WOMEN'S MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION IN PEACE PROCESSES

MODALITIES AND STRATEGIES ACROSS TRACKS

29-30 November 2018
Geneva, Switzerland

UN WOMEN

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Global peace has been in decline for four consecutive years, with the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region having numerous high-intensity armed conflicts and regarded as the world's least peaceful region. Despite significant efforts by the UN and others, including civil society and regional organizations, high-level peace processes in the region remain largely stalled and women's meaningful participation limited, hampering the likelihood of reaching a durable agreement. Indeed, making strides towards women's effective participation and gender-inclusive peace processes continues to be a persistent challenge with relatively little progress since the passing of the landmark Security Council resolution 1325 on women, peace and security (WPS).

In November 2018, UN Women convened the conference 'Women's Meaningful Participation in Peace Processes: Modalities and Strategies Across Tracks' with support from the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development. Discussions included over 60 practitioners, analysts, and advocates from around the globe, including the MENA region. It provided an opportunity to explore good practices on modalities and strategies to secure women's meaningful participation in peace processes, with a strong emphasis on contributing toward new and existing peacemaking efforts in the MENA region. The primary focus was to explore innovations, trends and challenges in the interplay between official, high-level processes at the track 1 level and unofficial processes in which civil society often plays a leadership role at the track 2 level.

While no report can fully do justice to the extensive and varied discussions over the course of two days, this document highlights key thematic areas, ideas and issues raised, as well as recommendations for greater progress. Topics discussed ranged from the continued need to ensure women's direct participation at track 1 level, the role of gender commissions and women's advisory boards and the challenges associated with promoting gender-inclusive peace agreements. Moreover, to share knowledge and experiences in under-explored and often critical areas in high-level peace processes, three comparative learning sessions were held in parallel on women's meaningful participation and gender-inclusivity in the pre-talks phase of mediation efforts, ceasefire arrangements and political power-sharing agreements. In addition to the recommendations developed from these three sessions, overarching recommendations have also been presented to guide future efforts. They are summarized as follows:

1. Foster formal and informal linkages across peace tracks

2. Explore all efforts to ensure women's direct and meaningful participation in high-level peace processes

3. Develop and share gender-sensitive knowledge that addresses key gap areas

4. Promote gender inclusivity and expertise in peace agreements at all stages

5. Provide gender-responsive budgeting and core civil society funding

Building on the prior discussions and efforts of many others working to create feminist change in this space, the recommendations offered here are designed to re-emphasize and/or suggest further opportunities for coordination, prioritization and strategic investment. The moment now brings renewed energy and momentum to address the gaps and obstacles for conflict prevention, management and resolution in the framework of the upcoming 20th anniversary of UN Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action (1995) in 2020. Transformative and deeply inclusive approaches to deliver positive peace are urgently needed, and there is no better time than now.

INTRODUCTION

Global peace has been in decline for four consecutive years, with the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region having numerous high-intensity armed conflicts and regarded as the world's least peaceful region.[1] Despite significant efforts by the UN and others, including civil society and regional organizations, high-level peace processes in the region remain largely stalled and women's meaningful participation and influence in official processes limited. This under-representation and participation of women has a deleterious effect on prospects for reaching durable agreements.[2] In the context of a large number of protracted conflicts and stalled peace processes in the MENA region and across the world, women and communities affected by violent conflict, peace and security practitioners and decision-makers are increasingly calling for transformative approaches to conflict resolution, including the need for more inclusivity, stronger coordination amongst a broader array of actors and a consistent commitment to preventative approaches.[3]

On 29 and 30 November 2018, UN Women convened the conference 'Women's Meaningful Participation in Peace Processes: Modalities and Strategies Across Tracks' with support from the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development. Discussions included over 60 practitioners, analysts, and advocates from around the globe, including the MENA region. It provided an opportunity to explore good practices on modalities and strategies to secure women's meaningful participation in peace processes, with a strong emphasis on contributing toward new and existing peacemaking efforts in the MENA region. The primary focus was to explore innovations, trends and challenges in the interplay between official, high-level processes at the track 1 level and unofficial processes in which civil society often plays a leadership role at the track 2 level.

Multi-track processes & linkages across tracks

In considering tracks 1 and 2, multi-track processes are considered to exist wherever there is a high-level mediation effort concurrent with efforts by community and civil society leaders to build peace, typically in parallel. While the efforts can be connected, they frequently occur separately and in parallel due to a range of challenges, including coordination among and across many actors, the constraints of confidentiality and competition for resources and attribution of efforts, amongst other factors.

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1   Global Peace Index 2018 (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2018).

2   Statement by the President of the Security Council on the Maintenance of international peace and security (S/PRST/2018/1); Jana Krause, Werner Krause and Piia Braenfors. 2018. Women's Participation in Peace Negotiations and the Durability of Peace. International Interactions, 44:6, 985-1016.

3   E.g. United Nations and World Bank, Pathways for Peace: Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict (World Bank, 2018).

Even where there are linkages across different peace process tracks—through points of influence, communication and feedback loops between tracks—there is a difference between those that reflect formal, track 1-led initiatives under the framework of a broader mediation strategy and those that occur less formally with civil society in the 'driver's seat' aiming to influence track 1 decision-making without necessarily having a formal mandate to do so. Each may occur using different strategies and approaches and will likely reap distinct and ideally complementary results.[4]

Whatever their precise shape, linkages with track 1 are particularly important since, despite all the efforts, women and other segments of society, such as youth, tend to be largely excluded and present in greater numbers and influence at the informal level rather than the formal. Acknowledging that efforts to promote inclusive participation within each track should continue, conference discussions focused on the idea of building linkages to identify good practices and transformative approaches that serve to broaden the ways in which inclusivity is considered. These discussions occurred in the context of largely stalled efforts around the world to build peace and increased attention toward the idea of creating linkages across tracks to promote conflict resolution and revitalize faltering political processes.

Evidence increasingly suggests that where peace negotiations are stalled, track 2 actors—including women's rights groups and leaders—can add pressure toward reigniting talks through, for example, broad-based coalitions and public mobilization.[5] Moreover, women and civil society leaders may be more likely to raise issues concerning human rights and justice, that are imperative in building sustainable peace, but may not otherwise be raised by the male-dominated,

conflict parties in their official negotiations. Track 1.5 and 2 activities can also serve as smaller-scale forums for dialogue, problem solving and issue framing, increasing levels of confidence between parties to a conflict and even going as far as possibly creating political space for the conflict parties to engage in technical discussions.[6] Finally, when information and perspectives are regularly exchanged between tracks 1 and 2, it can help actors—civil society and women's groups as well as track 1 actors—to "sharpen their ideas, ground their positions in reality, and develop the relationships necessary to have their vision of peace better represented in final agreements."[7] For track 1 actors in particular, greater information-sharing and feedback with track 2 counterparts can help to design inclusive and effective processes, promote ownership and thereby encourage long-term sustainability for any outcome(s) achieved.

There is a critical need to deepen thinking, policy and practice on the linkages that can exist between track 1 and 2 levels.[8] Indeed, conference participants exchanged knowledge and perspectives relating to the status of peace processes globally and in the MENA region, as well as strategies and challenges to women's meaningful participation across different tracks and modalities in Colombia, Cyprus, Georgia, Iraq, Kenya, Kosovo, Libya, Myanmar, Nepal, Northern Ireland, Syria and Yemen.[9] Through enhanced comparative knowledge and shared learning, a variety of insights and recommendations relating to the specificities of challenges and opportunities for advancing women's meaningful participation within and across peace tracks were discussed. The conference also included an active learning element with three parallel, pilot learning sessions on the following themes: (1) preparation phase for peace talks; (2) ceasefire arrangements; and (3) political power-sharing agreements.

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4   Building linkages and entry points for influence between tracks should not be restricted to initiatives coming from the formal level or at the expense of the continuing and urgent need to protect and fund civil society for independent organizing and mobilization.

5 Thania Paffenholz et. al, Making Women Count (UN Women, 2016).

6 Christina Buchhold et al., Oslo Forum 2018: The End of the Big Peace? Opportunities for Mediation (2018), p.14.

7 Anjali Dayal, Connecting Informal and Formal Peace Talks: From Movements to Mediators (Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security, 2018), p.3. Noting, however, that the author only refers to these benefits for track 2 actors.

8 At a June 2018 workshop organized by UN Women with women from Iraq, Syria and Yemen, participants repeatedly raised the need to focus on creating linkages between all tracks of peace processes.

A timely juncture

The event occurred at a timely juncture in global policy on the women, peace and security (WPS) agenda. It drew from the outcomes of the Global Study on the Implementation of UN Security Council resolution 1325 and the sustaining peace resolutions,[10] **while also building upon the latest UN** Secretary-General's annual report on women and peace and security[11] and an expert group meeting titled 'Women's Meaningful Participation in Negotiating Peace and the Implementation of Peace Agreements', which provided inputs for the Secretary-General on this topic and provided much needed clarity on a core concept and demand that is at the heart of the WPS agenda.[12]

There is now a renewed momentum to focus on the progress and remaining gaps related to this central pillar of the WPS agenda and consider upcoming opportunities to advocate for transformative and inclusive approaches in conflict prevention, management and resolution in the framework of the upcoming 20th anniversary of UN Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action (1995) in 2020.