



Norwegian Ministry
of Foreign Affairs



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NOREF
Norwegian Centre for Conflict Resolution

NORDIC WOMEN MEDIATORS

Chair's Statement

Meeting of Regional Women Mediators Networks

Oslo, 23 March 2018

More than 17 years have passed since the Security Council adopted resolution 1325, the first and groundbreaking resolution on women, peace and security. For almost two decades, the international community has recognised that women's participation and influence in peace and security matters is decisive, not only to ensure respect for women's rights, but also to improve operational effectiveness, build resilience, prevent and resolve conflicts, and sustain peace. In spite of broad political consensus on these matters, and evidence from both experience and research that testifies to the importance of women's participation, women continue to struggle to be heard by negotiating parties and by mediators. Women continue to be sidelined and denied the opportunity to act as negotiators for parties to conflicts. And women continue to be underrepresented among mediators and in delegations to peace processes.

Recently, several regional networks of women mediators have been established: the Nordic Women Mediators network (2015), FemWise-Africa (2017) and the Mediterranean Women Mediators Network (2017). In addition, an increasing number of countries and multilateral organisations are expressing interest in establishing further networks. These networks are part of a global movement to enhance women's participation and influence in peace processes.

Representatives of these regional women mediators' networks met for the first time on 21-23 March 2018 in Oslo. Representatives from the UN Secretary-General's High Level Advisory Board on Mediation and representatives of UN entities (Executive Office of the Secretary-

General, Department of Political Affairs, and UN Women) were also present. Other multilateral actors represented at the meeting were the African Union (AU), the European Union (EU), the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and the Association of Southeast Asian States (ASEAN), as well as country delegates from South Africa and the UK, and representatives of civil society and academia.

In total, more than 80 women and men were gathered for two days at Holmen Fjordhotell outside Oslo to explore opportunities for cooperation, seek synergies and discuss the possible establishment of an alliance of regional women mediators' networks. Convened under the auspices of the Nordic Women Mediators (NWM) network, the gathering was hosted by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in close cooperation with the Norwegian Centre for Conflict Resolution (NOREF) and the Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO). Norwegian Foreign Minister Ine Eriksen Søreide formally opened the meeting, followed by speeches by UN Under-Secretary-General Ana Maria Menendez, Nobel Peace Laureate Leymah Gbowee and former UN Under-Secretary-General Noeleen Heyzer. A public panel debate then followed with Ms Menendez and representatives from the regional networks: former interim President of the Central African Republic Ms Catherine Samba-Panza (FemWise-Africa), Deputy Political Director at the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs Ms Francesca Tardioli (the Mediterranean Women Mediators Network), and Swedish Special Envoy to the Great Lakes Ms Lena Sundh (Nordic Women Mediators). Experts in this field, Ms Thania Paffenholz and Ms Sanam Anderlini, were commentators. After this public event, working sessions were held for the next day and a half.

Outcomes of the Oslo Meeting

Building on this momentum, and the mediation actors' commitment to include more women in peace processes, the participants at the Oslo meeting agreed to continue consolidating their respective networks, while seeking synergies between the networks and taking a first step towards the possible establishment of an alliance of Regional Women Mediators Networks. The common goals of such an alliance would be to:

- support women's participation and influence in peace processes at all levels: local, national, regional and international;
- work for gendered outcomes of peace processes;
- develop creative approaches to inclusion and mediation with a view to building and sustaining peace;
- learn from best practices in inclusion, and aim for innovation in mediation;
- enable a joint space for regional networks to liaise with and support each other, and to share information; and
- improve the visibility of women's expertise, experience and contributions to peace.

The participants at the meeting also agreed to explore opportunities for collaboration. A contact group was established, with representatives from each regional network. This group will discuss the next steps to be taken and a possible timeline for activities, in consultation with their respective regional memberships.