**MINISTRY**

**INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND COOPERATION**

 **REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**A Question for Written Reply**

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**433. Mr M Hlengwa (IFP) to ask the Minister of International Relations and Cooperation**:

Whether, given that South Africa, together with Switzerland, is co-chair of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Focal Points Network for 2022 and that the President of the Republic, Mr M C Ramaphosa, is on record having said that gender based violence is the Republic’s second pandemic, the Government intends to leverage the opportunities and access provided through the WPS Network for the benefit of the women of the Republic, in order to gather resources and/or knowledge in the fight against gender **–** based violence; if not, why not; if so, what are the relevant details? NW498E

**REPLY:**

In 2000, the United Nations Security Council recognised the gendered impact of war, and the exclusion of women in peace-building processes through the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 1325. To strengthen the reach and impact of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda, the Global Network of Focal Points on Women Peace and Security was established in 2016, to ensure that UN Member States adopt gender responsive peace and security policies that can meaningfully respond to emerging security challenges and permutations of violence.

The Global Network is an acknowledgement that while good practices have emerged in the implement of the WPS agenda, the global community needs less rhetoric and more action based on the ultimate objective of the WPS Agenda that is to prevent wars from happening and not making wars safer for women.

South Africa and Switzerland are the 2022 Co-Chairs of the Global Network of Focal Points on Women Peace and Security taking over from Canada and Uruguay. The Global Network is a voluntary body of like-minded UN Member States. Under the stewardship of South Africa and Switzerland, the Global Network will continue to implement and localize the WPS Agenda through National Action Plans. The National Action Plan (NAP) of South Africa was adopted by Cabinet in March 2020.

Our National Action Plan provides policy makers and security actors with a new set of tools to plan for large-scale, coordinated collaboration to support the strategic priority of creating a safe and peaceful South Africa and the continent. It also provides concrete action steps to help government and civil society to evolve out of conflict peacefully, through the involvement of women as peace anchors in communities during localised conflicts such as the July 2021 unrests, service delivery protests, gang violence, student uprisings as well as development and implementation of gender responsive policies and programmes.

The National Action Plan on WPS seeks to reinforce the existing frameworks on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide, provide protection and support for women experiencing violence, and focus on the behavioural changes required to build a South Africa at peace with itself. It is particularly designed to support the National Strategic Plan on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide which is anchored on five key interventions:

* Urgently responding to victims and survivors of GBV;
* Broadening access to justice for survivors;
* Changing social norms and behaviour through high-level awareness raising and prevention campaigns;
* Strengthening existing architecture and promoting accountability; and
* The creation of more economic opportunities for women who are vulnerable to abuse because of poverty

Furthermore, the Gender-based Violence and Femicide National Strategic Plan (GBVF-NSP), envisages bold leadership, strong accountability across government and the broader society to respond to GBVF and has entrenched firm technical and financial support. In addition, South Africa is conscious of the heightened risk of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) during conflict by aggravating factors, including the polarization of gender roles, the proliferation of arms, the militarization of society, and the breakdown of law and order. South Africa will leverage on this chairship by working with AU Member States and other stakeholders in the fight against SGBV in conflict and post-conflict settings. The subsequent long-term and complex impacts of SGBV continue to affect individuals and communities after conflict ends.

South Africa will leverage on its role from a premise that addressing SGBV is an integral aspect of the overall Women, Peace and Security agenda. SGBV affects the health and safety of women and has significant impact on economic and social stability. We recognise that sexual violence can threaten international peace and security, and that it is frequently used as a tactic of war to dominate, humiliate, terrorise, and displace women. It is for this reason that South Africa will also use its tenure as the Global Network Co-Chair to strengthen its current Capacity Building Programmes on Conflict Resolution, Mediation and Negotiation. The programmes target women and youth both domestically and in the conflict-ridden countries in the continent.