

INTERNATIONAL ROUND TABLE ON WOMEN PEACEMAKERS



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

Organisation
des Nations Unies
pour l'éducation,
la science et la culture

**International Women's Day
8 March 2007
UNESCO Headquarters, Paris**



Preface

The preamble to UNESCO's Constitution states that "since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed." On 8 March 2007, to celebrate International Women's Day, UNESCO's Section for Women and Gender Equality (now, the Division for Gender Equality) wished to pay tribute to the *women* around the world who are courageously, and often anonymously, constructing the defences of peace.

Every day we hear graphic accounts of the impact of conflict on women, be it physical, sexual or psychological, perpetrated by state or non-state actors. Indeed, discrimination and violence against women – which are more often than not met with impunity – are among the central obstacles to peace-building processes.

While the impact of conflict on women is well documented, we rarely hear about the tireless work of women to end conflict, and the multitude of actions they take to preserve, build, and maintain what is all too often a fragile peace. These women are presidents and parliamentarians, but they are also lawyers activists, doctors, grassroots workers and mothers who refuse to be passive by-standers in the face of conflict and instead choose to stand up against it.

In recent years it has become clear that peace-building processes without the equal participation of women, their perspectives, aspirations and rights are not sustainable. UN Security Council resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, adopted in 2000, is the direct outcome of this realization. For the first time in the history of the United Nations, a Security Council Resolution officially points to the particular situation of women in the context of war and peace: often they are the first victims of violence, and yet are denied the right to take part in its formal resolution as equal citizens. Thus, this ground-breaking resolution does not simply dwell on the role of women as victims of conflict, it also highlights the contributions of women working proactively at the local, regional and international levels in conflict prevention, resolution and sustainable peace building.

In 2007, within the framework of the UNESCO programme to celebrate International Women's Day, we acknowledged the efforts of a few distinguished individuals involved in peace processes at the UNESCO International Round Table on "Women Peacemakers" on March 8 2007 at our Headquarters in Paris. This brochure presents selected excerpts from their moving and inspirational speeches, as well as a copy of their *Women Peacemakers Statement*.

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Assistant Director-General for Strategic Planning

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Opening Address, 8 March 2007



It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to UNESCO for this Conference to mark International Women's Day 2007.

The chosen theme for today is women peacemakers. Our distinguished panellists are all women who have courageously devoted themselves to promoting peace and women's inclusion in peace processes around the world. They follow in a long, yet often forgotten, tradition of women peacemakers. As the former UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, said: "For generations, women have served as peace educators, both in their families and in their societies. They have proved instrumental in building bridges rather than walls."

Yet, despite this historic role, women are systematically underrepresented in formal peace processes. Their important contribution to informal peace processes is largely ignored. That is why this year we felt it crucial to highlight, and celebrate, women peacemakers around the world, and in particular the five women peacemakers who are with us here today on our panel.

Among our eminent panellists is Ms Sylvie Kinigi, former Prime Minister of the first democratically elected, ethnically mixed government of Burundi. Ms Kinigi is known the world over as a leader and outspoken proponent of peace and reconciliation.

We are also honoured to have with us Ms Luz Méndez. As one of the few women to participate in the Guatemalan peace negotiations in the early 1990s, Ms Méndez succeeded in bringing the inclusion of women's rights into the historic Peace Accords.

Also with us today is Ms Ruth-Gaby Vermot-Mangold. Through the Swiss Parliament and the Council of Europe, Ms Vermot-Mangold has helped to win international recognition for women peace activities, such as through the 1000 PeaceWomen Project.

We are likewise privileged to have on our panel Senator Mobina Jaffer. Beyond her inspiring work as former Canadian Special Envoy for Peace in Sudan, Ms Jaffer was also Chair of the Canadian Committee responsible for implementing Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security.

Finally, we are proud to welcome Ambassador Swanee Hunt. Following her own close engagement in the peace negotiations in the Balkans in the 1990s, Ambassador Hunt has founded the Initiative for Inclusive Security to help bring together and train women peacemakers from around the world.

Before I invite our keynote speaker to take the floor, let me say a few words about our chosen theme, and how it relates to the overarching message of International Women's Day this year – "Ending impunity for violence against women".

Be it perpetrated by the State or its agents, in the public or private spheres, in peacetime or in times of conflict, violence or the threat of violence is a common thread in the fabric of women's everyday lives. Gender-based violence is responsible for the majority of deaths of women aged 15 to 44 worldwide. And, as we are reminded today, such violence is all too often met with impunity. It is not an exaggeration to say that violence against women is of epidemic proportions, and that it is particularly aggravated by and in conflict situations.

During conflict, women and girls are particularly vulnerable to exploitation, abuse, sexual slavery, and forced recruitment into armed groups. We now know that

40 percent of child soldiers are girls, who are often forced into the double role of sexual slave and armed soldier. This underscores the fact that while all suffer from the tragedies of war, women are affected differently than men. Yet this fact is rarely taken into account in peace building, peace keeping or reconstruction efforts, which are only recently beginning to include gender sensitivity training.

It therefore seems obvious that if women suffer equally – and in many instances even more than men – from conflict they should be equally involved in its resolution. Including women in peace and reconstruction processes is a way of ensuring that women's rights are taken into account in post-conflict governance.

Indeed, there is ample evidence that the equal inclusion of women in peace processes and post-conflict reconstruction leads to more effective reconstruction overall and ultimately to a more sustainable peace. One prime example of this is Rwanda, where women played a vital role in post-conflict reconstruction and reconciliation, and today make up 49 per cent of the country's parliament.

The potential of women as peace builders and peace keepers has been widely recognized. It is particularly well highlighted in UN General Assembly Resolution 1325. Let me pause here a moment to pay tribute to Angela King, a Jamaican diplomat and UN official, who recently passed away, and who was the driving force behind the creation and passage of the Resolution. This important document engages all UN Member States to promote the participation of women in decision-making and peace processes, to integrate gender perspectives and training in peacekeeping, and to protect women in armed conflict. Furthermore, it engages the UN to mainstream gender issues into its reporting systems and in all programs related to conflict and peacebuilding.

International commitments such as Resolution 1325 and the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) have gone far in raising awareness on women's equality and women's role in peace building and keeping. Yet despite the advancement that Resolution 1325 represents, and the tireless contributions of individuals like Ms Angela King, women remain underrepresented in peace processes and at top decision-making levels. Indeed, the gap between policy and practice remains wide.

I am proud to say that UNESCO is actively working to bridge that gap. First, by working to empower women and ensuring that all UNESCO programs mainstream gender equality into their actions. Women's empowerment is a first and critical step in the realization of gender equality – be it in peace processes, or in any other domain. We are also working to promote inclusive peace through our role as international facilitators and promoters of dialogue between cultures and civilizations. UNESCO believes that dialogue is the keystone of conflict resolution, and that real and meaningful dialogue cannot take place unless all stakeholders are included: women, as well as men.

This is why we are actively working to integrate gender concerns into our work in post-conflict settings. Our aim is to ensure that UNESCO's activities contribute towards empowering women to take an equal part in the stabilization, reconstruction and development of their countries.

Let me conclude by saying how honoured UNESCO is to host this International Round Table, in the presence of such distinguished women peacemakers. It is critical that we, as an international community, recognize and actively support the courageous women peacemakers who devote, and often risk, their lives every day in the search for peace. It is our great hope that these exceptional women will serve as role models for future generations.



Swanee Hunt

Director of the Women and Public Policy Program at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government and Chair of "The Initiative for Inclusive Security"

"I've been working in over thirty conflicts and working with about 500 women leaders and... I've seen how important it is that women be involved in peacemaking. There are six reasons:



"One: women are community leaders, whether with formal or informal authority. When the Director-General mentioned Rwanda, that's a perfect example of how Aloysia Inyumba built women's-only councils: first at the village level, then higher and higher until women got so used to running for office that they were ready to run not only for the women's seats but against the men, and that's how they came to have 49% women in Parliament...

"Two: women are particularly adept at bridging ethnic and religious, political and cultural divides, and we could give you a hundred examples of how women worked together, saying: "Sure, I am a Serb, and you are a Croat, and you are a Muslim, but we are all mothers" or, 'We all have missing children in this conflict in Sri Lanka, let's get together as the parents of the missing' or, 'We are all having trouble having our voices heard in Israel and Palestine, let's create an international women's council.'

Ambassador Swanee Hunt is the founding director of the Women and Public Policy Program at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government and the founder of the Initiative for Inclusive Security. During her service as U.S. Ambassador to Austria, she hosted negotiations and international symposia aimed at securing peace in the Balkans. Today, through her work with the Initiative for Inclusive Security, Ambassador Hunt works to connect women peacemakers from around the world through her Women Waging Peace Network, and has trained women leaders and peace builders in over 40 countries.

"Third: women have their fingers on the pulse of the community. Those are the words said to me by Vjosa Dobruna — a physician who became the only woman in the UN interim government in Kosovo.... She went into her office at UN Headquarters, and there was no desk, no telephone, no chair. So she held her day in the café across the street. I said 'How could you possibly have done that?' and she said 'Oh no, it turned out fine, it was actually much better because the people could see me without going through security and I could really hear what was going on...'

"Fourth: women, as second class citizens, are often viewed as less threatening. Anna Politkovskaya, who was, as you know, recently assassinated in Russia, was part of our [Women Waging Peace] network. She told me she got into Chechnya more than sixty times posing as a farm woman going in on a wagon of hay because they didn't imagine her, this woman on the hay, to be able to write the reports that she wrote....

"Fifth: women bring a different perspective into the peace talks; and the example I always use is

Luz Méndez, who is one of the great women in the peace-building world.

"Last: women are highly invested in having peace and they will tell you that: 'Because I am a mother, I've got to see this place secure'. "



Sylvie Kinigi

Senior international political and economic program administrator and former Prime Minister of Burundi

"We are all aware of the foundational role that women play in the life of society... in particular in promoting peace and security, women's involvement is still marginal,



but important. **Women pay a very heavy price in conflicts and this cannot be overstated. Indeed, that is why all the peace and security strategies cannot yield tangible and sustainable results... unless they are inclusive.**

Consequently, the involvement of women should be consolidated at all levels of the process: conflict prevention, conflict management and resolution, reconstruction and consolidation of peace.

"Research conducted has revealed that when women attain decision-making positions, they denounce policies of exclusion, support the reorientation of policy choices as well as the

Sylvie Kinigi is former Prime Minister of the first democratically elected, ethnically mixed government of Burundi. She survived the violent 1993 coup, during which the President, Melchior Ndadaye, was assassinated, only to find herself in charge of a conflict-beleaguered nation. Ms Kinigi bravely went on to become a leader and outspoken proponent of peace and reconciliation. She is currently working as Senior Political Advisor and Coordinator of Programs to the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General to the Great Lakes Region in Africa.

formulation of strategies based on the interests of the human person (access to basic social services, health, education, access to decent housing, poverty reduction, etc.) and stimulate institutional and legislative reforms in order to reflect more equitable political choices. **In order to achieve this, women put up a relentless fight at the risk of endangering their lives. Sometimes, they succeed while sometimes they do not....**

"With the promotion of democratic systems, leaders who are the product of transparent elections tend to advocate for equal opportunities between men and women, particularly through institutionalising the quota system or affirmative action in favour of women. Africa has not lagged behind in this evolution; indeed, this has contributed to strengthening the position of women in peace processes on the continent. **The role of**

women in defining policies and promoting democratic governments has no doubt had a tangible impact on the

quality and relevance of policies adopted, and especially with the increased number of women holding senior positions of responsibility....

"And finally, in conclusion, we cannot possibly arrive at a solution if we do not recognize those who have acted — if we do not give them visibility. I would like to thank UNESCO for starting this process of recognition."



Luz Méndez

President of the Advisory Council to the National Union of Guatemalan Women, Guatemala



Luz Méndez is President of the Advisory Council to the National Union of Guatemalan Women (UNAMG). From 1991 to 1996, Ms Méndez participated in the Guatemalan peace negotiations which brought an end to 35 years of violent conflict. She was one of the few women at the negotiating table, and succeeded in incorporating women's rights into the historic Peace Accords. As part of her work with the Global Fund for Women, and UNIFEM, she has contributed to peace processes in Burundi, Iraq, Israel, the Palestinian Territories and Colombia, among others.

"There was something that was very important in the [Guatemalan] peace negotiations; that was the agenda. It was a very broad agenda that included all the issues, economic and social, that affected Guatemala... and that made it possible to have a very broad and thorough discussion. During that discussion, the women put forward their point of view and raised the specific needs of women. What was their role? What was their added value? What did they bring to the bargaining table? Well, **they managed to put on the agenda a number of issues that wouldn't have been mentioned at all during the peace negotiations if they hadn't been there.** For example gender based violence, sexual and reproductive rights, equal access to land, to housing, to health care, to education...

"I was involved at the time, as part of the UNRG delegation, and **during four and a half years I was the only woman to be in both delegations. And of course it was difficult at the time to raise a number of issues, in particular those issues that affect women....** I found great support in the fact that the Civil Society Assembly managed to put forward a number of themes for discussion and I took up these recommendations. Of course it wasn't possible to include everything in the peace accord, but it was possible to include, for example, councils defending indigenous women, the establishment of the National Women's Forum. There was also a commitment to develop a health care plan for women, a commitment to review the legislation of our country, so that we could do away with sexist aspects that were embedded in the law, and also the penalization of rape. These are some of the aspects we included in the final peace accord. During those years the international community really supported me... and when I travelled to Beijing to attend the World Conference on Women I realized that there were 30,000 women who were there together and that gave me a real strength.

"We need to build peace, we need to prepare all the stakeholders who will then make it possible to fully implement peace agreements and in particular we need to provide resources, financial and material resources, to women's organizations. That is what we are trying to do, and we have

really made huge efforts... and I think that maybe a number of countries could look at Guatemala as a useful lesson: we need to strengthen women, we need to strengthen other stakeholders so that peace agreements can be fully implemented.



Ruth Gaby Vermot-Mangold

Member of the Swiss Parliament and of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and Founder of the organization "1000 PeaceWomen Across the Globe"

"I am not a peace builder; I am not involved in peace initiatives. I think rather I am a facilitator for the visibility of women peace initiators. I am a member of the Council of Europe and I'm a speaker for South Caucuses. I visited the refugee camps in Azerbaijan, Armenia and Nagornij Karabakh, I know you remember them. I've been to Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, Chechnya, Georgia. I've been to many countries where there are many people who are in refugee camps and there I saw women, women who had life in their hands — because it was no life of leisure in these camps. They lived in very cold conditions in the winter, very hot conditions in the summer, the children were ill, and it's the women who took care of drugs, schools for the children, food, clothes, took care of the survival of people... **I saw very courageous women who were also very committed politically. They've gone to city hall in many cases to say 'No, this is not right, we want peace, we support all forms of conciliation, we want a different life.'**



"And quite often, I came back from these visits to the refugee camps — where the women also told stories of rape and violence — ...and **I felt we need to make the work of these women visible. We have to make their work visible and honour it as well, because, globally there are hundreds of thousands of women involved in peace** — we've had a few examples today.

"So how do we honour them? The Nobel Peace Prize? So we set up an association, and began collecting the names and biographies of women globally to give visibility to this very committed and courageous community.... We went to the major banks looking for money, but they said 'no, no, your project doesn't fit into our sponsorship concept.' So **it is very clear that money doesn't go to women, but money is part of what women need.**

"Women use their energy and their time and they exhaust themselves to make the world a more liveable place.... Peace is not only the absence of war, it's about having food, water, land, schools for the children, human rights, the absence of violence, rape and torture. That is peace!"

Ruth-Gaby Vermot-Mangold is an active member of the Swiss parliament and the Council of Europe, and uses these positions to advocate in favour of women's empowerment and gender equality. In addition to being a peace activist herself, Ms Vermot-Mangold is also a vocal advocate on behalf of other women peace activists. Through her work as the President of the Swiss Assembly's sub-committee on refugees, Ms Vermot-Mangold became sensitized to the dramatic impact of conflict on women, as well as to the work that women around the world are doing for peace. It is thus that she founded the 1000 PeaceWomen Project, an initiative that nominated 1000 women peace activists from around the world for the 2005 Nobel Peace Prize. While the 1000 peace women did not receive the Nobel Prize, they did win world recognition for their courage and achievements.



Mobina Jaffer

Senator of British Columbia, Canada, and former Special Envoy for Canada to the Peace Process in Sudan



Senator Mobina Jaffer, of British Columbia, Canada, was appointed in 2002 as Canadian Special Envoy for Peace in Sudan. Since then, she travelled throughout the region and distinguished herself as a peacemaker by listening to all sides of the conflict: meeting with top government officials, rebel leaders, and refugees alike. She also chaired from 2002 to late 2005 the Canadian Committee on Women, Peace and Security, established to implement Security Council Resolution 1325.

"On March 8, this very special date, **I would like to dedicate my presentation to women peacemakers all over the world, and especially to my Darfurian sisters who were very determined that they would be at the peace table.**

These Darfurian women came from Khartoum, villages in Darfur, from refugee camps. They were homemakers, they were combatants, and they were professional women, they were community activists. They were determined that they would be included in the peace tables. And today, I know that you will join with me in saluting them for having succeeded in being at the peace tables....

"As Canada's Envoy to Sudan, I tried very hard to get the women to sit at the peace table. There were no women on the side of the Sudanese government, sometimes there was a sort of partial delegate from the rebels' group. When I asked where the women were - and I would be very cute about it, saying: 'It's pretty lonely, there is only the Envoy who is a woman and no other woman in the room... where are the women?' And **I was told: women don't understand peace processes, it's too complicated, women have duties at home... looking after the family. Once we have arrived at the peace process, we'll include them. Every excuse that you can possibly think of, I was given....**

"Friends, I completely failed in getting even one woman at the peace table. But I can assure you, that I learnt many, many lessons of how to deal with those excuses if I ever have to deal with them again. What we lost in not having those women at the peace table was that the women were not provided with the skills that the men were provided in leadership... the women were denied experience, the women were not able to build the networks that the men were, so that once the peace agreement was signed, they would be able to pick up the phone and ask for more help. I learnt a lot from this failure of not getting the women at the table. ..

"The lessons that we learn when women are at the peace table is that we build skills for the whole community, we provide knowledge for the whole community, and we provide a network for the whole community. We bring a voice of women to agreements, a voice of the community when agreements are to be implemented. Therefore today, as we leave, **I ask that everywhere we go, we ask**

the UN, our governments, to make it absolutely mandatory that no peace table should be set up without one third of that peace table being women. That we insist that these women be given the same "per diem" as men at that peace table and that we insist that they have full delegate status at that peace table."



Women Peacemakers Statement

*On the occasion of International Women's Day
UNESCO, Paris; 8 March 2007*

We, the women peacemakers gathered here today on 8 March 2007 at the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to take part in the International Round Table on "Women Peacemakers",

Convinced of the crucial and central role of women in formal and informal peace-making and that there can be no lasting peace without gender equality,

Convinced that women should receive equal visibility and resources to carry out their peace efforts,

Noting the recognition by the international community of the critical contributions of women in peace building processes and the intention of the international community to include women in conflict prevention, resolution and post-conflict reconstruction in a systematic and meaningful way,

Determined to pursue our governments' commitment to the UN Security Council Resolution 1325, adopted in October 2000,

Request continued support from UNESCO for:

- Women's leadership in all aspects of peace-making and peace-building efforts, from post-conflict reconstruction and reconciliation to full recovery and the prevention of conflict,
- Women's full and equal participation in all democratic and decision making processes,
- Building empowering social, political and cultural environments that sustain women's peace efforts and secure lasting gains in favour of gender equality.
- Sustaining women's efforts in peace negotiations and post-conflict processes.

We, **congratulate** UNESCO on this initiative to amplify women's voices and women's action for peace.

Sylvie Kinigi

Luz Méndez

Ruth-Gaby Vermot-Mangold

Mobina Jaffer

Swanee Hunt



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