



Statement on the US National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security
December 20 2011

The International Civil Society Action Network (ICAN) and its partner programme, the Global Network of Women Peacebuilders (GNWP) applaud the Government of the United States for the adoption of the 2011 National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security and related Executive Order. We congratulate the United States for joining the family of nations that have embraced and adopted this agenda, and look forward to comprehensive US action across national and multilateral entities.

ICAN/GNWP's mission – similar to the simple yet profound goal of the US NAP - is to recognize, support and elevate the voices and contributions of women active in the promotion of peace, security, social justice, rights and democracy in countries affected by conflict, transition and closed political space. Our partners are self-empowered, courageous and committed individuals, leaders in civil society, who are often doing the peace work that neither international actors nor their own governments can undertake. In its implementation of the national action plan, we hope that the United States will ensure that mediation, peace making and peacebuilding processes include systematic and structured engagement with such actors, so these processes benefit from the wealth of experience and dedication they offer.

We also hope the potential magnitude of this plan is appreciated across the United States government. The resolution of violent conflict and peaceful transformation away from authoritarianism toward open societies remain the most elusive challenges for the international community. The women, peace and security agenda offers an important roadmap for sustainable peacemaking and preventive work. This agenda is not about making wars safe for women, it is about ending the horrendous practice of warfare entirely.

It offers a framework for the inclusion of active nonviolent positive agents of change on equal footing alongside the spoilers and armed actors, in the critical discussion around peace, security and power. It is a transformative agenda and we look forward to invigorated US leadership at home, and partnership at the United Nations and in other regional bodies where the US is present.

As the process takes shape we hope that bureaucratic markers of progress do not impede or replace actual progress and practice in crisis contexts. We look forward to seeing the US NAP come to life vis-à-vis US engagement in the Middle East, the Arab Spring, across Africa, Asia, Latin America and beyond.

We also offer one poignant thought: Where would we be, if such a plan had been adopted and implemented for the past decade? How many lives could have been saved? What lost opportunities for peacemaking could have been salvaged? This plan must be put into action immediately. In the next decade, its current promise must turn into reality.

ICAN/GNWP for women's rights, peace and security
technical expertise, capacity development, localized knowledge and - always - independent perspectives