

REPORT OF THE HIGH-LEVEL ROUNDTABLE ON

# GENDER PARITY AND SECURITY SECTOR REFORM

13 MARCH 2019



Organized by the United Nations Group of Friends of Security Sector Reform, co-chaired by Slovakia and South Africa, and the Group of Friends for Gender Parity, co-chaired by Ghana and Qatar, with the support of the Security Sector Reform Unit of the Office of Rule of Law and Security Institutions of the Department of Peace Operations.



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# Executive Summary

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On 13 March 2019, the United Nations Group of Friends of Security Sector Reform, co-chaired by Slovakia and South Africa, and the Group of Friends for Gender Parity, co-chaired by Ghana and Qatar, organized a high-level meeting to discuss challenges and opportunities to enhance women's participation in national security services. The roundtable was an official side event of the sixty-third session of the Commission on the Status of Women which took place from 11 to 22 March in New York. Around 100 participants representing permanent missions, governments, security institutions, regional organizations, and civil societies attended the meeting.

Following the keynote speech delivered by the United Nations Under-Secretary-General and Senior Adviser to the Secretary-General on Policy, Ms. Ana María Menéndez, four prominent women delivered remarks and recommendations, namely Ms. Marta Lucía Ramírez, Vice-President of Colombia; Ms. Lindiwe Zulu, the Minister of Small Business Development of South Africa; Ms. Bineta Diop, the Special Envoy for Women, Peace and Security for the African Union Commission; and Ms. Katarína Cséfalvayová, the Chairperson of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Slovak Parliament. The discussion was facilitated by Ms. Sarah Cliffe, Director of New York University Center on International Cooperation.

The roundtable concluded that the promotion of gender equality in the security sector should be a core element of global efforts to “build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels” by 2030, as enshrined in Goal 16 of the Agenda for Sustainable Development. While acknowledging women's advancement in the security sector over the past decade, participants noted that women remain underrepresented in security institutions around the world, particularly in decision-making positions.

Reiterating the United Nations Secretary-General's call to “push back against the pushback” on women's rights, the panelists stressed the need for more political commitment to change the male-dominant culture of security institutions and deconstruct social stereotypes that continue to limit women's participation in the sector. Moreover, the roundtable recognized the importance of strengthening gender-responsive security sector reforms by identifying lessons from national and regional experiences and suggesting targeted measures to overcome gender bias through advocacy, accountability, experience sharing and adequate support. The responsibility of senior leaders and decision-makers to set gender parity targets at all levels of their national security sector institutions, in particular in senior positions, was stressed.

As a next step, the two Groups of Friends committed to focus their cooperation on the implementation of relevant provisions of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda and the Security Council Resolution 2151 (2014), including by strengthening political advocacy towards the promotion of gender parity in national security institutions; supporting measures aimed at preventing and responding to gender-based discrimination in the security sector work-place; promoting the empowerment of women and their networks to inspire change in the security sector around the world; improve data collection and transparency of information pertaining to women's representation in national security institutions to track progress towards Goal 16 of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.



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# Introduction

## Background

The United Nations Group of Friends of Security Sector Reform – co-chaired by Slovakia and South Africa – emerged in 2007 as a platform for Member States and international organizations to deliberate actions needed to advance the United Nations security sector reform agenda, which fosters the building of effective and accountable national security institutions on the basis of non-discrimination, full respect for human rights and the rule of law. Policy dialogues organized under its aegis bring together national and international partners to build a shared understanding of national reform processes and best practices.

The Group of Friends for Gender Parity – co-chaired by Ghana and Qatar – emerged in 2017 as a coalition of Member States committed to advancing women’s leadership as a prerequisite for enhanced international peace and development. Gender parity means the equal representation of women and men in all areas of society and its institutions.

In the context of consultations held between the two Groups of Friends, the United Nations Security Sector Reform Unit within the Office of Rule of Law and Security Institutions of the Department of Peace Operations, in consultation with the Inter-Agency Security Sector Reform Task Force, developed a concept note to capture potential areas of collaboration and the nexus between gender equality, gender parity and

gender-responsive security sector reform in the framework of relevant UN policies and guidelines, including Security Council Resolutions 1325 (2000) and 2151 (2014).

## Objectives

The United Nations norms<sup>1</sup> point to the utility and importance of linking gender parity and security sector reform as part of broader efforts to build inclusive institutions and promote peace. The United Nations Secretary-General stated that investing in sustaining peace means investing in basic services, building effective, accountable and strong institutions, protecting human rights, promoting social cohesion and diversity, ensuring the meaningful participation of women and girls in all areas of society. At the same time, there is a wide recognition that building inclusive security institutions, in which both men and women are equally represented, is vital to enhance Member States’ ability to deliver security services to all segments of society. In this regard, the high-level dialogue aimed to assess options to strengthen the linkages between gender parity and security sector reform agendas as a means to advance the implementation of Goal 16 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Security Council Resolution 2151 (2014), which underscores the importance of “women’s equal and effective participation and full involvement in the security sector reform process, given their vital role in the prevention and resolution of conflict and peacebuilding”.

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<sup>1</sup> The United Nations Security Council Resolution 2151 (2014) and Resolutions on Women, Peace and Security call for the inclusion of women in all stages of security sector reform. Full and equal opportunities for men and women in all areas of society are also human

rights protected under international laws, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (1993), Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979) and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995).

Despite calls for women's participation in the security sector, institutions (such as the armed forces, police, corrections, immigration etc.) in vast majority countries around the world continue to be predominantly formed by male. A small proportion of women in national security institutions has repercussions in terms of their participation in United Nations peace operations. In some countries, insufficient funds are allocated to gender mainstreaming in the security sector and women are subject to discriminatory practices, including confinement to traditional roles and lack of access to higher ranks.

In this regard, the high-level sought to generate an understanding of the importance of a gender balanced security sector on promoting of peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development. It identified challenges and opportunities for women's full and equal participation in national security services as *sine qua non* for the effectiveness, accountability and inclusiveness of these institutions; and explored targeted measures aimed at removing barriers and creating incentives for women's advancement including through United Nations programmatic and advocacy efforts.

# Panelists

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**Ms. Ana María Menéndez**  
**Under-Secretary General**  
**Senior Adviser to the Secretary-General on Policy**  
**United Nations**



**Ms. Martha Lucía Ramírez Blanco**  
**Vice-President**  
**Colombia**



**Ms. Lindiwe Zulu**  
**Minister of Small Business Development**  
**South Africa**



**Ms. Bineta Diop**  
Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security  
African Union Commission



**Ms. Katarína Cséfalvayová**  
Chairperson of the Foreign Affairs Committee of  
the National Council  
Slovakia



**Ms. Sarah F. Cliffe**  
Director of New York University's Center on International  
Cooperation



## Co-chairs Summary

On 13 March 2019, the United Nations Group of Friends of Security Sector Reform, co-chaired by Slovakia and South Africa, and the Group for Friends for Gender Parity, co-chaired by Ghana and Qatar, convened a high-level roundtable on gender parity and security sector reform. The roundtable was an official side event of the sixty-third session of the Commission on the Status of Women which took place from 11 to 22 March in New York. It was organized with the support of

the Security Sector Reform Unit in the Office of Rule of Law and Security Institutions of the Department of Peace Operations and the Inter-Agency Security Sector Reform Task Force (IASSRTF)<sup>2</sup>.

The meeting brought together approximately one hundred (100) participants representing twenty-three (23) Member-States<sup>3</sup>, the United Nations system, the European Union, the African Union, and non-governmental organizations<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> The IASSRTF is co-chaired by the Department of Peace Operations and United Nations Development Programme and brings together fourteen (14) United Nations entities.

<sup>3</sup> Delegates included the Permanent Representative of the Finland, H. E. Mr. Kai Sauer; the Permanent Representative of Slovenia, H. E. Ms. Darja Bavdež Kuret; the Deputy Permanent Representative of Greece, H. E. Mr. Kalamvrezos Dionyssios; the Deputy Permanent Representative of Lebanon, H. E. Mr. Bachir Azzam; the Deputy Permanent Representative of Uganda, H. E. Mr. Philip Odida; as well as other distinguished representatives from the

Permanent Missions of Australia, Austria, China, Colombia, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Nicaragua, Poland, Portugal, Spain and The Gambia.

<sup>4</sup> The Roundtable benefitted from the participation of non-governmental organizations including the Bahá'í International Community; the Federation of Women Lawyers of Kenya; International Organization for Victim Assistance; the New Humanity; the New York University; the Quaker United Nations Office; and the Youthbridge Community Foundation.

The United Nations Under-Secretary-General and Senior Adviser to the Secretary-General on Policy, Ms. Ana María Menéndez, delivered a keynote speech. Other prominent women leaders participated in a panel discussion, namely the Vice-President of Colombia, Ms. Marta Lucía Ramírez; the Minister of Small Business Development of South Africa, Ms. Lindiwe Zulu; the Special Envoy for Women, Peace and Security of the AU Commission, Ms. Bineta Diop; and the Chairperson of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Slovak Parliament, Ms. Katarína Cséfalvayová. The panel was facilitated by the Director of New York University's Center on International Cooperation, Ms. Sarah F. Cliffe. In addition to the panellists, interventions from the floor were made by high-level authorities, including the Deputy Minister of Defense of Ghana, Mr. Derrick Oduro; the Permanent Representative of Slovenia, Ms. Darja Bavdež Kuret; and a Major General from the South African National Defence Force, Ms. Ntsiki Memela-Motumi; as well as by representatives of non-governmental organizations.

The roundtable underscored that the promotion of gender equality in the security sector should be a core element of global efforts to “build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels” by 2030, as enshrined in Goal 16 of the Agenda for Sustainable Development. While acknowledging women's advancement in the security sector over the past decade, participants noted that women remained underrepresented in security institutions around the world, particularly in decision-making positions. Reiterating the United Nations Secretary-General's call for a fight to “push back against the pushback” on women's rights, the panelists stressed the need for more political commitment to change the male-dominant culture of security institutions and address gender-based discrimination in the work place. Moreover, the

roundtable recognized the importance of strengthening gender-responsive security sector reforms by identifying lessons from national and regional experiences and suggesting targeted measures to overcome gender bias through advocacy, accountability, experience sharing and adequate support.

In their opening remarks, the Permanent Representative of Qatar to the United Nations, Ambassador Ms. Alya Ahmed Saif Al-Thani, and the Permanent Representative of Slovakia to the United Nations, Ambassador Mr. Michal Mlynár, underlined that measures to increase the participation and representation of women as pre-requisites for effective, accountable and inclusive security institutions should be at the core of national reform processes. As highlighted by the Permanent Representative of Qatar, in many contexts the “historical exclusion of women from the security sector has led to the formation of institutions that are not inclusive neither accountable, thus powerless to effectively prevent conflicts and respond to needs of men, women, boys and girls”. In addition, the Permanent Representative of Slovakia expressed concerns with the fact that women continue to be subjected to many forms of “discrimination in security sectors around the world, including confinement to traditional roles and tasks, selective recruitments, conditions of employment that inhibit their equal participation and limited access to higher ranks”. Hence, building inclusive security sectors, in which both men and women are equally represented, is vital to enhancing the ability of States to deliver effective and accountable security services to all segments of society.

The United Nations Under-Secretary-General and Senior Adviser to the Secretary-General on Policy delivered a keynote speech emphasizing that more commitment and decisive action are required at national levels to address inequalities

in the security sector, including the establishment of targets for the recruitment, retention and promotion of women. She noted that the underrepresentation of women in national security institutions had a direct impact on international peace and security. The small numbers of female peacekeepers reflects the low proportion of women in national armed forces. If the current pace of progress is maintained, it will take several decades to reach the gender parity targets set by Security Council Resolution 2242 (2015).

In their closing remarks, the Permanent Representative of South Africa, Ambassador Mr. Jerry Matjila, and the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Ghana, Ambassador Ms. Martha A. Pobee, announced that the United Nations Groups of Friends of Security Sector Reform and Gender Parity will continue to collaborate towards the promotion of gender parity in national security institutions, thus advancing the implementation of the Sustainable

Development Goal 16 and the Women, Peace and Security Agenda. Furthermore, the Permanent Representative of South Africa called for renewed efforts to fully implement Security Council Resolution 2151 (2014) on security sector reform, which requests the “inclusion of more women in the security sector”, including by allocating funds to activities primarily focused on achieving gender equality and by enhancing the participation of traditional leaders and women’s local organizations in security sector decision-making. The Permanent Representative of the Republic of Ghana emphasized the importance of continued advocacy and experience sharing amongst Member States to expedite the promotion of gender parity in the national security sectors. She also called on Member States, the United Nations and partners to develop an action plan with concrete measures to improve the status of women in the security sector and empower women networks at international, regional and national levels.

## Observations and recommendations emerging from the Roundtable

- i. **The principle of gender parity should guide an ambitious agenda to effect change in national security sectors and promote greater commitment towards the implementation of Goal 16 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.**

High-Level representatives emphasized the importance of enhancing international and regional advocacy to spur national action and commitment towards gender parity within the security sectors. It was highlighted that an increase in the proportion of women in security services has been shown to enhance the effectiveness, accountability and inclusiveness of institutions. In Ghana, an increase in women’s representation in the armed forces from 3 per cent in 2010 to 17 per cent in 2019 enhanced the capacity of the military to effectively respond to the needs of different groups of society. In Afghanistan, the enhanced recruitment of women was deemed as essential step towards improving the operational effectiveness of the National Police. In Burkina Faso, The Gambia, Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire, the meaningful participation of civil society, including women, youth and traditional leaders in the security sector debate contributed to strengthening public trust in the institutions. Despite considerable efforts and investments in this

area, there is insufficient data on women's representation in the security sector around the world. The information provided by participants evidenced their low representation but are not sufficient to analyze the status of women in a global scale. In this regard, Member States and the United Nations should improve the collection and availability of information on the number of women in national security institutions as part of their efforts to track progress and promote accountability towards the implementation of Goal 16 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Women, Peace and Security Agenda. The Permanent Representative of Qatar also invited Member States to become International Gender Champions by undertaking at least two commitments to advance gender equality in their work.

- ii. **Member-States should increase efforts to attract and retain qualified women candidates in the security sector by identifying and eliminating persistent barriers to their recruitment and promotion and by establishing zero tolerance policies for gender-based discrimination in the security sector work place.**

The Deputy Minister of Defense of Ghana emphasized the importance of mapping and addressing structural barriers that impede women's advancement in the security sector. In many contexts, women are deterred from joining the security sector because of social stereotypes about the nature of their work. The social conditioning usually sets in early – from the kind of education and messages that girls get to the kind of jobs they are channeled to. Representatives of non-governmental organizations also highlighted that, once in the security sector, women face other obstacles, such as inadequate facilities, equipment and uniforms, occupational segregation, limited promotion opportunities, discriminative pregnancy policies, sexual harassment and lack of access to child care. In this regard, the Major General of the South African National Defence Force stressed that aspirational gender parity targets set by senior leaders should be backed up by accountability measures. Security institutions should undertake concrete measures to attract and retain qualified women candidates, including by developing gender-sensitive human resources policies, eliminating gender bias in hiring process and undertaking targeted recruitments to ratify past discriminations. Improving the work environment within the security sector would also entail organizing human rights awareness trainings, adopting codes of conduct and establishing accountability mechanisms to prevent and respond to sexual and gender-based violence in the work place.

- iii. **Member States and the United Nations should promote the empowerment of women in security services by actively recognizing their advancement and encouraging those in senior positions to share their leadership experiences to inspire change.**

Over the last decade, as result of the movements for social change and the political pressure toward more egalitarian gender values in the work place, women have overcome many barriers and accessed positions in the security sector which were traditionally occupied by men. For instance, in South Africa, women combatants not only played a fundamental role in the liberation struggle, but also pushed for the reform of the security sector, which at the time “was not only used as a tool to suppress democracy but also to sustain a patriarchal society”, stressed the Minister of Small Business Development of South Africa. Since 1994, reforms in South Africa led to an increase in the proportion of women in the defence sector from 19.7 per cent to 30.3 per cent. Reforms also resulted in the appointment of a woman as Minister of Defense in 2012. In Colombia, the first

women appointed Minister of Defense in 2002 was subsequently elected as Vice-President in 2018. In Slovenia, the first female national police chief and General of the Army were recently appointed, thus becoming the first North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) country where women occupy such leadership positions. In this regard, participants underscored the importance of recognizing women's advancement in the security sector and documenting good practices and lessons learned. Member States and the United Nations should also consider ways to establish an international network of women leaders in the security sector to promote exchange of experiences, develop mentoring programmes and strengthen advocacy around gender equality.

iv. **Member States and the United Nations should strengthen efforts to increase the number of women in leadership positions and ensure that decision-making at all stages of security sector reform processes is inclusive and responsive, as per target 7 of Goal 16.**

As stressed by the Chairperson of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Slovak Parliament, women's presence and influence at the negotiation table not only broadens policies discussed but increases the probability of a peace agreement to last. In Colombia, the participation of women in the peace negotiations was instrumental in overcoming the armed conflict in 2016, explained its Vice-President. Once the agreement was reached, women's groups in rural and urban areas contributed to its implementation. In the African Union, the establishment of the gender parity targets at commissioner level and the creation of FemWise – a network of African women mediators – enhanced the organization's response to conflicts, elucidated the Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security for the African Union Commission. Notwithstanding women's positive influence in negotiation processes, there are currently no systematic efforts to ensure that they participate in decision-making table of peace agreements and national security policies. Participants called on Member States and the United Nations to strengthen advocacy at the national, regional and international levels to ensure inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all stages of security sector reform processes.

# Keynote Speech

## Ms. Ana María Menéndez Under-Secretary-General Senior Adviser to the Secretary-General on Policy United Nations

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Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

Let me first congratulate the co-chairs of the Groups of Friends of Security Sector Reform and the co-chairs of the Group of Friends for Gender Parity on jointly initiating this high-level policy dialogue on the nexus between security sector reform and gender parity.

I am particularly delighted to be joined today by a group of distinguished and very committed women. They are here to share their experiences and recommendations on improving the position of women in the security sector and contribute to strengthening peaceful and inclusive societies.

Ladies and gentlemen,

In his message for this year's International Women's Day which was held under the theme "Think Equal, Build Smart, Innovate for Change", the UN Secretary-General urged for a "wholesale, rapid and radical change... to reimagine and rebuild our world so that it works for everyone". To make this vision a reality, we need to address change in those institutions that traditionally and, in many cultures, have been constructed as male-dominated and exclusive domains. The security sector is a good example of this.

This has in turn disproportionately impacted the way security institutions respond to the needs of

different community groups, including women.

Despite some progress made over the past decades, women continue to be underrepresented in security and defense forces. Women face structural and systemic barriers in recruitment processes, including unequal treatment, and sometimes harassment and abuse.

These women that succeed in joining security institutions often have limited access to deployments. In addition, they are less likely to be promoted to higher ranks, which consequently results in lower overall numbers of women in leadership positions in most security institutions.

Concrete measures to overcome discrimination and enhance accountability of the security sector institutions are necessary to proactively promote women's inclusion in the security sector.

Increasing the representation of women in the security sector has proven to enhance the operational effectiveness of these institutions and increase trust vis-à-vis the population, including men, women, boys and girls. Making security institutions more inclusive is therefore central to sustainable peace and development.

This is an issue of importance not just for domestic constituencies, but of concern to the UN as well. With an increasing number of

countries serving as troop and police contributing countries, reaching our own goals of increasing the number of women in peacekeeping is affected by this issue. The number of women in national service affects the pipeline from which deployments are made. And the same impediments women face – knowledge about opportunities, access to skills needed for deployments, and attitudinal and institutional obstacles, affect the numbers in UN peacekeeping. This has an impact on our effectiveness as global peacekeepers.

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is for all of these reasons that the United Nations is doing more to support the efforts of Member States to increase women's participation in the security sector, and ensure that institutions are accessible and responsive to all, and that safety and protection reaches the furthest left behind.

In Afghanistan, support to the national police led to a significant increase in the number of women police officers. In Timor Leste and Sierra Leone, United Nations capacity building programmes helped the police to improve its gender-sensitive strategic planning and increase education opportunities to women officers.

In Mali, training of women security officers led to their effective engagement in early warning and dispute resolution. In Burkina Faso, The Gambia and Ivory Coast, platforms were established to promote meaningful participation of women, youth, traditional groups and civil societies in security sector debates. These initiatives also contributed to enhancing public trust and civilian oversight.

Excellencies, Ladies and gentlemen,

Before concluding let me propose a few concrete steps for the way forward. First, the responsibility to promote and enable women's equal participation in security sector institutions lies with senior leaders and decision makers. Their decisive actions are critical to put in place transparent targets for the recruitment and retention of women and to remove systemic barriers that continue to perpetuate unequal treatment of women within the security sector. Second, the position and participation of women in security forces at the national level is not only vital for the countries concerned, but also for international peace and security. The small proportion of women among United Nations troops and uniformed police personnel is a direct reflection of the small percentage of women in national security forces. At the current pace, it will take several decades to reach the targets set by Security Council Resolution 2242.

I am pleased to announce that with the generous support and active participation of a number of Member States here, the United Nations will soon launch a multi-partner trust fund dedicated to accelerating progress towards these targets.

Finally, despite considerable efforts and investments in this area, we have little reliable data or consistent information on the participation of women in the security sector on a global scale. If we are serious about making a difference, it will be important to improve and systematize gender-sensitive analysis, data collection and information sharing.

Thank you for your kind attention.

# Remarks by the Co-Chairs

## United Nations Group of Friends of Security Sector Reform & Group of Friends for Gender Parity



### Introductory remarks of H. E. Ms. Alya Ahmed Saif Al-Thani, Permanent Representative of Qatar to the United Nations

Excellencies,  
Distinguished Guests,  
Ladies and Gentlemen:

As Co-Chair of the United Nations' 150-member Group of Friends for Gender Parity, it gives me great pleasure to welcome you all to this "High-level Roundtable on Gender Parity and Security Sector Reform: Promoting Peaceful and Inclusive Societies for Sustainable Development", jointly organized by the United Nations Group of Friends for Gender Parity and the United Nations Group of Friends on Security Sector Reform.

Today's meeting is extremely important because we discuss ways to strengthen the linkages between gender parity and security sector reform, which is key to advance Goal 16 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (SDG) and necessary to achieve the objectives of the Secretary-General's Gender Parity Strategy. Gender equality is an enabler and accelerator for

all the SDGs, and specifically contributes to progress on SDG 16.

Peaceful and inclusive societies uphold the rule of law and ensure equal access to justice. They protect people from all forms of violence, including gender-based violence, and control corruption and organized crime. Decision-making at all levels is inclusive and responsive, and fundamental freedoms are upheld. Laws and policies apply without discrimination.

Achievement of SDG 16 faces some challenges, namely the targets with a direct impact on Security Sector Reform. For instance, target 16.7 which calls to "ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels,". Although, women have made strides in representation in decision-making, in peace processes as well as governance more broadly.

Still, the numbers reflect inequality between men and women.

Despite targets set for women's participation in the security sector - army, police, correction, immigration, among others - the security sector continues to be predominantly formed by men.

The historic exclusion of women from the security sector has led to the formation of institutions that are not inclusive neither representative, thus powerless to effectively prevent conflicts and respond to needs of men, women, boys and girls.

We also know that the inequal representation of women in the police and army mirrors that of United Nations peace and peacekeeping operations. Women represent only 5.39% of police and troops in peace operations.

Though, it is important to acknowledge that the percentage of women in peacekeeping operations is up now, thanks to the efforts of the Secretary-General.

It is therefore urgent that we commit to increasing the representation of women in the security sector as a prerequisite for the effectiveness, accountability and inclusiveness of institutions. Without this SDG 16 cannot be fully achieved.

I am pleased to note that Qatari women are being encouraged to enter and compete within the

traditionally male-dominated fields of STEM, such as engineering and information technology – these are fields of importance to the security sector. At Texas A&M University at Qatar, women account for 45.7 percent of the total student body. Qatari women work as ministers, ambassadors, doctors, engineers, directors of public and private institutions, and recently Qatari women were appointed to the Shura Council. Qatari women also became the region's first judges and prosecutors.

I am proud to note that we have now 337 female diplomats, out of a total of 1062 diplomatic corps – approximately 30 per cent. These numbers are very good taking into account we are a population of 313,000 Qatari citizens. Since 2018, women in Qatar are allowed to volunteer for national service. Beforehand women were already performing administrative roles in the military.

To conclude, I also call on you to become an International Gender Champion. The International Gender Champions Initiative is a project that aims to deliver on gender equality through its Champions, who sign 'parity pledges' to strive for gender equality in all discussions and to undertake at least two commitments to advance gender equality in their programmatic work or management.

Thank you very much.



## Introductory remarks of H. E. Mr. Michal Mlynár, Permanent Representative of the Slovak Republic to the United Nations

Dear Excellencies,

I would like to fully subscribe to the statement just made by the co-chair from Qatar H. E. Ms. Alya Ahmed Saif Al-Thani. - But also - to stress how important is to look for linkages among the various work strands of different United Nations Group of Friends, which multiplies our collective voice and efforts in the United Nations.

We cannot reach our aspirations of building accountable and inclusive security institutions if we leave behind a potential of women and girls who account for more (or less) than half of population in every country. Advancing gender parity in the security sector has never been more critical.

In this regard, let me encourage all of you to use this forum as an opportunity to have a frank exchange of views on the barriers that continue to inhibit women's full and equal participation in security institutions and to look for incentives to promote an increase of women in security sector and beyond.

The integration of a gender perspective is widely recognised as one of the key principles of security sector reform (SSR). The failure to ensure gender-responsive SSR prevents the reform process from contributing to an effective, accountable and sustainable security sector. The Secretary-General also attaches the greatest importance to

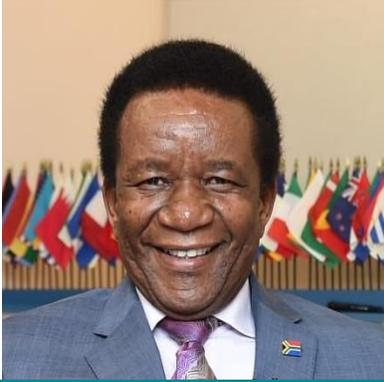
increase the participation of women, particularly uniformed women personnel in peacekeeping, as set out in his system-wide Gender Parity Strategy for 2018-2028 period.

Gender Parity Strategy rightly recognized external and internal challenges, which are causing gender imbalance within security sector. We should express concern with discriminatory practices that women are subjected in the security sectors around the world, including confinement to traditional roles and tasks, selective recruitments, conditions of employment that inhibit their equal participation and lack of access to higher ranks.

We need to identify the root causes of these discriminations and propose an effective plan of action focused on gender equality in the security sector institutions to be implemented by United Nations, Member-States and partners. Also, we should be ready to support policies, which are calling for an enhancement of women employment opportunities, by providing family-friendly policies within member states, but also to support shifting from an advisory/mentoring role to an operational one, which is largely held by male officers in many member States, Slovakia included.

Last but not least, let me refer also to the Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (2015, UN

Women), which concludes that more resources, accountability to commitments, and increased attention to gender is needed at national and global levels to address discriminations and achieve gender parity in the security institutions. Let us not squander the potential dividends of gender equality for peace and development. Empowering women to that end and prevent conflicts is essential and urgent. Thank you for your attention.



## Concluding remarks of H. E. Mr. Jerry Matjila, Permanent Representative of South Africa

Dear Excellencies,

Thank you for this opportunity to provide closing remarks on this important High-Level Dialogue on Gender Parity and Security Sector Reform. I believe that the deliberations we had today will go a long way in promoting peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development across the world, more especially in developing and transitional countries.

I wish to emphasize the support to the recommendations made by the Ambassador Martha Ama Akyaa Pobee. Indeed, as the international community; the United Nations, Member States and partners, and as Group of Friends we have no option but to advance the building of inclusive institutions, as enshrined in Goal 16 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Security Council Resolutions 1325 (2000) and 2151 (2014).

We encourage Member States to increase the recruitment of women in their national security sectors. As you have heard from Minister Lindiwe Zulu's presentation, in South Africa we are steadily working towards balancing the ratio of men and women in the security sector as part of broader reforms. In 2018 women constituted 30.3% of the Department of Defense (DoD) growing from 19.7% since 1994.

I reiterate the recent endorsement of the DPO Uniformed Personnel Gender Parity Strategy and, consequently, urge Member States to increase their contributions of women officers to police, corrections and troops of UN's peace operations.

We wish to highlight that the Security Council Resolution 2151 (2014) recognizes the need for the "inclusion of more women in the security sector" and calls for "women's equal and effective participation and full involvement in the security sector reform process, given their vital role in the prevention and resolution of conflict and peacebuilding".

We further wish to express concerns with small allocation of funding to gender initiatives in the security sector reform processes. We note that the Secretary-General has committed the United Nations system to earmarking a percentage of its spending for programmes that further women's empowerment and gender equality as a primary objective. We, therefore, encourage Member States to replicate this earmarking target for assistance devoted to SSR to other countries. We also wish to highlight the need to ensure the inclusion of civil society, traditional groups and women's organizations in all discussions pertaining to gender parity in the security sectors.

Let me give momentum to this important matter a follow-up discussion will be convened by both

Group of Friends on the side lines of the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development.

In conclusion, I wish to extend my gratitude to all the speakers for their invaluable contribution: Ms. Ana Maria Menendez; H. E. Ms. Marta Lucía Ramírez; H. E Ms. Lindiwe Zulu; Ms. Bineta Diop; Ms. Katarína Cséfalvayová; and Ms, Sarah Cliffe for facilitating the discussions.

I wish to also thank all participants for their valuable contributions. I also thank the coordinators of the Group of Friends, Slovakia, Qatar and Ghana for a job well done.

Thank you



## Concluding remarks of H.E. Ms. Martha A. Pobee, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Ghana

Excellencies,  
Colleagues and Friends,  
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to begin by thanking all our eminent speakers for making time to attend this event and for their respective contributions to the rich discussions we have had on such an important subject. The Government of Ghana and the Permanent Mission is honored to join hands with all the participating countries in these efforts, and I wish to mention in particular the fruitful partnership with the Secretariat and the co-chairs of the Groups of Friends of Security Sector Reform His Excellency, Jerry Matthews Matjila, Permanent Representative of South Africa, and His Excellency Ambassador Michal Mlynar, Permanent Representative of Slovakia as well as the co-chair of the Group of Friends for Gender Parity Ambassador Alya Ahmed Saif Al-Thani, Permanent Representative of Qatar. I wish to join in expressing appreciation to all the speakers today.

The presentations have clearly underlined the fact that despite the significant advantage for peace and security, women continue to be underrepresented in the security sector reform processes and many countries have not yet set targets to change that reality. The total global proportion of women in the police, military, immigration, correction act is currently unknown, constituting a major knowledge gap in

our efforts to track progress in the implementation of the Goal 16 of the Sustainable Development Agenda. The case has been made to change this narrative.

The following have also been highlighted:

- That promoting the principle of gender equality and aiming for parity in security institutions is a critical element to achieve peaceful, just and inclusive societies by 2030; and that making security institutions more inclusive is central to peace and sustainable development;
- That women's full and equal representation in the security sector reform enhances national reconciliation and remains vital to re-establish community trust in the state after conflict;
- That the Inclusion of women in decision-making process at national levels will render agreements and reforms in the security sector more durable. Once a decision is reached, women's groups have contributed to improved implementation;
- That the inclusion of women in the security institutions will help reduce the risk of sexual and gender-based violence within and by the security forces, which has devastating, long-term effects on the lives of victims, their families, and the social fabric of communities;
- That building an inclusive security sector is more than increasing the numbers of

women in our institutions. It is also ensuring equal treatment in the workplace. There are numerous structural barriers to women's service. Barriers that are systemic and act to limit women's empowerment and full participation, which must be addressed.

- That we need to also address other forms of discrimination women are subjected to on the basis of colour, ethnicity, religion, political opinion, social origin, and sexual orientation.
- Sexual harassment and assault from immediate colleagues and superiors are also huge concerns for women in security sector institutions.

Going forward, I would like therefore to suggest measures to be undertaken by UN, Member-States and partners to advance the building of inclusive institutions, as enshrined in Goal 16 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and in the Security Council Resolution 2151 (2014). It is evident that a number of Member States have taken the lead in this regard. There is therefore the need to encourage experience sharing amongst Member States that are still lagging behind.

In light of the remarks made by participants, I also wish to call United Nations Secretariat along with members of two Group of Friends and partners to develop a concrete plan of action focused on:

First, generating political consensus on the need to develop and implement advocacy, policy and legal reforms to accelerate gender parity in the security sectors at national levels. Such policies should have sufficient resource allocations, and women need to play an active role in accountability and oversight of their implementation. I also strongly encourage us partner with regional and sub-regional organizations and expert organizations to develop

more guidance on gender-responsive security sector reform.

Second, implementing concrete measures to attract, recruit, retain, and advance women at all levels and sectors of security (such as oversight bodies, ministries, security agencies, judiciary and civil society groups), thus creating conditions for successful delivery of security services to all segments of society. Resources should be mobilized to integrate gender-balance targets, improving outreach and career advancement for women. At the current pace, it will take several decades to see UN peacekeeping reach the targets set by the Resolution 2242 and the Secretary-General's Gender Parity Strategy. The small proportion of women in the troops and police of United Nations peace operations reflects the small proportion of women in the security sector of our member-states.

Third, establish monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to track the progress of gender parity in the security sectors at national and global levels. Collecting data is essential to ensure accountability and compliance to targets set by Goal 16.

I am certain that together these efforts will contribute to ensuring women's equal and full access to justice and security institutions. The important lessons we take away from this event are for the two Groups of Friends to collectively and individually pursue actions to push forward the agenda of gender parity within the security sector.

In conclusion, I wish to reaffirm Ghana's commitment to this effort. The President of the Republic of Ghana, H.E. Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, both AU Gender Champion and co-Chair of eminent group of SDG advocates, is fully committed to delivering on women's rights and their inclusion in important processes in all three

pillars of the UN's work. For Ghana, this is an important step to ensure that we live up to this shared ambition of Goal 16 set out in September 2015.

Thank you for your kind attention.

