

World Parliamentary Forum on Sustainable Development

Achieving the 2030 Agenda through Inclusive Development

**Remarks by Ms. Lakshmi Puri, Assistant Secretary-General of the United Nations
and Deputy Executive Director of UN Women
Bali, Indonesia - September 2017**

Second plenary on “Ending violence, sustaining peace”

Distinguished Minister / Madame Minister,

Excellencies,

Distinguished participants,

Dear friends,

I am delighted to address you today at this important gathering of parliamentarians decision-makers and thought leaders, to talk about your crucial role in promoting women’s voice participation and leadership in the ‘sustaining peace’ Agenda set out in the United Nations Resolution adopted last year (A/RES/70/262 resolution on Review of United Nations Peacebuilding Architecture) and in the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development adopted in 2015.

These two international frameworks are two sides of the same coin, mutually interdependent and reinforcing. Both recognize the essentiality of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls as a precondition and an objective in itself. They are based on the conviction that women's increased, enhanced and equal voice, participation and leadership in both these great and noble projects of humanity in the 21st Century are a vital enabler and beneficiary.

Further the link between ending violence against women and girls, sustaining peace and achieving sustainable development is symbiotic too. Violence against women and girls is both an early predictor of conflict, spills over into larger violence including in the context of violent extremism and terrorism, feeds

conflict whereby rape and other forms of violence are used as weapons of war by warring parties and hampers reconciliation and sustaining peace.

Hence the international Community in its Women, and Peace and Security Agenda (UNSC Resolutions 1325 (2000) and subsequent 8 related resolutions) commit to prevention, protection, prosecution of perpetrators, and access to justice / reparations for victims and survivors of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) in pre conflict, conflict and post conflict and provision of multisectoral critical services to them as part of the Prevention and Sustaining Peace Agenda.

Equally the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development enshrines the elimination of violence against women as a sustainable development target under SDG 5 on achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls. This as well as outcome Agreed Conclusions of the 60th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) also affirm women's equal participation and leadership and decision-making in public and private sectors, in economic, political, social, technological life and fields and at all levels as a Sustainable Development Target and one that will also enable SDG 16 on Just and Peaceful Societies to be realized.

1. Why Women's leadership matters and is a game changer

The evidence is clear that increased women's participation and leadership in all fields and in political decision-making helps build safer, more inclusive and more harmonious societies. If we acknowledge and invest in their role as peace actors as well as development actors they will be game changers to prevent breakout of conflict, broker more durable piece, prevent relapse and build back better after conflict.

UN Women supported the 2015 Global Review and Study on the occasion of the 15th anniversary of Security Council resolution 1325 bears this out in chapter and verse that:

- Women's participation improves the sustainability of peace agreements.
- Women often lead dialogue processes that stop the slide into conflict, and build consensus after war.
- More women in our respective police and military forces make for more effective institutions to ensure our security.

- Evidence has shown that women typically invest more of their economic peace dividends into family and community wellbeing.
- Women's agency also improves the humanitarian assistance; strengthens the protection efforts of our peacekeepers; and contributes to the conclusion of peace talks and the sustainability of peace agreements.
- The women's agency in peace processes ensures the inclusion of community needs to achieve deeper peace benefits; enhances economic recovery after conflict; and helps counter violent extremism.
- Women's participation in political processes improves them. When women are in decision-making positions, often more inclusive decisions are made, different voices are heard, and a variety of solutions are created.
- Women frequently demonstrate political leadership by working across party lines through parliamentary women's caucuses - even in the most politically combative environments.
- In countries where more women participate as political leaders, greater attention is paid to issues like health, education, infrastructure, ending violence against women, and overall quality of life concerns. These issues are all central to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and illustrate how goal 5 on "achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls: is a catalyzer for all the other goals, including goal 16 of "Just, peaceful and inclusive societies.

2. Despite challenges some Progress is recorded

There are several markers of progress in relation to women leaders and frontline activists for peace participating in peace building processes and therein lies hope and faith that it's mission possible.

- More than ever before, women are making decisions for peace and security in the halls of governments and international organizations but also there is increased recognition of their pivotal role as peacebuilders in conflict theaters.
- For example, in 2015, seven out of ten peace agreements signed included gender specific provisions—a vast improvement compared against the

analysis showing that only 73 out of 664 agreements produced between 1990 and 2000 included a reference to women.

- There are more women in mediation support teams and more regular consultations with civil society leaders.
- Countries and regional organizations are beginning to take more robust action against sexual violence.
- Courts and commissions of inquiry are paying more attention to gender-based crimes, even though this has not yet translated into higher levels of prosecution.
- More security sector personnel are now trained to prevent and respond to sexual and gender-based violence, and more countries are implementing national action plans or related strategies.
- Furthermore, there is recognition that in conflict-affected contexts, women's participation and representation in public life brings credibility to peace processes and negotiations, as their presence and influence is essential for unifying divided communities and rallying peace-building actors. We have seen this illustrated recently in Colombia where feminist leaders were central to bringing the perspective of women and minorities and the voices of victims to the negotiating tables in Havana.
- The Secretary-General of the United Nations and the UN political missions, peace keeping operations and mediation efforts are committing to women's participation and leadership in this agenda, to ending violence against them and to harness their critical role in Secretary-General's Prevention and Sustaining Peace Agenda as well as in preventing and countering violent extremism and terrorism.

3. Continuing and new challenges

Yet, and despite recognizing remarkable progress, the situation remains far from equitable and women continue to bear the brunt of war and more endangered than combatants themselves.

- Many atrocities continue to be committed against women and girls, including by ex combatants and extant peace actors including some of our own peacekeepers.
- Extremist groups are targeting women's rights as a deliberate, devastating method for subjugation and control.
- Despite women play a vital role in preventing conflict and building and maintaining peace, far too often, they are prevented from full participation in peacemaking and peacebuilding.
- As result, peace processes, humanitarian programmes and peacebuilding plans ignore them and fail to meet their needs and protect their human rights.

4. Gender equality is vital for achieving Sustainable Peace

The groundbreaking and historic resolutions on Sustaining Peace adopted simultaneously by the UN General Assembly and Security Council in 2016 have demonstrated a shift in the mindset and strategic priorities of the UN Member States.

- Indeed, Member States have committed to ensure that sustaining peace is based on the people-centered approach of the 2030 Agenda and grounded in international human rights laws and standards. The Sustaining Peace resolutions emphasize that *inclusivity* is key to successful efforts to prevent, resolve and rebuild from conflict.
- Let me emphasize that from a gender equality perspective inclusivity means adherence to the 2030 Agenda's pledge to leave no one behind and reach the furthest behind first. It also means ensuring that women are not the missing --yet vital -- factor to make the lasting peace for which we all long and strive.
- Women are *drivers* of sustainable development and peace – not merely *beneficiaries*, and women are *strategic partners* as well. Therefore, I would like to underscore that true inclusivity and empowerment requires that the equal half of humanity - Womanity be brought to the center of decision making on sustaining peace and sustainable development in its economic, social and environmental dimensions.

5. Gender equality is a driving force for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and an important building block for Sustainable Peace.

Gender equality and women's empowerment is one vital force and truth, reconciliation and gender justice are both interlinked means and an end to sustainable peace.

For both, the 2030 Agenda as well as for Sustaining Peace, gender equality is not only the key ingredient and catalyzer but without it the whole sustainable peace project is jeopardized.

- Sustainable peace is not only the absence of war. It will only be possible when there is zero tolerance to violence in households and in communities, within countries and across States. Yet around the world, one in every three women has been beaten, coerced into sex, or abused in some way. Violence against women is therefore a major threat to sustainable peace. It compromises the health, dignity, security and autonomy of women and girls.
- Sustainable peace will only be possible if there is equal participation of all citizens - women and men - in the public life of their country and community. Equal representation provides a strong foundation for the development of sustainable peace.
- Sustainable peace demands social justice and social cohesion. There again, women have shown to be particularly effective in creating and sustaining social cohesion and social justice. In fact, women's empowerment constitutes a key component of social justice. Equal access to productive resources, economic recovery and reconstruction are essential factors of social justice.
- Overall, sustainable peace requires transforming attitudes that promote violence and discrimination. This means tackling gender stereotypes that often underpin the culture of violence and inequality.

6. UN Women's action

Guided by the international commitments on Peace and Security, including all 8 Security Council resolutions on Women and Peace and Security and other key reference points like the Beijing Platform for Action, and the Convention

on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, UN Women works in the following areas to achieve transformative change:

a. Mediation and conflict prevention:

- UN Women has championed women's participation in peace negotiations for Syria, Myanmar, South Sudan and Mali, and supported the Colombia peace talks which led to significant numbers of women at the table and a gender perspective in all aspects of the final agreement.
- UN Women has also held regional trainings of women mediators in West Africa and the Horn of Africa, Myanmar, South East Asia and Central Asia, and deployed gender advisors to the offices of special envoys in the Sahel, Great Lakes, Syria and Burundi.

b. Peacebuilding and recovery:

- UN Women promotes that gender issues are addressed in all peacebuilding efforts of the UN and that 15 per cent of funds going to post-conflict recovery are earmarked for projects whose principle objective is to enhance gender equality.
- In numerous countries, UN Women supports gender-sensitive security sector reform and demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants as well as to increase the numbers of women in post-conflict governance institutions.

c. Peacekeeping:

- UN Women runs training courses for female military officers – providing a space where women in the armed forces can gain exposure, additional training and opportunities for professional advancement.
- UN Women also supports the Department of Peacekeeping Operations(DPKO) in training military peacekeepers in the prevention of and response to conflict-related sexual violence in their areas of deployment.

d. Ending impunity:

- UN Women's 'Gender-Sensitive Transitional Justice' programme supports women's engagement in holistic post-conflict justice processes at the international level, as well as in Kosovo, Colombia and the Philippines.
- Further, through a roster managed together with Justice Rapid Response, UN Women has deployed gender advisors and sexual violence investigators to all UN Commissions of Inquiry established since 2009, fact finding missions, investigations of the International Criminal Court and national accountability processes.

e. **Countering violent extremism:**

- UN Women promote a gender-sensitive approach to preventing and countering violent extremism by:
 - expanding and deepening a data-driven evidence base on the drivers of extremist violence and its impact on women and girls;
 - ensuring counter-terrorism frameworks integrate gender and are informed by experiences of women;
 - increasing access to justice and essential services for victims of sexual and gender-based violence in the context of terrorism and violent extremism; and
 - increasing women's participation and leadership in counter-terrorism response and prevention efforts.

f. **National Action Plans:**

- UN Women has supported the development of national action plans on resolution 1325 (NAPs) with technical expertise, with a specific focus on ensuring that action plans have concrete targets, resources for implementation and monitoring plans.

g. **UN coordination and reporting:**

- UN Women is responsible for the annual report of the Secretary-General on Women, Peace and Security, as well as the Secretary-General's report on the situation of and assistance to Palestinian women.

- UN Women also chairs the InterAgency Standing Committee on Women, Peace and Security, which brings together all relevant UN entities with civil society as observers.

h. Catalytic funding:

- UN Women serves as a secretariat for the Global Acceleration Instrument on Women, Peace and Security and Humanitarian Action (GAI), which is a funding mechanism that aims to re-energize action and stimulate a significant increase in the financing of women's participation, leadership and empowerment in humanitarian response and peace and security settings.

7. Way Forward

Whether supporting intergovernmental processes, individual Member States/participating States, or women's organizations, together, we can and we must ensure that women of all ages are included and empowered to contribute to sustainable development and peace.

In order to do so, the Secretary-General's seven-point action plan on women's participation in peace-building promotes:

- Involving women in peace processes and make gender expertise available;
- Taking into account women's needs and participation in post-conflict planning processes;
- Ensuring that civilian capacity has specialized skills to rebuild state institutions in a way that makes them more accessible to women and girls and less prone to gender-based discrimination;
- Ensuring women's representation in post-conflict governance;
- Promoting women's rights to security and justice in the context of the rule of law - before, during and after conflicts;
- Ensuring women's participation in economic recovery;
- Increasing financing for gender equality and women's empowerment in post-conflict situations.

With respect to the last bullet let me emphasize that achieving sustainable peace requires regular, predictable and dedicated funding for women's peacebuilding. Yet, while the UN has committed to ensuring a minimum of fifteen per cent of all peacebuilding funding be allocated to gender equality, the recent Global Study on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 on Women and Peace and Security demonstrated that less than two per cent of all official development assistance was allocated to gender equality in fragile contexts (...) Less than 2 percent ... We can do better, we must to better!!

8. As parliamentarians, you have a particular role to play in promoting women's participation in sustaining peace and promoting sustainable development.

As lawmaking establishments, oversight bodies and representative institutions, parliaments have a key function in setting a country's wider development vision, and in developing sound policies in support of that vision.

As UN Women, we encourage you to take steps to:

- Ensure the allocation of financial resources to promote women's participation as candidates and voters.
- Eliminate discriminatory laws against women and pass legislation that advances gender equality including gender responsive budgeting across various sectors.
- Align national legislation with National Action Plans on Security Council resolution 1325 where applicable and appropriate resources for the Plans' implementation.
- Promote measures to ensure women's effective participation at all levels and at all stages in peace processes and mediation efforts, conflict prevention and resolution, peacekeeping, peacebuilding and recovery, including through temporary special measures, by setting and working to achieve concrete goals, targets and benchmarks.
- Promote zero tolerance of violence against women in the political sphere.

- Create space for diverse voices and listen to your female constituents. Hear their priorities for development and peacebuilding in their communities and beyond and act accordingly.
- Allocate and prioritize adequate , targeted and mainstreamed resources.

Let me emphasize that as parliamentarians it is your role and responsibility to ensure that the interests and needs of the women and men, girls and boys whom you represent are considered in every decision you make.

UN Women stands ready to support you with our technical expertise and networks. Women's leadership from the grass roots to the highest levels of government is a powerful capacity for peace and development.

We must engage women and harness their potential if we are to achieve the ambitious vision enshrined in the Sustainable Development Goals.

As Raden Ajeng Kartini, national heroine of Indonesia once famously said “the girl whose mind has been educated, her views enlightened, will no longer be able to live in the world of her ancestors.” By extension this means creating and inhabiting a world in which the vision of the 2030 Agenda has become a reality, a world in which gender equality and women's empowerment are the new norm. Only in that world will peace prevail and sustain .

Lasting peace depends on equal rights, equal opportunity and the equal participation of women. By definition, women's agency is an integral component of this approach and therefore essential for sustainable peace.

Thank you.