

**Oral and Written Statement submitted to
CEDAW on the occasion of the
General Discussion on Women in Conflict and Post-conflict Situations
July 18, 2011; United Nations, New York, NY
Submitted by the
Global Network of Women Peacebuilders (GNWP) –
International Civil society Action Network**

Distinguished CEDAW committee members, Excellencies, UN experts, and colleagues,

We extend our sincere appreciation and congratulations to the CEDAW committee for this ground-breaking initiative and an excellent concept paper. You have our continuing support on this General Recommendation.

We commend the CEDAW committee for referencing the Secretary-General's report on the implementation of Resolution 1325 and the significant gaps and challenges in almost all aspects related to women and peace and security in conflict-affected and post-conflict countries (Concept Note . PART III - Role of the Convention in advancing women's human rights in post-conflict contexts).

We urge the committee to consider:

Women's participation in peace negotiations and decision-making at all levels on peace and security issues

The lack of women's participation in decision-making is visible in almost all sectors of life. However, the absence of women is even more apparent on the issue of peace and security and the undervalued roles of women in these processes, is blatant. The number of women actually sitting in official peace negotiations and meaningfully participating in decision-making and planning on peace and security issues is minimal.

Furthermore, many representatives at the Global Consultation¹ in Colombo, Sri Lanka in October 2010 spoke to the lack of involvement of women on all sides in political decision making after conflict, as well as the lack of substantive participation in peace negotiations and other key peace making policies like demobilization, disarmament and reintegration (DDR) programming. They also noted that peace processes take many forms and can extend over long periods of time.

No women have been appointed Chief or Lead peace mediators in UN-sponsored peace talks, but in some talks sponsored by the African Union or other institutions women have

¹ Global Consultation on the Application of Women's Human Rights Framework on the Issues of Women Affected by Conflict organized by the International Women's Rights Action Watch (IWRAW) Asia Pacific, and its partners, Women and Media Collective, Global Network of Women Peacebuilders, Women's International League of Peace and Freedom and Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era in Colombo, Sri Lanka on October 15-17, 2010.

joined a team of mediators. A recent positive case is the role of Graça Machel as one of the three mediators for the Kenya crisis in 2008.

We believe that if women are denied access to peace and security processes, they are less able to advocate for their needs and experiences and are unable to shape a society that will respect their rights moving forward. Moreover, women's lack of participation in decision-making increases their vulnerability to sexual and other forms of violence. This is especially true in pre- and post conflict situations where economic and social rights such as right to own housing; right to education and quality health services; stable legal status; and access to employment and other civil and political rights are deeply impacted by the militarization and impunity generated by the instability of the political situation. As a result, women and girls end up being subjected to discriminatory practices, such as forced marriage, trafficking and forced prostitution, to name a few.

The CEDAW Committee should note the importance of addressing women's civic participation and participation in decision-making processes at all levels as well as their rights to determine their roles in- and outside of households and families. Furthermore, fostering women's participation in consultative processes regarding relocation and resettlement in post-conflict situations as well as supporting their active engagement with political structures and institutions is of paramount magnitude. We also urge the CEDAW Committee to note that not only the State (s) on whose territory hostilities have occurred can be called to uphold their obligations to ensure women's participation, but also States who act as key facilitators of peace processes can be asked how their engagement supports the full involvement of women in all peace processes including transitional justice processes. The Committee has committed in General Recommendation 28 to address extra-territorial accountability and exploring this question is critical. These points highlight the need for:

- CEDAW to utilize its monitoring role with States Parties to support their fulfillment of Security Council Resolutions 1325 and 1820 as aspects of their obligations for women's equality; including questioning of States Parties on actions taken under the various elements of Security Council Resolutions 1325 especially in relation to the development and implementation of national action plans; and
- Integrating the Security Council Resolutions within the CEDAW framework to incorporate gender sensitivity into women's human rights advocacy and ensure the substantive equality of women.

We therefore support the CEDAW Committee in its work to draft and adopt a new General Recommendation on the issue of armed conflict that will greatly strengthen the implementation of Resolutions 1325 and 1820 and other existing legal mechanisms. In this endeavor, we urge the Committee to:

- Interact with the work of other treaty bodies, UN mechanisms and other international obligations;
- Call for over-arching guarantees of non-discrimination and equality;

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- Integrate gender-specific approaches to conflict transformation, conflict resolution and peace building; transitional justice; and
- Create a framework for understanding the different experiences from the perspective of the rights set out in the Convention.

This statement is endorsed by the following organizations:

1. Afghan Women's Network
2. African Women's Active Nonviolence Initiatives for Social Change (AWANICH)
3. Asian Circle 1325
4. CENADEP-AWANICH - Democratic Republic of Congo
5. Center for Women in Governance – Uganda
6. Centro de Educacion e Investigacion para la Paz – Spain
7. COFERD/BANDUNDU - Democratic Republic of Congo
8. Corporación de Investigación y Acción Social y Económica (CIASE) – Colombia
9. Cadre Permanent de Concertation de la Femme Congolese (CAFECO) Democratic Republic of Congo
10. Center for Peace Education – Philippines
11. FemLink Pacific
12. Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict
13. IFOR Women Peacemakers Program – Netherlands
14. Impact for Change and Development (IMPACT) – Nigeria
15. IREX – Liberia
16. Isis International – Philippines
17. Liga de Mujeres Desplazadas – Colombia
18. Observatorio Género Democracia y Derechos Humanos – Colombia
19. Lira Rural Women Initiative Transit Shelter (Uganda)
20. Lira Women Peace Initiatives (Uganda)
21. Mano River Women's Peace Network (MARWOPNET) – Sierra Leone
22. Mothers for Active Non-Violence (MOFAN-V) - Ghana
23. National Organization of Women (Sierra Leone)
24. Peace Women Partners – Philippines
25. Saathi, Nepal
26. Sancharika Samuha (Nepal)
27. Teso Women Peace Activists - Uganda
28. Voice of the Voiceless – Liberia
29. West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP) - Liberia
30. Women and Allies Peacebuilders – Burundi
31. Women's Forum - Sierra Leone
32. Women's International League for Peace and Freedom – Democratic Republic of Congo
33. Women's Partnership for Justice and Peace (WPJP – Sierra Leone)
34. Women In Peacebuilding Network (WIPNET) - Liberia
35. Women In Peacebuilding Network (WIPNET) Nigeria

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