



Security Council

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Letter dated 4 March 2020 from the Permanent Representative of Austria to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

It is my pleasure to transmit herewith the outcome of the Global Women's Forum for Peace and Humanitarian Action, which took place on 19 and 20 February 2020 in Vienna (see annex). The forum was hosted by the Austrian Government, the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund and the Global Network of Women Peacebuilders.

The forum served as a platform for discussions and recommendations from grass-roots women's organizations from 17 countries across Africa, the Americas, Asia and the Pacific, Europe and the Middle East, government and United Nations representatives, academics, experts and private sector partners. The outcome will feed into strategies aimed at fulfilling commitments under the women and peace and security agenda, as well as the Generation Equality Forum ahead of the Beijing+25 Conference, and is also a contribution to the peacebuilding architecture review called for in Security Council resolution [2282 \(2016\)](#) and General Assembly resolution [70/262](#).

I should be grateful if you would circulate the present letter and its annex as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Jan Kickert
Permanent Representative of Austria to the United Nations



Annex to the letter dated 4 March 2020 from the Permanent Representative of Austria to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

Vienna Declaration 2020

Women peacebuilders and humanitarian actors define key priorities in 2020 and beyond

20 February 2020

We, women peacebuilders, humanitarian responders, and civil-society representatives from diverse backgrounds and from 17 countries across Africa, the Americas, Asia and the Pacific, Europe, the South Caucasus and the Middle East, convened at the Global Women's Forum for Peace & Humanitarian Action¹ in Vienna, Austria, on February 19–20, 2020.

Ahead of the 20th anniversary of the adoption of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women and Peace and Security, the 5th anniversary of the adoption of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 2250 on Youth and Peace and Security, and the 25th Anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, we exchanged experiences and set key implementation priorities for the way forward. We call for greater recognition for and support to our work in building and sustaining inclusive peace.

Our critical work creates positive change in our communities. Nevertheless, we continue to face the following challenges:

- **Our lives and our rights are disproportionately threatened by violent conflict.** The root causes of conflict, including gender inequality and other intersecting forms of violence and discrimination, the political and economic systems of war (including militarization and arms proliferation), weak accountability for violations of international humanitarian and human rights law, and other threats like climate change, the rise of violent extremism, and organized criminal networks, remain insufficiently addressed.
- **Our diversity is not sufficiently recognized.** Women and young women are not homogenous groups of people. The meaningful and effective participation of women and youth does not sufficiently extend to all persons who identify as such, including many historically marginalized communities.
- **Our work remains underfunded.** The failure to allocate sufficient, timely, direct, flexible, reliable, adequate and sustainable resources is a major obstacle to our work. When funding is available, it is often short-term and inaccessible to grassroots civil society, and even more so for grassroots youth organizations.
- **Our lives and our families are at risk because of our work as women peacebuilders.** In addition to legal and socio-cultural barriers, we face harassment, threats, arrests, torture and violence. The space for our work is rapidly shrinking.

¹ The Global Women's Forum for Peace & Humanitarian Action was organized by the Austrian Development Cooperation, Global Network of Women Peacebuilders, and the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund in Vienna, Austria on February 19–20, 2020. This Declaration, an outcome document of the Forum, will feed into the 20th anniversary of UNSCR 1325 and contribute to the Generation Equality Forum and the UN Peacebuilding Architecture Review.

- **Our potential is limited by patriarchy, negative stereotypes, discriminatory socio-cultural practices and policies.** Harmful policies, social, and cultural norms as well as traditional concepts of masculinity and femininity promote violence and militarization, while sustaining gender inequalities.
- **We remain excluded from most peace processes and political decision-making at all levels,** despite evidence that our participation makes them more effective, more inclusive and more sustainable. When peace agreements are reached, we are further marginalized in the implementation process. Most peace agreements are little known or understood by local communities, and often not translated into local languages. As a result, implementation is slow – and even slower for gender-responsive provisions, if they exist.
- **Many of us do not have access to economic resources and opportunities.** Often, we cannot own land, inherit properties, travel safely, or make financial decisions. This is worsened during conflict and humanitarian crises where there is scarcity of economic resources and opportunities, in particular for refugee and internally displaced persons (IDPs), the majority of whom are women and girls.
- **We are not recognized as experts and excluded from the design and decision-making on priorities.** Despite our extensive experience, our positive impact and our knowledge as peacebuilders and humanitarian responders, our contributions are unrecognized and undervalued. Because of this, we are excluded in decision-making, donor priorities do not reflect our needs and our realities, and our initiatives remain underfunded and overlooked.
- **We are excluded in the design and implementation of humanitarian programmes.** In refugee and IDP camps, the majority of decision-makers and leaders are men. As a result, the needs of women and young women refugees, internally displaced, and host communities remain invisible and unaddressed. This makes it difficult, and at times, unsafe for us to access services and aid.

These grave challenges are exacerbated for women who face added layers of discrimination based on ethnicity, economic status, age, ability, sexual orientation and gender identity, such as young women, elderly women, indigenous women, widows, women veterans, women with disabilities, refugee and internally displaced women, women migrants, women returnees and former combatants, women in rural communities, women living in unrecognized territories, and other marginalized groups.

To address them, we urgently call on:

The United Nations and Donor Community, including the private sector:

1. To provide adequate, accessible, flexible, demand-driven and long-term funding, particularly to grassroots women's rights and youth organizations, to simplify funding application procedures, and to meaningfully include women of all backgrounds and ages in the design of funding priorities and programmes.
2. To support women's self-protection initiatives, including through (i) rapid funds and coordination to respond to women peacebuilders and humanitarian actors facing risks and safely relocate; (ii) supporting civil society-led monitoring and information-sharing on threats and risks, (iii) provision of legal and psychosocial services.
3. To support women's – including young women's – rights and access to education, economic resources and opportunities, recognizing that when women and young women, are economically empowered and financially independent, they can more effectively contribute to decision-making, peacebuilding, conflict

prevention, sustaining peace, and the promotion of human rights and gender equality.

4. To provide dedicated financial support to enhance women's and youth civil society organizational capacities, especially at the grassroots level, and strengthen coordination among women peacebuilders, humanitarian responders and civil society, including through intergenerational dialogues.
5. To recognize climate change as a driver of conflict and to invest in women-led initiatives aimed at climate change mitigation and adaptation as a conflict prevention strategy.
6. To make resources, infrastructures, and tools such as access to internet and new technologies available to grassroots women, including young women, through cooperation with the private sector in ways that are non-exploitative and respectful of local women's and youth's capacities to make decisions.
7. To create and make accessible conflict-sensitive rapid response funding for women and young women's initiatives in humanitarian emergencies.
8. To utilize goods and services produced by local women and intentionally invest in economic enterprises led by local women in conflict and crisis situations.

Member States and local and national authorities

9. To improve coordination with women's rights organizations and increase funding to support their work in implementing the Women and Peace and Security resolutions and gender-sensitive humanitarian action.
10. To enable and institutionalize women's meaningful participation, particularly at the local level, in developing, adopting and implementing gender-sensitive environmental policies as a conflict-prevention strategy.
11. To recognize, support and protect women peacebuilders and humanitarian responders and their families, so they can safely carry out their work, by condemning actions that violate their rights and preventing all risks, reprisals, and other interference with their work.
12. To adopt gender-responsive macro-economic policies and gender-responsive national and local budgets, particularly in post-conflict economic recovery, and to enable women's meaningful participation in the design, implementation, and monitoring.
13. To remove legal, logistical and institutional barriers such as excessive visa restrictions to women's and young women's participation in international meetings, conferences and other policy and decision-making spaces.
14. To strengthen the nexus between WPS and humanitarian action by integrating a strong WPS perspective in humanitarian action and by guaranteeing meaningful participation of women peacebuilders in the design and implementation of humanitarian programmes; ensuring the meaningful participation of women refugees, internally displaced women, and women in host communities in developing and implementing National Action Plans and Local Action Plans on WPS.
15. To hold Member States accountable to uphold and enforce national, regional, and international laws and policies on WPS, human rights and humanitarian situations.

All stakeholders

16. To meaningfully include women refugees, IDPs and women from host communities, at all stages of design, implementation, and monitoring of humanitarian programs which contribute to social cohesion between communities, and to ensure that they are represented in all coordination and leadership mechanisms in crisis contexts.
17. To further invest in initiatives focused on social cohesion between host communities, refugees and IDPs.
18. To guarantee the meaningful participation of local women from diverse backgrounds as mediators and negotiators in all peace processes, including official negotiations.
19. To design and fund programmes that cut across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus and with a strong human rights-based approach.
20. To adopt comprehensive codes of conduct, including strict zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse; and transparent reporting and accountability mechanisms;
21. To involve boys, young men and men of all ages – including traditional and faith leaders – as allies in the implementation of the Women Peace and Security resolutions and international humanitarian laws and agreements, while ensuring women's leadership and promoting positive masculinities.
22. To promote the portrayal of women as peacebuilders, leaders and decision-makers in the media; support women's access to decision-making positions in media organizations; and hold the media accountable for hate speech and misogyny.
23. To invest in holistic and survivor-centered sexual and reproductive health care services, psychosocial support, and access to justice programmes for support to survivors of sexual and gender-based violence in conflict and humanitarian crises.
24. To ensure local women's participation in all stages of design and implementation of disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration programmes
25. To recognize, support and stand with women peacebuilders Call to Action to elevate their vital work and address the insecurities they face.
26. To guarantee synergies and remove silos between the effective implementation of all international frameworks on peace and security, human rights, and development, including the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the UN Security Council Resolution 1325, UN Security Council Resolution 2250, the Sustainable Development Goals, the Sustaining Peace resolutions, and to use the 2020 milestone anniversaries as an opportunity to garner political support, allocate funding, and build on momentum.