

The Platform of United Nations and regional independent expert mechanisms on the elimination of discrimination and violence against women (Platform on EDVAW)¹

The undersigned, members of the Platform on EDVAW² met in Addis Ababa (Ethiopia) on 4 February 2020, and adopted the following joint statement:

“Elimination of discrimination and violence against women and girls, including its root causes, must be integrated in all efforts to silence the guns before, during and after conflict”

(11 February 2020) The EDVAW Platform is calling for renewed efforts by States, international and regional organizations and relevant stakeholders to address the root causes of gender-based violence against women and girls before, during, and after conflict as a continuum that requires a holistic approach for its eradication. Meaningful participation of women in all peacebuilding processes will only become a reality when the elimination of discrimination and violence against women is fully integrated into the Women, Peace and Security agenda, in line with international human rights norms and standards and Sustainable Development Goal No 5.

20 years after the ground-breaking UN Security Council Resolution 1325, which established a framework on women, peace and security (WPS), some progress has been made in acknowledging the gendered dimensions of conflict, women’s specific security needs and the importance of women’s participation in conflict prevention and resolution. However, significant challenges remain towards its full implementation and promoting accountability for it. The EDVAW Platform calls for a holistic, gendered and intersectional approach to conflict prevention that integrates the elimination of discrimination and violence against women and the realization of gender equality as an integral part of peace and security.

Over the last few decades, a comprehensive conceptual and normative framework has been developed by these independent expert women human rights mechanisms, which provide guidance in addressing the challenges toward the implementation of the WPS agenda at the international, regional and national level. The UN and regional normative frameworks on the elimination of discrimination and violence against women are all applicable during times of peace and conflict. The CEDAW Convention applies in times of peace and war, as elaborated in its General recommendation No. 30 on Women, Peace and Security.³ The Istanbul Convention, in its article 2, makes it explicit that it applies in times of peace and in situations of armed conflict.⁴ This is also the case for the Maputo Protocol, which highlights that women

¹ Whenever the Platform refers to women, girls are included.

²*Lucy Asuagbor*, Special Rapporteur on Rights of Women in Africa; *Dubravka Šimonovic*, UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences; *Hilary Gbedemah* Chairperson of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women; *Meskerem Geset Techane*, Chair-Rapporteur of the UN Working Group on the issue of discrimination against women and girls; *Margarette May Macaulay*, Rapporteur on the Rights of Women of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights; *Tatiana Rein*, President of the Committee of Experts of the Follow-up Mechanism to the Belém do Pará Convention (MESECVI); and *Marceline Naudi*, President of the Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence of the Council of Europe.

³ CEDAW/C/GC/30.

⁴ Article 2, paragraph 3 of the Istanbul Convention.

should participate in processes for conflict prevention and resolution (art. 10) and establishes States parties' responsibilities regarding the protection of women in armed conflict, including asylum seeking women, refugees and internally displaced persons (art. 11). The Committee of Experts of the MESECVI, in its interpretation of the Belém do Pará Convention⁵, asked States Parties to adopt provisions to prevent and punish sexual violence committed in armed conflicts and in natural disasters. In addition, sexual violence and other types of violence against women during wartime have been established as constituent acts of crimes against humanity and war crimes by international criminal law; the Rome Statute and ad hoc international criminal tribunals' jurisprudence have enlisted rape and other gender-based violence among the most serious crimes of concern to the international community.

The mandate of the UN Special Rapporteur has also addressed the issue of violence against women during times of conflict in thematic and country reports⁶. The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights has published a report on the impacts of an armed conflict on violence and discrimination against women.⁷ The African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) in its 2019 Study on Conflict and Human Rights addressed the specific vulnerabilities faced by women in conflict and the importance of including women in peace and security processes.⁸ In its work, several of the Platform mechanisms have noted that during numerous conflicts there is an exacerbation of gender-based violence, in particular the use of sexual violence against women and girls. Despite rape often being used as a tool of war, the causes and consequences of such gender-based violence are not yet fully addressed. In many cases, preexisting forms of violence and discrimination against women, like inadequate criminal law on rape not in line with international human rights standards, result in impunity for the majority of perpetrators. Furthermore, in some situations, statutes of limitation for prosecution of rape in peace times are also applicable during conflict. This secures impunity for perpetrators and prevents access to justice and reparation for victims of such violence.

In that sense, the EDVAW Platform believes that sexual violence and violence against women during conflict cannot be understood in isolation from gender-based discrimination that women experience in times of 'peace', but is connected to and derives from the more general patterns of gender inequality and violence against women. This results in women becoming more vulnerable to conflict-related violence and human rights violations in general and in the failure to provide access to interim measures and reparations. The Platform argues that a gendered approach to conflict prevention and resolution must include measures to silence the guns by controlling and regulating the arms trade and circulation, including of small arms, which can be used for committing gender-based violence. Gender-related killings of women during conflict are connected to those that take place during peace; in order to prevent and eradicate femicides, States must collect and disseminate data on such crimes, including information about the relationship between perpetrator and victim.

⁵See Recommendation No. 7 of the Second Hemispheric Report. MESECVI. [Second Hemispheric Report on the implementation of the Belém do Pará Convention](#), 2012. OEA/Ser.L/II.6. 10.

⁶ See E/CN.4/1998/54; E/CN.4/2001/73 and A/HRC/7/6/Add.4.

⁷ IACHR. [Violence and Discrimination against Women in the Armed Conflict in Colombia](#), 2006. OEA/Ser.L/V/II.

⁸ ACHPR. [Addressing Human Rights in Conflict Situations: Towards a More Systematic and Effective Role for the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights](#), 2019.

The active role of women, as civil society leaders, human rights defenders, combatants, officials in State and international institutions and others, must also be recognized. One of the major developments introduced by UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and other resolutions that followed was acknowledging this and thus placing the emphasis on women's participation in all decision-making levels in national, regional and international institutions for prevention and resolution of conflicts. This should include the elimination of violence and sexual harassment of women in political and public life, including during elections, with an aim at ensuring women's equal, meaningful and effective participation, in line with the principle of full equality and non-discrimination.⁹ The Platform experts highlight that the active participation of women in all conflict prevention and resolution efforts is a condition for their effectiveness and legitimacy.

The Platform members hold the view that promoting the full implementation of the women, peace and security agenda, in consonance with the international human rights framework and the SDG agenda, is not only inextricable from facing the most urgent security challenges in the world but also an important strategy to push back the pushbacks on women's rights. The Platform on EDVAW has previously called on States to increase support to the expert mechanisms in the face of pushbacks that have been blocking and slowing down progress in the elimination of discrimination and gender-based violence against women.¹⁰ The EDVAW Platform reiterates this call and highlights that this Platform is a strong tool for promoting a holistic and integrated approach for eradicating discrimination and violence against women, in times of conflict and peace.

SIGNED

Lucy Asuagbor, Special Rapporteur on the rights of women in Africa

Dubravka Šimonovic, UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences

Hilary Gbedemah, Chairperson of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)

Meskerem Geset Techane, Chair-Rapporteur of the UN Working Group on Discrimination against Women and Girls

Margarette May Macaulay, Rapporteur on the Rights of Women at the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights

Tatiana Rein, President of the Committee of Experts of the Follow-up Mechanism to the Belém do Pará Convention (MESECVI)

Marceline Naudi, President of the of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence of the Council of Europe (GREVIO)

⁹ See the report on violence against women in politics by the UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences (A/73/301).

¹⁰ See joint statement, "[Independent women human rights mechanisms are part of the solution to 'push back the pushbacks and keep pushing back'](#)", 20 March 2019.