation Army (*Ejército de Liberación Nacional*, ELN). Policy actors and

practitioners alike are beginning to reconsider approaches to peacemaking with greater attention to local and partial peace agreements. Still, conference participants questioned if it could be taken even further. It was suggested that perhaps there are some confidence building initiatives better carried out at tracks II or III. In some cases, perhaps increasingly, the center of (formal) peace efforts can and should be at more local levels, which would likely have different opportunities and risks for women's meaningful participation in confidence building and peace processes generally.

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