

MEETING REPORT

GENDER-INCLUSIVE PEACE PROCESSES

STRENGTHENING WOMEN'S MEANINGFUL
PARTICIPATION THROUGH CONSTITUENCY
BUILDING



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**PEACE, SECURITY AND
HUMANITARIAN ACTION SECTION
UN WOMEN**

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This report is informed by contributions gathered in the context of the global conference Gender-Inclusive Peace Processes: Strengthening Women's Meaningful Participation through Constituency Building (7-27 July 2021).

The conference was organized by UN Women in partnership with CMI – Martti Ahtisaari Peace Foundation and with financial support from the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) in cooperation with Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH and the Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

On behalf on UN Women and CMI, we would like to thank all the participants in this convening for their insightful contributions and productive engagement.

The conference and meeting report were made possible through a collaborative process involving UN Women's Peace, Security and Humanitarian Aid and Communications teams at headquarters, UN Women regional and country office staff across the Arab States and other regions, and CMI's Women in Peacemaking and Communications teams. Many thanks to all those involved for their invaluable support and continued cooperation.

Finally, we are especially grateful to UN Women's partners and donors at BMZ and GIZ for the productive long-term collaboration and generous financial support that has once again made this conference possible. We also extend our appreciation to the Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs for their programmatic partnership that enabled CMI's role and contribution to the convening.



ACRONYMS

BMZ	German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
TAG	Technical Advisory Group
TSM	Temporary Special Measure
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council resolution
WPS	Women, Peace and Security

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As violent conflicts and humanitarian crises intensify globally, and especially in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), communities are paying the price in the absence of political settlements and sustainable peace. Women, in particular, are severely impacted by these crises, but they remain mostly excluded from meaningfully participating in peace processes. This is despite overwhelming evidence showing that their involvement in peacebuilding and mediation contributes to lasting peace that goes well beyond just the silencing of guns.¹ The COVID-19 pandemic exposed even more starkly the extent of gender inequality in conflict-affected contexts, prompting ever-more urgent calls for inclusion.

In this context, UN Women convened the global conference 'Gender-Inclusive Peace Processes: Strengthening Women's Meaningful Participation through Constituency Building' in July 2021, in partnership with CMI – Martti Ahtisaari Peace Foundation, and with financial support from the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) in cooperation with Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH and the Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs. The conference attracted the participation of more than 320 peace practitioners from 70 countries worldwide, with a focus on the MENA region. It was hosted completely online for the first time since its inception in 2018², taking place over Zoom (live events, synchronous component) and SparkBlue (asynchronous engagement) platforms.

Discussions focused on how to **leverage the practice of constituency building to foster inclusive peace and enhance women's meaningful participation in formal peace processes**.³ Scholars have found that one reason why women's inclusion in peacebuilding is correlated with more durable agreements is because of the strong and extensive linkages that women signatories establish with constituencies of women's civil society groups. Yet,

A reconceptualization is necessary that considers women as equal political actors and that deepens the general understanding of the gendered dynamics of accountability and representation in contemporary peace processes.

With technical inputs and facilitation from experts and thought leaders, the conference offered a safe space for the sharing of experiences and cross-fertilization of ideas among practitioners with deep knowledge of different country contexts. Participants reflected, among other issues, on how to mitigate the **increased security risks** that women activists and politicians face for their participation in political processes – from being retaliated against for their activism to becoming the target of other political groups. They shared their perspectives on the **opportunities and challenges of digital methods in constituency building**, including the use of social media and digital tools to amplify women's voices, and the heightened risks women can face as targets of hate speech and cyber harassment. Participants also discussed the ambivalent nature of **temporary special measures (TSMs)** and debated the efficacy of **gender quotas** as a long-term, transformative tool to shape societies, given their existing limitations

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