



PARLIAMENT
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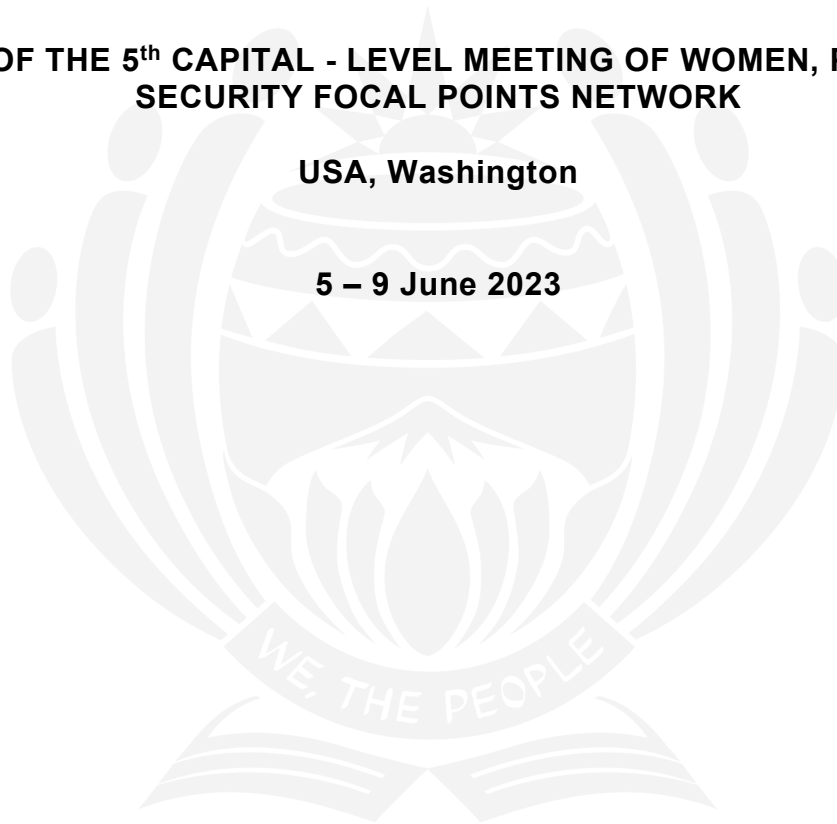
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**REPORT OF THE 5th CAPITAL - LEVEL MEETING OF WOMEN, PEACE, AND
SECURITY FOCAL POINTS NETWORK**

USA, Washington

5 – 9 June 2023



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A delegation from the South African Parliament participated in the 5TH Capital-level Meeting of Women, Peace, and Security Focal Points Network from the 5th to the 9th of June 2023 in Washington, DC. Participants from about 87 countries attended and the objective of the meeting was mainly to share best practices and experiences related to advancing the global WPS agenda.

The discussions were informative as Members were able to gain a better understanding of the issues from multiple perspectives and had an opportunity to exchange their views and opinions. It is worth noting that the meeting did not conclude with the adoption of a resolution or a declaration. Participating in this meeting supported Parliament's mandate as follows:

- **Deepened international engagement:** Parliament's international engagements were deepened through the following:
 - Hon. Lesoma participated as a panelist in the high-level plenary session titled 'Parliamentarian Panel discussion: on WPS and legislation'.

NOTEWORTHY ISSUES

- **Mediation training for MPs:** Parliament is encouraged to take advantage of mediation training offered by the Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO). DIRCO reported that it is training women as mediators within and outside South Africa.
- **Standardisation of meetings with South African Ambassadors during international official meetings:** The delegation raised a concern that they did not get the opportunity to meet with the South African Ambassador in Washington. A request was made for such a meeting with the DIRCO official attending the WPS meeting on the 8th of June 2022 and no response was provided. It is worth noting that on the 5th of June 2023, there was a briefing meeting between Parliament's delegation with senior officials from the Departments of International Relations and Cooperation and Defence.

1. INTRODUCTION

Purpose of the meeting: To deliberate on the theme 'Advancing the adaptability and evolution of WPS as a framework for implementing policy changes' and plenary discussions. The meeting was well-attended and vibrant.

Delegation Members:

- Hon. Regina Lesoma, MP and leader of the delegation.
- Hon. Moleboheng Modise-Mpya, MP.

Delegation Secretariat:

- Ms. Mpho Monnakgotla, IRPD Researcher.

2. MEETING OUTCOMES

2.1 Plenary Sessions

The plenary sessions took place on the 6th of June and focused on:

- **Opening Remarks**

Opening remarks were delivered by several high-level speakers including Under Secretary for Arms Control and International Security Ambassador Bonnie Jenkins; U.S. Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women's Issues Geeta R. Gupta; Chief of Romania's Gender Management Office and Romanian Focal Point Lt. Colonel Manuela-Elena Bercea; Special Envoy of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission on Women, Peace, and Security, Mme Bineta Dion; and UN Women Executive Director Sima Sami Bahous.

Amongst others, speakers noted that the WPS agenda has been around for over 20 years and is a powerful proven tool for advancing gender inclusiveness but the challenge is transitioning this agenda from policy to action. The agenda requires a community such as the WPS Network to translate it into transformative action. The Network is more relevant today as member States push forward against the pushback on women's rights and urge governments and regional organizations to join if they have not done so and to ensure that the Agenda have the adequate human and financial capacity to effectively implement it. The UN Women is working closely with Member States, regional organizations, and civil society on various to fully implement the Agenda.

To address the implementation gaps, the US administration supports the creation of regional women's peace and security centers of excellence to advance WPS policy implementation. The envisioned centers would be repositories for expertise, and standards to national plan development and implementation and coordinate existing WPS communities - governments, regional entities, and UN entities to focus on regional priorities and issues relevant to the WPS agenda, such as technology-facilitated gender-based violence, gender impacts of climate change, conflict-related sexual violence, and advancing accountability for sexual violence in conflict countries.

Despite all these efforts, the WPS vision is far from being achieved, women are still systematically marginalized across all the State's decision-making processes, particularly in

conflict management. In this light, States must take immediate action to ensure that women are present in all sectors, from economy to security in that way they will not be invited to participate as they will be present in those sectors. Countries were urged to abolish all discriminatory gender norms. Also, countries need to silence the guns and stop the bombs so that a genuine culture of peace can take place. Things cannot be left in the hands of the minority who believes in violence. Countries must invest in women's movements and allocate appropriate finances to the WPS Agenda.

- **Panel Discussion: The Future of WPS**

This discussion was led by Ambassador Swanee Hunt and amongst others, speakers noted that the war of aggression against Ukraine to the violent protesters and the deteriorating situation for women and girls in Afghanistan are constant reminders of the significance of the WPS agenda in addressing the complex peace and security challenges facing the world. The lack of adequate resources and structures was identified as another critical barrier to the implementation of the agenda, particularly the WPS National Action Plans (NAPs). Evidence shows that NAPs with dedicated budgets are most effective in terms of incremental change and value for investment. Also, it was highlighted that South Africa provides a rich history that a lot of countries can learn from. For instance, the pivotal role women played in the fight for freedom and equality. Women were at the forefront of civil disobedience campaigns, boycotts, and marches. Despite challenges, today South Africa is a country that celebrates diversity and works towards creating a more equitable society for all.

- **Parliamentarian Panel Discussion: WPS and Legislation**

This discussion recognised the importance of legislators' crucial role in ensuring the WPS implementation and the panelists included Hon. R. Lesoma, MP (South African Parliament); Ms. Y. Kravchuk, MP (Ukrainian Parliament); Ms. E. Lindh, MP (Sweden Parliament); and Ms. D. Al Bashir, MP (Jordan Parliament). Amongst others, Hon. Lesoma noted that South Africa has been at the forefront of promoting gender equality and empowering women and girls, and has introduced a comprehensive legislative and policy framework to promote and protect their rights, including the Domestic Amendment Act 14 of 2021; the Criminal Law (Sexual and Related Matters) Amendment Act 13 of 2021 and the Constitution 18th Amendment Bill recognising Sign Language as an official language. Also, noted that Parliament continues to put a spotlight on GBV by, amongst others, holding several debates in the two Houses. Committees including the Multi-Party Women's Caucus have been instrumental in holding entities and individuals to account to intensify the battle against GBV. Further noted that Parliament has adopted several initiatives including *Taking Parliament to the People (TPPTP)* programme which gives people an opportunity to make their voices heard. Concluded by noting that more than ever, it is critical for parliaments to play an active role in promoting the Women, Peace and Security Agenda. Parliaments as part of the global community, must act jointly to overcome gender inequality and ensure women's rights in peace and security decision-making processes.



2.2. Series of workshops for National Focal Points and civil society

The Plenary sessions were followed by a series of workshops for National Focal Points and civil society to examine and share best practices for collaboration on implementing WPS efforts. The key points of these workshops are as follows:

The role of the Focal Point - national implementors of WPS

- The diverse role and experiences of Focal Points in different countries makes comparisons difficult.
- Focal Points should focus on promoting one of the four WPS pillars: Prevention of conflict and other forms of violence against women & girls.
- Focal Points must foster coherence by exchanging experiences.

WPS in Action

- Countries not in conflict/war do not consider WPS as an area of focus or concern.
- Lack of political will and funding impede the implementation of WPS in the majority of countries.
- For some countries security implies interference, making it difficult for

WORKSHOPS: KEY POINTS

WPS Sustainability: for Member States

- Governance structure: Well-defined governance structure that ensures accountability, transparency & effective decision-making.
- Resource mobilisation: Clearly defined strategy for resource mobilisation.
- Stakeholder engagement: active engagement with local communities.
- Institutional capacity: presence of appropriate staff, finance & systems and facilities.
- Monitoring & Evaluation: robust framework to assess performance, impact, and progress toward objectives.

WPS Monitoring & Evaluation

- Allocation of appropriate resources including funds and personnel to effectively implement and monitor WPS national action plan.
- Involvement of relevant stakeholders in M&E activities to ensure transparency and inclusivity.
- Countries were encouraged to use the WPS Global Compact Monitoring Framework - a set of indicators that assess the implementation of WPS commitments by assessing the legal, policy and institutional environment in countries.
- Parliaments were encouraged to play a role in advancing WPS agenda.



3. RECOMMENDED ISSUES FOR NOTING AND/OR ACTION BY PARLIAMENT

The South African Parliament is invited to note the following key issues

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- **Standardisation of meetings with South African Ambassadors during international official meetings:** The delegation raised a concern that they did not get the opportunity to meet with the South African Ambassador in Washington as per the practice. A request was made for such a meeting with the DIRCO official attending the WPS meeting on the 8th of June 2022 and no response was provided. It is worth noting that on the 5th of June 2023, there was a briefing meeting between Parliament's delegation with senior officials from the Departments of International Relations and Cooperation and Defence.

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