

2023 UN Peacekeeping Ministerial

Side Event on Enhancing Women's Participation in UN Peacekeeping: The Role of Gender-responsive Leaders

Date: 5 December 2023

Time: 16:30-18:30

Location: Accra International Conference Center, Accra, Ghana

Background

A top priority for UN peacekeeping is to ensure that missions have a gender-balanced workforce with more women in the full range of occupational positions, that the work environment supports their meaningful participation, and that the work of our operations are conducted gender-responsively and advancing the women, peace and security agenda. The UN needs diverse leadership and teams, in which both women and men can contribute their skills, experiences and perspectives to the fullest, better reflecting the communities we serve. Greater diversity of perspectives and experiences and broader skillsets, as well as gender-responsive analysis, translate into better planning and results and, thus, to greater operational effectiveness and performance.

While significant progress has been made towards gender parity within uniformed components, more work remains to be done. In addition to continuing to increase the number of women, especially in contingents, we must also go beyond the numbers and ensure that such increases result in women playing key roles at all levels in peacekeeping.

The integration of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda across A4P+ priorities has had a catalytic impact on peacekeeping effectiveness, from strengthened people-centered approaches in early-warning, conflict resolution and prevention to augmenting women's civic and political participation.

This involves recruiting and deploying more women in leadership and command posts, ensuring women play roles commensurate with their skills and experiences, and creating an enabling environment where women can thrive within our missions. In order to do this, it is imperative to start in national military and police by avoiding unnecessary obstacles that hamper women's service, making sure that they are able to progress in their careers and contribute to the maximum of their capability.

The 2023 UN Peacekeeping Ministerial, hosted by the Republic of Ghana, provides an opportunity to bring together United Nations representatives and Member States to strengthen our partnership in furthering this agenda, which is key to ensuring the effective delivery of peacekeeping mandates.

By sharing different perspectives, experiences and good practices, including from Chiefs of Defence Staff (CHODs), this side event will provide a platform for knowledge sharing and peer learning on the role of gender-responsive leadership in the full and equal participation of women in uniform and the implementation of UNSCR 1325 and subsequent WPS related resolutions, as well specific WPS tasks in peacekeeping mission mandates.

In addition, a Secretary-General's report on the Status of Women in the Defence Sector is being prepared in 2023 that will provide an in-depth collection of good practices from Member States on strengthening the meaningful participation of women in national armed forces. Preliminary findings and data gathered in the context of this report will further inform the discussions of this event.

This side event will be organized in coordination with the CHOD WPS Network. The Network, founded in the context of the 2017 Peacekeeping Ministerial in Vancouver and currently chaired by the Swedish CHOD General Micael Bydén, provides a collaborative platform for CHODs who have committed to advance the WPS agenda within their defence forces. The Network supports members' efforts to build internal capacity and expertise, and facilitates sharing of experiences, lessons learned and good practices.

Description and objectives of the event

The objectives of this event are to:

1. Highlight the importance of uniformed and political leadership in this area, with a focus on specific actions leaders can personally take or commitments they can make that can be implemented in military and police.
2. Promote peer learning and broaden knowledge of good institutional practices to enhance the roles and opportunities for women in national military and police to increase their numbers and ensure the full, effective and meaningful participation of women in peacekeeping operations.
3. Share experience and lessons from promoting and implementing gender-responsive operations and the role of leadership in this regard.

Examples of areas in which leaders can personally take action:

- Measures to mitigate entrenched gender biases that may limit women's opportunities for participation and leading by example by learning about our own biases.
- Strengthening structured feedback mechanisms and/or fora for men and women in military and police to share experiences and alert leadership of specific barriers to their full and equal participation.
- Ensuring gender parity in own teams and promoting parity in national decision-making bodies and senior positions.
- Ensuring accountability for implementation of gender parity measures, e.g. through leadership commitments, senior leadership review mechanisms, or performance evaluation processes.
- Attending and promoting gender-responsive leadership training for all commanding officers.
- Ensure the leadership's full responsibility in combatting harassment and misconduct within military and police.

Examples of good institutional practices, either existing or planned:

- Measures to avoid unnecessary obstacles in selection processes, both for recruitment and in career development.
- Measures to ensure that women are getting access to appropriate and fit for purpose equipment and uniforms as well as facilities.
- Ensuring that deployment to UN peace operations enhances women's career prospects when returning home rather than hampering them.

- Measures to identify and build talent among uniformed women with a view to nominating and deploying them to peacekeeping.
- Gender policies/strategies and equitable and inclusive parental leave policies and measures are in place to support women's ability to progress in their careers.
- Temporary special measures for the recruitment and career advancement for women.
- Ensure that all military units at the company or battalion level deployed to peacekeeping contain at least one Engagement Team/Platoon, comprised of at least 50 per cent women, to enhance situational awareness and threat mitigation through the integration of a gender perspective and engagement with communities. Ensure that gender equality and WPS deliverables are integrated in all the training packages, modules, and resource materials provided to uniformed personnel and provide comprehensive training on WPS and gender equality for uniformed personnel.

Format

The seminar will be held in person in the afternoon of 5 December 2023, as a side event of the Peacekeeping Ministerial in Accra.

The target audience are senior level participants in the Peacekeeping Ministerial, including CHODs who are members in the CHOD WPS Network.

It will feature key note speaker(s) and a panel discussion on good practices, with the participation of Member States and United Nations representatives who will address both personal and institutional actions.

All speakers delivering remarks and all panelists will address both personal and institutional practices in their remarks and announce at least one personal commitment they will make moving forward in any of these or other related areas.