Re-designing Peacebuilding for the 21st Century
Peace, Power and Sharing Responsibility

Hybrid side event to the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development
with on-site participation at the German house, New York

14 July 2021, 10 – 11:30 am (EST)

Concept Note

Germany, Mexico, South Africa and the International Civil Society Action Network (ICAN) will host a hybrid event on Re-designing Peacebuilding for the 21st Century: Peace, Power, and Sharing Responsibility, on July 14 from 10 - 11.30 am EST at the German House in New York.

This high-level event on the sidelines of the 2021 High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) on Sustainable Development will focus on the challenges of ensuring successful peace processes in an era of complex multidimensional conflicts. It will reflect on the evidence base that demonstrates the efficacy of inclusive processes, particularly with regard to the representation of women peacebuilders. In direct response to the HLPF theme “sustainable and resilient reconstruction after Covid-19”, the discussions will tackle SDGs 16 and 5, putting particular focus on the direct links between the recognition, resourcing, and protection of women peacebuilders and their full, meaningful and effective participation in peace processes.
With a focus on the current processes in Libya and Sudan, the exchanges will highlight the contributions of women-led peacebuilding organizations to peace processes; provide analysis, lessons learned, and ways forward; and generate responses and commitments from member states.

The hybrid event will take place at the German House in New York with a limited number of participants as well as with online participation.

Key Objectives:

- To highlight the importance of local peacebuilders for the sustainability and legitimacy of formal peace processes and peacebuilding efforts;
- To put forth concrete commitments for action to strengthen the participation of women peacebuilders in formal peace processes, ensure their protection, and resourcing their local work;
- To share best practices and precedents on the design of inclusive peace processes.

Agenda

Introductory remarks by
- Heiko Maas, Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs, Germany

Keynote Speech by
- Kristen Bell, UN Global Advocate for Women’s Peace & Humanitarian Fund (tbc)

Panel discussion with
- Heiko Maas, Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs, Germany
- Ambassador Mathu Joyini, Permanent Representative of South Africa to the UN
- Ambassador Juan Ramón de la Fuente, Permanent Representative of Mexico to the UN
- Sanam Naraghi Anderlini, Founder/CEO, International Civil Society Action Network (ICAN)
- Enass Muzamel, Executive Director, Madanyia, Sudan
- Women peacebuilder from Libya (tbc)
- Rosemary A. DiCarlo, Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (tbc)

Closing remarks by
- Ambassador Günter Sautter, Permanent Representative of Germany to the UN
Background

In 2020, as the Covid-19 pandemic spread around the globe, fragile contexts accounted for 23% of the world’s population. 460 million people in those fragile contexts already lived in extreme poverty. The pandemic exacerbated fragility and poverty, exposing long-standing structural challenges, including weak governance and the absence of state services at local levels. In countries ravaged by political and other forms of violence, the pandemic aggravated grievances and sparked further conflict. In many countries, women peacebuilders responded and filled the void that resulted from inefficient state structures. They engaged in community awareness-raising, distributed personal protective equipment and food, and worked to prevent domestic violence as people quarantined at home. As formal peace processes stalled, they called for global ceasefires, mediated local ones, and negotiated prisoners’ releases. These women, who continued to put their life on the line amidst an unforeseen global crisis and stepped up to protect their communities, are at the heart of the global Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda. Yet, they continue to be a missing piece in the spaces where the futures of their countries are decided.

Peace and security are a prerequisite for sustainable development. Only an inclusive peace is likely to be a sustainable one, as research has established and is widely acknowledged within the peacebuilding community. The inclusion of women peacebuilders in peace processes informs the substance of negotiations, increases legitimacy and fosters the chance of lasting peace. When conflicts involve such a multiplicity of actors as they do today, exclusionary processes focused on two-party talks are no longer sufficient. On the contrary, such processes are prone to fail, increasing the risks of violence and the re-emergence of conflict.

Civil society, especially women peacebuilders who stand up to protect their communities, using as tools their vision of social justice and equality, are critical actors in peacebuilding and mediation. As evidenced most recently during the Covid-19 pandemic, they have the credibility, trust, and influence earned from years of work at the community level, to step in – whatever the crisis – and pick up the pieces when official responses are inadequate and slow. During peace processes, they use this leverage. They recognize the importance of linking the discussions at the negotiation table to the communities, so that people who are most affected are consulted and informed. But despite the intimate knowledge of their contexts, and the legitimacy this brings, the responsibilities they voluntarily take on and the solutions they provide, they are often side-lined into the lowest level of a multi-track process. This must end. Peace processes must be redesigned to fully include peacebuilders in all tracks and all phases of peace processes.

With the world compounded by war, pandemics and environmental degradation, we cannot afford to continue to prepare for and respond to crises in siloes. We must support and build the resilience of local women peacebuilders and invite them to the table. Their participation and contributions must be put front and center in all peace processes as we enter a post-Covid era.

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1 OECD, States of Fragility 2020 https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/5d27ed4c-en/index.html?itemId=/content/component/5d27ed4c-en