



CHAIRS' SUMMARY, UN Peacekeeping Ministerial: The Dhaka Preparatory Meeting on Women in Peacekeeping, co-hosted by Bangladesh, Canada and Uruguay

- On 25-26 June 2023, close to 150 participants from 35 UN Member States, the United Nations (including the UN Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations, Jean-Pierre Lacroix, and the UN Under-Secretary-General for Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance, Catherine Pollard), think tanks, academia and peacekeepers met in Dhaka, Bangladesh, to discuss and address the opportunities and barriers to the meaningful participation of women in peacekeeping, beyond increasing their deployment numbers alone. This summary is provided by the three co-chairs of the meeting: Bangladesh, Canada and Uruguay. This issue is firmly anchored in the Women Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda, the UN Gender Parity Strategy, Action for Peacekeeping (A4P) and Action for Peacekeeping+ (A4P+) at both the national and multilateral levels.
- The meeting provided an open forum for Member States and the United Nations to deepen their understanding and share best practices on barriers and obstacles to women's meaningful participation in peacekeeping, specifically regarding the Measuring Opportunities for Women in Peace Operations (MOWIP) barrier assessment methodology; gender responsive leadership; safe, respectful and enabling environments; accountability for conduct and discipline; and the Elsie Initiative Fund. Particular emphasis was placed on how member states could formulate pledges leading up to the UN Peacekeeping Ministerial in Ghana in December 2023 in line with the UN's pledging guide. Participants also visited Bangladesh's Institute for Peace Support Operations Training (BIPSOT) as part of the program.
- Following the Preparatory Meeting, Member States are better prepared to meet in Ghana and commit to pledges that will positively impact women in peacekeeping. In support of this goal, this outcome document includes the following points from the Dhaka Preparatory Meeting on Women in Peacekeeping: i. United Nations Member State Action Items and ii. United Nations Action Items. The actions items are themes or outcomes for action that emerged during the Conference and could be taken on in support of women in peacekeeping. This includes guidance on UN Member State pledging ahead of the 2023 Peacekeeping Ministerial in Ghana. Finally, action items are followed by a detailed Conference Summary.

OVERVIEW

- I. MEMBER STATE ACTION ITEMS
- II. UNITED NATIONS ACTION ITEMS
- III. MEETING SUMMARY



I. **MEMBER STATES: ACTION ITEMS**

1. Formulate pledges on women in peacekeeping and conduct and discipline ahead of the 5-6 December 2023 UN Peacekeeping Ministerial, aligned with the pledging guide (specific guidance is provided below).
2. Complete questionnaire on Gender Equality and the Status of Women in the Defence Sector by 18 October 2023, to be submitted to the UN Department of Peace Operations by Permanent Missions. A copy has been circulated to all attendees.
3. Implement barrier assessments.
4. Provide adequate and gender-responsive infrastructure, services, uniforms, PPEs, welfare and healthcare, and ensure access to communications (the latter particularly for self-sustained troops deployed to remote areas).
5. Ensure sustained political engagement to develop a gender-responsive culture in peacekeeping.
6. Use the Secretariat's tools and training to mitigate the risks of misconduct, including by ensuring commanders understand their roles and responsibilities (e.g. use Secretariat's SEA and Misconduct Risk Management Toolkit, new training package for commanders).
7. Work with the United Nations to facilitate the resolution of paternity claims of children born of SEA.
8. Share good practices and lessons learned with each other and with the UN Secretariat in these areas and work with the UN Secretariat to develop related communication materials.

Guidance on formulating pledges on women in peacekeeping ahead of the 5-6 December UN Peacekeeping Ministerial:

The peacekeeping ministerial is an opportunity for Member States to make pledges in support of peacekeeping. Pledges should respond to the needs identified in the pledging guide. They should be specific and implemented in the near term. They typically involve personnel or technical contributions and can also be bilateral or triangular partnerships

Member States wishing to make pledges should discuss them with the Strategic Force Generation Cell at the Department of Peace Operations. After the Peacekeeping Ministerial, Member States are expected to update pledge status and implementation.

The [pledging guide](#) outlines key areas that relate to the meaningful participation of women in UN peacekeeping. Member States are encouraged to contribute to one or all of the following list of potential pledges as noted below. Note that a contribution or application to the Elsie Initiative Fund for Uniformed Women in Peace Operations is also welcome.

➤ **Enhancing accountability and data-driven approaches:**

- Renew commitment to achieve UN Gender Parity Strategy **targets**.
- Conduct **barrier assessments** in national security institutions and share lessons learned.
- Establish **national database of trained women** that meet the criteria for deployment.

➤ **Increasing the pool of qualified women and deploying and nominating women to all roles**

- Nominate women to **uniformed leadership positions** at UNHQ and in missions.
- **Deploy women in operational roles**.
- Establish national **mentoring/networking mechanisms** that include women previously deployed to UN peacekeeping.



➤ **Deploying gender-responsive capabilities:**

- **Military - Mixed Engagement Teams:** Every infantry battalion should include a mixed Engagement Platoon/Team with 50/50 men/women composition, trained in line with UN requirements and guidance.
- **Capacity providers** to support TCCs to train and help them establish and deploy mixed Engagement Platoons /Engagement Teams in all future rotations;
- **Police** - Contribute **gender integrated Formed Police Units** comprising at least 32 women (equivalent to the size of a platoon) across all functions, including command.
- Capacity providers to support PCCs to provide all female pre-Selection Assistance and Assessment Team (pre-SAAT) trainings and to enhance gender-sensitive facilities and infrastructures of FPU in high-risk missions.

➤ **Training**

- **Nominate qualified women to relevant training** courses, e.g. 30% women in the peacekeeping train the trainers' courses and at least 15% women in training on engineering, medical and Command, Control, Communications, Computers, Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance(C4ISR).
- **Capacity providers to financially support** 50/50 men/women UN Military Observer course and 50/50 men/women UN Staff Officer course.
- Capacity providers to support PCCs to provide all female pre-Selection Assistance and Assessment Team (pre-SAAT) trainings and to enhance gender-sensitive absorption capacities of FPU in high-risk missions.
- Women who have successfully attended relevant courses should be nominated for deployment.

➤ **Addressing gender bias and discrimination**

- Train all commanding officers (both men and women) on **gender-responsive leadership** and measure performance accordingly.

➤ **Providing gender-responsive infrastructure and services¹**

- **Gender-responsive accommodations and facilities.**
- **Adequate uniforms, body armor & personal protective equipment.**
- Sufficient **sanitary products** for the tour of duty.
- **Essential medicines.**
- Professional support to medical units in upgrading skillsets on **women's health.**
- Applying a **gender-responsive approach to mental health support.**

➤ **Communications**

- Provide financial resources to ensure expertise for UNHQ-led communications on women's participation.

➤ **Conduct and discipline**

- Troop and Police Contributing Countries (T/PCCs) to commit to continue conducting pre-deployment training on UN standards of conduct, including on maintaining a workplace free of any form of discrimination, harassment, including sexual harassment, and abuse of authority; and integrate the UN Reinforcement Training Programme into pre-deployment training for commanders.
- T/PCCs with pending paternity and child support claims arising from allegations of SEA should further engage with the Secretariat to advance their resolution.

¹ For further information, please see:

2023 Report of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations (A/77/19)
2023 Contingent-Owned Equipment (COE) Manual



- T/PCCs should commit to enact legislation that specifically prohibits Sexual Exploitation and Abuse.
- Member States are asked to consider making or renewing a voluntary contribution to the SEA Trust Fund.
- Member States are invited to provide expertise for UNHQ-led communications to prevent misconduct and to train personnel responsible for communicating on this issue.
- Member States are asked to support capacity that would deliver strategic SEA oversight, coordination and coherence in relation to SEA prevention and response to incidents.

II. UNITED NATIONS: ACTION ITEMS

1. Continue to prioritize the meaningful participation of women in peacekeeping, which includes not only supporting increased representation but also building enabling environments.
2. Continue to advocate for concerted actions of Member States and the UN Secretariat to make progress towards reaching the Secretary General's Uniformed Gender Parity Strategy targets for 2024 and beyond, support / encourage T/PCCs to undergo a barrier assessment as a first step and concrete action to support actions that will then sustainably increase the numbers of women who deploy, and create enabling environments for uniformed personnel in field missions.
3. Continue to develop and update tools to support leaders to build understanding and competencies in their role in implementing gender equality, diversity and inclusion, for example, through training and guidance.
4. Continue work to integrate women's needs in the design of peacekeeping missions in support of enabling environments, including accommodations, ablutions, camp layout and recreational spaces, as well as in healthcare.
5. Continue to provide guidance, standards and pre-deployment training to support Member States in fulfilling their responsibility to respect the United Nations' standards of conduct, including to eliminate sexual exploitation and abuse (the UN will be launching new core pre-deployment training and a training package on conduct and discipline for commanders).
6. Work with Member States to realize the rights of victims and children born of sexual exploitation and abuse (a UN high-level task force established will develop a framework of action for engagement with Member States).

III. MEETING SUMMARY

Overview

On 25-26 June 2023, Bangladesh, Canada and Uruguay co-chaired the first United Nations Peacekeeping Ministerial (UNPKM) Preparatory Meeting in Dhaka ahead of the 5-6 December 2023 Ministerial to be hosted in Accra, Ghana. The preparatory meeting aimed to explore and address contemporary opportunities and barriers to ensuring the meaningful participation of women in peacekeeping, to help Member States to shape pledges ahead of the December Peacekeeping Ministerial.

Session One: Understanding Barriers and Obstacles to Women's Participation:

Dr. Niloy Ranjan Biswas, University of Dhaka, moderated a discussion of the ten major barriers facing the meaningful participation of women in peacekeeping identified in the [Measuring Opportunities for Women in Peace Operations](#) (MOWIP) barrier assessment methodology. Barriers include the following:



eligible pool, deployment criteria, deployment selection, household constraints, infrastructure, peacekeeping experiences, career value, top-down leadership, gender roles, and social exclusion. These obstacles can apply throughout a woman's experience before, during and after deployment to a UN peace operation. This session featured an exchange of experiences between two Member States – Germany and Uruguay – that have undertaken MOWIP barrier assessments and the researchers on the recently published [Global MOWIP Report](#). Panelists were asked to provide insights about the assessment process, and how barrier assessment reports have informed interventions to increase the meaningful participation of women in peacekeeping. Key observations included:

- Gender equality is key to fit-for-purpose peacekeeping missions and sustainable peace;
- The MOWIP barrier assessment methodology is a valuable tool that provides a shared language for barriers identified, while also providing cultural flexibility and contextualization that can be adapted throughout the process;
- Although reports are targeted at peace operations, they can be telling of a security institution in general, and can inform more broad domestic policy, such as national action plans on Women, Peace and Security (WPS);
- Barrier assessments provide information on the security institution as a whole, and how barriers affect both men and women, which presents an opportunity to work towards better conditions for all.
- The process of conducting a barrier assessment (interviews and group discussions with officers at all ranks) contributes in and of itself to building a more inclusive culture in the institution that conducts it.

Session Two: The Elsie Initiative Fund for Uniformed Women in Peace Operations:

Deborah Warren-Smith, Manager of the Elsie Initiative Fund (EIF), UN Women, provided a presentation on the EIF and the modalities available for T/PCCs to access resources to increase the meaningful participation of uniformed women. Established on the premise that some barriers could be remedied by financial measures, the EIF was designed to support and incentivize efforts to increase the meaningful participation of uniformed women in UN peace operations. The outcomes of the EIF's work include expanded country-specific knowledge of the barriers, increased meaningful deployment of uniformed women, increased pool of uniformed women eligible to deploy, and improved working/living conditions for uniformed women. There are two types of funding modalities available:

- Flexible project funding (FPF): where a grant is available to
 - a) current or prospective T/PCCs to conduct a barrier assessment, that is required to access project funding.
 - b) current or prospective T/PCCs to undertake one or more approved activities to address specific barriers identified in a barrier assessment.
 - c) support projects submitted by UN organizations which are designed to implement and test innovations
- Gender Strong Unit (GSU) premium: priority is given to a T/PCC that intends to reinvest the premium in ways that further address the EIF's goals to accelerate the pace of change.

Colonel William Abotsi of the Ghana Armed Forces (GAF) presented an overview of Ghana's experience as a recipient of the EIF and champion of women in peacekeeping, highlighting the positive outcomes of investing in projects and Gender Strong Units, which served to encourage more T/PCCs to support the



deployment of trained and qualified women to UN peace operations. The GAF, which undertook a MOWIP barrier assessment with funding from Canada during the development and piloting of the MOWIP, applied to the EIF's second programming round to access project funding to address the identified barriers. Ghana not only invested in concrete actions domestically, but also in deploying Gender Strong Units which were the first to be sent to the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL). To support the deployment of the GSU, UNIFIL was also a recipient of the EIF that provided funding to build gender-sensitive accommodations and working conditions for women peacekeepers.

Note: Member States are encouraged to apply for funding through the Elsie Initiative Fund. Alternatively, Member States are encouraged to contribute to the Elsie Initiative Fund.

Session Three: Announcement of DPO Research Project and Upcoming Secretary-General Report on the Status of Women in the Defence Sector

Ana Garcia Alvarez, Senior Gender Officer in the United Nations Department of Peace Operations (DPO), presented the Department's ongoing work to produce a Report on *Gender Equality and the Status of Women in the Defence Sector*, which aims to describe the state of play of gender equality and the proportion of women in the defence sector globally, and to identify good practices in addressing inequalities. The aim of the report is to expand knowledge and disseminate good practices that can be replicated at national levels. The final report will not focus on personnel numbers, but rather on the percentage of women across ranks. Countries will not be ranked against each other, and individual questionnaires will not be made public.

Note: All Member States have received a note verbale requesting the completion of a questionnaire, with a deadline to respond through Permanent Missions in New York by 18 October 2023.

Session four: Gender Responsive Leadership and Inclusive Teams

Ulric Shannon, Director-General of the Peace and Stabilization Operations Program at Global Affairs Canada, moderated a panel discussion on how gender-responsive leaders and inclusive teams are essential in increasing the meaningful participation of women in UN peace operations. Gender-responsive leadership has been integrated by the UN in some areas, including peacekeeping policy, training, mentorship and accountability frameworks, but it remains a new concept for many Member States. It is vital for peacekeeping to more intentionally move toward "[a more inclusive, intersectional view of gender-responsive leadership](#)", that recognizes that personnel hold identities beyond their gender, and that biases and discrimination negatively impact personnel and the implementation of mission mandates.

This session featured an exchange between peacekeeping experts and officials who have experience in upholding the competencies of gender-responsive leadership and creating inclusive teams for uniformed personnel in all their diversity. Key takeaways included:

Role of leaders

- Inclusive experiences start with how leaders conduct themselves and the values they instill; it is vital that leadership understands the special role they play in implementing gender equality,



diversity and inclusion within their teams, including in contingents; and that they set the example for good conduct and discipline.

- It is the Commander's clear responsibility to intervene in situations of sexism and denigration, and they should act quickly to ensure the well-being of their personnel.

Measures and considerations

- Gender-responsive leadership must strive to address stereotypes and biases.
- Spaces should be created for individuals to share experiences and efforts, as this is key in addressing social and cultural barriers.
- It is important to consider the diversity of how Member States approach gender.
- In many cases, those who have suffered discrimination are afraid to speak, therefore leaders must set early expectations and standards for their units, address conduct and discipline from the start and protect those who come forward.
- Member States and UN Secretariat should continue to strengthen accountability and feedback measures to receive timely feedback and be able react to the realities and key issues on the ground.
- Leaders should be provided with examples of and tools to help them take concrete action when conducting daily business.

Session five: Effective Partnerships for Strengthening Accountability for Conduct and Discipline in Peacekeeping

Ana Garcia Alvarez, Senior Gender Officer in the United Nations Department of Peace Operations (DPO), moderated the session, which provided an opportunity for key United Nations conduct and discipline stakeholders and Member States to reflect on the concept of managing the risks of misconduct in United Nations peacekeeping through effective partnerships that strengthen existing and emerging good practices. The panel members provided their unique perspectives and concrete examples of good practices and future opportunities to strengthen partnership on accountability for conduct and discipline, including in areas that can be supported through pledges made in the context of the 2023 UNPKM. Key observations included:

General considerations

- Good conduct and discipline are fundamental to effectively implement peacekeeping mandates - the actions of a few can discount the entire UN system and adversely impact how mandates are enacted and the trust of host nations.
- Sexual harassment and misconduct can occur within the peacekeeping force itself, which reduces the attractiveness of peacekeeping as a career and limits retention.
- A victim-centered approach must be used to address SEA and harassment.

Measures

- Preventive measures are key - this includes setting standards and ensuring leadership (mechanisms that can influence the culture).
- Misconduct risks must be mitigated. In the case of SEA and sexual harassment, mitigation actions must be victim-centred.



- The UN provides guidance, standards and core pre-deployment training material, but gaps remain with performance and behaviours in the field. To further mitigate this, the UN will be launching new core pre-deployment training materials and a reinforcement package for commanders before the end of the year.
- Clear frameworks at the Member State level are also required to respond effectively to misconduct, and personnel should accept these standards as a precursor for deployment. All personnel should continue to be screened for any prior allegations, and contingents must actively manage risks of SEA and misconduct.
- Partnerships between Member States and mission leaders should be strengthened to ensure transparency, accountability, and strong conduct and discipline.

Role of personnel and leaders

- All peacekeeping personnel must be held accountable for their actions.
- Leaders need to understand their roles and responsibilities and that they are accountable for the actions of their personnel, creating an environment conducive to mutual respect, and mitigating any instances of misconduct and SEA.

Session Six: Creating Enabling Environments for Gender Equality in Peacekeeping

Ambassador Luis Bermúdez, Director General for Political Affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Uruguay, moderated a discussion on creating enabling environments for women personnel in missions, including issues and recommendations outlined in the Uniformed Gender Parity Strategy, UN Security Council Resolution 2538 (2020) on Women in Peacekeeping, the Contingent Owned Equipment Manual, and the reports of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations (C34). This session featured an exchange between peacekeeping experts and officials with experience in different supporting areas to create better work environments for uniformed women personnel. Panelists were asked to provide insights related to gender-responsive infrastructure and equipment, medical services, work culture in, and the elimination of all forms of harassment and discrimination. Insights included:

General considerations

- Creating enabling environments to advance gender equality is essential to attaining our goals for the meaningful participation of women peacekeepers.
- Historically, women's needs have not been considered in the design of peacekeeping missions, with it being a design by and for men.
- Based on UN outreach activities, we know that when women peacekeepers are provided with appropriate infrastructure and equipment, it improves safety and well-being which in turn supports their ability to carry out their duties.
- Efforts towards enabling environments based on inclusivity and equality have a positive impact on women's experiences. These efforts include building inclusive teams free of gender bias and discrimination; providing gender-responsive accommodations and healthcare; providing portable toilets; providing body armour that is appropriate for the physiological difference between men and women; facilitating the disposal of menstrual products in all women's ablutions.



- Member States and the United Nations should continue to work together in these areas.

Measures by United Nations

- The UN Department of Operational Support has developed design recommendations in four practical areas that require gender-responsive designs for enabling environments: accommodations, ablutions, camp layout and recreational spaces.
- It will continue its efforts to promote and support the implementation of gender responsive facilities and infrastructure as well as provide recommendations in the logistics and supply area in the next three years.

Measures by Member States

- Institutional cultural change within security institutions with regard to women's meaningful participation in peacekeeping will take time to achieve and is influenced by the limitations imposed on women such as the need for family permission to deploy or the stigma of deploying while having children at home. Moreover, this is compounded by the hierarchical nature of military and police institutions, where promotions and advancement also take time. Therefore, efforts must be continued and be sustained overtime.
- Training and career development opportunities at the national level are particularly important, given low numbers of qualified female officers (training opportunities for women are not as widespread as for men, which limits the eligible pool of women candidates).
- Regarding infrastructures, Member States should continue to collaborate with the United Nations on the planning and development of new camps and rehabilitation of existing ones to ensure they meet the envisioned gender responsive design recommendations.

Session Seven: Developing Concrete Pledges to Address Existing Challenges: Pamela Moore, Director of Peace Operations Policy and Deployments at Global Affairs Canada, moderated the session, which began with a briefing from the UN Department of Peace Operations on the [2023 Pledging Guide](#) for the UN Peacekeeping Ministerial Meeting in Accra Ghana (5-6 December), followed by a short panel of peacekeeping experts who provided context for the importance of Member State pledges related to the participation of women in UN peacekeeping for the 2023 UNPKM. Key points included:

- The Ministerial is an opportunity to commit to strengthening UN peacekeeping, based on the needs identified by the UN in the pledging guide. On the issue of women in peacekeeping, it is important to go beyond numbers alone, and consider other ways to provide support to the many issues included in the pledging guide which have been discussed in this preparatory conference. *Note: Please see previous section for a full breakdown of the topics covered under the pledging guide as they relate to women in peacekeeping.*
- Gender integration and equality should be considered as an inherent practice at the forefront of peacekeeping efforts.
- It is critical in gender mainstreaming that individuals feel part of the process to ensure sustainability. It allows individuals to reflect on their own experiences and actions and leads to more lasting change.
- Member States and institutions may be hesitant to undertake a barrier assessment for fear that the report and its findings may reflect poorly on their institution. However, security institutions



are encouraged to consider that the report will identify barriers in every T/PCC and the results are contextualized to allow for transformation at the local level.

- The findings of the MOWIP provide evidence-based findings that allow for targeted changes.
- Going through the process of conducting the MOWIP creates institutional awareness of the issue that can continue the conversation and create the momentum for transformational change and provide the security sector with an institutional roadmap to increase women's participation.

Conclusion: No one country has all the answers. The co-chairs, Bangladesh, Canada, and Uruguay, along with the United Nations, are pleased to report that the preparatory conference presented concrete and tangible examples of how we can support gender-responsive leadership; create workplaces that proactively foster inclusion and combat discrimination, harassment, and abuse; and enable the sharing of best practices about dismantling obstacles together. The participants thanked Bangladesh for hosting, and all partners expressed their thanks to Ghana, as the host of the upcoming 5-6 December United Nations Peacekeeping Ministerial Meeting in Accra, for prioritizing women in peacekeeping.