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BACKGROUND GUIDE

AGENDA: EMPOWERING WOMEN IN POST-
CONFLICT PEACEBUILDING AND
TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE



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I. LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

Dear Delegates,

Welcome to UN Women. It is with great enthusiasm that I invite you to take part in this dynamic and essential conversation on – **EMPOWERING WOMEN IN POST-CONFLICT PEACEBUILDING AND TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE**. In a world where conflicts continue to fracture communities and systems, women often face compounded vulnerabilities, excluded from political negotiations, deprived of fundamental rights, and burdened by the aftermath of violence.

This agenda challenges us to do more than just protect — it compels us to empower. We must examine how local and international systems can place women at the centre of peace-building efforts. You are called not only to understand the gender dimensions of conflict but to push boundaries, question norms, and develop policy-driven, actionable solutions that pave the way for lasting peace and inclusive governance.

As we are preparing to come together and discuss on this, I urge each one of you to ponder: Are gender-related issues undermining the political unrest and economic problems in post-conflict areas? How should peace-building efforts adopt a gender-perspective both locally and internationally? What can we, the international community, do to overcome these challenges and ensure peace-building commitments secure gender equality and security? As we delve into discussions and deliberations on the agenda, our objective must be to learn, engage, and propose solutions that will promote and uphold gender equality and increase female participation in law-making.

Each delegate plays a vital role in shaping the conversation and direction of this committee. Your voice will help determine how we define success: Is it about stronger representation? Survivor-led justice reforms? Equitable economic rebuilding? Through negotiation, debate, and diplomacy, we will strive to answer these questions and craft thoughtful, transformative solutions.

Please note the instructions as you prepare for the conference:

- 1. BACKGROUND GUIDE REVIEW:** Please do carefully read through this background guide provided. This document is designed to clarify various aspects of the agenda and aid you in your research. However, you must keep in mind that this document is not the ultimate source of information. It is recommended that each member conduct independent research and explore the various problems in the agenda and review existing local and international framework.
- 2. RULES OF PROCEDURE:** The proceedings will be in accordance with UNA-USA rules of procedure. If you are not familiar with them, do review the rules before the committee begins. If any member

requires any assistance, the Executive Board is here to assist in understanding the rules of procedure, the mandate and operations of UN Women, and the agenda.

3. **RESEARCH:** Understand the agenda and approach it with an open and creative mind. Ensure that your research is current and relevant to the agenda and associated issues. Consider how you can apply your research effectively to devise viable solutions. Do ensure that you are using credible sources for your research and informed about your assigned country's foreign and domestic policies.

I wish all the members the very best in your preparations for the conference. If you do have questions or require any assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me at diyajayaraj168@gmail.com.

I look forward to the impactful dialogue we will build together.

With best wishes,

DIYA JAYARAJ
CHAIRPERSON, UN WOMEN

II. NATURE OF PROOF AND EVIDENCE

Documents from the following sources will be considered as credible proof for any allegations or statements made by any delegate in the committee:

1. UN Reports, News, and Publications (Absolute Fact – Conclusive):

Includes and not restricted to:

- a) Reports of the UN Press; and
- b) Reports of the UN Organs and Agencies (UNSC, UNGA, UNESCO, etc.).

2. Reports of UN affiliated agencies (Fact – Conclusive):

Examples include but not restricted to World Bank Group (including IBRD, IDA, etc., the IMF, the IAEA, the GCC, etc.

3. National governments and Agencies (State Fact):

Official reports issued by a national government or its agencies shall be considered conclusive evidence when referring to that state's own policies, initiatives, and achievements in a particular field. However, any statements or claims that remain disputed or controversial as of the date of the session shall be treated as rebuttable. For example, a report from a state-run news outlet cannot be accepted as definitive proof that the state has not engaged in human rights violations or persecution.

4. News and Media sources (Disputable Fact):

Reports from sources such as Reuters, Al Jazeera, or BBC may be used as references in committee proceedings, provided that no stronger or more authoritative evidence exists to contradict their claims. Delegates are permitted to cite such articles; however, the information contained within them will not be automatically accepted as conclusive proof and may be subject to challenge.

III. COMMITTEE OVERVIEW

UN Women, formerly known as the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, is the UN organisation delivering programmes, policies and standards that uphold women's human rights and ensure that every woman and girl lives up to her full potential. It is the global champion for gender equality, trusted partners for advocates and decision-makers from all walks of life, and a leader in effort to achieve gender equality. UN Women is established to accelerate the progress on achieving its goals and meet women's needs worldwide.

According to the **UN General Assembly Resolution 64/289**, which established UN Women in 2010, the organisation is governed by a multi-tiered intergovernmental governance structure. The UN General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and the Commission of the Status of Women (CSW) constitute UN Women and provide normative policy guidance, while the General Assembly, ECOSOC and the Executive Board of UN Women provide for operational policies. The directorate consists of the **Executive Director and two Deputy Directors**.

The Guiding documents for UN Women are several international agreements:

1. UN Women's strategic plan, 2022-2025
2. Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)
3. Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (PFA)
4. UN Security Council resolution 1325 on women, peace and security (WPS)
5. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

UN Women operates through a combination of **normative support, operational programming, and UN system coordination**. At the normative level, it assists intergovernmental bodies, such as the CSW, in formulating policies, global standards, and norms. At the operational level, UN Women works directly with governments, civil society, and grassroots organisations to implement gender-responsive programmes, particularly in developing and conflict-affected regions. Its work ranges from supporting women's political participation and economic empowerment to combating gender-based violence and integrating gender perspectives into national laws and budgets. As the coordinating entity for gender equality within the UN system, UN Women also leads efforts to ensure that all UN agencies consistently address gender in their operations, policies, and evaluations.

UN Women holds both **a global mandate and a field presence**, allowing it to engage across sectors and regions. While it does not possess enforcement powers like judicial bodies, it plays a vital role in shaping international norms and influencing domestic implementation through technical expertise, funding, policy advice, and data collection.

FUNCTIONS OF UN WOMEN:

1. POLICY LEADERSHIP AND NORM-SETTING

UN Women supports intergovernmental bodies like the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) and the General Assembly in setting international norms and standards on gender equality and women's rights.

2. OPERATIONAL SUPPORT TO MEMBER STATES

It provides technical assistance, funding, and policy guidance to governments and civil society to help implement gender-inclusive laws, reforms, and programs, particularly in post-conflict and developing regions.

3. UN SYSTEM COORDINATION

UN Women leads and coordinates the UN system's efforts to integrate gender perspectives across all agencies, ensuring consistency and accountability in promoting gender equality.

4. RESEARCH AND DATA COLLECTION

It conducts and publishes research on gender issues, collecting sex-disaggregated data and policy analysis to guide evidence-based decision-making and program development.

5. MONITORING AND ACCOUNTABILITY

UN Women tracks and reports on progress towards international commitments, such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Beijing Platform for Action, holding stakeholders accountable for gender-related obligations.

6. ADVOCACY AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Through campaigns like HeForShe and Generation Equality, UN Women mobilizes governments, institutions, and individuals to commit to action for gender justice and women's empowerment.

7. CRISIS RESPONSE AND PEACEBUILDING

UN Women plays a vital role in post-conflict reconstruction, peacebuilding, and humanitarian response, ensuring women are included in peace processes and protected from violence.

IV. UNDERSTANDING THE AGENDA

AGENDA: EMPOWERING WOMEN IN POST-CONFLICT PEACEBUILDING AND TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE

Post-conflict peacebuilding entails a range of strategies aimed at preventing the recurrence of armed conflict through **long-term capacity-building, reconciliation, and societal transformation**. It relies heavily on the commitment and efforts of local and national entities, with the support of international bodies, after the cessation of armed conflict. The goal is to normalise relations and reconcile differences between opposing parties.

Peacebuilding mostly involves **addressing the root causes of violent conflict and supporting indigenous capacities** for peace management and conflict resolution. It should extend beyond simply the absence of violence to deconstructing and destroying structural violence and inequalities, such as gender-based violence and gender inequality. Activities within post-conflict peacebuilding span multiple sectors, including **democratic institution-building, efforts to reduce prejudice, power-sharing arrangements, reduction of social and economic inequalities, promotion of rule of law, security sector reforms, and access to education and employment**. Ultimately, peacebuilding aims to create a positive and sustainable peace characterised by the restoration of relationships, absence of physical and structural violence, elimination of discrimination, and creation of a social system that serves the needs of the entire population.

Transitional justice is a multifaceted approach that societies undertake to **address legacies of massive human rights violations and achieve reconciliation, accountability, and justice**. It comprises of judicial and non-judicial mechanisms, which include prosecution initiatives, truth-seeking, reparation programmes, and institutional reforms, all of which must adhere to international legal standards. Its main intention is to **prevent further conflict, acknowledge experiences of victims, and address violations of civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights**. This approach recognises that gender inequality is often aggravated by conflict, making women and girls particularly vulnerable to human rights abuses. Therefore, transnational justice mechanisms should incorporate conflict-related abuses and prevent future oppression of women.

Women are disproportionately affected by conflict, experiencing unique forms of violence and discrimination. Few of them are listed below:

1. **SEXUAL AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE**

Sexual and Gender-based violence (SGBV) is often used as a weapon of war, with women being the target because of the notion that they symbolise a community's honour and identity. Similarly,

violence by intimate partners and family members is also a rampant issue, where sometimes former combatants and security forces. Women may also face increased risks of **forced sex work and human trafficking** due to economic desperation and lack of opportunities. Dire economic conditions increase women's already unequal status and make them susceptible to precarious employment positions.

2. LACK OF REPRESENTATION IN POST-CONFLICT GOVERNANCE

Women are frequently **excluded from decision-making** in post-conflict reconstruction, despite their irreplaceable role in rebuilding communities. Additionally, "political women", that is women who engage actively in politics and policy-making and express their political views to the public, also face violence and threats of violence, which dissuades them from participation in policy-making activities. Situations of such conflicts and crises **inhibit women's access to justice and basic necessities**, which further heighten ongoing threats of insecurity and violence.

3. GENDER BIAS IN DDR PROGRAMMES

Disarmament, Demobilisation, and Reintegration (DDR) programmes are critical in transitioning from conflict to peace, but when these programmes are designed without the gender perspective, they **exclude and disadvantage women and girls**, reinforcing inequality and significantly setting back societal progress. DDR programmes are traditionally **military-focused**, designed around the assumption that combatants are men and have systematically **excluded female ex-combatants, supporters, spies, cooks, porters, medical practitioners, and victims of abduction and slavery**. As a result, women often go unrecognised and are denied access to reintegration resources, such as financial support, vocational training, psychological services, and social reintegration efforts.

4. ECONOMIC INJUSTICE

Women also face **economic hardships** due to displacement, **loss of livelihood**, and **increased burdens of household care**. **Discriminatory laws and societal norms with regards to property rights, inheritance, and access to resources** further amplify their vulnerability in post-conflict societal reconstruction efforts. There is also a widespread **preference of employing men in post-conflict countries**, which further marginalises women and exacerbates existing inequalities.

5. LACK OF ACCESS TO EDUCATION

Women and girls face **rampant loss of educational opportunities** and an **inability to access education**. Without access to education, women are less likely to participate in political decision-

making, economic recovery, or peace negotiations, which reinforces the male domination such structures. They also lack legal awareness and become susceptible to SGBV, domestic violence, early or forced marriage, and abuse.

6. INADEQUATE HEALTHCARE INFRASTRUCTURE AND ACCESS

Conflicts often **destroy healthcare infrastructure**, leaving pregnant women and children without access to safe pre- and post-partum healthcare, prenatal care, or emergency services, which increases women and infant mortality rates. Women in post-conflict areas are often survivors of SGBV, which is used as a weapon of war. Without access to medical and psychological support, **physical trauma (including STIs like HIV) and mental health disorders go untreated**, which further perpetuate suffering and stigma. Untreated health issues inhibit female participation in peacebuilding and policy-making efforts.

7. EROSION OF SOCIAL RIGHTS

The breakdown of legal order in post-conflict societies often leads to **violation of basic social rights**, which strips away women's right to dignity, identity, inclusion, and equal participation in public life. Women who have been victims of sexual violence, widowed by war, or who have taken non-traditional roles during war are frequently **ostracized by their communities**. Instead of being supported in their recovery and reintegration, they are blamed, silenced, excluded from social, economic, and political life.

V. IMPORTANCE OF GENDER INCLUSION

Post-conflict peacebuilding presents a rare and transformative opportunity to reshape societies. Yet, despite over two decades since the adoption of **UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000)**, which calls for increased participation of women in all aspects of peace and security worldwide, gender inclusion still remains inconsistent, superficial, and heavily undermined by structural and institutional barriers. Gender inclusion is not something mechanical, where a list of criteria is ticked off, but is a **critical foundation for sustainable peace, inclusive governance, and equitable justice**.

1. **WOMEN AS KEY STAKEHOLDERS, NOT JUST PASSIVE VICTIMS**

Conflicts affect men and women differently. While men are often conscripted into the military forces, women and girls are disproportionately affected by **SGBV, loss of livelihoods, and social ostracization**. However, the narrative of framing women solely as victims obscures their resilience and agency. In many post-conflict societies, women do serve as **first responders, primary caregivers, negotiators, and community peacebuilders**. Gender inclusion opens the conversation for female experiences in peacebuilding efforts, while ensuring the transition process reflects the needs of the entire population and not just the political elite.

2. **INCLUSIVE PEACE IS SUSTAINABLE PEACE**

Various studies and UN reports have demonstrated that there is a **direct correlation between gender-inclusive peace processes and the durability of peace**. When women participate meaningfully in peace negotiations and post-conflict governance, peace agreements are **35% more likely to last at least 15 years** according to UN Women, legal and constitutional reforms are more likely to **prioritise education, healthcare, and equality**, and Community-level buy-in increases, as women are often **trusted local leaders**, particularly in displaced and rural communities.

3. **JUSTICE THAT EXCLUDES WOMEN IS INCOMPLETE JUSTICE**

Transitional justice mechanisms often ignore or inadequately address **SGBV**, like rape, domestic violence, and forced displacement. Without women's inclusion in formulation, implementation, and oversight in these efforts, transitional justice remains blind to the **complex intersection of power, trauma, and inequality** that women face. UNDP and UN Women's joint research stresses that transitional justice processes must **"not only include women but reshape power relations"** to ensure justice is accessible to **all victims of all forms of violence**.

4. WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN POST-CONFLICT GOVERNANCE TRANSFORMS INSTITUTIONS

Women's inclusion in post-conflict governance ensures that political institutions ensure that there is **equitable representation** of all the sections of the society they aim to serve. In Rwanda, after the genocide, the reconstruction efforts incorporated a deliberate push for women's participation in parliament and local governance. Today, **Rwanda has one of the highest rates of female parliamentary participation in the world**, which has led to a progressive society with gender-based reforms in education, inheritance rights, and employment.

5. GENDER INCLUSION STRENGTHENS ECONOMIC RECOVERY

Post-conflict economies are often fragile and under-sourced. Yet, **women make-up the majority of the unpaid and informal workforce** in many conflict-affected areas. Economic recovery policies without gender perspective often exclude women from land reform, credit access, training programs, and entrepreneurship aid. Economic empowerment of women is not just equitable but strategic as women tend to reinvest more of their income into families and communities, making them an integral part of rebuilding local economies.

6. SECURITY SECTOR REFORMS NEEDS GENDER PERSPECTIVE

Police, military, and judicial reforms in post-conflict settings is essential for restoring public trust and maintaining peace. However, when **security sector reforms (SSR)** are conducted without a gender lens, it reinforces militarised masculine standards and often become **hostile or unsafe of women and girls**. Integrating women into security sector activities increases operational effectiveness, improves community trust, and helps address SGBV more systematically.

7. MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION IS TRANSFORMATIONAL

It is not sufficient to just count the number of women who are "at the table", we must also assess **what roles they play and how much power they hold** in decision-making and implementation. UN Women define meaningful participation as a process where women are **present, prepared, empowered, and influential**. Inclusion of women must address **intersectionality** (race, class, ethnicity, age, and ability), be grounded in **local realities and needs**, be protected against **tokenism or backlash**, and include their presence in **consultation, leadership, and accountability** mechanisms.

8. CHALLENGING PATRIARCHY AND POWER STRUCTURES

One of the key findings across all sources is that **exclusion of women is not related to culture, it is about power**. Patriarchal norms, social stigma, and institutional exclusion often conspire to keep women out of the decision-making process. As the UNDP and UN Women's joint research states, meaningful inclusion is about **shifting the structure of power so that justice and peace reflect everyone's interests**, not just the political elites and former combatants.

Gender inclusion is not optional; it is **crucial to foundational peacebuilding efforts**. In every aspect of post-conflict recovery, beginning from rebuilding governance structures to reestablishing economies and social cohesion, women's participation enhances effectiveness, equity, and sustainability. Yet, persistent barriers remain, from structural gender bias and underfunded women's organisations. The international community must shift from rhetorical support to **concrete action**, such as quotas, funding, legal reform, and accountability mechanisms that ensure **not just participation, but equitable distribution of power**.

VI. CASE STUDIES

1. LIBERIA

Liberia presents a compelling case study for examining women's roles in post-conflict peacebuilding and transnational justice. During the **second civil war between 1989 and 2003**, women and girls were frequently targeted with SGBV and other perils. In the aftermath of the conflict, the peace agreement was signed after collective demonstration by the Liberian women's organisations, representative of the country adopted the **Golden Tulip Declaration**, which contained women's demands for their **inclusion into all structures and institutions** involved during the transition period and as a part of post-conflict society. Ms. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf was democratically elected as the Africa's first female president and she was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in the year 2011.

Women also played a vital role in **fostering trust** between local communities, policymakers and security institutions through dialogues and engagement. They recommended policy reforms to **enhance gender-responsiveness of the security-sector**, including penal code reforms to address the needs of all prisoners (men, women, and youth), trauma-counselling training for security forces, and anti-corruption measures. Women's groups in Liberia helped improve public perceptions of the military by **participating in the DDR process**. UN officials supported the establishment of the **Liberian Gender and Security Sector National Task Force** in March 2017, which proved to be an effective coordination mechanism to advance implementation of WPS priorities in the security sector. A **Women and Children Protection Section** was established within the national police in 2005, which trained officers to handle SGBV, which consequently encouraged women to report such crimes.

Women were also included in economic programmes, which improved resilience and promoted sustainability. To address the lack of electricity in rural areas in post-civil war Liberia, women were trained for six months by Barefoot College and UN Women on **building, installing, and maintaining solar lamps and panels**. This training resulted in over 425 homes and structures in four towns having electricity.

Despite these efforts, challenges like inequalities rooted in patriarchal traditions continue to fuel violence and harmful practices and limited resources and institutional support for special units does undermine their effectiveness. Nevertheless, Liberia's experience demonstrates that while significant progress has been made, there needs to be more effort towards sustaining these measures and ensure meaningful inclusion of all sections of society.

2. COLOMBIA

In Colombia, the 2016 peace agreement between the Colombian Government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia – People’s Army (FARC-EP) included an innovative approach prioritising **direct participation of conflict victims in the legislature through representation in the Congress**, where the candidates were registered from victims’ organisations, peasant and ethnic groups, social and women’s organisations. This initiative aimed to improve women’s participation in law-making and strengthen their institutional presence.

The same peace accords also established a **Special Forum for the Implementation of the Gender-Based Approach** which supports the civil society oversight and ensures the gender perspective in the peace accords. The forum also includes women from national and regional platforms, indigenous communities, the LGBT community, and the Afro-Colombian communities. This forum serves as a dialogue channel between civil rights organisations, women’s groups, and the government.

These peace accords have increased women’s participation and leadership, but this has also increased the risks for women. The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights office in Colombia reported that **36 murders of women leaders** from 2016 to September 2019, and the National Ombudsman office documented **447 threats** from February 2018 to May 2019. Threats to rural women, including campesina and ethnic leaders, which have increased in 2019 to first part to 2020, due to struggles for land access, environmental protection, and illicit crop substitution.

Despite these risks, the peace accords have opened new spaces for women’s participation and leadership. Colombia’s hybrid formal/non-formal accountability mechanisms for women are good examples for other post-conflict settings.

3. RWANDA

Following the **1994 genocide**, Rwanda implemented a range of gender-sensitive policies and institutional reforms that have significantly advanced women’s empowerment and participation in post-conflict reconstruction. Notably, Rwanda has achieved **one of the highest levels of female political representation in the world, with over 60% of seats in the Chamber of Deputies held by women**. This achievement is rooted in constitutional quotas, sustained political will, and the persistent advocacy of women’s organisations, which together created an enabling environment for women’s involvement in national governance.

Rwanda has also enacted legal reforms to improve women's access to property and economic resources. The 1999 inheritance law and the 2003 constitutional reform granted **women the right to own land and open bank accounts without male authorization, enhancing their economic independence and security**. These reforms were pivotal in challenging the patriarchal structures that historically restricted women's rights and facilitated the development of more equitable land and family laws, particularly benefiting widows and female-headed households in the aftermath of conflict.

The government has also promoted women's economic empowerment through targeted programs focused on **access to credit, vocational training, and entrepreneurship support**. These initiatives have aimed to integrate women into Rwanda's broader economic recovery process, especially in the informal and agricultural sectors. Moreover, efforts have been made to address deeply rooted cultural barriers that hinder women's access to land and productive resources, particularly in rural communities where traditional norms remain influential.

Despite the significant progress, challenges persist. Many women in rural areas continue to face barriers in accessing healthcare, education, and income-generating opportunities. Gender norms and stereotypes continue to limit the full exercise of women's rights and their leadership roles at the local level. Nonetheless, Rwanda's experience illustrates how sustained political commitment, inclusive legal reform, and gender-targeted initiatives can reshape post-conflict societies. It serves as a valuable model for integrating gender equality into peacebuilding and reconstruction processes.

4. SYRIA

The Syrian conflict, now in its second decade, has had devastating consequences for women, who have been disproportionately affected by displacement, loss of livelihood, and gender-based violence. Despite these challenges, Syrian women have consistently mobilised at the grassroots level by **advocating for peace, humanitarian access, and transitional justice**. Although formal peace processes such as the Geneva and Astana talks have largely excluded women from decision-making roles, Syrian women's movements have demanded representation and accountability through parallel civil society initiatives and international advocacy.

In 2016, the UN established the **Syrian Women's Advisory Board (WAB)** to support the Office of the Special Envoy for Syria, marking a milestone in institutional recognition of women's voices. Comprising diverse representatives from across Syria's political, ethnic, and regional spectrum, the WAB offers gender-responsive recommendations to negotiators and elevates women's experiences within the broader political process. Alongside this, **Syrian women-led civil society groups** have

been active in documenting war crimes, supporting survivors of sexual violence, and demanding justice through truth-telling mechanisms and reparations frameworks.

However, women's participation in peacebuilding continues to face significant structural and cultural barriers. **Deep-rooted patriarchal norms, the securitization of political spaces, and the fragmentation of the Syrian opposition** have all contributed to the marginalisation of women's perspectives in formal negotiations. Additionally, **threats, harassment, and forced displacement** have made it difficult for women leaders, especially those in rural or opposition-held areas to participate safely and consistently in public life.

Despite these obstacles, the resilience and leadership of Syrian women remain central to local peacebuilding and recovery efforts. Initiatives such as **women-led community mediation, legal aid networks, and trauma support programs** have been vital in preserving social cohesion amid widespread breakdown of state institutions. While Syria's transitional justice process remains elusive, the efforts of women to build peace from the ground up underscore the urgent need for a formal political process that guarantees their full and meaningful inclusion. The Syrian case highlights how even in highly protracted and violent conflicts, women's leadership is indispensable to laying the foundation for just and sustainable peace.

5. AFGHANISTAN

Afghanistan presents a deeply complex example of the struggle for **women's participation in peacebuilding and transitional justice**, particularly following the political shifts of the past two decades. From 2001 to 2021, Afghan women made **historic gains in education, political representation, and legal rights**, supported by constitutional reforms and sustained international engagement. Women held seats in parliament, participated in national consultations, and contributed to local peace efforts, particularly through the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission and grassroots civil society organisations.

However, the **Taliban's return to power in August 2021** marked a stark reversal of these advancements. Since then, Afghan women have faced **systematic exclusion from public life**, including bans on secondary and higher education, dismissal from government jobs, and severe restrictions on movement and expression. Women's participation in governance and justice institutions have been **effectively dismantled**, and efforts to include women in formal negotiations, such as during the intra-Afghan peace talks, have been **minimal and largely symbolic**.

Despite this hostile environment, Afghan women continue to demonstrate **resilience and leadership**, particularly in exile and through online platforms. Activists and former public officials have formed networks abroad to **document human rights violations, advocate at the UN, and amplify the voices of women still in Afghanistan**. In the absence of formal transitional justice mechanisms, women-led initiatives are working to preserve **truth-telling, accountability, and memory** of abuses, especially in relation to gender-based violence and ethnic targeting.

Afghanistan's experience underscores the **fragility of gender inclusion in the absence of institutional guarantees** and sustained international pressure. It highlights the dangers of **treating women's rights as negotiable** in political settlements and the critical need for **binding commitments** to women's participation in any future peace or transitional process. The Afghan case is a stark reminder that without **protection, participation, and power**, gains in gender equality can be swiftly undone, and peace will remain both unjust and unsustainable.

6. SUDAN

Sudan's post-conflict transition has highlighted both the **transformative potential and persistent challenges** of women's participation in peacebuilding and transitional justice. Following the 2019 revolution that overthrew the authoritarian regime of Omar al-Bashir, Sudanese women emerged as **key actors in the pro-democracy movement**, with widespread visibility in protests and civil resistance efforts. Their role in the uprising earned global recognition and was seen as a **symbol of Sudan's desire for inclusive and rights-based governance**.

The **Juba Peace Agreement of 2020**, signed between the transitional government and several armed opposition groups, included provisions for women's participation and gender equality, reflecting a shift toward more **gender-aware peacebuilding frameworks**. However, implementation has been **uneven and fragile**, with women largely absent from key negotiating teams and power-sharing structures. While the agreement recognized the need for **30% representation of women in governance**, actual political appointments have fallen short of this target, undermining efforts toward **inclusive political reform**.

Sudanese women's organisations have remained active in **advocating for justice, reconciliation, and legal reform**. These include initiatives addressing **conflict-related sexual violence**, promoting **truth-telling and reparations**, and supporting displaced women in Darfur, Blue Nile, and South Kordofan. Yet, the **escalation of armed conflict in April 2023** between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces has reversed many of these gains. Women and girls have faced **heightened**

risks of sexual violence, displacement, and targeted attacks, with limited access to humanitarian assistance or legal protection.

Despite the breakdown of formal institutions, Sudanese women continue to **mobilise through informal networks, diaspora advocacy, and digital platforms.** Their efforts aim to **preserve civic space,** push for international accountability, and ensure that **gender equality remains central to any future peace process.** The case of Sudan illustrates both the **resilience of women in conflict-affected societies** and the **urgent need for sustained, institutional support** to translate their contributions into long-term, structural inclusion. Without deliberate integration of women's voices, Sudan risks repeating cycles of exclusion, impunity, and instability.

VII. QUESTIONS A RESOLUTION MUST ANSWER (QARMA)

1. How can member states ensure women's meaningful participation in all stages of post-conflict peacebuilding and transitional justice?
2. What mechanisms can be implemented to guarantee women's representation in decision-making bodies and peace negotiations?
3. How should national DDR programmes be restructured to recognise and include female ex-combatants and support staff?
4. What kind of policies can be adopted to address and prevent SGBV during and after conflicts?
5. How can transnational justice mechanisms be made more gender-inclusive and address specific needs of women and girl victims?
6. What reforms are needed in inheritance, land, and property laws to ensure economic justice for women in post-conflict societies?
7. How can healthcare services, including reproductive and psychological care, be made accessible to women and girls in conflict-affected zones?
8. What steps can be taken to eliminate cultural, structural, and legal barriers to women's political participation after conflict?
9. What safeguards can be put in place to protect women human rights defenders and political activists from retaliation or violence?
10. What steps can be taken to improve access to education and legal literacy to girls and women in peacebuilding capacities?
11. How can international and regional actors (like the UN, AU, or EU) support Member States in implementing gender-inclusive peacebuilding policies?
12. How can Member States ensure that gender inclusion efforts extend to marginalized groups such as rural women, ethnic minorities, and LGBTQ+ communities?

VIII. REFERENCES

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