

**Women for Peace: Recognizing Women's Role in Peacebuilding  
Side Event to the September UN General Assembly**

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Today we need a power shift: from discrimination to justice, and from violence to peace. The feminist movement is a critical key to unlocking this systemic change.

Last week I was in Abuja, Nigeria for the launch of the Nigerian Women Mediators Collaborative Initiative (NWMCI), which aims to identify and support women mediators across different tracks for peace. While I was there, I met a woman traditional leader with eyes that flashed like lightning and a laugh that thundered across the room. She told me: "I am not a woman. I am a rebel." She said that she refused to be seen as a woman, because women were treated as objects of domination. Instead, she demanded respect, recognition, and partnership for her vision of peace.

We now know that gender equality is the number one predictor of peace, and feminist movement building is the number one predictor of policies addressing violence against women. We also know that the reason feminist movement is a critical driver for tackling violence is because feminists are bold in their rebellious vision, and relentless in pursuing gender justice.

For example:

In **Colombia**, when peace talks were launched in 2012 without including women, women mobilised and worked together with the Gender Sub-commission through 3 civil society platforms to successfully include over 100 gender provisions in the 2016 Peace Agreement. Their analysis of harms through a gender lens resulted in a more holistic agreement, with commitments to zero tolerance for sexual and Gender Based Violence and justice for these harms. Women peacebuilders also called for further transformation through their "Mas Vida, Menos Armas" ("More Life, Less Arms") campaign, which called not just for demilitarization of the FARC, but of demilitarisation of society as a whole.

In **Korea**, women crossed the Demilitarised Zone (DMZ) in 2015 to call for a political solution to the almost 70 year (1950+) Korean war. They imagined a political process before others thought it was possible. Today, despite major challenges, political space for dialogue is opening, and the #KoreaPeaceNow campaign continues to push for a peace agreement in the Koreas with women at the table and a disarmed Korean peninsula.

In **Bosnia**, women have analysed how excluding women and a gender perspective from the creation of the peace agreement, and how similar exclusions in economic reconstruction, as well as silos between the political and economic processes, reinforced injustices and built a basis for

renewed conflict. Today, feminists continue to push for post-conflict reconstruction to ensure women's meaningful participation, redress inequalities, and promote social protections. Countries like New Zealand, UAE, and Bhutan show that intentional budgets aimed at well people of people and planet are possible. Countries like Costa Rica and Thailand show that this can include reducing and reallocating military expenditure to social protections, and more is possible to align budgets with the SDGs for people and planet.

What works is identifying, supporting, and amplifying local women's analysis and recommendations to address root causes of violence for peace.

The 2015 peace and security reviews support this approach: We learned from them that the UN does more when it does less: It is at its best when it identifies and facilitates local peacebuilding, rather than duplicating and re-creating the wheel.

Sustaining peace requires a bottom-up approach that supports local women's leadership for peace, rights, disarmament, and justice.