

UK warns that peace talks 'fail without women'

The UK is urging countries and UN agencies to give more women a meaningful role in peace talks and protect them from violence while they are on the frontline of negotiations, ahead of the 20th anniversary of the first UN Security Council resolution on women's inclusion in peace and security.

In a virtual address to the United Nations today (Thursday 29 October 2020), Middle East Minister James Cleverly will set out a new UK-funded protection framework – the first international guidance to be developed to specifically to protect women peacebuilders – amid increasing attacks on them globally.

According to research by UN Women and the Council on Foreign Relations, when women meaningfully participate in peace talks, the resulting agreement is 64% less likely to fail and 35% more likely to last at least 15 years. Yet between 1990 and 2017, women made up only 2% of mediators, 8% of negotiators, and 5% of witnesses and signatories in all major peace process.

To demonstrate the UK's ongoing commitment to women's inclusion in peacebuilding, Minister Cleverly will announce £1 million of new UK aid for the Women Mediators across the Commonwealth (WMC) network, an independent group of 50 women mediators around the world, hosted by peacebuilding NGO Conciliation Resources. The funding will provide women on the frontline of peace talks with training, mentoring and resources for their participation in peacebuilding, and to lobby for greater inclusion of women at all levels of negotiations, including at the UN.

The UK will also announce £250,000 of new aid funding to support research into the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on women and girls living in fragile and conflict-affected states, such as Afghanistan and Nigeria. The study will develop policy recommendations to ensure women and girls are better protected in future pandemics.

At a UN open debate on women, peace and security, Middle East Minister James Cleverly, will say:

We know that when women have a seat at the table, peace negotiations are less likely to fail, which is why 20 years ago, every country at the UN pledged to increase their participation.

Yet the proportion of women still hasn't increased and when women are included, they increasingly suffer threats against their lives.

World leaders must now put words into action and follow the UK's lead of protecting women on the frontline and lobbying for greater inclusion.

The UK-funded Women Peacebuilders Protection Framework urges countries to prepare for and respond to threats and attacks women peacebuilders face doing their work. This includes:

- recognising the expertise and skills that women peacebuilders offer, by paying them for their services;
- training local police and judiciary on how to better respond to the unique threats women peacebuilders face;
- ensuring secure transport and communication for women peacebuilders who partake in peace talks; and
- planning for the emergency relocation of women peacebuilders when their lives may be endangered, including flexible grants to pay for transport and accommodation, and psychological support.

Mossarat Qadeem is one of the women peacebuilders supported by the WMC. Her work in peacebuilding includes working with vulnerable young people in Pakistan who are at risk of being radicalised by extremist groups, including by better contextualising their understanding of the Quran, and supporting their reintegration into society.

Mossarat Qadeem, Executive Director of the PAIMAN Alumni Trust, said:

Women can bring something unique, because we look at the issue of conflict from a different angle. Women peacebuilders start building peace long before the formal process begins, and continue long after.

I was excited to join the Women Mediators across the Commonwealth network. It gives us a platform to influence the process better and seek recognition for women mediators, and it has become like a sisterhood from which we can share and learn with each other.

Women's involvement in the peace process is vital, as women and girls are disproportionately impacted in conflict settings – for example, the higher risk of sexual violence and child marriage, or lack of access to sexual and reproductive health services. Their experiences and role in society bring an important dimension to peace negotiations.

Today's new package of support comes ahead of the 20th anniversary of UN Security Council Resolution 1325, a UK-led resolution which set out the importance of substantially including women in all levels of the peace process, which falls this Saturday 31 October 2020.

Laura Aumeer, Programme Director at NGO Conciliation Resources who host the WMC network, said:

Conciliation Resources welcomes the financial support provided to the WMC by the UK government. Despite the challenges raised by the COVID-19 pandemic, the network continues to support members and their peacebuilding work, responding to an increased need for

conflict prevention and resolution globally.

The WMC is unique in its diversity of membership, bringing together women peacebuilders working in all spaces, from community to national and international processes.

Notes to editors

- The UK was the penholder on the first UN resolution (1325) on women, peace and security in 2000. The aim was to establish the crucial role of women in conflict prevention and peacebuilding, and reduce the disproportionate impact of conflict on women and girls.
- There has been no significant increase in the proportion of women at peace tables since 2000 while attacks against women peacebuilders across the globe have increased.
- Last year, HRH the Countess of Wessex met members of the WMC, which was launched by the UK in 2018. Her Royal Highness heard about their work and supported the creation of the Protection Framework, announced today, as part of her longstanding support for women's role in peace and security.
- A UK grant of £250,000 will support Gender Action for Peace and Security (GAPS), a UK-based NGO network to lead research on the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on women and girls in ten countries affected by conflict: Afghanistan, Colombia, Myanmar, Iraq, Lebanon, Nigeria, Palestine, Somalia, Uganda and Ukraine. The research will be conducted by grassroots and international women's rights organisations, overseen by GAPS.
- [Data from UN Women and the Council on Foreign Relations \(5 January 2018\). Women's Participation in Peace Processes.](#)