



INCLUSIVITY. ACCOUNTABILITY. RESILIENCE.

Position of Women Peace Activists and Women-led Organizations in Europe and Central Asia: Insights for the 2025 Peacebuilding Architecture Review

4 December 2024

CIVIL SOCIETY ENGAGEMENT

WHAT



A **robust, inclusive, and safe** civil society engagement process is key to enhancing the global peacebuilding architecture. Women-led organizations (WLOs) and women’s right organizations (WROs) bring critical grassroots knowledge and advocacy to international peace processes. By ensuring **safe participation**, fostering **gender-responsive policies**, and strengthening **protection measures**, the United Nations (UN) can facilitate the quality, inclusiveness, and sustainability of peacebuilding efforts. WLOs are not only **a partner for implementation but an integral actor in designing accountable peacebuilding processes that resolve conflicts, build peace and security, and ensure human rights**¹.

HOW

1. Establish Clear and Accessible Entry Points for Civil Society Engagement in UN processes:

- **Formal Consultations:** The UN should create **structured avenues for WLOs, including those with representation of young women**,² to participate in consultations related to peacebuilding and human rights, ensuring that their perspectives are integrated into key processes like the **UN Security Council (UNSC), Peacebuilding Commission, and Third Committee of the General Assembly**.
- **Inclusion in Key Discussions:** WLOs should be invited to contribute to discussions around peacebuilding policies, gender-responsive peacebuilding, and human rights initiatives at the **UN General Assembly, Human Rights Council, and UN Security Council** briefings, ensuring that WLOs’ perspectives are

considered in shaping global responses to conflict resolution, peace building and security.

- **Representation on Advisory Groups:** The establishment of representative advisory bodies composed of CSOs, including women’s organizations, women human rights defenders, grassroots groups, and youth organizations, will allow for their voice and agency to contribute to conflict resolution, peacebuilding and security policy.

2. Create Mechanisms for Ongoing Dialogue and Engagement

- **Regular Meetings with UN Peacebuilding Officials:** WLOs’ representatives should have regular opportunities to meet with UN staff working on **human rights, peacebuilding, and gender-responsive peacebuilding** and **youth-responsive peacebuilding** to ensure their

¹ This is summarized from discussions at WPS regional dialogue event in Moldova, 5-6 September 2024

² Youth is referred here in line with UN Security Council Resolution 2250 which defines “youth” as people aged 18–29 years but notes the variations that exist at national and international levels.

perspectives are included in conflict prevention, resolution and security related policies and programmes. These interactions can take the form of informal briefings, town hall meetings, and roundtables.

- **Knowledge Sharing Platforms:** Develop digital secure platforms or portals where WLOs can share information, experiences, and best practices on peacebuilding, human rights, and gender equality. This would foster better communication between the UN and CSOs, ensuring more effective and coordinated efforts.
- **Capacity Building Programs:** UN peacebuilding and human rights bodies should provide WLOs, including young women's organizations, with the resources, knowledge, and training needed to engage more effectively in peacebuilding processes and UN frameworks, with technical assistance on policy development and monitoring and evaluation.
- **Ensure Gender and Youth-Responsive Peacebuilding:** The engagement of WLOs and women activists should prioritize gender-responsive peacebuilding strategies that take into account the different needs and experiences of women, men, girls, and boys. This includes involving women's organizations in peace negotiations, policy-making, and implementation processes, particularly in contexts of conflict and post-conflict recovery.
- **Incorporate Diverse Voices into UN Decision-Making:** Encourage the active participation of diverse and marginalized groups in UN processes. For instance, **youth-led organizations, LGBTQI+ groups,** and **grassroots women's organizations** should be represented to ensure that the issues of the most vulnerable are addressed in peacebuilding efforts.
- **Focus on Intersectionality:** Civil society organizations should be invited to share their insights on how different social identities—such as race, class, age, ethnicity, and disability—affect the peacebuilding process. Incorporating an intersectional lens will ensure that policies are more inclusive and responsive to the needs of all populations.

3. Ensure Safe and Inclusive Participation

For the engagement of WLOs' **safety** and **inclusion** must be prioritized in all phases of peacebuilding, including through:

- **Safe Spaces for Vulnerable Groups:** Develop safe and accessible spaces for marginalized and vulnerable groups (including women, youth, disability, LGBTQI+ individuals, and those from conflict-affected regions) to participate in UN processes without fear of retribution or harm. This might include ensuring physical security at UN meetings or using online platforms for participation.
- **Digital and Remote Participation:** Provide platforms that enable remote participation for WLOs and women activists that cannot physically attend UN meetings in New York due to security concerns, financial constraints, or other barriers. This ensures that perspectives from regions with limited access to international processes are still considered.
- **Ensure Non-Retaliation and Confidentiality:** The UN should establish a robust framework that guarantees **non-retaliation** to WLOs and women activists for their engagement and contributions. **Confidentiality** measures should be clearly outlined to ensure that sensitive discussions and inputs from CSOs are protected.
- **Protection for Human Rights Defenders and Activists:** WLOs, women activists and human rights defenders must be supported with the necessary protection mechanisms. This includes travel visas, protection from harassment or surveillance, and legal support when engaging with UN bodies as well as physical safe spaces upon returning back to their country of residence from the UN consultations. The UN should actively address the threats posed to civil society activists, particularly in conflict zones, where their safety and well-being may be jeopardized.

4. Foster Collaborative Engagement with Intergovernmental Bodies

- **Collaboration with the Security Council and Peacebuilding Commission:** WLOs and women activists should be included in all briefings and

discussions related to the **Security Council** and **Peacebuilding Commission**, especially when these bodies address human rights and gender-specific issues. Civil society can bring unique on-the-ground perspectives and advocate for policies that reflect the lived realities of affected populations.

- **Provide Mechanisms for Real-Time Feedback:** The UN should create channels through which CSOs can provide real-time feedback on ongoing peacebuilding initiatives, including how effectively intergovernmental bodies are addressing **gender equality, human rights, and socioeconomic vulnerabilities** in conflict-affected regions, including from the perspective of intersectionality.
- **Engage with the UN's Third Committee of the General Assembly:** The Third Committee, which deals with human rights and social issues, offers a critical platform for civil society to share insights and engage in dialogue on the challenges faced by women, youth, and marginalized groups. Regular and structured interactions should be promoted, where CSOs can inform debates and influence resolutions on human rights and gender-specific issues.

5. Address the Backlash Against Civil Society

- **Countering Shrinking Civic Space:** The UN should actively address the **shrinking space** for WLOs and women activists, including young women activists, especially in authoritarian contexts where restrictions on CSOs are increasing. Measures should include **public statements of support** for civil society

organizations and **actions to push back against government repression.**

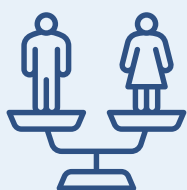
- **Advocate for the Recognition of CSOs in National and International Policies:** The UN should advocate for **legislation and policies** that protect the **independence** of CSOs and **human rights defenders**, especially in countries where NGOs and civil society activism are being increasingly targeted. This also includes advocating for the recognition of CSOs as legitimate and vital actors in peacebuilding and humanitarian efforts.

6. Monitoring and Evaluation of CSO Participation

- **Build Mechanisms for Accountability:** Civil society engagement in peacebuilding should be **monitored and evaluated** to ensure that it is meaningful, safe, and effective. Regular assessments of WLOs' engagement in peacebuilding processes, including feedback from civil society about the challenges and successes of their participation, should be in place. This will allow for the continuous improvement of engagement strategies.
- **Track Progress on Gender and Human Rights Indicators:** The UN should track and report on how well CSOs are integrated into peacebuilding processes and whether **gender and human rights standards** are being met. This includes monitoring the impact of policies on marginalized groups and ensuring that women's organizations are effectively integrated into peacebuilding efforts.

EMBEDDING GENDER EQUALITY

WHAT



The peacebuilding architecture review provides a strong momentum for UN reforms to **fully address women's rights issues** through structural changes and institutional reforms that ensure gender equality is embedded in the UN Security Council's (UNSC) work. By increasing women's representation, integrating gender and social inclusion analysis into all decisions, and fostering accountability, the peacebuilding architecture can become **a more inclusive and responsive** body in addressing the **specific needs and rights of women in conflict situations.**

HOW

1. Prioritizing Inclusion and Gender Equality:

A core principle of both the peacebuilding architecture and the Pact for the Future is inclusive and gender-responsive peacebuilding. This can be implemented by ensuring the following:

- **Women, Peace and Security (WPS):** UN Women as a penholder for WPS agenda should be considered as a central actor to the new peacebuilding framework and as a key entry point for ensuring gender-responsive and inclusive policies in the Pact's implementation.
- **Gender Parity:** The peacebuilding architecture should ensure a mandatory Gender Parity in its institutions, including through gender advisors who focus specifically on WPS issues, and gender experts who can advise on the impact of UNSC resolutions on women's rights and gender equality.
- **Quotas** should be introduced for women's participation in UN-led peace related platforms and gender experts should be present.
- Consider to establish a **Gender and Civil Society Advisory Board** consisting of women's civil society organizations, particularly those working in conflict zones, to provide insights and recommendations on how UNSC actions

can better address women's rights. This would enhance the inclusivity of the UN peacebuilding architecture's actions and decisions and ensure that local women's voices are heard.

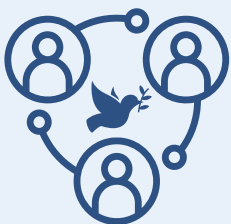
2. Leveraging CEDAW Recommendations

Directly linking the UN peacebuilding architecture's policies and actions with CEDAW General Recommendation N40 by:

- **Prioritizing gender equality** across all levels of decision-making and ensuring women's leadership in all peace and security processes.
- Paying a strong focus on **integrating WPS principles** in areas such as arms control, cybersecurity, and crisis prevention, with a focus on addressing the root causes of conflict; as well as expand gender-sensitive early warning mechanisms.
- **Promoting youth participation** and engagement across all aspects of the peace and security agenda, ensuring that young people can effectively build a peaceful, equal, inclusive and sustainable world that responds to their demands, implements their rights, ensures youth co-leadership, intergenerational solidarity, and enables them to anticipate and overcome crises.

PACT FOR THE FUTURE

WHAT



The review of the **global peacebuilding architecture** and the implementation of the **Pact for the Future** have to be intrinsically linked as both seek to strengthen and modernize the frameworks for global peace, security, and development in the context of evolving challenges. While the peacebuilding architecture focuses on the structures and processes that prevent and address conflict, the **Pact for the Future** outlines commitments to building a future that is inclusive, resilient, and sustainable, particularly in response to global challenges like climate change, conflict, and inequality.

HOW

1. Peacebuilding Architecture as a Critical Stakeholder in the implementation of the Pact for the Future

Several aspects highlight how peacebuilding structures align with or can lead the implementation of the Pact:

- **Interlinking Preventive Actions:** The peacebuilding architecture, especially the **Peacebuilding Commission** and **UN Peacebuilding Fund**, is suggested to strengthen focus on the preventive diplomacy, conflict prevention, and building lasting peace. By focusing on the prevention pillar of peacebuilding, it helps tackle issues such as inequality, environmental degradation, and human rights violations that the Pact seeks to address.
- **Strengthening the UN's Role in Crisis Response:** the **Peacebuilding Commission**, the **Security Council**, and the **Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA)**, should be seen as central components in the **Pact's operationalization**, ensuring that the UN's crisis response mechanisms are robust, coordinated, and relevant to the needs of the most vulnerable populations.
- **Addressing the Climate Change and Conflict Nexus:** The **Pact for the Future** explicitly acknowledges the need to address the interconnections between climate change, conflict, and migration. The peacebuilding architecture should play a critical role here by helping countries integrate **climate security** into peacebuilding strategies, ensuring that the **environmental dimensions of conflict** are addressed alongside traditional security concerns. **Climate change adaptation** programs and conflict-sensitive development plans should be incorporated into the peacebuilding frameworks of affected regions.
- **Encouraging Member States to develop and introduce dedicated funding mechanisms** to support the work and enhance capacities of women's organizations in conflict resolution and peacebuilding. Despite the crucial contribution of women's organizations and

activists to conflict resolution and peacebuilding, women led organizations remain underfunded, receive primarily short-term project support and spend a disproportionate amount of their time on donor-related activities such as preparing funding proposals and reporting results.

- **Strengthening synergies with SDGs:** The peacebuilding architecture is inherently linked to the **SDGs**, particularly in promoting peace, justice, and strong institutions (SDG 16). It has to foster the integration of peacebuilding efforts into regional and national development plans and the mobilization of resources for conflict prevention, so the **Pact for the Future** can leverage the peacebuilding architecture as a mechanism for achieving SDG targets, especially in conflict-prone areas.
- The new peacebuilding architecture can serve as the **operational mechanism** to ensure that the Pact's goals are translated into actionable programs, particularly in conflict-affected and fragile contexts, in the following ways:
- **Monitoring and Accountability** - the **Peacebuilding Commission** and its associated mechanisms, can monitor the progress of countries in implementing peacebuilding strategies that align with the Pact's objectives. These bodies can track whether peace processes, human rights interventions, and gender equality initiatives are successfully advancing.
- **Supporting the Localization of the Pact** - the **Pact for the Future** calls for a **localized approach** to global goals, which emphasizes country ownership and **context-specific strategies**. The peacebuilding architecture, particularly the **Peacebuilding Fund**, provides critical resources for **local actors** (including civil society, women's groups, and local governments) to implement peacebuilding projects. This aligns with the Pact's goal of empowering **local communities** and ensuring that peacebuilding efforts are grounded in the local context, while remaining aligned with broader global goals.

UN Women Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia

Abide-i Hürriyet Cad. İstiklal Sok.
No:11 KEY Plaza Kat:8
34381 Şişli, İstanbul, TURKEY

eca.unwomen.org

