Women in peace operations and peace processes: EU and UN together to promote women’s meaningful participation

The EU and the UN are increasing cooperation to promote women's meaningful participation in all roles and areas of expertise (civilian, military, police) at all levels in UN peacekeeping and EU crisis management missions and operations, as well as in peace processes.

The EU and the UN are increasing cooperation to promote women's meaningful participation in all roles and areas of expertise, at all levels, in UN peacekeeping and EU crisis management missions and operations (both civilian and military), as well as in peace processes. This work follows a set of
priorities that have been identified to reinforce the UN-EU strategic partnership on peace operations and crisis management.

Against this background, close to a hundred experts and practitioners from all over the world gathered in Brussels on 21 November for a joint EU-UN workshop to exchange lessons learned and good practices on how to increase the number of women in peacekeeping and crisis management, and how to advance women's meaningful participation in peace operations and peace processes.

Gender equality is a fundamental value of the European Union and flows through all of the EU’s actions and policies, both internally and externally. Gender equality and women’s meaningful participation are also essential factors to prevent, manage and resolve conflict and crises. "There is no lasting peace if half of society is excluded from it", as EU High Representative Mogherini said.

Next year will mark the 20th anniversary of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (WPS), which affirms women’s key role in the prevention and resolution of conflicts.

Building on the European Union’s work to implement UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and its follow up resolutions on WPS, Council Conclusions welcomed the new EU Strategic Approach to WPS in December 2018 containing commitments and clear guidelines to achieve peace and security by engaging, empowering, protecting and supporting women and girls.

Its aim is to ensure that women and girls from all backgrounds can participate and shape all matters related to peace and security from conflict prevention to conflict resolution, as well as to prevent and protect from conflict-related violence – including sexual and gender-based violence.

Among the speakers of the EU-UN workshop were current and former women mission leaders; senior gender advisers both from missions and the Office of the Special Envoy of the UN Secretary-General, and women peacekeepers from across the world: South Africa, Namibia, Fiji, Solomon Islands, Vietnam, and Australia, the CPCC Deputy Civilian Operations Commander/Chief of Staff, a member of the Swedish Women's Mediation Network, the African Union and Canadian colleagues.

Academics and civil society also took part in the discussions that mainly approached challenges to gender parity and equality in peace operations and peace processes; the necessity of deploying more women in missions and operations and how to make them more inclusive.

By identifying the main barriers for this purpose and how to remove them, the workshop brought to the fore the need to work on both, the more technical aspects (infrastructure, recruitment policies, equipment, family benefits) to create a more enabling environment for women in what remains mainly male dominated areas; while also addressing the need for an organisational cultural shift (norms, attitudes and behavior) in order to ensure an inclusive environment.

While the former will help to recruit more women, the latter is about retaining talent and ensuring that women are allowed to contribute to making a real difference in achieving peace and security. This requires strong leadership, as well as good stories and role models – and the workshop showed multiple examples of all these three components that are required to substantially increase women’s participation in peace operations and peace processes.

www.eeas.europa.eu

Source URL: