From Gender Justice to Sustainable Peace: A 25-Year Vision

Sarajevo Pledge - Renewed Commitments to the Women, Peace and Security Agenda

Preamble

We, the participants of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) International Conference, held in Sarajevo on 12-13 June 2025, gathered on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of UN Security Council Resolution 1325, reaffirm our collective commitment to advancing the WPS agenda as a cornerstone of sustainable peace, democratic resilience, and inclusive security.

The international conference in Bosnia and Herzegovina marks a powerful moment of reflection and renewal as the country commemorates 30 years since the signing of the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Dayton Peace Agreement). It is not only a testament to the resilience of peace but also a call to deepen commitments to inclusive, gender-responsive peacebuilding for the next generation.

We welcome the 2025 Political Declaration adopted at the 69th Commission on the Status of Women, CEDAW General Recommendations N40 in 2024, which emphasizes the necessity of women's participation in peace processes, conflict prevention, and post-conflict reconstruction. and the UN Secretary-General's Common Pledge on Women's Participation in Peacebuilding in October 2024.

We underline that the ongoing UN Peacebuilding Architecture Review (PBAR) needs to underscore the centrality of the WPS agenda in shaping effective and inclusive peacebuilding frameworks. We expect that the PBAR will incorporate the WPS agenda not as a matter of policy alignment but as a strategic imperative to enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of peacebuilding efforts worldwide.

We acknowledge the strong commitments made by the 237 signatories of the global Compact on WPS and Humanitarian Action, representing over 150 countries. This multi-stakeholder platform continues to foster collaboration, accountability, and shared learning among governments, UN entities, civil society, regional organizations, academia, and others.

We welcome the launch of the new WPS Roadmap by the OSCE Chair-in-Office on 6 May 2025, aimed at strengthening the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325. The roadmap focuses on integrating gender perspectives in peace and security efforts, promoting women's full and equal participation in decision-making, and enhancing accountability and progress tracking. We appreciate the commitments already made by 24 participating States.

We affirm the importance of adopting and localizing National Action Plans (NAPs) with adequate resources and decentralized coordination. In contexts where NAPs are not in place, alternative local implementation mechanisms should be explored.

In the face of escalating conflicts, climate insecurity, political repression, and democratic backsliding, ***we emphasize*** that gender equality is not a secondary concern but a prerequisite for durable peace. ***We acknowledge*** with urgency that, despite important normative advances, the implementation of the WPS agenda remains uneven, critically underfunded, and too often excludes the voices and leadership of those most affected by conflict and crisis. ***We highlight*** that the WPS agenda and its current progress are primarily driven by civil society and women's movements, working in strategic alliances with the UN and Member States.

We underline that militarization, climate crisis and ecological degradation are linked threats to human security, gender equality, and lasting peace. These crises deepen inequalities, especially for women and marginalized groups, and weaken the foundations of positive peace. Militarization diverts resources from human development and inclusive governance, while environmental harm drives displacement and unrest. A gender-responsive peace agenda must address these interconnected challenges by promoting demilitarization, ecological justice, and community resilience. ***We urge*** their integration into all peacebuilding, early warning, and recovery efforts, calling on governments, the UN, and financial institutions to adopt sustainable, intersectional approaches.

We pledge to ensure that our recommendations contribute to shaping the upcoming UN Security Council Open Debate on Women, Peace, and Security in October 2025.

We strongly recommend a renewed commitment to the promises made in 2000, reshaping pledges into tangible actions across seven priority areas:

1. Participation and Leadership

- Increase the meaningful participation of women at all stages of peace and political processes, including as mediators, negotiators, and decision-makers.
- Set national targets to ensure a minimum of 40% representation of women in formal peace negotiations and national security bodies by 2030.
- Urge regional and international organizations to adopt proactive measures for greater inclusion of women in formal peace processes and leadership roles in peace operations.
- Recognize accountability as a foundational step in peacebuilding, essential to achieving sustainable and lasting peace.
- Promote gender-aware and compassionate leadership centered on empathy, active listening, and dignifying survivors beyond legal systems.
- Strengthen alliances across all levels - international, national, and grassroots - to create a coordinated and impactful women-led peace architecture.
- Elevate women's existing expertise, especially in early warning and conflict prevention, to reinforce their central role in peacebuilding.
- Engage younger women in conflict prevention and mediation to ensure continuity and the development of a new generation of peacebuilders.
- Address the past to prevent future conflict through storytelling, intergenerational dialogue, and community healing, fostering reconciliation and a culture of peace.
- Create psychosocial support frameworks and safe spaces for women mediators and peacebuilders, recognizing mental health and safety as integral to sustained involvement.
- Ensure inclusive planning, implementation, and monitoring of WPS initiatives by meaningfully engaging local communities, particularly rural and marginalized women activists and leaders.

2. Justice and Survivor-Centered Accountability

- Affirm that justice begins with belief in survivors and go beyond rhetoric to demonstrate solidarity and amplify survivor voices with integrity.
- End impunity for conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) through strong national legislation, survivor-centered transitional justice, and robust regional cooperation.

- Invest in comprehensive victim and witness protection, expanded psychosocial care, and gender-sensitive judicial processes in domestic and international courts.
- Develop justice systems that prioritize survivor needs using trained personnel, accessible services, and survivor-led approaches.
- Ensure legal recognition and reparations - financial compensation, education, and public acknowledgment - for CRSV survivors.
- Expand legal definitions of CRSV to include forced prostitution, survival sex, and coercive exploitation linked to poverty and displacement.
- Involve survivors in all stages of justice and peacebuilding processes, including policy design, implementation, and evaluation.
- Create regional platforms for coordinated action, data-sharing, and survivor advocacy to drive systemic change.
- Address the needs of children born of wartime rape, including legal protections and access to services to support their long-term inclusion and well-being.
- Launch awareness campaigns and education to combat stigma and foster supportive communities for survivors.
- Support government–CSO partnerships to establish survivor-centered support systems, healing initiatives, and commemorative programs.
- Promote the collection of survivor testimonies through museums, archives, and education to preserve memory and promote intergenerational understanding.
- Create a regional coalition to align efforts and amplify collective advocacy for survivor-centered justice.
- Urge international institutions, including the ICC and UN-mandated bodies, to integrate strong gender justice frameworks and ensure accountability in all mandates and prosecutions.

3. Protection and Early Warning Systems

- Institutionalize gender-responsive early warning mechanisms, co-developed with women civil society actors.
- Ensure multi-year, flexible funding for survivor-centered CRSV prevention and response, with a focus on women-led and local organizations. Funding must cover preventive action, psychosocial support, legal aid, safe housing, medical care, and accountability.
- Provide sustained psychological, medical, and economic support for women, girls, and elderly survivors in protracted conflict settings to prevent intergenerational trauma.
- Reaffirm that humanitarian aid is non-negotiable and must be accessible to all affected populations regardless of political contexts.
- Facilitate cross-border institutional and civil society collaboration to combat online gender-based violence and monitor emerging threats.

4. Relief, Recovery, and Resilience

- Mainstream WPS principles into all post-conflict recovery efforts and hold humanitarian, development, and peace actors accountable for gender-equal outcomes.
- Prioritize access to land, livelihoods, healthcare, and climate-resilient recovery for women in post-conflict settings.

- Provide education and training on gender-responsive crisis management and involve youth in peacebuilding to ensure long-term cultural change.
- Strengthen legal protections for women peacebuilders and human rights defenders, and promote male allyship to reduce backlash.
- Ensure women's continued leadership post-conflict, resisting regression to traditional roles and ensuring full inclusion in peace and recovery planning.

5. Close the WPS Financing Gap

- Support the call for $360 billion annually to achieve SDG 5 by 2030, and ensure that WPS financing is systematically integrated across national and international peacebuilding, development, and security budgets.
- Encourage donors to earmark at least 15% of all peacebuilding and conflict prevention funding for women-led initiatives and protection networks.
- Call on Member States to publish annual, disaggregated WPS budgets and establish dedicated funding lines to secure long-term investment.
- Urge international financial institutions and development banks to apply gender-responsive budgeting and scale up gender-lens investing, especially in fragile contexts.
- Strengthen the sustainability of WPS financing by identifying and leveraging diverse funding sources, including EU instruments, bilateral donors, and public-private partnerships, to ensure resilient financial support.

6. Recognition of Women Peacebuilders as Central Actors for WPS agenda implementation

- Promote formal recognition of women-led peacebuilding organizations and their networks, including grassroots groups, as essential actors and drivers of transformative change in peace and security.
- Guarantee the meaningful and systematic participation of women and women-led organizations at all stages of peace processes.
- Implement practical protections for women peacebuilders, especially those facing threats in conflict and post-conflict settings.
- Ensure sustainable, direct funding, acknowledging that underfunding remains a major barrier to their effectiveness and safety.
- Address challenges posed by shrinking civic space, legal restrictions, and security threats to women-led organizations and activists; overlooking their leadership risks both missed opportunities and erasure.
- Establish concrete mechanisms to translate WPS commitments into action, including tracking systems, transparent reporting on inclusion, and protection protocols for women peacebuilders at risk.

7. Strategic Partnerships and Regional Leadership

- Reinforce cross-regional cooperation rooted in feminist diplomacy through dialogue, peer learning, and shared implementation strategies across Europe, Central Asia, and globally.
- Focus on practical solutions in advancing the WPS agenda, particularly within the UN Security Council, while addressing the interlinkages between environment, peace, and security.
- Activate regional institutions to lead WPS implementation and ensure state-level accountability.
- Embed WPS principles in all UN Security Council discussions and resolutions to ensure a gender-responsive peace and security approach.

- Leverage the convening power of governments, multilateral bodies, and civil society to move from commitments to action.
- Formally recognize women peacebuilders and human rights defenders as essential actors, and ensure their safety, resources, and full participation.
- Call for the creation of special protection status for women peacebuilders working in high-risk conflict and post-conflict settings.
- Engage media, cultural institutions, and education systems as allies in shifting gender norms, preserving memory, and amplifying women's voices in peacebuilding narratives.
- Develop clear success indicators and timelines across all six thematic areas to enhance transparency and track progress effectively.
- Establish a joint regional monitoring mechanism involving civil society to track implementation, share good practices, and foster regional accountability.

The Sarajevo Pledge

We endorse the Sarajevo Pledge as a shared commitment to reinvigorate the WPS agenda in our respective countries, institutions, and communities. As a forward-looking vision for 2030 and beyond, we affirm:

"We will not wait another 25 years. We will act now to make women's leadership and gender responsive justice, protection, and recovery central to every peace effort, in every country, for every generation."

We request the Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees of Bosnia and Herzegovina to submit this document as a formal input to the UN Security Council Open Debate on Women, Peace and Security in October 2025.

We also call on the governments of the countries in the region that serve as members of the UN Security Council to support this initiative and ensure the WPS agenda remains a priority in global peace and security efforts.

We reaffirm our collective commitment to **accountability**, with a clear intention to monitor the implementation of the recommended pledges, ensuring that progress is measured and that governments remain responsible for fulfilling their commitments.

We extend our sincere gratitude to Bosnia and Herzegovina for its leadership and continued dedication in advancing the WPS agenda and for facilitating this important collective commitment.