

Women in the peacebuilding process
Informal interactive debate of the Third Committee
Tuesday 11 October 2005, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.
Conference Room 1

Background note

Organization and format

The Bureau of the Committee on Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Affairs decided to hold an informal interactive debate during the 60th session of the General Assembly on the topic “Women in the peacebuilding process”.

The event will be chaired by the Chair of the Committee. The debate will open with short statements by representatives of United Nations entities who will outline key issues and raise questions to stimulate dialogue and interaction among participants attending the informal interactive debate. Participants are encouraged to make their interventions interactive, through responding to previous inputs, raising questions and providing examples of their own experiences.

Gender perspectives of peacebuilding

The recent World Summit Outcome reaffirmed two important principles: development, peace and security and human rights are interlinked and mutually reinforcing; and gender equality is essential to advance development and peace and security. Member States also agreed to establish a Peacebuilding Commission as an intergovernmental advisory body, which is to develop a coordinated, coherent and integrated approach to post-conflict peacebuilding and reconciliation.

Peacebuilding has been identified as critical in the transition from conflict and insecurity to lasting peace and security. It addresses the needs of countries emerging from conflict towards recovery, reintegration and reconstruction and assists in laying the foundation for development, peace and security and human rights by fostering sustainable institutions and processes, in areas such as the eradication of poverty and inequalities, transparent and accountable governance, the promotion of democracy, respect for the rule of law and fostering a culture of non-violence and reconciliation. Peacebuilding activities include focused attention to medium- and long-term social and economic development. By addressing the political, economic, social, cultural, institutional and structural causes of conflict, peacebuilding is critical to preventing relapse into conflict.

The four world conferences on women – from Mexico in 1975 to Beijing in 1995 –, their follow-up processes in 2000 and 2005, and the groundbreaking Security Council resolution 1325 on women and peace and security of 2000, recognized the important contribution of women to peace and security and committed Member States and the United Nations to actively incorporate gender perspectives in their work in this area. The 2005 World Summit outcome also reaffirmed the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and in peacebuilding.

Although women and women's organizations have successfully initiated or participated in early warning, conflict prevention, political mediation and peace processes, as well as reconciliation, and reconstruction efforts in many war-torn countries, they have not been systematically involved in peacebuilding efforts at the national, regional and international levels. Attention to the specific needs, contributions and priorities of women, and to persisting inequalities and discrimination, has also been inadequate in peacebuilding initiatives. Integrating gender perspectives in peacebuilding requires basing efforts for security, justice, development and economic stability on explicit analysis of the specific experiences of both women and men during conflict and its aftermath. It requires the empowerment of women as well as men to participate fully in decisions shaping their countries and their communities. It also requires commitment of resources to ensure the full inclusion of gender perspectives in peace and security processes and the participation of women in peacebuilding - as decision-makers, implementation partners and beneficiaries.

Elements for discussion

The interactive debate may wish to address the following issues:

- Strategies to ensure the full participation of women in all peacebuilding activities at national, regional and international levels;
- Measures to ensure that peacebuilding policies and programmes, including measures devised to strengthen the rule of law and the respect for human rights, are based on international norms and standards, in particular the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women;
- Ways and means of ensuring effective consultation with and participation of women in peacebuilding efforts at all levels, in order to support and build on the critical efforts of women's groups and networks;
- Measures to ensure that the development of policies and practices of the Peacebuilding Commission takes gender perspectives fully into account, through inter alia:
 - ✓ Ensuring that women and their organizations participate fully in the initial design of the Peacebuilding Commission in its proposed configurations at international, regional and national levels – including with due respect for the principle of gender balance, as mandated by the General Assembly;
 - ✓ Ensuring that the work of the Peacebuilding Commission is based on the strategy of gender mainstreaming;
 - ✓ Ensuring that information from women's groups and networks will systematically inform the discussions and recommendations of the Peacebuilding Commission;
 - ✓ Ensuring that the funding modalities of the Peacebuilding Commission enable women's participation as decision-makers, implementation partners and programme beneficiaries.