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**CEDAW and Women, Peace and Security: Strengthening the Synergies for Better Implementation and Accountability**

**Side event during the seventy-second session of the CEDAW Committee**

**Geneva, Palais des Nations, Room XVI**

**1 March 2019, 13:00 – 15:00**

**Discussion report**

**Background**

On March 1, 2019, the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA), the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (Committee), the Global Network of Women Peacebuilders (GNWP) and UN Women held a panel discussion on the synergies between the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Resolutions. The discussion was held as a side event during the seventy-second session of the Committee, and was attended by CEDAW Committee members, representatives of the State Parties, and civil society.

There is already a strong appreciation of the importance of the complementarity between the WPS agenda and CEDAW, and the need for strengthening the synergy between the two policy instruments. The need for greater synergy was recognized in the General Recommendation 30 (GR 30), on women in conflict-prevention, conflict and post-conflict situations, which instructs all 189 States parties to CEDAW to report on the implementation of the WPS resolutions. Other important milestones were the Arria Formula meeting on the linkages between UNSCR 1325 and CEDAW GR 30 in December 2016, and the adoption of a Framework of Cooperation agreement between the CEDAW Committee and the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary General on Sexual Violence in Conflict (SRSG SVC) in July 2018.

The side event built on these previous achievements, and the advocacy to strengthen the synergies between CEDAW and the WPS Resolutions in global policy spaces and on the ground, conducted by the Global Network of Women Peacebuilders (GNWP), in partnership with the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA) Directorate for International Law (DIL) and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) since 2012.

**Meeting agenda**

Ms. Hilary Gbedemah, Chair of the CEDAW Committee; Mr. Ibrahim Salama, Chief, Human Rights Treaties Branch, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights; and Ambassador Daniel Klingele, Deputy Director of the Directorate of International Law, Federal Department of Foreign Affairs opened the discussion.

Ms. Mavic Cabrera-Balleza, the CEO of GNWP moderated the exchange between panellists and other participants. The panellists included:

* Ms. Bandana Rana, Chair of the CEDAW Task Force on women in conflict prevention, conflict and post-conflict situations and Co-Chair of the CEDAW Committee;
* Ms. Pramila Patten, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict (SRSG SVC) – joining via a video message;
* Ms. Hanaa Edwar, Co-founder, Iraqi Women’s Network; and
* Ms. Christine Loew, Director of UN Women Liaison Office in Geneva.

**Key discussion points**

1. **Highlighting the achievements of the agenda so far**

The discussion provided a space to reflect on the achievements in strengthening the synergies between CEDAW and WPS to date. All speakers highlighted some key achievements, including the Arria Formula; the Cooperation Framework between the CEDAW Committee and the office of the SRSG SVC; as well as the publishing of a UN Women guidebook on CEDAW General recommendation 30 (2013) on women in conflict prevention, conflict and post-conflict situations; and the Security Council Resolutions on WPS that includes a checklist of questions for States Parties reporting to CEDAW.

Other important achievements highlighted during the discussion included:

* + **Increased reporting on WPS by States Parties to the CEDAW**

Ms. Bandana Rana commended on progress made in the number of references to WPS in State party reports and civil society shadow reports to the CEDAW Committee.

Ms. Christine Loew shared this view, highlighting that the United Kingdom, one of the Permanent Members of the Security Council, included information about its National Action Plan for the implementation of WPS in their most recent report to CEDAW. Cote d’Ivoire also included information about WPS in its report submitted in 2018, during its tenure as a Security Council member.

* + **Increased references to WPS from CEDAW Committee**

Ms. Bandana Rana also emphasized that the CEDAW Committee regularly questions State Parties about the status of implementation of the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 and other WPS Resolutions. Ms. Christine Loew also commended the CEDAW Committee for the attention paid to the issue, highlighting that in 2017, the Committee referenced WPS in 18 of 28 concluding observations, including for 11 non-conflict countries.

* + **Information-sharing between the CEDAW Committee and the Security Council**

Nearly all of the panellists drew attention to the importance of information sharing between different bodies, agencies and institutions involved in the protection of women’s rights, both at national and international levels. The reports submitted to the CEDAW by States parties and civil society are a vast source of information and analysis, which is invaluable to the work of various offices, bodies, and agencies of the UN, as well as to regional organizations.

Ms. Hanaa Edwar called for greater harmonization of women’s rights mechanisms at national levels, using Iraq as an example. She emphasized that coordination remains a challenge, considering that information sharing amongst government agencies in charge of implementing different international laws or instruments related to women’s rights is not systematic. While highlighting this challenge, she also stressed that the CEDAW General recommendation 30 (2013) on women in conflict prevention, conflict and post-conflict situations is a strong tool that could be used to support better harmonization and coordination of mechanisms in charge of protecting women’s rights at the national level.

Highlighting the importance of the Framework of Cooperation between her office and the CEDAW Committee, Ms. Pramila Patten spoke of the potential of enhanced information sharing between her office and the CEDAW Committee to strengthen accountability of Member States for ensuring gender equality, protecting women’s rights and preventing sexual violence in conflict settings. For example, she highlighted that her office submitted reports to the CEDAW Committee, in view of its dialogues with a number of States parties. These reports, which are based on the office’s engagement with national authorities, civil society, and survivors of conflict-related sexual violence, include information on barriers in the access to justice, including legal, social, structural, institutional and procedural barriers.

Ms. Christine Loew spoke of UN Women’s efforts to support the Security Council to make greater use of observations issued by the CEDAW Committee. She shared that in advance of each meeting of the Security Council Informal Expert Group on WPS (IEG), UN Women prepares a written briefing package for participants, which includes background information based on documentation issued by the CEDAW Committee, when relevant. For example, the materials for a meeting on Mali in 2017 referenced a CEDAW Committee report noting that Mali “continues to lack a law criminalizing gender-based violence, forced marriage, or female genital mutilation, which affects approximately 90 percent of Malian women.”

1. **Remaining challenges**

While emphasising achievements, the panellists also reflected on the remaining challenges to strengthen the synergies between WPS and the CEDAW, including:

* + **Reporting on the WPS agenda by non-conflict States Parties**

Ms. Christine Loew drew attention to the misconception that WPS applies only to conflict-affected States Parties. She stressed the need to challenge this view, and called on States Parties that are not in conflict to report on WPS in their CEDAW reports as well.

* + **Insufficient coordination between women’s rights mechanisms at the national level**

Ms. Hanaa Edwar shared her experience of coordinating the drafting of the shadow report for Iraq, which is due to report in October 2019. She emphasized that effective implementation of both CEDAW and WPS requires an whole-of-government approach and strong coordination. This is often a challenge as different ministries are in charge of implementation and reporting on different international instruments.

* + **Briefings by human rights experts**

Ms. Christine Loew reminded the audience of three recommendations issued by UN Women during the Arria Formula meeting: (1) to make greater use of information issued by the CEDAW Committee; (2) to report to the CEDAW on the implementation of WPS commitments; and (3) to continue briefings by UN human rights experts.

She pointed out that while progress has been made on the first two recommendations, the implementation of the third recommendation is lagging behind. She noted a positive trend in the number of women from civil society, briefing the Security Council in 2017 and 2018. She recognized the role of the advocacy by the NGO Working Group in increasing the number of women briefers and called to use it as a “blueprint” and apply it to increase the number of human rights experts among Security Council briefers.

* + **Reporting on Localization**

Ms. Bandana Rana noted that while an increasing number of States Parties adopt strong and inclusive National Action Plans (NAPs) on WPS, implementation remains a challenge. Sharing her experience from Nepal, she emphasized the importance of a dedicated budget, and localization for effective implementation. She called on States Parties to reference these aspects when reporting to CEDAW, and on the CEDAW Committee to raise these issues in its Lists of Issues and Concluding Observations.

**Recommendations**

The event has fostered a rich discussion, including interventions from representatives of the Permanent Missions of Austria, Bangladesh, Croatia, Israel and Peru, as well as by CEDAW Committee members. All speakers emphasized the importance of continued work to strengthen the synergies between CEDAW and WPS, and the use of both instruments to guarantee women’s meaningful participation in conflict prevention, sustaining peace, and decision making at all levels.

The following key recommendations can be formulated based on the discussion:

1. **All States parties should:**
	* Report on the status of implementation of the WPS agenda in the country, including if it is not affected by conflict, and recognize the importance of the WPS agenda for the full realization of women’s rights;
	* Strengthen the harmonization of all national instruments for women’s rights, guarantee coordination and a cross-sectoral, whole-of-government approach to the implementation and reporting on the WPS agenda and the CEDAW.
2. **The CEDAW Committee should:**
	* Expand its exchange with States parties on the WPS agenda to include steps taken to guarantee effective implementation at the local level;
	* Reinforce information sharing with the office of the SRSG-SVC, and develop shared positions on key issues.
3. **The UN Security Council should:**
	* Work with Member States, UN entities and civil society to identify and invite human rights experts to brief the Council, including on issues related to CEDAW implementation in the countries on the Council’s agenda.