

## Better Peace Symposium II: Expert Group Meeting

### *Concept Note*

### Summary

The International Civil Society Action Network (ICAN) in partnership with the Missions of Canada, the United Kingdom, Norway and South Africa to the United Nations will host a 2-day expert-level working group meeting (EGM)<sup>1</sup> in New York on May 21-22, 2019. The meeting will focus on past and current contexts where conflicts have occurred and transitions are in place, with specific attention to a) gender responsive implementation modalities of peace agreements; and b) the systematic and structured inclusion of women's civil society, peace organizations/ movements throughout implementation. The convening will be the sixth thematic Global Solutions Exchange (GSX)<sup>2</sup> meeting organized by ICAN and its partners.

### Key objectives:

1. To identify the specific contributions of women's peace organizations to supporting peace agreements and their implementation;
2. To identify the unique threats and challenges encountered by women peacemakers (including financial, political and security threats), highlighting the need for a strengthened commitment to protecting peacemakers;
3. To share good practices and lessons from past peace processes; and
4. To develop guidance for multilateral institutions and donors that are committed to the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda, but are faced with the challenges of “how” to advance it in the context of post-war/post-agreement/transitional settings.

### Context

The growing momentum around support for women's participation in peace processes juxtaposed by the rising threats faced by civil society actors in post conflict settings and the fragility of peace accords during times of transition, make this discussion timely and relevant.

There is increased recognition that the complexity of conflicts like those in Yemen, Syria and elsewhere require a shift from a narrow notion of peace negotiations as security and political processes to inclusive societal processes. Peace in the political and the security realm is not sufficient when the wars have been fought in local communities. For peace to sustain it must be anchored and rooted, and spread publicly. This is especially critical in immediate post negotiations periods when spoilers on all sides may emerge with the purpose of breaking the still fragile consensus. Civil society and peacebuilding organizations are thus key allies in popularizing any peace deal.

While the international community readily supports civil society actors in their peacebuilding efforts during conflict, attention - and with that funding - often shifts to “state building” activities when the guns are silenced. In reality, states in transition rarely have the capacity to provide the magnitude of services needed to build a functioning society. Yet, donors divert funding from the civil society organizations (CSOs) who

---

<sup>1</sup> The EGM is a follow up to ICAN's 2014 Better Peace Symposium that resulted in ICAN's Better Peace Tool and additional gender responsive guidance and trainings.

<sup>2</sup> The Global Solutions Exchange (GSX) was launched in 2016 as a platform for enabling systematic and structured engagement between ICAN's civil society partners and governmental and multilateral entities responsible for peace, security and preventing/countering violent extremism. See <http://www.icanpeacework.org/our-work/global-solutions-exchange/>

have the knowledge and skills to provide these services to the state who is not yet able to fulfil its role. This leads to public mistrust and opens up a vacuum that can easily be filled by negative forces. In this critical moment it is peace activists who serve as a conduit of trust between state and communities.

It is widely acknowledged within the peacebuilding community, and established through research, that only an inclusive peace is likely to be a sustainable one. The importance of including civil society (particularly women) and local actors at the peace table - in addition to the warring parties - is now a common truth. Considered less frequently, however, are the risks peacemakers take in their advocacy for inclusion at that table and for equitable and just agreements that adhere to human rights norms. The dangerous situations peacemakers might face when the task of implementation begins is overlooked more often than not. In Colombia, where the peace agreement (2016) boasted of being the first in the world to include a gender and women's rights perspective peacemakers have since been ferociously attacked. As of 2018, more than 200 human rights leaders (women and men) had been assassinated since signing of the peace agreement.<sup>3</sup>

In each conflict and post conflict phase, civil society actors face similar issues of threat and intimidation at local and national levels. Additionally, even in places where steps towards peace have included strides in gender equality, gender-specific spikes in violence have occurred. These are often enabled by lack of governance, security and social support systems, as well as the diversion of funding<sup>4</sup> during transition periods. Peacemakers must be included in the design and delivery of implementation efforts, and ensured protection in the post agreement phase.

## **Program**

Building on findings and recommendations from the EGM on *Women's Meaningful Participation in Negotiating Peace and the Implementation of Peace Agreements* convened by UN Women in May 2018 and the 2018 Report of the Secretary-General on women and peace and security, the 2-day meeting will bring together relevant stakeholders to develop practical guidance to ensure inclusive implementation mechanisms and guarantee protection of peace makers in post-war/post-agreement/transitional settings. The guidance is intended for multilateral institutions, civil society organizations, governments and the donor community and all those involved in the implementation phases of peace agreements.

*A detailed program will be provided to attendees in advance of the meeting.*

## **Participants**

Participants will consist of experienced practitioners and policy makers relevant to the realm of mediation/peace processes. They will include a carefully selected cohort of women peacebuilders - from the ICAN spearheaded Women's Alliance for Security Leadership (WASL) - and others who have been or are currently engaged in peace processes and the implementation of peace agreements, so that the discussions remain focused and practical.

Countries:

Afghanistan, Colombia, Liberia, Myanmar, Nepal, Nigeria, Northern Ireland, South Sudan, Sri Lanka, Syria, Yemen

## **Sponsor**

The meeting is made possible by the kind support of Global Affairs Canada (GAC) and the UK's Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO).

---

<sup>3</sup> WILPF (2018). *Defending the implementation of the peace agreement in Colombia*. Retrieved from <https://reliefweb.int/report/colombia/defending-implementation-peace-agreement-colombia>

<sup>4</sup> United Nations. Security Council. *Report of the Secretary-General on women and peace and security*. S/2018/900 (9 October 2018). Retrieved from <http://undocs.org/S/2018/900>.