

**From Extreme Violence to Violent Extremism**  
***Women's Strategic Engagements to Provide Positive Sustainable Solutions***

6<sup>th</sup> Annual Women, Peace & Security Forum

11-13 November 2017

Rabat, Morocco

**Concept Note**

The International Civil Society Action Network (ICAN) will convene its 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Women, Peace and Security Forum, "From Extreme Violence to Violent Extremism: Women's Strategic Engagements to Provide Positive Sustainable Solutions" from the 11<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> of November 2017. The gathering will be held in Rabat, Morocco, generously hosted by the Rabita Mohammedia des Oulémas and Search for Common Ground, Morocco.

The forum will gather women peacebuilders and human rights defenders from over 35 countries actively involved in countering violence and extremism by promoting peace, resilience, equality and pluralism (PREP). It will focus on strategies and approaches that our partners have developed to build alliances and collaborate effectively with other key actors at the community, national and international levels who have an interest and responsibility in reducing violence, countering extremism, fostering social cohesion and sustaining spaces for independent civil society.

**Context**

As we prepare for our 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Women, Peace and Security Forum, we cannot help but reflect on the persistent challenges that face many of the countries that will be represented at the forum. From state-induced violence, rising repression and foreign interventions to the continued presence and expansion of non-state militias and transnational extremist movements, the sources of insecurity are ever present. At the same time we have witnessed moments of joy. In Sri Lanka and Colombia decades of warfare are coming to an end. Inclusive peace remains elusive but there are new opportunities for women's peace activism and engagement. While we recognize that women's leadership in this realm of peace and

security is often taken for granted or overlooked, from Afghanistan to Uganda we have clear evidence of the proactive, often pioneering, and creative leadership of women in raising awareness and prompting action for change. Across ICAN's growing network, and particularly through the Women's Alliance for Security Leadership (WASL), we witness how our partners are facing the challenges and opportunities directly. Yet, we are also the first to acknowledge that women's peace movements cannot bear the burden alone.

In every instance, from local community-based efforts to national and transnational activism, the need for strategic alliances is evident and central to our collective work. Building bridges with the security sector, political leaders, educators, religious actors, youth, the private sector, the media and cultural producers is essential to sustained transformation. Whether it is preventing violence against women or countering the spread of extremism or promoting reconciliation, WASL members are at the forefront of raising alarm bells and taking action, but to scale our effort and impact, we identify and engage critical strategic actors. Each in our own contexts is forging these alliances to leverage the power and influence that others have, in support of peace, equal rights, security and pluralism, that is mutually beneficial.

## **Program**

Under the overarching theme *"From Extreme Violence to Violent Extremism: Women's Strategic Engagements to Provide Positive Sustainable Solutions"*, ICAN's 2017 Forum will be dedicated to sharing experiences, tactics, lessons and prospective ideas for deepening these strategic alliances. As in every forum we will also acknowledge and celebrate the courage and resilience of our partners. This year we will mark the 2<sup>nd</sup> anniversary of the founding of the Women's Alliance for Security Leadership (WASL), with attention to our collective achievements to date, the added value of the alliance as a mechanism for collaboration, and our future aspirations.

The forum sessions will be designed to focus on the approaches and processes that we undertake to build our alliances and leverage the influence of other actors and sectors who have an interest and responsibility to reduce violence, counter extremism, facilitate inclusivity and foster social cohesion. Drawing on Johan Galtung's theory of change model<sup>1</sup>, we will analyze the strengths as well as gaps in current strategies that our participants have developed. We will enable cross-country experience sharing regarding innovative partnerships with the media, religious community and other sectors at the local, national and international levels. In identifying the gaps we will also collectively determine next steps for our collaboration within WASL.

---

<sup>1</sup> The model consists of action and attention to changes in behavior and attitude in the personal, relational, cultural and institutional realms.

Sessions will highlight women's effective approaches to connect Track I and community-based peacemaking efforts; gender sensitive reintegration and rehabilitation of former extremists, their families, and victims of violence; and other critical topics. In addition to the exchange of good practices and lessons learned, the forum will include practical skills building for targeted messaging and advocacy to engage and mobilize key stakeholders. Core sessions will include:

1. Exchange of strategies and good practices for engaging different sectors in plenary discussions and breakout groups: security, media, religious, political, youth, and the public;
2. Capacity building on advocacy and awareness-raising concepts and skills;
3. Interactive discussion with key international policy makers and donors; and,
4. Review of the developments and achievements of WASL since its formation and consultation to determine our collective priorities and commitments for 2018.

## **Participants**

ICAN's Women, Peace and Security Forum is an annual event dedicated to providing women peacebuilders and human rights defenders a safe space for learning, collaboration and solidarity. Forum participants are innovative practitioners, activists and thought leaders working to promote women's rights, peace and security from over 35 countries worldwide. Many are active members of WASL, an international network of independent women-led organizations working to transform extremism and militarism by promoting peace, resilience, equal rights and pluralism. They are locally-rooted and globally connected, trusted in their communities, and key influencers in their societies. We believe that collaboration across sectors is critical to movement building and essential for transformative change, thus participants include representatives from civil society organizations, journalists, researchers and scholars, political activists, representatives from governments and multilateral organizations.

## **Sponsorship**

As the organizer of the event, ICAN with the generous support of the Royal Norwegian Government, the Swiss Government, the United Nations Development Programme, and One Earth Future Foundation, covers the costs of participation of all women activists, as well as costs related to the convening of the forum. Representatives of international non-governmental organizations, governments and donor institutions are expected to cover their own travel and lodging costs. ICAN is grateful to the Rabita Mohammedia des Oulémas and Search for Common Ground Morocco for inviting us to convene our annual forum in Morocco this year.