



OFFICE OF THE SPECIAL ENVOY OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL  
FOR THE GREAT LAKES REGION

Outcome Document  
Session 3

*Effective Measures to Guarantee Women's Meaningful Political Participation and their Contribution in Peacebuilding*

20 August 2020

1. On 20 August 2020, the Office of the UN Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region (GLR), in coordination with countries of the region, Guarantors of the Peace, Security, and Cooperation (PSC) Framework (UN, AU, SADC, ICGLR), and the Advisory Board for Women Peace and Security (WPS) in the GLR, convened the third and final session of a series of virtual consultations on WPS in the GLR.
2. The theme of Session 3, '*Effective Measures to Guarantee Women's Meaningful Political Participation and their Contribution in Peacebuilding*', aimed to (i) take stock of women's participation and contributions in political and peacebuilding processes, (ii) identify lessons learned, best practices and challenges, and (iii) identify actionable steps to be taken to ensure inclusivity of all stakeholders, particularly women in political and peacebuilding processes during and post COVID-19.
3. Participants included: the AU Commissioner for Political Affairs, women leaders of the Advisory Board, ICGLR Executive Secretariat and its fora, UNWOMEN Burundi, representatives of civil society organisations (CSOs), regional and international partners, namely ECOWAS and EU, advocates, experts, DPPA, UN Peace Building Support Office (PBSO) and a number technical level representatives of Permanent Missions to the UN.

**Opening Statements and Regional Overview**

4. In his opening remarks, UN Special Envoy Huang Xia highlighted the importance of the meeting, which, in-line with Security Council resolution 2493 (2019), encourages States to strengthen the capacity of women to allow them to participate in political and peace processes and address their under-representation in decision-making bodies. He further noted that at a time when the world is in the grip of profound changes caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and its socio-economic impacts, it



is imperative to rely on collective responsibility to support and accompany the participation of organizations working for peacebuilding, notably those led by women involved in stabilization activities as part of reconstruction and recovery. While welcoming the progress made in relation to women's political participation in the GLR, he urged participants to consider ways and means to strengthen institutional mechanisms and legislative frameworks dedicated to the status of women at both national and regional levels; improve political investment in women's led electoral campaigns; expand the space granted to women in the media in order to promote the visibility of their actions; and promote training and capacity building for future young women leaders.

5. Minata Samate, AU Commissioner for Political Affairs, expressed her appreciation for the cooperation between her Department and the Office of the Special Envoy through the joint initiative on gender and elections conducted in November 2019. While recognising that Africa has made efforts to promote women's representation in decision-making, she appealed for greater commitments to achieve parity in accordance with its international commitments. She stressed the importance of the role of women in governance and the ongoing efforts of her Department and UNDP to promote and support initiatives aimed at strengthening leadership opportunities for African women, including the development of a plan of action that focuses on emerging leaders. She further called for increased access to funding and technical resources for women leaders; the implementation of legislation on gender equality in leadership and political processes, as well as in addressing violence and intimidation against women during electoral processes; and for discrimination against women in management positions to be challenged.

6. Madam Lydia Gachoya, representing the ICGLR Regional Women Forum, as well as being a member of the Advisory Board for WPS for the GLR, appreciated the opportunity that the meeting afforded to provide a collaborative perspective and interrogation on the issue of inclusive and equal political and leadership participation for women. She recalled Aspiration 6 of 'Agenda 2063' and Sustainable Development Goal 5, as two key foundational instruments that provide the region with a strong framework in its efforts towards the WPS objectives. While noting some positive developments across the region in addressing societal, institutional and structural barriers she underscored the reality of a long road ahead to achieve gender parity and inclusive leadership. Women across the GLR are still facing physical and emotional violence while on the campaign trails or in community debates, with their campaigns severely under-funded due to existing political funding mechanisms and the lack of access to adequate leadership capacity building.

7. The opening session was followed by presentations by Dr. Zanetor Agyeman-Rawlings, Member of Parliament in Ghana; Marie Louise Baricako, a CSO representative; Dr. Sintiki Ugbe, the Director, Humanitarian & Social Affairs, ECOWAS; N'deye Sow, representative of International Alert; Egide Nyongabo, UNWOMEN Burundi; Donia Romdane, Expert, Gender and Elections; Hon. Jeremie Kekenwa, Former Senator, Burundi; and Amb. Ambeyi Ligabo, Director, Democracy and Good Governance, ICGLR. The discussions focused on the need for enhanced policy and institutional frameworks, financing for women's participation and review of the political processes approaches. Participants considered the current status, good practices, lessons learned and the role of constitutional bodies in women's participation in peacebuilding and political processes.

## **Discussions**

8. The vibrant discussion allowed participants to reflect on different perspectives in addressing women's participation through a more holistic approach, with a focus on the importance of parity, enhancing policy frameworks, moving from the initial minimum quota of 30% to 50%, institutional frameworks, women in political parties, constitutional reviews, administration of elections to make them gender sensitive, women in governance, positive masculinity and financing for women's participation, linked to national budgets.
9. The roundtable consultative meeting addressed the following thematic areas:

### ***Overview of Women's Participation in Gender-Responsive Peacebuilding Initiatives***

10. Participants noted that structural and institutional barriers continue to impede women's equal participation in peace and security efforts. It was also recognized that the GLR lacks sufficient women as peace-building negotiators and mediators, which was viewed as one of the indicators that reflects the gap in women's leadership quotas. Participants observed the disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on women and children, and the need for 'post war and conflict' recovery strategies in addressing the needs of women and girls

#### *Recommendations*

- *Establish a network of young women leaders to feed into regional response programmes.*
- *Strengthen multi-stakeholder initiatives at the grass roots level, in order to promote women's meaningful participation in leadership roles in all spheres of the community.*
- *Support Member States to redesign census tools to inform and facilitate development of gender responsive budgets that are gender sensitive.*
- *Development partners and governments to restructure financial support to target women's traditional cooperatives, institutions and grassroots CSOs in order to enhance women's local participation in peace and political processes.*
- *Strengthen the capacity for women mediators and negotiators to allow them to participate equitably in all peace-building processes.*
- *Member States to strengthen local mechanisms that monitor the gender quotas for women leadership roles.*

### ***Good practices and lessons for women's participation in peacebuilding and political processes***

11. ECOWAS, International Alert and UNWOMEN Burundi briefed on the role of women in prevention and resolution of conflicts, the promotion of strong regional institutional mechanisms for conflict prevention and response, and the potential and ability of women mediators at the community level.

#### *Recommendations*

- *Build on the ECOWAS experience and support the creation of gender development centers and a GLR Gender Security Committee.*
- *Support women mediators in Burundi in their institutional and organizational development process, as well as in community initiatives.*

- *Building on the experience of women mediators at community level in Burundi, establish a network of women community leaders and women mediators to promote the dynamics of peace and democracy across the GLR.*
- *As part of the celebration of the 20th anniversary of resolution 1325, convene a regional consultation and exchange of experiences workshop between women mediators and community leaders.*

### ***Good governance and leadership: the role of constitutional bodies in women's participation***

12. Participants noted that women's equal participation in decision-making is not only a call for justice and democracy, but a necessary pre-condition for advancing the WPS agenda. They advocated for the adoption of new approaches in conducting gender-sensitive reforms in political parties and electoral bodies in view of the COVID-19 pandemic.

#### *Recommendations*

- *Build the capacities of women parliamentarians and other women leaders to act as mentors and training of trainers of the grassroots level advocates for the WPS agenda*
- *Advocate for the removal of application and registration fees of electoral aspirants and candidates.*
- *Provision of a targeted fund for CSO supporting the capacity building for women candidates.*

#### **Next Steps**

13. The UN Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) plans to convene a dedicated ambassadorial-level meeting on the GLR and the implementation of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda in the coming weeks. This session, along with the earlier two sessions on 'Women as Agents of Change for Social and Economic Transformation' and 'The Prevention of all forms of Violence Against Women and their Protection', will inform the high-level consultations, with a short-consolidated report to be presented to the meeting

#### **Note of Appreciation**

14. Participants expressed their gratitude to the Office of the Special Envoy, the PSC-Framework Guarantors and the Advisory Board for WPS in the GLR for convening and facilitating the meeting in preparation for the upcoming PBC meeting on WPS.

Done in Nairobi  
20 August 2020