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The Role of Parliaments as Partners in Women, Peace and Security



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- Opening remarks: as prepared for delivery-

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen, Good Morning.

The United Nations Development Programme is honoured to join the Permanent Missions of Norway and the International Civil Society Action Network (ICAN) in hosting this discussion. I am particularly pleased to welcome Jens Frølich Holte, State Secretary at the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Ms. Sanam Anderlini, Co-Founder & Executive Director, International Civil Society Action Network(ICAN); Ms. Nada Darwezeh, Chief of the Gender Equality Section at the Center for Women at the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia; as well as Ms. Visaka Dharmadasa, Founder and Chair of the Association of War Affected Women (AWAW) in Sri Lanka, and Ms. Avazkan Ormonova, Director of the Public Fund "Business Initiative Women" in Kyrgyzstan.

The 62nd CSW focuses on the challenges and opportunities in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of rural women and girls. It is often women in rural areas who are most affected by conflict and insecurity. Rural livelihoods can be shattered by the damaging impacts of violent conflict, and the distance from centrally-headquartered law enforcement and peacekeeping services can put rural women and girls at particular physical risk.

The vital role of women in achieving peace and development – which has been recognised in a series of UN Resolutions on women, peace and security starting in 2000 with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 - has now been reaffirmed in both the Sustaining Peace Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals.

The 2015 Global Study on the Implementation of resolution 1325 revealed that the resolution should be regarded as one of the crowning achievements of the global women's movement, and one of the most inspired decisions of the United Nations Security Council. The recognition that peace is inextricably linked with gender equality and women's leadership was a radical step for the highest body tasked with the maintenance of international peace and security.

And yet, there remains a gap between the ambition of our commitments and actual political will and financial support. While the WPS agenda has contributed to significant changes in international norms surrounding women's

political leadership and decision-making on peace and security, its national implementation has remained slow and patchy at best.

Analysis shows that while 73 UN Member States have UNSCR 1325 National Action Plans, only 17 of them have allocated budgets for their implementation.

On average, every year, UNDP implements programs to support the more effective functioning of some 70 parliaments around the world. Over the past few years, we have sought to re-orient this support toward capacitation of parliaments and parliamentarians to be fit for purpose as actors in the 2030 Agenda. An integral aspect of our efforts focuses on women parliamentarians, and on advocating for a greater role for parliaments and parliamentarians in peace and security.

Let me give you an example on how parliaments can make an impact in supporting infrastructure for peace:

Ghana's national peace architecture, particularly its National Peace Council, has been recognized as an important emerging model for developing state capacity to protect civilians and prevent conflict. In November 2010, the National Peace Council Bill was presented to Parliament and in March 2011, was unanimously adopted by Parliament. The enactment of the Bill formally

constituted the Commission and empowered it to begin its duties, to coordinate conflict prevention, management, and resolution, and build sustainable peace through networking and coordination. Parliament approves the

annual budget for the Council and takes a close interest in its activities.

Members of national parliaments are uniquely positioned to promote peace and pluralism, in their role as elected representatives of the people.

Parliamentarians can also be critical players in ensuring the needs of rural women are properly addressed. As local representatives, members of Parliament can carry specific stories of hardship back to the capital and lobby for action.

Parliamentarians, through their law-making and oversight functions, can ensure that government institutions promote peace, security and gender equality by guaranteeing that all laws – in their intent and in their application - promote and protect human rights, inclusive governance and accountability. This is of particular importance in the law and justice sectors.

Parliamentarians have other relevant tools at their disposal. They can use Question Time or interpellations to ask the Government what actions they are taking to address rural women's needs. In committees, they can propose the initiation of specific parliamentary inquiries into critical issues, including whether the WPS agenda is being implemented to address rural women's specific

needs. They can encourage targeted budgeting to ensure women are included in peacebuilding and economic development efforts, and they can support funding of National Action Plans on Women, Peace, and Security.

Greater engagement between parliaments and civil society can also be a powerful way of promoting participation of women and girls in all aspects of peace and security, including in rural areas. UNDP recognises that systematic and structured engagement between civil society, government, parliaments and the UN system is truly vital. Civil society groups – alone or in coalition (such as the members of the International Civil Society Action Network) can act as intermediaries to support women – helping to bring issues that are of particular importance to them to the national and even international stage.

I am very pleased to use this forum to announce a new UNDP project to support legislatures to domesticate the WPS agenda through parliamentary action. With the generous support of the Government of Norway, UNDP will work with three parliaments in 2018 –including that of Kyrgyzstan– to specifically reflect upon their current WPS National Action Plans and develop parliamentary action plans to support of them. Drawing on their input and feedback, as well as other contributions from parliaments around the world, we will then produce a Handbook for Parliaments on WPS Implementation.

Many people in this room today – not least our panellists - have rich personal experiences to draw upon, and I greatly look forward to the coming exchange of views, both today and as this programme of work moves forward.

I now pass the floor to Mr Jens Frølich Holte, State Secretary, Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, once again with an acknowledgement of Norway's leadership in

agenda that an effective management strategy is required in this important area of work.



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