

## Sustaining Peace : African Women Mediators in focus

High-Level Seminar organized by the Permanent Mission of Belgium to the UN, the African Union Commission and the International Peace Institute (IPI)

UNHQ, Room 3, New York, April 25th, 2018, 9 am – 13.00 pm

---

### CONCEPT NOTE

#### 1. Background

The Security Council and General Assembly resolutions on the review of the Peacebuilding Architecture have, as stated by the Secretary General, ‘recognized the importance of women’s leadership and participation in conflict prevention, resolution and peacebuilding and the need to increase the representation of women at all decision-making levels in national, regional and international institutions and mechanisms for the prevention and resolution of conflict’. A meaningful participation of women in mediation processes is part of this endeavor, as already stated in numerous resolutions of the Security Council on Women, Peace and Security and the resolutions of the General Assembly on mediation.

Research, practice, and international policy have indeed made the case for the value and importance of women’s full participation in all efforts to resolve conflict and sustain peace, including mediation, in order to deepen the effectiveness and sustainability of peacebuilding. Yet, despite a growing body of international and national level commitments to increase women’s participation in these processes, women are more often than not kept on the sidelines.

It is important to note that the African Union launched an African network of women mediators (FemWise-Africa), as a means to strengthen African women’s participation at the peace table, in prevention, mediation as well as in peace stabilization efforts. Indeed, this landmark decision of African Heads of States marks the resolve of the continent to address the absence of and lack of African women in formal mediation processes, to recognize women’s longstanding role in informal mediation efforts, to facilitate their access to skills and development opportunities, and to give political legitimacy to women’s efforts on the ground.

Against this background the Permanent Mission of Belgium in New York has joined forces with the African Union (AU) and the International Peace Institute (IPI), to co-host a seminar on ***African women mediators***. Our aim is to provide a platform and an opportunity for women, as mediation practitioners, to share their experiences, challenges, successes and needs in different contexts on the African continent.

This seminar will address two core issues. First: by bringing in voices from the field, including from the local level, we will hear first-hand testimonies of the experience of African women as mediators and actors of peace processes. The panelists will elaborate on the challenges they face, and identify opportunities about how to overcome the problems blocking the African women from playing a more prominent role in mediation. Secondly, whilst looking at the role women already play in their communities at grassroots level, this seminar will address the challenge of linking local (track 2 and 3) mediation processes to the more political (track 1) initiatives. In that respect, particular attention will be paid to the potential transformative impact of networks and regional organizations, with a focus on Africa.

This seminar creates an opportunity to obtain first-hand testimonies from actors who are, on the ground, enabling and sustaining peace. Belgium, the AU and IPI hope this will also bring a useful

contribution to the objectives of the PGA's High-level Meeting on Sustaining peace, with its focus on implementation.

## **2. Seminar outline and Panel discussions**

A High-level Opening Segment will be followed by two panel discussions.

### **High-Level Opening Segment – 9:00 – 10:00**

- **H. M. the Queen Mathilde of the Belgians**
- **H.E. Smail Chergui, AU Commissioner for Peace and Security**
- **H.E. UNDSG Amina Mohammed**
- **H.E. Catherine Samba Panza, co-president of FemWise-Africa**
- **H.E. Margot Wallström, Minister of foreign affairs of Sweden (tbc)**

Moderator: **H.E. Didier Reynders**, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Belgium

### **Panel A: Experiences from the field – 10:00 – 11:20**

This panel focuses on the mediation work of women at local level – track 2/ 3.

What are the challenges for women working as mediators? Lessons learned? Success stories?

Way forward? How can we overcome remaining obstacles to women participation in mediation?

**Three** panelists will be selected

- 
- 
- 

Moderator: **H.E. Ambassador Martha A. A. Pobee**, Permanent Representative of Ghana and Chair of the Group of Friends of the African Women Leaders Network (tbc)

Q&A

\*\*\*

### **Panel B: Linking up with the political discussion – 11:20-12:40**

This panel will focus on linking the local mediation efforts with wider, more political (track 1) initiatives.

How can local mediation efforts be connected with initiatives at national or regional level?

In countries with a strong UN presence, how can UN support local initiatives and help foster coherence ?

Particular attention will be paid to the opportunities and problems related to the inclusion of women mediators in this process.

**Three** panelists will be selected

- 
- 
- 

Moderator : **Pierre Yves Monette**, former member of MSU Standby Team

Q&A

\*\*\*

**closing remarks – 12:40 – 13:00**

**H.E. Ambassador Fatima K. Mohammed**, Permanent Representative of the AU to the UN

**H.E. Youssef Mahmoud** (IPI senior advisor, former SRSG Burundi, HIPPO and 1325 Global Study Panel)

**H.E. Ambassador Karen Van Vlierberge** , Deputy Permanent Representative, Permanent Representation of Belgium