



**Launch of the
Plan of Action for Women in Communities to Counter Hate Speech and Prevent
Incitement to Violence that Could Lead to Genocide and Related Atrocity Crimes**

12 June 2023 (10:00 am– 11:30 am)

ECOSOC Chamber, UN Headquarters, New York

Remarks by

**Alice Wairimu Nderitu, Under-Secretary-General, Special Adviser on the Prevention
of Genocide**

Excellency, distinguished guests, ladies, and gentlemen,

At the outset, I would like to thank the Permanent Mission of Italy to the United Nations for co-sponsoring this event, and in particular the Permanent Representative, Ambassador Maurizio Massari and for the kind support of the Italian Government for this Plan of Action. I would like to also extend my thanks to the Chef de Cabinet, Courtenay Rattray for being with us today and for representing the Secretary General of the United Nations Antonio Guterres. I am grateful to all speakers and participants, those my sisters Jacqueline O'Neill, Canada's Ambassador for Women, Peace and Security and Dame Pauline Tallen, Nigeria's immediate former Minister for Women Affairs and Social Development. I thank those who joined in person or connected virtually. Most of all I thank my sisters, from far flung parts of the world, sisters I have walked with for much of my life building bridges among divided people, underlining our important role as women in peace, security and human rights, sisters who gathered in Napoli to draft this plan we launch today. Some of you are here today, many of you could not come but today is your day and indeed even in your absence, I feel your presence.

Ladies and gentlemen,

When I previously mediated armed conflict, it was the women, more than anyone else who demonstrated daily, what bringing peace in societies torn apart by violence, healing the wounds of war, rebuilding trust and reconciling groups after traumatic events looked like in practice. As Under Secretary General and United Nations Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide, I have continued engaging with women, especially in the field of the genocide and related atrocity crimes such as war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Despite the milestones set by the Beijing conference on equal rights and opportunities for all women and girls and by Security Council Resolution 1325 on women's role in the maintenance and promotion of peace and security the gap of women participation in the prevention of genocide and related atrocity crimes and their incitement is yet to be realized. And yet, women and girls are a frequent target of genocide and related atrocity crimes and their incitement. Women are also often silenced, raped, enslaved, tortured, and killed.

We must address this gap urgently, redouble our efforts to advance the role of women, in particular women in communities in prevention mechanisms and processes. We must make prevention of genocide and related atrocity crimes a reality, as divisions along identity lines are deepening and the number of conflicts and crises are growing globally.

So today, I introduce the Plan of Action for Women in Communities to Counter Hate Speech and Prevent Incitement to Violence that Could Lead to Genocide and Related Atrocity Crimes, the Napoli Plan of Action, a tool my office developed with women who live and have worked on prevention in communities for most of their lives.

Ladies and gentlemen,

There is overwhelming evidence that women are absent from decision-making roles in the context of preventing genocide and related atrocity crimes and their incitement, despite being key stakeholders and having agency and capabilities to respond meaningfully. At the same time, it is well documented that group-based differences and inequalities increase the risk of genocide and related atrocity crimes in society. Hence, if we enhance their role in a prevention, the statistical probability to succeed in increases. For this reason, women must

be at the forefront of genocide and related atrocity crimes prevention, at the center of our policies, strategies, and programmatic action more so as they play a key role in enhancing mitigating risks factors.

Distinguished delegates,

As we enter the third decade of the Women Peace and Security Agenda (WPS-Agenda), we need to rethink how we approach prevention, starting by acknowledging that we have failed at including women and supporting their role in the prevention of genocide and other atrocity crimes. But how can we make peace and prevention a reality if we continue to exclude half of the world population? Women deserve and demand a seat at the decision table of genocide and related atrocity crimes prevention. Excluding them is doing us a disservice and only increases the risk of atrocity crimes, with obvious impacts on human life and dignity.

So, we gathered in Napoli as women from around the world, in July 2022 discussing, based on practice, the role and contribution of women in communities in preventing genocide and related atrocity crimes and their incitement as well as on the thought leadership from practice across the world.

Our meeting resulted in the *Plan of Action for Women in Communities to Counter Hate Speech and Prevent Incitement to Violence that Could Lead to Genocide and Related Atrocity Crimes* (The Napoli Women in Communities Plan of Action), a policy document urging all relevant stakeholders and influencers across governments, civil society, academic institutions, traditional institutions, multilateral partners, and donor partners to implement three main recommendations:

1. Ensure that while contributing in countering hate speech and preventing incitement to violence that could lead to genocide or related atrocity crimes, women are;
 - Engaged, or
 - Have the opportunity to engage, or
 - Have an increasing capacity to engage.

2. Explore and systematically pursue practical strategies for facilitating the engagement of women to counter hate speech and prevent incitement to violence that could lead to genocide and related atrocity crimes.
3. Build capacity, globally and as needed within the United Nations and its partners to ensure that there is:
 - Sufficient understanding on hate speech and prevention of incitement that could lead to atrocity crimes to ensure the proficiency in implementation of projects involving *The Napoli Women in Communities Plan of Action*.
 - Incorporate interventions by women countering hate speech and preventing incitement to violence that could lead to genocide and related atrocity crimes into policy and programming.

Each recommendations details specific sets of measures, urging stakeholders to take action.

This initiative seeks to convene and build sustainable support systems around the work of women in communities preventing genocide and related atrocity crimes and their incitement. It recognizes the crucial and central role women have in preventing genocide and related atrocity crimes and restoring the social fabric after the crimes have been committed. It further anchors the empowerment of communities at the center of prevention of genocide and related atrocity crimes, a priority for my mandate.

Ladies and gentlemen,

On 18 June we will celebrate the second International Day on Countering Hate Speech. This is an important milestone for the international community, for the UN system and for my mandate, as I am also the UN global Focal Point on Hate Speech. Hence, today's event is a reminder that all our efforts towards prevention, including in countering hate speech and preventing incitement to violence, need the inclusion of women front and center.

Today, we have an opportunity to commit to and support Plan of Action. We will have a panel discussion on how to best implement this initiative and foster support with all

stakeholders, from government to community leaders, from civil society to the media and beyond.

I believe that your presence today is a testimony of your commitment to empower women and enhance their participation in genocide and related atrocity crimes prevention.

I call on all of you to support these very complementary agendas and contribute to the implementation of the *Plan of Action for Women in Communities to Counter Hate Speech and Prevent Incitement to Violence that Could Lead to Genocide and Related Atrocity Crimes*

Thank you for your attention.