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Women Peacebuilders advancing Sustainable peace



Summary

1. Women, Peace and Security-A policy framework
2. Role of Pakistan's Women in Peace
3. What is the role of Parliaments and Parliamentarians in advancing the implementation of WPS Agenda?
4. How Parliamentarians can support women peacebuilders?



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Summary

Twenty four years ago in the year 2000, the UN Security Council adopted SCR 1325, the first resolution on women, peace, and security (WPS). This resolution is a significant milestone as it establishes a connection between women and the peace and security agenda. The Security Council has adopted an additional nine resolutions on WPS after adopting SCR 1325. Women's Policy and Security framework recognizes that women must play a crucial role in any endeavor to establish long-term global peace and security. WPS encourages women to participate equally and meaningfully in peace processes, peacebuilding, and security, all from a gendered perspective. However, the proportion of women participating in formal peacemaking processes continues to be low despite several global and regional promises and initiatives. In 2022, women's participation as negotiators in UN-led or co-led peace processes dropped to 16%, down from 19% in 2021 and 23% in 2020. Since 1990, women's groups' representatives have rarely been signatories to peace agreements. Ensuring women's participation in peace negotiations and peacekeeping activities is crucial for the advancement of their role in peacebuilding. There is evidence that the presence of women in peace negotiations improves peace agreements' quality and longevity and increases their number of provisions pertaining to political reform and rate of implementation.

Parliaments play pivotal role in setting the direction of the decision making process in any country. They can promote WPS agenda by working closely with women peacebuilders. They can foster gender sensitive peace processes within communities and beyond through various means.

A. Advancing the implementation of WPS Agenda: Role of Parliaments and Parliamentarians

- i. Encourage participation of women in decision-making and peace process
- ii. Allocate resources to promote gender equality and women's empowerment in all peace and security activities
- iii. Develop National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security and establish Robust framework for reporting, monitoring and implementation
- iv. Establish cross party caucuses to advance WPS agenda
- v. Build capacities of MPs and women peacebuilders to engage as effective peacebuilders
- vi. Establish connections with organizations working in the areas of peacebuilding and security

B. Supporting Women Peacebuilders: How Parliamentarians can make a difference?

- i. Join Forces with women peacebuilders
- ii. Express Solidarity with Women Peacebuilders



- iii. Encourage Women legislators to take up leadership positions
- iv. Improve representation of women in national and regional organizations
- v. Undertake all essential legislation to empower Women
- vi. Increase investment in women empowerment
- vii. Provide easy Loans to women entrepreneurs
- viii. Develop Regional Action Plans
- ix. Promote Gender perspective in peace agreements
- x. Parliamentary Diplomacy to express solidarity with women peacebuilders in countries of conflict
- xi. Engage with women-led organizations
- xii. Appoint Women as High level representatives or envoys on Women Security

Achieving meaningful and equitable participation of women in peace processes, peacebuilding, and security necessitates strong political will and the enforcement of stringent measures.



1. Introduction:

Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) is “a policy framework that recognizes that peace and security is more sustainable when women are equal partners in the prevention of violent conflict, the delivery of relief and recovery efforts, and in the forging of lasting peace.”¹ The Women's Policy and Security (WPS) framework recognizes that women must play a crucial role in any endeavor to establish long-term global peace and security. WPS encourages women to participate equally and meaningfully in peace processes, peacebuilding, and security, all from a gendered perspective. Women and children are the primary victims of conflict and experience structural and personal insecurities, such as sexual abuse and harassment, as is frequently observed.

Twenty four years ago in the year 2000, the UN Security Council adopted SCR 1325, the first resolution on women, peace, and security (WPS). This resolution is a significant milestone as it establishes a connection between women and the peace and security agenda. It also recognizes that women and girls are affected differently by armed conflicts as compared to men and boys and it stresses that women must actively and effectively participate in peacemaking, including peace processes and peacebuilding.

SCR 1325 consists of four pillars²

- A. The role of women in conflict prevention;
- B. Women's participation in peacemaking and peacebuilding;
- C. The protection of women's rights during and after conflict; and
- D. Women's specific needs during repatriation, resettlement, rehabilitation, reintegration and post-conflict reconstruction.

The Security Council adopted an additional nine resolutions on WPS after adopting SCR 1325, the most latest of which was in October 2019. These resolutions are frequently referred to as being divided into two categories.

- SCR 1325 (2000), SCR 1889 (2013), SCR 2122 (2013), SCR 2242 (2015), and SCR 2493 (2019) are the first set of resolutions that support women's active and productive participation in peacemaking and peacebuilding.
- The second set (S/RES/1820 (2008), S/RES/1888 (2009), S/RES/1960 (2010), S/RES/2106 (2013), and S/RES/2467 (2019) aims to prevent and address conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) and started with the adoption of SCR 1820 in 2008.

¹ <https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/Women-Peace-and-Security-and-US-Policy-An-Overview.pdf>

² <https://peacemaker.un.org/wps/normative-frameworks/un-security-council-resolutions>



Women and children are the primary victims of conflict and experience structural and personal insecurities, such as sexual abuse and harassment, as is frequently observed. The Rwandan civil war (1990-94)³ and Yemen's eight-year strife⁴ serve as stark reminders of similar atrocities. By reducing these incidents and giving victims a voice, women peacekeepers can help ensure that the victims receive justice and have access to extensive medical care and treatments. The proportion of women participating in formal peacemaking processes continues to be low despite several global and regional promises and initiatives. Many peace agreements still lack gender provisions that adequately address women's security and peacebuilding concerns. Too few women are represented in peace and security decision-making, despite the passing of multiple resolutions and advances in related policy and practice, which collectively comprise the women, peace, and security (WPS) agenda. Global security has deteriorated, leading to significant increases in military expenditure. In the meantime, financing for and support for women's peacebuilding initiatives remain inadequate. For far too many people, the attainment of peace and security is still a distant goal. The UN Women recent statistics reveals that⁵

- In 2022, women's participation as negotiators in UN-led or co-led peace processes dropped to 16%, down from 19% in 2021 and 23% in 2020.
- Since 1990, women's groups' representatives have rarely been signatories to peace agreements.
- In 2022, only one out of 18 peace agreements had a representative of a women's group or organization as a signatory.
- In 2022, 33% of peace agreements included provisions referencing women, girls, and gender, similar to previous years.

Evidence suggests that women involved in peace processes tend to be more concerned with transitional justice, economic development, education, and reconciliation than they are with the war's spoils. These are all essential components of a long-lasting peace. In 2021, a record breaking 45 women spoke in the country-specific meetings and 15 thematic meetings in the UN Security Council.⁶ In 2022, women represented 46% of the briefers invited to speak at the UN Security Council under rule 39, a notable increase from the average of 19% seen between 2013 and 2017.⁷

³ Binaifer Nowrojee. "Shattered Lives: Sexual Violence during the Rwandan Genocide and its Aftermath. Human Rights Watch." 1996. Accessed at <https://www.hrw.org/reports/1996/Rwanda.htm>

⁴ "More than 11,000 children killed or injured in Yemen," UNICEF, December 12, 2022. Accessed at <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/more-11000-children-killed-or-injured-yemen>. Also see "An average of six women killed every week in Yemen as a result of the ongoing conflict," CARE, March 24, 2021. Accessed at <https://www.care.org/news-and-stories/press-releases/an-average-of-six-women-killed-every-week-in-yemen-as-a-result-of-the-ongoing-conflict/>

⁵ <https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/peace-and-security/facts-and-figures>

⁶ UN Women, *Women, Peace and Security 2020-21*, (UN Women, 2022).

⁷ <https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/peace-and-security/facts-and-figures>



Women peacebuilders at the forefront, when it comes to negotiating with armed groups, helping disadvantaged communities, and standing up for victims of violence. Their efforts go beyond formal negotiations for peace to include a wide range of activities such as livelihood support, humanitarian aid, and fostering traditional dialogues among communities. Their close ties to communities make them a primary channels through which war-affected populations express their needs and concerns. According to the WPS agenda, women peacebuilders should be involved in any inclusive peace and security decision-making process. However, their critical roles are frequently undervalued and inadequately supported. Furthermore, they are more vulnerable and frequently become victims of political and gender-based violence.

Ensuring women's participation in peace negotiations and peacekeeping activities is crucial for the advancement of their role in peacebuilding. As per latest statistics, by July 2023, 107 countries and territories had implemented National Action Plans (NAPs). Thirteen (13) regional and sub-regional organizations have action plans and strategies in place to improve the implementation and monitoring of women, peace, and security in the member countries. Of the 13 regional and sub-regional action plans and strategies, 9 (69%) prioritize improving women's representation in peace negotiations and mediation, while 6 (46%) include references to climate change.⁸

2. Women, Peace and Pakistan:

The history of the role of women in peace, and security in Pakistan is as old as the history of this nation itself. Working within the cultural context of society, the Muslim women of the Indian subcontinent remained actively engaged in the political struggle which culminated in the independence of Pakistan in 1947. Soon after independence this nation grieved the death of its founder, Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah. The political crisis which ensued his death brought into limelight the integrity and resilience of his sister, Mohtarma Fatimah Jinnah who led the people's movement against the first military ruler of this country in 1965. Since then our women have left deep marks on the political as well as economic fabric of the nation as well as the wider region. Taking oath as the first woman prime minister of Pakistan in 1988, Honorable Ms. Benazir Bhutto also secured the historic distinction for having the first one to own the Premier's office in the entire Muslim world. The Parliament of Pakistan set the record in 2008 when Dr. Fehmida Mirza became first women Speaker of the National Assembly of Pakistan. Since then, number of important ministries have been led by women lawmakers in the past as well as in the incumbent government. Proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments was 20.5 percent in 2022.⁹ Despite the aforementioned statistics, women still make up 50% of Pakistan's population overall and they are underrepresented in the peacekeeping activities.

⁸ <https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/peace-and-security/facts-and-figures>

⁹ The World Bank, Gender Data Portal, <https://genderdata.worldbank.org/indicators/sg-gen-parl-zs/> accessed on 14 Mach, 2024.





Pakistan's peace and security landscape faces specific challenges due to regional instability, growing rifts within diverse communities, and divisions exacerbated by crises and emergency situations such as COVID-19 pandemic and climate shocks/disasters. Communities have become more polarized on social, economic, and political levels as a result of threats of violence, even in virtual spaces. There are several reasons that contribute to this menace, however they differ geographically within the country. Youth and women's participation in civic space is further hampered by exclusion from democratic processes, cultural norms, social biases, and militant violence.

The initiation of the WPS agenda is still under discussion in Pakistan and the Government of Pakistan has not signed UNSCR 1325.¹⁰ Several countries have come up with their national action plans on women's inclusion in peace building. This list does not include Pakistan. However, the Government of Pakistan has recognized gender security as a key pillar in its first National Security Policy 2022-26. The policy aims to "ensure integration of gender equity into national security narratives through full and meaningful participation of women in decision-making, law enforcement, justice sector, and peacekeeping." Pakistan continues to rank fifth among nations that contribute troops and female engagement teams to UN peacekeeping operations, with over 200,000 troops deployed abroad over the last 60 years. Additionally, the country achieved its target of contributing contingent forces with 15% female soldiers.¹¹

Women MPs are emerging as catalysts for cross party dialogue on imperative social issues and above all to promote peace, tolerance and rule of law. Members of Pakistan's Parliamentary Women's Caucus have been actively advocating for gender-sensitive laws and policies. They have prioritized gender-sensitivity in combating violent extremism and radicalization. The Young Parliamentarians Forum and the Senate Policy Research Forum, have seen both men and women MPs from the government as well as opposition benches joining hands for key matters faced by the citizens. Consequently they have opened new avenues for public-interest legislation, conflict prevention and peace building.

3. Role of Parliamentarians in advancing WPS agenda:

Finding long-term solutions for development and peace requires the involvement of women. The international community needs to make greater investments in the meaningful involvement of women at all levels, from participation to prevention, protection to resolution and recovery, whether it is through peacebuilding, peacekeeping, or conflict and crisis response. There is evidence that the presence of women in peace negotiations

¹⁰ Salma Malik, Ahmed Hasan Awan, and Talha Ibrahim. "Role of Pakistani Female Peacekeepers in Enhancing International Humanitarian Law: Opportunities And Challenges," *Margalla Papers* 27, no. 1 (2023).

¹¹ Salma Malik, Ahmed Hasan Awan, and Talha Ibrahim. "Role of Pakistani Female Peacekeepers in Enhancing International Humanitarian Law: Opportunities And Challenges," *Margalla Papers* 27, no. 1 (2023).



improves peace agreements' quality and longevity and increases their number of provisions pertaining to political reform and rate of implementation.

Parliaments are symbols of democracy and provide a critical forum for, leadership and safeguard the rule of law and human rights. The legislative and oversight roles of MPs provide the elected women with an important platform to influence social change and contribute to peace and security agenda. However their capacity to perform this role effectively is contingent upon access to sound knowledge and information through accurate and objective research support. This faculty is best provided through dialogue within the region where female MPs be positioned to share ideas, gather facts of best practices, seek solutions and make decisions in light of factual analysis. Parliaments often manage disputes in the political space, thus avoiding violent conflict. Parliamentary debate, agreements and dialogue between political parties and parliamentarians and interaction between parliament and constituents, all contribute to keeping the peace. Parliaments play pivotal role in setting the direction of the decision making process in any country. They can promote WPS agenda by working closely with women peacebuilders. They can foster gender sensitive peace processes within communities and beyond through various means.

A. Advancing the implementation of WPS Agenda: Role of Parliaments and Parliamentarians:

a) Integrate and implement UNSCR 1325 into national legislation and policy framework: The resolution obligates member states to take action in several inter-related areas such as¹²

- i. Participation of women in decision-making and peace process:** This includes increasing the number of women at all decision-making level bodies (national, international and regional) responsible for prevention, management and resolution of conflict. It also requires that all actors in negotiation and peace process focus on special needs of women and girls during repatriation, resettlement, rehabilitation, reintegration and post-conflict reconstruction. Moreover, the states are also required to include women in peace agreement implementation mechanism and take measures that support 'peace initiatives of local women and indigenous conflict resolution process,
- ii. The protection of women and girls**
- iii. Gender perspectives and trainings in peacekeeping**

Strong political will is crucial to advance implementation of WPS agenda in any country. Parliaments can thus make efforts to integrate and implement UNSCR 1325 into national legislation and policy framework. Moreover, Parliaments can enact and

¹² https://www.un.org/womenwatch/ianwge/taskforces/wps/Five_Years_On_Ch_2.pdf





enforce laws and policies that promote gender equality and protect the rights of women in conflict-affected areas. This includes addressing issues such as gender-based violence and discrimination, as well as ensuring women's access to justice and economic opportunities.

In the context of Pakistan, the parliament can establish a specialized committee to thoroughly review the resolution and its implication for the country. The committee can engage various stakeholder including relevant ministry, legal experts, policy makers and CSOs and make recommendations to the parliament for future course of action on the resolution. Based on the review, the Parliament can then issue formal statement clarifying Pakistan's position on UNSCR 1325. However, when it comes to improving women participation in political process, the government has enforced stringent measures which include increasing the proportion of women MPs in the national parliaments, passing pro-women legislations, gender-sensitive budgeting. The government has enacted laws to address gender-based violence, promote women's access to justice and create economic opportunities for women.

- b) Allocate Resources:** Advancing the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda needs a collaborative effort from multiple stakeholders. The need for stronger political will among governments to promote gender equality and women's empowerment in all peace and security activities is critical for progress. This includes not just making commitments, but also allocating resources to encourage women's engagement in peace processes, such as funding for women-led projects and organizations operating in conflict-affected areas. Without political will and financial assistance, progress toward implementing the WPS agenda would be limited.
- c) Develop National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security:** The formulation of a national action plan (NAP) is critical tool for moving forward with the commitments of Member States in this area. Such plans provide an opportunity for national stakeholders to identify priorities, allocate resources, determine responsibilities, and initiate strategic actions within a defined time frame. Parliaments can provide a conducive environment for the development of a national action plan on women, peace, and security within their countries. The process should be led by a high level ministry that not only has a political influence but also enjoys the confidence of women groups. Few strategies for developing action plans have been emerged, the most important of which are:
- iv. *“The use of gender audits and surveys to assess the current state of affairs on gender mainstreaming in national governments and peacekeeping efforts;*
 - v. *The formation of cross-government working groups to promote an atmosphere of cooperation and collaboration across governments departments and between the government and civil society;*





- vi. *The establishment of concrete mechanisms for monitoring and accountability and*
- vii. *The allocation of sufficient resources to give the policies teeth and substance.*¹³

The above mentioned strategies are the first steps that states can take to implement UNSCR 1325. Furthermore, governments can work with civil society organizations and foreign partners to develop comprehensive plans that promote gender equality and meaningful participation of women in all stages of peacebuilding. Recently, the Government of Pakistan has launched its first ever National Security Policy 2022-26 where gender security has been recognized as a key pillar of a state. The policy has identified objectives which include:

*“Enable free and secure participation of women and transgender persons in all avenues of public life. Maximise the inclusion of women in decision making forums, policy formulation, and institutions working on peace, protection and security. Protect citizens, especially women and transgender persons, from gender-based violence.”*¹⁴

- d) Establish Robust framework for reporting, monitoring and implementation:** To demonstrate tangible benefits in the lives of women, girls, and communities, NAPs' actual impact should be systematically monitored and reviewed on a regular basis. An effective monitoring and evaluation system can help improve policies and programmes, strengthen commitment and partnerships, encourage accountability and build a foundation for sustainable investments. It is imperative that a system of this kind be established during the planning phase, in conjunction with a thorough context analysis and evaluation of various elements, stakeholders, hazards, and requirements. The context analysis establishes a baseline for future monitoring and evaluation. The annual progress report can be submitted to the Parliament strengthening the process.
- e) Role of Parliamentary Groups in advancing WPS agenda:** Parliamentarians can collaborate with like-minded members of other parties to advance issues or concerns by establishing cross-party parliamentary groups. This is a valuable means of working outside of party lines. Within the legislature, cross-party parliamentary groups can serve as an effective means of advancing the WPS agenda. The WPS agenda pertains to all MPs, not only female MPs. Women's caucuses, however, frequently have a significant impact on the advancement of gender-sensitive legislation and regulations, particularly those pertaining to WPS. Women's caucuses

¹³ https://www.un.org/womenwatch/ianwge/taskforces/wps/Five_Years_On_Ch_2.pdf

¹⁴ National Security Division Government of Pakistan, National Security Policy of Pakistan 2022-26, (National Security Division, 2022).





have been efficient in leveraging the influence of female MPs from various parties for the sake of gender equality. Such caucuses are also frequently used as a point of contact for women's rights organizations seeking to participate in parliamentary proceedings. In Pakistan, Women Parliamentary Caucus (WPC) since its creation has been instrumental in promoting dialogues for peacebuilding through various initiatives. In 2022, the forum organized a conference to promote meaningful role of women parliamentarians in peacebuilding and sustainable development. Enhancing women's participation and ending violence against women and girls are key mandated functions of WPC.

f) Violent Extremism and Women Parliamentary Caucus: Since violent extremism (VE) has become a threat to people's safety and security, especially women and girls, attention must be paid to the gendered aspect of VE. The UN Secretary General's 2015 Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism, which featured a section on gender, and UNSCR 2242 (2015), which was part of the larger WPS agenda, both acknowledged the need to concentrate on the gendered impacts of violent extremism. In 2018, a High-Level Advisory Group on Countering Violent Extremism and Terrorism was also formed by the IPU. Gender Sensitive Laws and Policies have been actively promoted by Pakistan's Women Parliamentary Caucus. The caucus strived to ensure that the efforts to combat violent extremism and radicalization were gender sensitive.¹⁵ In order to advance gender-sensitive laws and policies in their own countries, other parliaments can take inspiration from Pakistan's Women Parliamentary Caucus and implement similar measures. They may create similar caucuses or committees dedicated to gender problems, which would help to guarantee that measures taken to counter violent extremism and radicalization take gender equality into account. These organizations can also advocate for laws that criminalize discrimination and violence against women and encourage their involvement in security and peacebuilding decision-making processes.

g) Establish All Party Parliamentary Group on Women, Peace and Security: Establishing a parliamentary group dedicated to women's security and peace can be an effective way of demonstrating a commitment to tackling these issues in their entirety. Countries are making efforts to develop such committees. For example, Canada has developed a Canadian Committee on Women, Peace and Security (CCWPS). Such a group can act as a focal point for raising awareness among lawmakers about the significance of WPS, emphasizing its importance beyond being a "women's issue." Additionally, having a dedicated parliamentary group can help legislators create focused plans and initiatives for integrating WPS principles into laws, regulations, and policies. This includes advocating for women participation to

¹⁵ UNDP, *Parliaments as partners supporting the Women, Peace and Security Agenda: A Global Handbook* (Norway: UNDP, 2019).





decision making at all levels on preventive diplomacy, negotiations, negotiation, reconciliation and humanitarian assistance.

- h) Join Forces with women peacebuilders:** Parliamentarians can also directly engage with women peacebuilders in order to amplify their voices and support their initiatives. Parliaments can develop mechanisms for dialogue and collaboration with women's organizations, providing them with opportunities to contribute to policymaking and decision-making processes. Parliaments can strengthen the effectiveness and sustainability of peacebuilding efforts by joining forces with women peacebuilders.
- i) Develop Capacity of MPs and women peacebuilders to engage in WPS agenda:** Another crucial aspect of advancing the WPS agenda is developing capacities of MPs to engage as effective peacebuilders. This involves equipping them with the knowledge, skills, and resources needed to promote gender equality, prevent conflict, and build sustainable peace. Capacity development for MPs can take various forms, including training programs, workshops, seminars, and exchanges with experts from NGOs working in the field of peacebuilding and gender equality. These initiatives can help MPs understand the root causes of conflict, the importance of women's participation in peace processes and the role they can play in advancing the WPS agenda. Likewise, Parliaments can allocate funds and resources for necessary training of women peacebuilders which can be utilized to building their skills in negotiation, conflict resolution, and advocacy, as well as providing them with access to networks and platforms where their voices can be heard. In this way, parliaments can help ensure that women are able to play a meaningful role in peace processes and decision-making.
- j) Partner with NGOs and local community groups:** Parliamentarians can work closely with organizations working in the areas of peacebuilding and women rights. When legislators seek to involve communities in achieving the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda, establishing connections with civil society organizations is extremely advantageous. Evidence from around the world indicates that legislative groups focused on women's rights and equality have frequently collaborated closely with women's rights NGOs to achieve shared objectives. Committees dealing with foreign affairs, human rights, welfare, and security frequently rely on the expertise of non-governmental organizations in domains including peacebuilding, women's rights, security sector reform, and human rights. These organizations usually have strong community networks, significant convening power, and specific expertise in gender issues. Both parties may profit from such collaborations, with NGOs able to take advantage of MPs' official convincing power and more successfully channel their advocacy toward programming outcomes or legislative reform while MPs are able to draw on the technical advice, research skills, and community trust of beneficiary



groups.¹⁶ Such collaborations can encourage the exchange of knowledge, best practices, and resources, ultimately strengthening grassroots efforts to promote gender equality and peace.

B. Supporting Women Peacebuilders: How Parliamentarians can make a difference?

Women peacebuilders are an asset of any society who are peace volunteers in communities and beyond. They can come from amongst local government workers, teachers and Members of Parliament. Their focus remains holding peacebuilding activities including but not limited to dialogue and advocacy. Women peacebuilders play a crucial role in promoting reconciliation, justice, and sustainable peace by addressing the root causes of conflicts and promoting gender equality and social justice. Their contribution is indispensable to develop inclusive and peaceful societies.

In Pakistan, the Women Parliamentary Caucus (WPC) in the National Assembly plays the role of linchpin in gathering and inspiring women peacebuilders from not only all over Pakistan but also the world at large. To curb violence against women and gender based violence, in addition to empowering women to play their imperative part as peace builders, the women parliamentarians have built alliances with the civil society and academia for better informing and effectively influencing the legislative and policy making processes. In March 2017, WPC organized an international conference on Role of Women Parliamentarians in Strengthening Democracy and Social Justice, which saw women MPs from 12 countries deliberating on role of women MPs as peace makers by working to strengthen democracy and dialogue for social justice in the world. The conference reiterated that:

- i. Membership of sitting women parliamentarians should be compulsory in negotiations and decision making during any conflict-management scenario.*
- ii. As mothers, daughters and sisters, women can play their role for the promotion of peace at a very early age. Inculcation of peace at a nurturing age of child can play critical role in the reduction of aggression and violence.¹⁷*

The Members of Parliament (MPs) have a leading and decisive role in not only creating opportunities for women to be empowered and trained to play crucial role as peace builders but also in supporting the actions of the women peace builders during conflict as well as in peace times. A set of ways recommended is as follows:

¹⁶ UNDP, *Parliaments as partners supporting the Women, Peace and Security Agenda: A Global Handbook* (Norway: UNDP, 2019).

¹⁷ WPC National Assembly of Pakistan Report Int'l Conference on Role of Women parliamentarians in Strengthening Democracy and Social Justice, p. 8.



- a) Women face gender-based violence of different kinds and forms from different sides and dimensions in conflict situations. At the rear of freedom movement of Kashmir and Palestine against the naked oppression by Indian and Israeli occupied forces; and civil war and conflict situation in Iraq against ISIS, women and children are suffering from scarcity of resources and are the first victim of human rights violations. More than decade of the conflict generated a widow crisis in these three conflict zones. They solace the freedom fighters as mothers and daughters and at the same time express their leadership skills in political process and decision making.
- b) **Increase opportunities for Women and Girls:** Legislators must ensure unwavering support for girls' higher education, their just opportunity in employments as well as maximum role as elected political leaders at federal, provincial (state) and local tiers of governance.
- c) **Express Solidarity with Women Peacebuilders:** Women MPs thus must raise voice of solidarity nationally on floor of the House and internationally through diplomacy on international forums to support these resilient women within conflict zones. Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto shaheed, the first women Prime Minister of the Muslim world, always led from the front in raising voice against terrorism being a global challenge. She continued her struggle to exemplify role of women as symbol of peace negotiators world over and embraced martyrdom in a terrorist attack only to inspire thousands of men and women peace builder in the country and the world over.
- d) **Encourage Women legislators to take up leadership positions:** Parliamentary parties must encourage Women legislators to take up leadership positions such as Chairs of committees and cross-party caucuses that will inspire them to play their role as peace makers in addition to support women peace builders working in different capacities ranging from non-governmental sector to human rights activists, from women in academia to public servants.
- e) **Improve representation of women in national and regional organizations:** Parliamentarians must persuade governments to ensure equal gender representation and inclusion at positions of authority as well as at regional forums. Recently, the announcement of increased quota of women in Provincial Services of Punjab by the first women Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz is manifestation of same spirit.
- f) **Undertake all essential legislation to empower Women:** Parliamentarians must undertake all essential legislation to empower women in



- society in terms of socio-political clout as well as financial independence and empowerment.
- g) Provide easy Loans to women entrepreneurs:** MPs must encourage government to provide easy loans to women entrepreneurs to include them in economic development such as was done by Sri Lanka where internal conflict led to 30,000 widows but the economic empowerment of women led them to become peace builders who were part and parcel of arbitration of peace negotiations between Tamils and Sinhalese. In Pakistan, the Benazir Income Support Program (BISP) is another successful story to be consolidated for women empowerment.
 - h) Increase investment in women empowerment:** Pakistan, Turkey and Iran are hosting for decades around 9 million homeless refugees from conflict prone Afghanistan, Middle East and Syria, which has left women, children and marginalized stranded in addition to continued attacks on these three countries. MPs must advocate nationally and internationally, the one demand that there should much greater investment in the women empowerment structurally, institutionally, ideologically, culturally and financially to curb conditions of poverty forthwith globally as it indirectly creates conditions for terrorists instead of improving citizenship.
 - i) Develop Regional Action Plans:** Parliaments can also seek to develop regional action plans on women, peace and security. The importance of regional approaches to security management and peacekeeping is the magnitude and complexity of global security threats, crises and intra-state conflicts that frequently spill across borders have prompted an increase in regional approaches to security management, peacemaking, protection and prevention. Many organizations including ASEAN, the EU, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD), NATO and the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) have adopted dedicated regional action plans (RAPs) on women, peace and security with the long-term aim of achieving sustainable peace and stability. Such plans can be developed by a through consultative process among regional parliaments and it can reflect the efforts and inputs of a wide array of institutions and stakeholders engaged in women's rights, gender equality and peace and security work across the region.
 - j) Promote Gender perspective in peace agreements:** Parliamentarians have the ability to seek for incorporation of gender perspectives into peace agreements during negotiation and implementation and they can also utilize diplomatic channels to persuade other member states to follow suit. They may advocate for the inclusion of gender-specific provisions in peace agreements,



like those pertaining to women's access to resources and justice, protection from gender-based violence, and participation in decision-making processes.

- k) Parliamentary Diplomacy to express solidarity with women peacebuilders in countries of conflict:** Parliamentary diplomacy refers to the bilateral and multilateral ties between legislatures. It can also be explained as “the full range of international activities undertaken by parliamentarians in order to increase mutual understanding between countries, to assist each other in improving the control of governments and the representation of people and increase the democratic legitimacy of inter-governmental institutions”.¹⁸ Parliamentary diplomacy can be an effective means of supporting women peacebuilders in other countries, leveraging the unique role of parliamentarians in representing the will of the people and advocating for policy change. Through diplomatic missions, cross-party collaborations and informal channels, parliamentarians can engage with counterparts in other countries to express solidarity with women peacebuilders and promote their cause. While there are challenges such as sovereignty concerns and resource constraints, parliamentary diplomacy offers a valuable avenue for advancing the agenda of women's inclusion in peacebuilding efforts worldwide. The high-level political actors and national and state legislatures can play crucial role in ensuring women participation in design and operation of peacebuilding activities. MPs can also use diplomatic pressure on governments to support women peacebuilders in other countries. This can include raising the issue in bilateral and multilateral meetings and advocating for policies that promote women's participation in peace processes.
- l) Engage with women-led organizations:** Parliamentarians can form partnerships with women-led organizations and civil society groups from within the country and other countries to support their peacebuilding efforts. This can include providing resources, technical support, and political backing for their initiatives.’
- m) High level representatives or envoys on Women Security:** The appointment of regional envoys to direct and coordinate operations has increased over time. These high-level devoted positions have had a meaningful impact on their respective organizations. The appointment of dedicated advocates has also helped to strengthen collaboration and partnerships between these organizations and the UN, as seen by the signing of Memorandums of Understanding, joint missions, and initiatives. Thus Parliamentarians can seek for the addition of women as high level representatives. The presence of women

¹⁸ Franz W. Weisglas and Gonnig De Boer, “Parliamentary diplomacy,” *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy*, Vol.2, Issue 1 (2007), pp.93-94.



in such envoys can have a meaningful impact on the outcomes as women can ensure women security.

4. Conclusion:

WPS agenda recognizes that women must play a crucial role in any endeavor to establish long-term global peace and security. Historically, women participation as negotiators in peacebuilding processes has remained low. Ensuring women participation in peacekeeping activities needs active engagement of MPs. MPs can make efforts to increase women participation in political processes as well as peacebuilding negotiation processes. MPs can also support the actions of women peacebuilders. This entire process necessitates strong political will and stringent measures to ensure that women participate equally and meaningfully in peace processes, peacebuilding, and security, all from a gendered perspective.



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