Women Mediating across the Triple Nexus:
Addressing socio-economic challenges resulting from Climate Change

CSW Side-Event | 20 March 2024
Summary Note

This CSW68 side-event was co-organised by the Pacific Women Mediators Network (PWMN), the Mediterranean Women Mediators Network (MWMN), the Permanent Missions of Italy and the Marshall Islands to the United Nations, and UN Women. The purpose of the discussion was to provide valuable policy recommendations for global policy-makers to support women mediators networks during the elaboration of the Pact of the Future and in preparation for the Summit of the Future, the 2025 Anniversary of the Women, Peace, and Security Agenda, and the 2025 review of the UN Peacebuilding Architecture Review.

In a time of growing global securitisation and militarised responses to intersecting crises, including climate change, it is critical to reflect on the context in 2000, when women peacebuilders collectively advocated for the women, peace and security (WPS) agenda at the Security Council to call for a human security approach based on women's meaningful participation and conflict prevention. Twenty-four years later, their calls remain relevant, as a lot still needs to be done to implement the WPS Agenda across the humanitarian-devleopment-peace (Triple) nexus.

The experiences of women who work within local communities offer valuable insights to policymakers on how to integrate the WPS Agenda across the Triple Nexus. "*I cannot afford to be working on a single issue because I don't see these as separate issues at all- and I fear that those who may have this approach may not be able to achieve anything,*" said Veena Singh of the Pacific Women Mediators Network. Local women peacebuilders are engaged in the diverse spectrum of activities, including responding to the challenges of climate change, development, disaster risk reduction (DRR), and conflict prevention. They are able to leverage on each other's expertise by coming together in regional women mediator networks and by engaging in cross-regional learning among themselves and with policymakers and donors. Their strategies emphasize action-oriented learning, oral traditions, and the sustenance of grassroots movements for lasting impact.

Climate change is one of the issues that require a comprehensive gender-sensitive response across the Triple Nexus. The maps of the most vulnerable countries to climate change and to conflicts clearly overlap. The foresight analytics collected by UN Women suggest that by 2050, under a worst case scenario, there will be an additional 158 million women and girls who will be pushed into poverty because of climate crises. In many contexts, climate change drives gender exclusion and discrimination. Among various security challenges, climate change remains the single greatest threat to the security of all Pacific peoples, as well as in many small island developing states (SIDS) and island states. Despite the international pushback to recognise climate-related security risks, the Blue Pacific Strategy to 2050 and Boe Declaration on Regional Security affirm the concept of security that includes human security, economic security, humanitarian assistance, and environmental security. Only this type of security can build resilience to disasters and climate change. In a scenario where people are forced to leave their homes due to the impact of extractive industries, climate-related disasters, conflicts and instability, they do not only lose physical spaces, they lose their communities and a sense of belonging, eroding identities, and fracturing social fabrics. The experiences of local women suggest the need to create co-benefits by linking the commitments to climate action, DRR, peacebuilding and women's meaningful participation and leadership.

There is little clarity among policymakers about the type of support regional women mediators networks require and who can provide this support. The global policy support for women mediators networks started emerging following the Global Study on WPS in 2015. The first mention of the regional women mediators networks in the UN Secretary-General's reports on WPS dates back to 2016 (S/2016/822). In 2018, the UN Secretary-General highlighted that networks of women mediators 'form part of a movement aimed at enhancing the influence of women throughout the duration of peace processes, from conflict analysis to preventive diplomacy, and to peacemaking and post-conflict peacebuilding and reconciliation' (S/2018/900, para. 39). In 2023, the New Agenda for Peace called for a shift in how the international community can think and do conflict prevention and peacebuilding and includes some of the strongest language ever from the UN Secretary-General on the need to transform gendered power dynamics in peace and security (p. 13). However, concrete action points have not been clearly articulated to date.

Women mediators networks are critical mechanisms for sustaining peace because they 1) ensure coordinated mobilisation to support women's meaningful participation across the Triple Nexus in a holistic and coordinated manner, enhancing complementarity, policy coherence, and coordination of diverse policy actors; 2) provide technical support and protection for women within communities and amplify voices of smaller and grassroots organisations; 3) expand peace constituencies by providing important mentorship for young women; 4) accelerate and monitor the implementation of the WPS agenda through feminist mechanisms; 5) actively contribute to peace and security efforts and advance conflict sensitivity across the Triple Nexus, fostering long-term resilience and social cohesion; 6) build strong lines of open communication between diverse women and government institutions; 7) bring traditional and indigenous leaders to become parts of the process. They amplify women's collective strengths and resilience in the context of wars and conflicts waged by men.

As such, women mediators networks have great potential, if adequately supported. For example, with the launch of the Pacific Women Mediators Network, the process of women's engagement in the Pacific can become more streamlined across various government priorities, including climate and security, development, peace and security and human rights. It will also ensure that all processes, policies and programming are gender sensitive. As lessons learned from Cyprus offer, it is however extremely important that women mediators are able to participate in the Track 1 processes. Despite the strong language of the UN Security Council resolutions on women's engagement in peace processes, Cypriot women continue to be present only in a technical committee and Track 2 processes. Women mediators networks can connect local women at the grassroots level to the highest levels of decision-making providing new insights and new approaches to diplomacy, including confidence-building measures.

When including women in Track 1 processes, it is important to look at the modalities of inclusion. In Yemen, the inclusion of women in water user associations allowed for a broader range of issues to be raised that really matter to the communities that might have been otherwise overlooked. However, what made the inclusion of women successful is the power shift towards enabling women themselves to decide what their role should look like and and how to frame it. Being part of women mediators networks supports women in accessibng and designing modalities of women's participation in relevant processes.

Women mediator networks build on the benefits of the network approach. Networks are not just a group of similarly-minded civil society organisations aligned around a specific strategy but they are one-stop shops for the diverse priorities and expertise of their members. Regionally-grown movements and networks, such as the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict in the Pacific (GPPAC Pacific), the Pacific Women Mediators Network (PMWN), and the Pacific Island Feminist Alliance for Climate Justice, driven by local actors themselves, ensure that peacebuilding efforts are relevant, sustainable, and reflective of community needs

and priorities. These networks are often better equipped to navigate complex social dynamics and understand the underlying causes of conflict within specific cultural contexts. By leveraging cultural norms, traditions, and indigenous knowledge systems, these networks navigate complex social dynamics and address underlying causes of conflict within specific cultural contexts. This culturally relevant approach resonates deeply with local communities and yields long-lasting results. Many donors are afraid to provide long-term, flexible, and sustainable funding these networks need to lead and champion their work. Similarly, there is little agreed policy language on the support required for the network approach. As such, policy recommendations for women mediators networks cannot benefit from the pool of actions supporting the network approach either, leaving women mediators with expanding existing commitments to women's participation, which in many cases are superficial and co-opted.

The following policy recommendations are for policymakers to adequately support women mediators network in addressing intersecting crises:

- Ensure that women mediators are represented, protected and are participating actively in all parts of the peace and security agenda. This includes regular review (jointly with women mediator networks as part of the governance structure for the review) of regional and national policies, programs and funding mechanisms to 1) *ensure the focus on addressing the most high-priority security concerns* and in the most effective and efficient way possible and 2) to conduct *a comprehensive gender analysis* of existing security threats. This also includes the provision of support to women mediators networks in participating in the Track 1 processes, beyond their mere engagements in technical tracks.
- Ensure that *women themselves shape the modalities of their engagement and participation* in relevant processes.
- Provide *holistic technical support, strong policies, systematic and institutionalised partnerships, and adequate and flexible feminist resourcing* to regional women mediators networks. This includes supporting their access, capacities, and work of regional women mediators networks. Women mediators networks however must remain vigilant against the potential misuse of aid for geopolitical gains, supporting sovereignty and self-determination in their work.
- *Reach, engage and mobilise young people*, drawing upon their creativity and ability to contribute to community problem-solving and decision-making while setting clear expectations about goals and finances behind young people's participation in the process.
- Collect evidence of *the progress achieved by the UN System, regional organisations and other development partners, in supporting the women mediators networks*. The Security Council can request the UN Secretary-General to prepare a report in this regard.