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Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”

Statement submitted by Mediators Beyond Borders, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



Statement

Mediators Beyond Borders International and its role in empowering women as leaders and critical participants in negotiation, conflict resolution and mediation as a means of furthering economic empowerment and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

For nations to foster gender equity and create lasting economic opportunities for women, highly skilled women negotiators and women leaders are essential at all levels: in local communities, civil society, private businesses and political circles.

Mediators Beyond Borders International advocates for all forms of conflict resolution and provide services to the development field, multilateral agencies, and corporations interested in enhancing their work with conflict-sensitive and trauma-informed practices. Our multidisciplinary teams jointly design and implement projects with local partners and increase local abilities to help heal from severe conflict, reconcile communities, and transform from conflict to a stable, economically viable community. These projects embody the Sustainable Development Goals 2030 goals on partnership, gender equity, education, environmental protection and peace-building. Partnering with global organizations has helped to ensure women's roles and rights are recognized.

Through its International Training Institute, Mediators Beyond Borders International provides a unique skills-building training that empowers women in community and civil society leadership roles to become more engaged in peace-building, conflict resolution and prevention, education and partnerships. Three sessions have been convened with women from over seventeen countries in the Middle East and North African Region, sub-Saharan Africa, and Southeast Asia, and an additional session for the South America region is scheduled to be held in Columbia in 2017. In particular, the program trains women in a range of leadership, negotiation and facilitation skills, supporting civil society efforts for sustainable peace and development. The program also creates sustained women's community of practice networks to leverage collaborative efforts, partnerships and support peace-building projects in the women's home nation. In addition, projects such as those in Sierra Leone, Liberia and Kenya engage traditional leaders and indigenous women in multi-pronged peace-building and livelihoods programs.

United Nations Resolutions and Reports

In Security Council resolution 1820 (2008, at 28), the Security Council voiced concern over the absence of women and the resultant failure of peace agreements to deal with women's issues leading to the perpetuation of discrimination against women, their continued marginalization in the post-conflict society and de facto impunity for abuses such as sexual violence during conflict. In 2009, the United Nations Secretary-General issued a report ([S/2009/189](#)) on enhancing mediation and its support activities, while describing the need for experienced and knowledgeable mediators and support teams, with women adequately represented. In the report, the Secretary-General recommended the fostering of gender balance and expertise in senior mediation posts. A UN Women Report entitled "Women's Participation in Peace Negotiations: Connections between Presence and Influence" (2012, at 26) concluded that "women's absence in peace processes cannot be explained by their alleged lack of experience in conflict resolution or negotiations. Instead there has been a lack of effort to integrate them in formal peace processes." United Nations

Secretary-General's Seven Point Action Plan on Women and Peacebuilding (A/65/354-S/2010/466) also calls on the United Nations to ensure that technical assistance in conflict resolution processes furthers women's participation as appointed decision makers. Point three of United Nations Development Programme's Eight-Point Agenda also prioritises expanding women's citizenship, participation and leadership. This holistic approach was recently reiterated and expanded in the 27 April 2016 United Nations System Chief Executive Board Statement of Commitment: Bringing the United Nations system together to support conflict prevention and peacebuilding within the broader 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Enhancing the Role of Women in Mediation Worldwide

The Group of Friends of Mediation was established to promote and advance the use of mediation in the peaceful settlement of disputes, participate in conflict prevention and resolution, and generate support for the development of mediation. The members of the Group of Friends of Mediation (currently of 44 United Nations Member States, the United Nations, 7 regional organizations and other international organizations) promoted a culture of mediation in their national, regional and international policies to engage more women in mediation, highlighted the importance of the full and effective participation of women at all levels of peace processes, and emphasized the crucial role of gender expertise in mediation.

Furthermore, at its 15th Session in May 2016 the Economic and Social Council Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues considered the role of indigenous peoples in conflict resolution. One of the key themes discussed was the particular disproportionate impact of globalisation and conflict on indigenous women and their families. The Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues has urged the United Nations system to actively support and promote processes of dialogue and consensus building, including mediation between indigenous groups and governments to address the negative effects of conflict and globalisation on women.

Mediators Beyond Borders International's position and the post-2015 agenda

The Conference on Women (Beijing+20), adopted at the fifty-ninth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, urged Member States to accelerate its full and effective implementation, and to set a deadline of 2030 for achieving gender equality and women's empowerment. As the international community considers the seventeen Sustainable Development Goals, the sixty-first session of the Commission on the Status of Women will provide an important opportunity to further the momentum to implement the 2030 Agenda towards achieving gender equality and women's rights and empowerment. In addition to mainstreaming gender equality in Goal 5, "Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls," the targets set out the new sustainable development goals, and cover a comprehensive set of issues, which include the gender dimensions of poverty, hunger, health, education, water and sanitation, employment, safe cities and peace, climate change and security. Mediators Beyond Borders International is encouraged by these developments aimed at prioritising women's empowerment and its link to sustainable development.

As it was agreed in the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, "[w]e must redouble our efforts to resolve or prevent conflict and to support post-conflict countries, including through ensuring that women have a role in peace-building and

state-building”. It has long been recognized that women’s contributions are critical to these efforts, perhaps most notably captured in United Nations’ Security resolution 1325 and General Assembly resolution 65/283. Enhancing the participation of women in conflict resolution and prevention roles will help achieve the United Nation’s desire of levelling the playing field and will lead to the likelihood of ensuring that the 2030 goals are met.

Recommendations

Mediators Beyond Borders International calls on the sixty-first session of the Commission on the Status of Women and the United Nations to:

(1) Specifically recognize the unique role women play in post-conflict peace-building and its link to women’s empowerment and community development.

(2) Specifically recognize that women mediators play a significant role in conflict resolution at the local level.

(3) Ensure that women are included in United Nations mediation teams at all stages of the mediation process, including senior mediation and negotiation positions.

(4) Promote women to leadership positions within the United Nations system, particularly in decision-making roles.

(5) Increase transparency of the roster of qualified women mediator and negotiator candidates, and of appointment assessment criteria used to select candidates to senior mediation and peacebuilding roles. In addition, identify strengths, opportunities and barriers to appointment of women candidates by periodic assessment and reporting.

(6) Ensure equal gender representation at high level negotiations and consultations on public economic policy and legislative change, especially relating to economic empowerment issues affecting women, such as health care, reproductive rights, child care, income equality, indigenous affairs, and educational opportunities for girls.

(7) Promote access to neutral public and private alternative dispute resolution options, including mediation, for women to consider for dispute resolution, such as in commercial, financial, human rights, income and employment equality disputes.

(8) Create opportunities for mentorship of women by other women for negotiation and leadership skills building and collaboration.

(9) Promote professional training and development for women (with an emphasis on the inclusion of Indigenous women) by supporting local, national and international funding mechanisms aimed at strengthening skills level training for conflict resolution, mediation and negotiation.

Mediators Beyond Borders International specifically recognizes the critical role that women play in the health of any nation, and make inclusion of the principles and recommendations stated above in the construction and evaluation of all national plans under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and for the implementation of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goal plans.