



# Briefing Session

17 May 2018  
02:30pm-04:30pm  
IPSS New Conference Room

## Enhancing Pathways for Increased Women's Role in Mediation in Africa

### CONCEPT NOTE

Close to 20 years have passed since the UNSC 1325, and a year since the UN declaration of Gender parity at all levels of the decision-making process. However, the road to a full-fledged success with women attaining their place at the high table remains far-fetched. This is of course without mentioning the several milestones that have been achieved since the landmark declaration. Women now represent a growing population of peacekeeping forces, emerging mediators and heads of State across the world. Globally, women constitute fewer than **10%** of peace negotiators and only **3%** of signatories to peace agreements.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, from 1992 to 2011, only **4%** of signatories, **2.4%** of chief mediators, and **9%** of negotiators were women.<sup>2</sup> As we enter a momentum of the rapid inclusion of all concerned stakeholders in the peace and security discourse, there is an increased need for activating and implementing existing legal frameworks on the inclusion of women in conflict prevention, management and resolution. Such a

reality is pressing for the African continent whose state of peace and security constitutes 80% of the agenda at the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) and the African Union Peace and Security Council (AU-PSC).

The AU is well equipped with frameworks of inclusion of women in the peace and security context. Its 2004 Solemn Declaration of Women Equality lays the foundation for the inclusion of women; their capacity building as well as the creation of platforms for their full-fledged participation in matters of state in their respective countries. It is reinforced in 2009 through the AU Gender Policy which "...guides the process of gender mainstreaming and women empowerment to influence policies, procedures and practices which will accelerate the achievement of gender equality, gender justice, non-discrimination and fundamental human rights in Africa".<sup>3</sup> Another important aspect is the fact that 19 out of the 55 AU Member States (MS) have adopted and developed National Action Plans (NAP) for the implementation of UNSC 1325.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, the

<sup>1</sup><http://www.un.org/africarenewal/magazine/december-2015/women-peacesecurity#sthash.60e4B2O5.dpuf>

<sup>2</sup> UN Women Sourcebook on Women, Peace and Security, 2012

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.un.org/en/africa/osaa/pdf/au/gender\\_policy\\_2009.pdf](http://www.un.org/en/africa/osaa/pdf/au/gender_policy_2009.pdf)

<sup>4</sup><http://www.un.org/en/africa/osaa/pdf/pubs/2016womenpeacesecurity-auc.pdf>

# BRIEFING SESSION

## CONCEPT NOTE

anchor for placing women at the core of peace and security activities in the continent is the establishment of the office of the Special Envoy on Women Peace and Security in 2014 and the African Network of Women Mediators in Africa (FemWise-Africa) in 2017. The mandate of both establishments is to enhance the role of women in the overall conflict spectrum from prevention, to management, resolution and peace-building. Thus they not only focus on echoing the voices of African women as primary victims of conflicts but also as primary actors in their resolution. In fact, the latter serves as a policy and network of women mediators in Africa.

The above mechanisms work within the overarching framework of the Africa Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) as well as the African Governance Architecture (AGA). As the core structures on the peace and security activities of the continent, they provide the principles and entry points for women's participation on the matter. Yet, despite these aspirations, women's role, especially in mediation remains limited; this is not because of the lack of instruments and mechanisms on the matter, but mainly due to the dominating image of women as victims of conflict. Such a generalist label of the African women population as portrayed in the media and advocacy campaigns limits the role of women in peace processes. Then, the process starts and finishes the role of women to solely voicing out the "wrongs" such as losing a family member, being displaced and, /or raped. Therefore, a women's role in a peace process is more often than not limited to that of a victim. And in cases where

women surpass this image, their voices are contained as the peace and security field, in particular mediation, is and remains a "men's club". Most often than not, as professional peace and security experts, women are side-lined in major decisions.<sup>5</sup>

However, the aim of the tools discussed in the frameworks of APSA and AGA aim towards going beyond this victim label of women in conflict. As discussed by D., Sophie, A., Philomena and S., Karl in ***Women & mediation in Africa under the APSA and the AGA***; women can be ambassadors of peace in the conflicts of the continent. In fact, their roles should be further appreciated not solely as mediators but also members of election observation missions. As demonstrated in the ongoing South Sudan Peace Process, or the 2009 Kenyan elections, women have proved such roles and contributed their share of making peace happen.

Consequently, based on the above and the discussion paper on Women & mediation in Africa under the APSA and the AGA, this briefing session aims to explore Pathways for Enhancing Women's role in mediation in Africa through addressing the following questions;

1. What are the entry points provided by APSA and AGA for increased women's role in mediation in Africa?
2. What are the success stories and the lessons that can be learnt thereof?
3. What are the challenges in this regards and their subsequent recommendations?

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<sup>5</sup> <https://mg.co.za/article/2018-05-04-00-the-african-unions-metoo-moment>