



**General Assembly  
Security Council**

Distr.: General  
14 October 2013

Original: English

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**Peacebuilding Commission**

**Seventh session**

**Organizational Committee**

**Summary record of the 2nd meeting**

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 26 September 2013, at 11.30 a.m.

*Chair:* Ms. Pusić ..... (Croatia)

**Contents**

Adoption of the agenda

Draft declaration of the high-level event on women's economic empowerment for peacebuilding

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*The meeting was called to order at 11.40 a.m.*

### **Adoption of the agenda (PBC/7/OC/2)**

1. The agenda was adopted.

### **Draft declaration of the high-level event on women's economic empowerment for peacebuilding (PBC/7/OC/L.1)**

2. **The Chair** said that women's economic empowerment in conflict situations was essential to peacebuilding and the achievement of equal rights for men and women. It was also a goal in itself and should be a priority in the discussions on the sustainable development agenda.

3. Women's access to land, productive assets and jobs improved family well-being and community stability and reduced poverty, yet women were often excluded from markets and business. Gender-biased laws, care burdens and insecurity hindered their engagement in economic recovery. Because their needs were not given priority in decisions on post-conflict resource allocation, their empowerment was inadequately funded. Investment was therefore needed not only in the economy but also in justice, security and public services, if women's contribution to economic recovery was to increase.

4. Speaking as the representative of Croatia, she said that her country had learned through its experience with the war in the Balkans that political change was required in post-conflict situations to empower women economically. Governments must therefore create conditions for sustainable peace and ensure that women had access to economic resources and employment.

5. **Ms. Mlambo-Ngcuka** (Executive Director, United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women) said that political decision-makers rarely listened to the voices of women who had survived conflict, many of whom lived in poverty with dependants and suffered abuse, displacement or the loss of family members and land. Employment programmes often failed to help such women, who were thus forced into low-paid, dangerous work. The international community should address women's access to land, venture capital and economic opportunities, and ensure their presence at peace talks and donor conferences.

6. Women's contribution to recovery and peacebuilding should be visible, funded and recognized in international law. Their involvement in public life led to lower corruption, more inclusive decision-making, better-funded social services, improved employment prospects and better family welfare.

7. The purpose of the action plan for gender-responsive peacebuilding, contained in the report of the Secretary-General on peacebuilding in the aftermath of conflict (A/65/354-S/2010/466), was to ensure that women's voices were heard and that their economic needs were met. Gender equality was essential to successful peacebuilding; women in post-conflict situations should therefore be given the services they needed to help them in rebuilding their lives and societies.

8. **Ms. Cheng-Hopkins** (Assistant Secretary-General for Peacebuilding Support) said that, since the adoption of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), the United Nations had adopted many resolutions on sexual violence and women as victims of war. However, women had not been acknowledged as agents of change and mediators in peacebuilding, and were often excluded from official peace talks.

9. The international community should implement the action plan for gender-responsive peacebuilding, which recommended temporary special measures to improve women's participation in public life, including electoral quotas for women. The situation of women was much better in post-conflict countries where such quotas had been used than in societies where they had not been used. In Rwanda, for example, where women held 64 per cent of parliamentary seats, 11 per cent of land was owned by women alone and 83 per cent was owned jointly by married couples. In Burundi, where 30 per cent of parliamentarians were women, definitions of sexual violence were being incorporated into the Penal Code. Lastly, in Malaysia, 30 per cent of corporate board members were required by law to be women.

10. **Ms. Ochieng** (Observer for Isis-Women's International Cross-Cultural Exchange) said that the first step to women's economic empowerment in post-conflict situations was the provision of quality health services, to help them rebuild their lives and communities. Governments should respect women's rights and ideas and allow them to participate in the economic discourse. If women were to benefit from

State initiatives, they should be consulted right from the planning stages.

11. The international community should build on the resilience of women who had survived conflicts to help them reclaim their dignity and become economically secure through property ownership. Although women were adept at using scant resources to improve their living conditions during conflicts and often took charge of the family finances after peace was declared, their right to property and safety must be upheld so that they could participate in the larger economy. In that connection, State legislation should be harmonized with traditional land-ownership systems.

12. The trauma caused by sexual and gender-based violence was another obstacle to women's empowerment during and after conflicts. The international community should therefore create a new peace and security architecture that protected women's rights at all times.

13. **Mr. Gilmore** (Observer for Ireland) said that the international community should support initiatives aimed at increasing women's contribution to peacebuilding. Progress had been made since the adoption of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), but more needed to be done to allow women to shape peace agreements and to ensure their full participation in society. Women's economic empowerment in post-conflict countries required action by the United Nations, other international organizations and local communities.

14. In that connection, the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General to the Great Lakes Region had made a commitment to mobilize the women of the region to implement the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the region. The Government of Ireland had hosted a high-level panel discussion on women and peacebuilding in the Great Lakes region in June 2013, which had led to discussions on channelling World Bank funds towards women's groups. His Government had also supported the participation of women's organizations in the work of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon and the expansion of a women's agricultural cooperative in Bint Jubayl.

15. The international community should support education programmes, which were essential to women's equal participation in society and their long-term economic empowerment. It should seize the

opportunity provided by peacebuilding to change discriminatory legislation and practices in post-conflict countries. His Government had recently reviewed its action plan on resolution 1325 (2000) and encouraged others to develop similar plans without delay.

16. **Mr. Eide** (Norway) said that the issues of women and gender should be integral to peacebuilding strategies. Women's empowerment had contributed greatly to the economic and social development of Norway, which marked the centenary of women's suffrage in 2013, and where women's employment and the birth rate were both high. His Government was committed to promoting women's empowerment in other countries and was involved in peacebuilding efforts worldwide.

17. A long-term commitment to women's economic empowerment was essential to lasting peace and economic development. In that connection, the international community should make a political commitment to changing men's and women's roles in peacebuilding by ensuring that the interests of both genders were represented at peace talks. It should also address the damage done to gender relations by sexual violence and rape during conflicts.

18. **Mr. Asselborn** (Observer for Luxembourg) said that the importance of women in post-conflict recovery could not be underestimated. Greater access to economic opportunities and inclusive financial tools for women provided greater social returns for all, because women were more rational economic actors and invested more in education, health and saving than men. The Government of Guinea had recognized that importance by making employment for women and girls a priority in peacebuilding. Guinean women played key roles in the community, diffusing tensions and maintaining basic economic activities.

19. However, improving the situation of all women and protecting them from all forms of violence was not possible without involving men and boys - a question of social justice, not only in countries in situations of conflict or post-conflict, but in all countries in general. The United Nations system should continue promoting gender equality, particularly through the implementation of the seven-point plan for gender-responsive peacebuilding set out in the report of the Secretary-General on peacebuilding in the aftermath of conflict.

20. The international community had an obligation to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, including

the goal of gender equality. His Government would continue to ensure that the economic empowerment of women was included in the discussions on the post-2015 development agenda.

21. **Mr. Kishida** (Japan) said that, for women to be fully incorporated in post-conflict societies, they must be seen not merely as victims of violence, but as full participants in the peacebuilding process. His delegation welcomed the Secretary-General's effort to promote the seven-point action plan for gender-responsive peacebuilding and called on all Member States to reaffirm their commitments to working towards a common objective. UN-Women should assume its lead role by presenting viable frameworks for the promotion of women's economic empowerment in post-conflict situations.

22. Japan placed great importance on peacebuilding in its foreign policy. As Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission Working Group on Lessons Learned, it planned to organize a meeting on the topic of gender that would build on the outcomes of the current meeting. It also supported women's empowerment through bilateral cooperation projects in countries where the Peacebuilding Fund was mobilized for the same cause; and had announced initiatives to strengthen assistance for women in Africa at the Fifth Tokyo International Conference on African Development.

23. Strengthened capacity-building efforts and international cooperation were required for effective promotion of women's empowerment in peacebuilding. Consequently, activities funded by the Peacebuilding Fund should trigger other activities financed by other development partners, and the international community should further enhance its coordination in order to maximize its effectiveness and synergies, particularly through an appropriate division of roles.

24. **Baroness Warsi** (United Kingdom) said that women played a crucial role in building stability in post-conflict environments, yet faced significant barriers to successfully contribute to the peacebuilding process, which the international community must work to overcome. She welcomed the adoption of a United Nations declaration calling on the members of the Peacebuilding Commission to continue to promote women's empowerment for peacebuilding. While progress had been made to that end, much more work was needed to achieve gender equality and to meet the

needs of women in post-conflict countries, especially in countries emerging from crisis, such as Egypt.

25. Her Government had taken steps to that end by adopting its National Action Plan for Security Council resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#), which embedded the role of women in peacebuilding throughout the country's defence, diplomatic and development activity. It had also introduced the Preventing Sexual Violence Initiative, which was building political momentum to end sexual violence in conflict and to ensure that the perpetrators were brought to justice. It was also contributing to projects undertaken in a number of countries to support women's economic empowerment.

26. **Mr. Fall** (Observer for Guinea) said that his country had long been at the forefront in the advancement of women's rights and had made women's employment one of the three pillars of its national peacebuilding programme. It had also taken various measures to empower and protect women, whom it considered essential for peacebuilding and peacekeeping. However, despite the remarkable progress Guinea had made in strengthening the role of women in the social, economic and political spheres, greater efforts were needed for women to regain their status in society.

27. The African Union had recognized the importance of women in society by embracing gender equality, as reflected in the gender balance within its Commission and in its decision to make the empowerment of women and young people the main theme of its 2012 Summit. It had also implemented programmes and policies to guarantee the rights and effective empowerment of those hitherto invisible contributors to economic growth. The New Partnership for Africa's Development was also implementing programmes aimed at reducing female poverty through capacity-building and promoting women's access to credit.

28. His delegation appreciated the efforts made by United Nations agencies and development partners, which included measures for the modernization of security and defence services and the promotion of women's associations. Lastly, all sustainable development strategies should integrate a gender dimension into all policies concerning employment, training, investment, and protection against violence and discrimination.

29. **Ms. Bonino** (Observer for Italy) said that in post-conflict situations women should be empowered rather

than being seen as victims. However, post-conflict transition projects were marked by a gender imbalance that must be corrected. Women should be empowered both during and after peacebuilding negotiations. Achieving gender balance in post-conflict situations was not only a moral duty but also an economically sound objective.

30. **Ms. Rohani** (Malaysia), welcoming the adoption of the draft declaration on women's economic empowerment for peacebuilding, said that attention should be given to strengthening the security of women through regulatory frameworks; establishing relevant institutional and administrative machinery for development programmes for women; increasing access to education and employment opportunities; and developing policies and services that offered equal livelihood opportunities to women. Women in conflict situations would benefit not only from targeted programmes providing income-generating skills or knowledge in business creation and financial management, but also from improved access to financial support, particularly for single mothers. The multi-dimensional approach required for economic and political recovery in post-conflict countries would involve empowering women and promoting gender equality. Malaysia would continue to uphold the important role of women in conflict prevention and resolution and to work with the United Nations system to promote that noble cause.

31. **Ms. Waffa-Ogoo** (Observer for the Gambia) said that while plans such as the seven-point plan and the Busan Joint Action Plan for Gender Equality and Development represented an encouraging trend towards considering gender empowerment as a critical component of peacemaking and peacebuilding in places of conflict, various institutional impediments to women's productive contribution to sustainable peace remained. Despite entrenched social and religious norms and the absence of requisite financial support that continued to deprive women of the opportunities and independence to become protagonists in the promotion of peace, women in certain conflict-affected countries had been able to capitalize on the meagre opportunities afforded them.

32. It was crucial for Governments and international partners to provide viable institutional support for women in peacebuilding in order to facilitate their participation in the socio-economic development of post-conflict societies. Her Government had made

tremendous efforts to mainstream gender issues in its national development policies and programmes, including providing greater education opportunities for girls, passing the Women's Empowerment Bill to protect and ensure equal opportunities for women, and implementing the national action plan regarding Security Council resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#).

33. **Mr. Friis Bach** (Denmark) said that, as Co-chair of the International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding, he strongly supported national leadership and ownership in peacebuilding efforts. All too often, the untapped potential of women as peacebuilders and statebuilders and the importance of their economic empowerment in building stable societies went unrecognized. Many of the pilot countries of the New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States adopted by the Group of Seven Plus had been engaged in active dialogue on those issues. Somalia, example, had adopted a compact affirming that the inclusion of women in the peacebuilding or statebuilding process was vital to the success of any such endeavour.

34. Addressing women's rights through statebuilding would improve development outcomes, as more secure and better-educated women were more able to make meaningful contributions to political, economic and social life. The difficulty in pursuing gender equality in conflict situations lay in the significant political and institutional changes required. However, it was important to seize the window of opportunity to achieve that goal by influencing constitutional reform, supporting women and identifying priorities and key processes in peacebuilding and national recovery operations.

35. Meeting the special needs of women and girls in the aftermath of armed conflict was a pre-requisite for their involvement in income-generating activities. In that connection, his Government supported the active participation of Afghan women in the peace and reconciliation process in their country. It had also earmarked 5.75 per cent of its humanitarian contributions for the protection of women from violence. Denmark also worked determinedly with partner countries around the world marred by conflict, particularly through regional programmes in the Middle East and Africa, to empower women to play key roles in all spheres of society.

36. **Ms. Yelich** (Canada) said that collective attention should be refocused on the commitments articulated in resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#), and that the full participation of women in all political and security structures was vital to building sustainable peace. Even though women and girls faced unique challenges in achieving economic empowerment and participating in the economic recovery of post-conflict societies, they could be the catalysts of post-conflict reconciliation and recovery. Given the tools and opportunities, women were economic actors who must be systematically included in stabilization programmes and whose right to inherit and own property must be ensured.

37. Canada supported projects that integrated the needs and capacities of women and girls in relief and recovery efforts, including in Afghanistan, where its cooperation with that country's Government provided viable agricultural options for farmers of both sexes, combining microcredit access with alternative income-generation skills. The Afghan Government's collaboration with partner institutions empowered them to provide adequate financial services to the poor, especially women, who represented the largest percentage of total borrowers and became economic decision-makers and active participants in their communities. Attaining the longer-term goal of ensuring that women contributed to economic growth and recovery required a focus on relevant laws, policies and institutions.

38. She welcomed the recent launch by UN-Women, with the support of Canada, of the Knowledge Gateway for Women's Economic Empowerment — an online platform connecting civil society, Governments and international organizations with women worldwide to help to prepare women and girls for employment, entrepreneurship and leadership roles. Canada remained committed to the principles outlined in the draft declaration on women's empowerment for peacebuilding, which it would advance through its own engagement in fragile and conflict-affected States and its bilateral and multilateral partnerships.

39. **Ms. Onwuliri** (Nigeria) said that resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#) and subsequent related resolutions had underlined the importance of women's active participation in all aspects of the maintenance of peace and security. There were three preconditions for women to achieve economic empowerment in peacebuilding situations. First, there must be national

commitment to pursue inclusive policies that gave women a political voice and the requisite economic skills. That was evident in Nigeria, where women held 33 per cent of the decision-making positions in the Federal Executive Council and 50 per cent of the positions in the judiciary. Many women also held key ministerial portfolios and occupied management-level posts in the civil service and federal agencies, the armed forces and the private sector.

40. Second, there must be an equal commitment to and legal frameworks for protecting the rights of women and ensuring their safety and security, particularly by ratifying relevant international treaties. Third, there must be requisite funding for programmes that empowered women and improved their socio-economic situation. Gender-responsive public policy must support the stated goals and help the international community to assist women adequately. A recent high-level meeting of African women in decision-making positions had drafted an outcome document, the Abuja Commitment, which the Commission might wish to use to chart a path for partnership with African women.

41. **The Chair** said she took it that the Commission wished to adopt the draft declaration on women's economic empowerment for peacebuilding, as contained in document [PBC/7/OC/L.1](#).

42. *It was so decided.*

43. **Mr. Diao** (Egypt), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that Egypt was not emerging from conflict, as had been stated, but was transitioning to democracy in an Egyptian-led political process.

*The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.*