

Women's participation is fundamental to sustainable peace

Madam President, it is a great pleasure to be attending this Security Council under your stewardship. I congratulate you and Kenya for choosing to invest in women peacekeepers and peacebuilders as today's theme. We are clear that women's participation is fundamental to sustainable peace. The evidence in support of this fact is abundantly clear.

And as we've already heard, we are all clear that women's participation is fundamental to sustainable peace. Indeed, the evidence in support of this fact is abundantly clear. I also therefore really welcome, and it's always a pleasure to hear from His Excellency, the Secretary-General and I know of his personal commitment to this important agenda. Without women, there can be no lasting, sustainable peace. I pay tribute to his team, the Deputy-Secretary-General Amina Mohammed and in doing so also welcome Her Excellency Sima Bahous, who has a new role as Executive Director of UN Women. I can report to you through Madam President, Secretary General, we've already met on the important issue of Afghan women, and we look forward to strengthening our relationship in this respect.

May I also join in the tribute that we've already heard being paid to Bineta Diop. I've had the honor and pleasure to be on several panels with over many years, and her personal passion, her advocacy and our expertise is beyond excellence, and we need to ensure that we really encompass this as we fulfill the ambitions, indeed our obligations for women, peace and security around the world.

I also welcome the contributions that we've heard from Celia Velasco,. And it was important that Ms Velasco, reminded us the Security Council of our obligations on this important agenda. Let me assure all colleagues that the United Kingdom remains fully committed to the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in decision making and the full, equal and meaningful participation of women indeed in all peace efforts.

Increasing the number of women, peacekeepers and women in leadership roles should not just be a key priority. It is essential. It is the right thing to do. It is vital to ensure operational effectiveness.

Madam President, if I may, I understand that the annual UN Award for a Champion of Women in Peacekeeping went to Major Nyaboga of Kenya and through your good offices. We congratulate the Major on this achievement. And we also recognise that Kenya is deploying such inspiring officers who serve as an example not just to women, but to men and women across the world. And in this respect, I am delighted that the United Kingdom has and continues to support the Elsie Initiative since its launch and has provided over £4.7 million since 2019 to encourage more women into peacekeeping ,peacebuilding roles. And we are also further committed to meeting the United Nations uniformed gender parity targets in this respect. To help the United Kingdom are

conducting a gender barrier study to better understand the obstacles faced by women in the UK armed forces deploying on peacekeeping operations. From those grassroots to the international stage, we encourage the United Nations as a leading light to lead by example and make women's direct participation a requirement, a fundamental requirement across all peace process it supports. And it should be a priority.

The United Kingdom has supported the UN's Peacebuilding Fund since its inception, committing over £175 million to empower women and indeed young people. We also support these incredible women mediator networks, and we continue to fund the women mediators across the Commonwealth this year. But let us be clear recently, back in 2019, we amalgamated these mediator networks of women, and we must get women mediators at the front line of ensuring we resolve conflict. These women have the expertise. They have the insight. These women have the knowledge. Yet what we fail to do is leverage this expertise effectively for peace around the world. More must be done.

Furthermore, the UK joins the calls in condemning the persistent attacks on women human rights defenders, a point well reflected in the contributions of the Executive Director of UN women. We need to robustly tackle impunity and hold perpetrators to account when reprisals occur, and that work begins right now at this time right here in this room. The United Kingdom supports the work of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human rights to tackle reprisals, in particular, those committed against Security Council briefers. This work includes a specific focus on the gender dimensions of intimidation and reprisals. After all, if we cannot protect the briefers who come here, the purpose of the Security Council cannot be met. We must ensure their protection is prioritized.

Madam President, we've already heard, rightly so, that the Afghanistan crisis has thrown a harsh light on the challenges before us. I've had the honour as many in this room to work directly with many women from across Afghanistan and now that the Taliban is in control in that country. We must ensure the rights of women and girls are central to any discussions with the Taliban. Women must be intrinsic to the conversation intrinsic to the nation's future, and it is vital that their voices are not just heard but are at the heart of Afghanistan's future.

Negotiating and mediation teams need to access the gender expertise. I've already referred to the Women Mediators Network and women therefore should be included in all national delegations in this regard. The UK continues to prioritise its work on the women peace and security agenda and is currently developing our next WPS's National Action Plan, due for launch in early 2023.

Let me finally assure this Council that we, the United Kingdom, commit to truly demonstrate the leadership we claim on women peace and security and to ensure that this agenda, this priority is a golden thread through all our work on resolving conflict, on building security and stability and ultimately for peace across the world. Thank you, Madam President.