

Malawian Women Gather for Peace Building Conference

REPORT from [UN Country Team in Malawi](#)

Malawian women drawn from different parts and sectors of the country on 28th October 2016 converged at the Peace-building conference at Crossroads Hotel in Lilongwe where they formed the first ever National Women in Peace-Building Forum that will champion women's equal and active participation in peacebuilding and peace processes in Malawi.

The mandate of the National Women in Peace Building Forum is to mobilise a critical mass of women in Malawi to develop their capacity in order to participate actively in peace, security and humanitarian issues in the country.

Minister of Gender, Children, Disability and Social Welfare, Honourable Dr. Jean Kalilani who was the Guest of Honour at the conference acknowledged the strides Malawi has made in putting women in positions of influence but acknowledged that there is need more work to done to have more women in positions of power.

“More work needs to be done to put more women in decision making positions. She said women, as agents of peace need to be included in peace negotiations, participate in governance processes, participate in establishing and maintaining rule of law and holding public authorities accountable,” said Honourable Dr. Kalilani.

The Minister further said the absence of war does not mean peace, citing a study conducted by the Institute of Economics and Peace in Africa which listed only 13 African countries considered peaceful, and only 45 countries globally and Malawi was not one of the countries considered peaceful in the study.

United Nations Resident Coordinator, Ms. Mia Seppo noted the appointment of the Chairperson of the Malawi Electoral Commission, the Solicitor-General, Clerk of Parliament, Director of Public Prosecution, Vice Chancellor of the Malawi University of Science and Technology (MUST), Director of Cabinet Services and appointment of the

first female General Secretary of the Assemblies of God Church in Malawi as examples of the important role women are playing in various spheres of power.

Ms. Seppo called for more women participation in peace processes. “Women must be around the table, if not leading the process in peace and security matters,” said Ms. Seppo adding that getting women at all levels of peace and security is critical.

She said that, in spite of being a peaceful country, Malawi has its internal political and socio-economic tensions, as well as tensions with other countries that threaten the peace and security of the country. She noted that Malawi has high levels of sexual and gender-based violence.

One of the female traditional leaders, traditional authority Chikumbu of Mulanje said the conference was important as it offered women of different occupations a unique opportunity to meet and discuss how to get involved in peace processes at various levels.

Chairperson of Malawi’s Women Parliamentary Caucus, Honourable Dr. Jesse Kabwila who attended the conference advised fellow women to stand up for their rights and take up challenging positions in society.

Honourable Dr. Kabwila said the society needs to fight long standing systems and power structures that delegate women to lower levels of power structures.

There are a number of peace building and conflict transformation initiatives that Malawi is undertaking. For instance, the Public Affairs Committee (PAC) with support from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has established Women in Faith Peacebuilding Network comprising women of various faith groups. The Women in Faith Peacebuilding Network presented a case study of how women can collaboratively prevent violence and promote peace and security in their communities.

Through the National Peace Architecture (NPA) the Office of the President and Cabinet three District Peace Committee are being piloted in Mangochi in southern region of Malawi, Kasungu in the central region and Karonga in the northern region. The three districts have reported incidence conflicts due to lands, political and religious differences among other issues.

In 2000 the United Nations passed the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 which reaffirms the importance of equal participation and full involvement of women in maintaining and promoting peace and security. Since the resolution was passed, more women are in mediation support teams and countries and regional organisations are also beginning to take more robust action against sexual violence.

At the end of the conference in Lilongwe women formed a National Women in Peace Building Forum whose mandate is to mobilise a critical mass of women in Malawi to develop their capacity in order to participate actively in peace, security and humanitarian issues in the country. The forum will be under the supervision of the NPA which is an institutional mechanism for peace building and conflict transformation in the Office of President and Cabinet, the forum comprises like-minded and interested women who are committed to ideals of peace.