

Women's International League for Peace and Freedom

Ligue Internationale de Femmes pour la Paix et la Liberté

Liga Internacional de Mujeres por la Paz y la Libertad

Consultative Status with UN ECOSOC, UNCTAD and UNESCO; Special Consultative Relations with FAO, ILO, and UNICEF.



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Recommendations to ensure women's participation in the Peacebuilding Commission

The Women's International League For Peace and Freedom (WILPF) recognizes the establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) as an institutional mechanism dedicated to ensuring effective and integrated UN coordination of post-conflict reconstruction and peace-building.

As an international NGO that has been engaged with the UN since its inception, WILPF would like to emphasize the important contributions of women to post-conflict peacebuilding and reconstruction, and to stress the need to ensure women's interests and concerns are reflected in the work of the PBC. Bearing in mind that the joint General Assembly and Security Council Resolutions establishing the PBC "encourage[s] the Commission to consult with civil society, non- governmental organizations, including women's organizations, and the private sector engaged in peacebuilding activities,"¹ it is essential that clear procedures for such consultation be incorporated into the operational structure and working methods of the Commission.

The following are recommendations addressing principles and mechanisms that the Commission could apply to ensure women's participation in peacebuilding processes.

- a. The PBC should ensure that its country-specific meetings involve meaningful consultations with women's groups through country-level civil society and NGO forums.
- b. PBC meetings at headquarters should allow NGOs observer and consultative status through arrangements under ECOSOC resolution 1996/31, to ensure that women's groups at international and local levels have access, and can provide information, to the Commission.
- c. To ensure that a gender perspective is fully integrated into the structures of the PBC:
 - UN commitments to gender equality and women's rights should guide the PBC's meetings and discussions. Meetings of the PBC should always include participation from representatives of UN agencies and departments with specific mandates and expertise on gender issues.
 - The Peacebuilding Support Office should include personnel with comprehensive expertise on women, peace and security and should develop formal channels of communication with women's networks and groups at national and international levels.
 - The Peacebuilding Fund should be structured to ensure that resources are allocated in a manner that is responsive to the needs and priorities of women. A specific portion of its financing should be set aside for supporting women-specific projects.

Consultation with women's organizations

The UN has formally recognized the role of women in peacebuilding through Security Council Resolution 1325 of 2000, which calls for women's equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security. The

PBC should implement the commitments of Resolution 1325 by establishing working procedures that draw on the peacebuilding knowledge, networks and resources that women offer and that are designed to take into account the needs and interests of women. For this to occur, the PBC should create a mechanism for consultations with women's groups at the local, regional and international level.

In country-specific meetings of the PBC, consultation with women's groups could be done through country-level civil society or NGO forums. Such forums would allow representatives of local women's groups and other civil society actors to channel their contributions and recommendations to policy-makers on issues of reconstruction, reconciliation and institution building. Meetings of the Peacebuilding Commission at headquarters should allow for civil society consultation and observation through arrangements under ECOSOC resolution 1996/31. With their extensive field operations and their networks of local contacts, civil society groups would provide a broad range of information to the Commission and greatly enrich its work.

Such systematic engagement with civil society is supported by UN practice and there are a number of examples of this. In Guatemala, UN-mediated peace negotiations established a Civil Society Assembly that brought together indigenous organizations, women's groups, the private sector and others to put proposals, debate and endorse the successive agreements that were negotiated between the conflicting parties. Guatemalans from different sectors were able to engage in dialogue and negotiation that produced a more comprehensive and sustainable peace.² In Timor Leste, the National Council composed of political leaders and civil society, including representatives of women's NGOs, acted as an advisory body to the Administration of the United Nations Transitional Authority in East Timor (UNTAET).

The modalities for PBC engagement with women's groups and other civil society actors may vary according to local circumstances. They should however, in all instances, be designed to support local approaches to peacebuilding and encourage transparency and inclusivity in order to build national ownership and accountability.

Integrating gender into the structures of the Peacebuilding Commission

The PBC's founding resolutions call for the integration of a gender perspective in the Commission's work.³ All components of the PBC should therefore be designed to be responsive to the specific needs and experiences of women in post-conflict societies.

Meetings of the Peacebuilding Commission

UN commitments to gender equality and women's rights, as set out in Security Council Resolution 1325, the Beijing Platform for Action and other international instruments, should guide all meetings and deliberations of the PBC. Further, PBC meetings should include participation from representatives of UN entities such as the UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the UN Population Fund (UNFPA) and Gender Advisory Offices in UN peacekeeping operations. The participation of these and other offices that have specific expertise on gender and women's rights issues would greatly assist the Commission in integrating a gender perspective into its strategies and proposals for post-conflict peacebuilding and recovery.

The Peacebuilding Support office

The Peacebuilding Support Office has been established as the focal point for the Commission's coordination and planning, and will provide the Commission with analytical and technical support to undertake its work. To be effective, the multi-disciplinary expertise of the personnel recruited in the Support Office should necessarily include a comprehensive understanding of issues of women, peace and security. Further, the office should actively seek to draw on the widest pool of expertise and knowledge on peacebuilding, by creating formal mechanisms for communicating with women's networks and groups at national and international levels. This requires staff persons with sufficient seniority mandated to ensure gender mainstreaming and to liaise with civil society.

² "The Civil Society Assembly: Shaping Agreement" Enrique Alvarez, 2002, African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD)

<http://www.c-r.org/accord/peace/accord13/guciv.shtml>

³ A/RES/ 60/180 and S/RES/1645 (2000), paragraph 20

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The Peacebuilding Fund

The Peacebuilding Fund should be used as an instrument for mobilizing and leveraging the financial and technical resources needed for women's civil society organizations and women leaders to have an impact on peace efforts. To ensure that women benefit directly from reconstruction efforts and resources, a specific portion of the financing mobilized through the Peacebuilding Fund should be tailored towards supporting women-specific projects and strengthening the capacity of women's civil society to participate in peacebuilding. Further, the Fund must incorporate a gender analysis to ensure that resources are allocated in a manner that is responsive to the needs and priorities of women.

Successful peacebuilding requires the empowerment of women to participate fully in decisions shaping their countries and their communities. The Peacebuilding Commission should base its agenda for peace, security, justice and development on a commitment to the full participation of women in peacebuilding - as decision-makers, implementing partners and beneficiaries.
