



Security Council Open Debate on Women, Peace and Security, 24 October 2024

Malta Statement delivered by Mr Darren Camilleri
Chargé d'affaires a.i. of Malta to the United Nations, New York

Thank you, President, and I also thank the Deputy Secretary General, UN Women Executive Director Bahous, Justice Owuor, and Ms. Nufor for their compelling calls to action.

Nearly 25 years ago, this Council recognised the grave threats armed conflicts pose to gender equality and women's rights. In response, it established the WPS Agenda to confront these challenges. Yet, today, we witness a troubling regression in our hard-won achievements across all key indicators.

In 2023, the proportion of women killed in armed conflicts doubled. Women accounted for less than 10% of negotiators and a mere 2% of peace agreement signatories. Funding for women-led organisations in conflicts, which are critical lifelines for sustainable peace, has declined for three consecutive years.



While the Security Council created the WPS agenda, its transformative potential relies on the profound engagement of diverse stakeholders. However, growing geopolitical fragmentation, patriarchal backlash, and the alarming shift from diplomacy to military escalation, intensifying the global backlash against gender equality.

In the conflict situations on our agenda, women and girls, including those with diverse sexual orientations and gender identities, are at heightened risk of sexual and gender-based violence. They are further marginalised from protection and peace processes.



In Afghanistan, the Taliban's systematic gender discrimination is creating both existential and operational challenges, including for principled humanitarian action. In Gaza, women are giving birth under bombardment, deprived of antenatal care and medication, and facing hunger. Over 52,000 pregnant women have been denied access to healthcare, violating the Geneva Conventions' protections for maternal health. In Myanmar, as highlighted by Ms Nufor, Rohingya women and girls in Rakhine State are caught in the crossfire of intensifying conflict, facing dire circumstances with limited access to protection or safe refuge.

President

The Council must act to uphold the dignity and rights of women in these and in all conflict settings.



First, we must strengthen our commitment to prevent, avert, and end conflicts through disarmament and demilitarisation. We urge the adoption of robust, gender-responsive arms control mechanisms, consistent with Article 7(4) of the Arms Trade Treaty, to prevent weapons from being used to perpetuate sexual and gender-based violence.

Second, we strongly support the Secretary-General's call for increased sustainable and flexible funding for the WPS agenda. It is imperative that we expand investments in local women-led peacebuilding organisations.

Third, we must pursue all available mechanisms to ensure justice and accountability for gross violations of women's rights. These include targeted sanctions and leveraging the mandates of the International Criminal Court and the International Court of Justice.



Fourth, we must both enable and protect women peacebuilders and human rights defenders, who cannot participate meaningfully in peace processes if they are under threat. The Council must demand accountability for reprisals and enhance its mechanisms to safeguard civil society engagement. We welcome the Secretary-General's Common Pledge to fast-track women's participation in formal peace talks and urge that substantive gender equality concerns are integrated through gender-responsive conflict analysis and more inclusive multitrack process design.

As we approach the 25th anniversary of Security Council Resolution 1325, we must redouble our efforts to defend and strengthen the WPS agenda. Women's human rights are not negotiable. They are the foundation of lasting peace. We must stand with women's movements, the heart of the WPS agenda.

This is not a fight for women to fight alone. Men too have a central role to play towards achieving these goals, and in ensuring that the WPS Agenda is given the importance it deserves.

President,



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2023-2024

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It has been a privilege for Malta to serve as coordinator of the WPS Shared Commitment holders on the Security Council. We encourage all incoming members to join them, and actively promote them. Even after our term on the Council, Malta will continue to work collectively to implement these commitments, safeguard progress, and unlock the transformative potential of the WPS agenda.

I thank you.