

## **Response to the consultation for Ireland's Third National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security**

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This response builds on research I have conducted in the area of Women, Peace and Security, in particular on the promotion of women in mediation. As such the response addresses the following questions as outlined in the consultation document:

1. What strategic objectives should be priorities for the Third National Action Plan?
6. How can the plan better engage those who have a role to play in Women, Peace and Security, but may not feel directly impacted?
7. How should Ireland better promote knowledge of Women, Peace and Security locally, nationally, regionally and internationally?

### **Background**

Since the passing of UNSCR 1325 in 2000 the role of women in peace and security has been on the agenda of the international community. The four pillars set out in the agenda have structured international efforts to promote both the participation of women in peace and security initiatives, and also the ways in which international law and policy engages with women in conflict. The current Secretary General of the United Nations has made mediation a key theme of his term of office. Recent reports have highlighted the need to enhance the UN's capacity to deliver mediation as a means of sustaining peace. A key element of

the Sustaining Peace agenda is a commitment to increase the representation of women in high-level mediation worldwide. The promotion of mediation generally, and women mediators more specifically is currently high on the international agenda. This is the context in which the current response is made.

## **1. What should be the strategic priorities for the Third National Action Plan?**

### **Goal: Promoting inclusive mediation through membership of multilateral institutions**

As part of the Sustaining Peace Agenda, Security Council Resolution 2282 (2016) reaffirmed the importance of women's participation in peace and security, and stressed the importance of increasing women's leadership and decision-making roles in conflict prevention. Increasing women's representation in high-level mediation is now linked to the goal of sustaining peace.

Ireland as a nation is in a strong position to provide leadership in the field of mediation. It has a demonstrated commitment to global engagement through multilateralism. The experience of peace and reconciliation in Ireland strengthens claims to leadership in this field. In the field of Women, Peace and Security Ireland has made demonstrable commitment to advancing gender equality and to promoting the participation of women in peace and security. Prioritising mediation brings these pillars together. Ireland's commitment to multilateralism is also a core strength in promoting this agenda at a time when international law and institutions are under strain from the re-emergence of geopolitical struggles. Ireland can demonstrate leadership through membership of the UN, the Security Council if elected, but equally through membership of other multilateral fora including the European Union and the OSCE.

***Objective 1: Increase the number of women in high-level mediation***

- Ireland should make an explicit commitment to equal nominations of men and women for mediation positions and ensure relevant policies and guidelines reflect this commitment. This can be used to put pressure on multilateral institutions to increase their gender parity in senior appointments.

***Objective 2: Enhancing the Leadership brand of women mediators***

- Ireland should publicly support women who are either nominated or appointed to high-level positions. The government should provide support for women to help overcome structural barriers faced in accessing positions within international organisations.

***Objective 3: Advocating for change within international organisations***

- Ireland should maintain its foreign policy commitment to advocating for change through diplomatic engagement in multilateral institutions.

**6. How can the plan better engage those who have a role to play in Women, Peace and Security, but may not feel directly impacted?**

**Goal: Engaging men and women together to advance inclusive mediation**

A commitment to advancing inclusive mediation complements existing foreign policy priorities for Ireland. One of the key challenges to inclusion in mediation is the diversity of the mediators themselves. To be properly inclusive mediation teams need a diverse range of people who bring different skills, perspectives and experiences to the process, including women. Having mediators from diverse backgrounds and life experiences (including religious actors, youth and other marginalised groups) is necessary to ensure a diverse range of views is represented. The ability to design processes that involve multiple actors with

different interests and perspectives has shifted the emphasis from an individual lead mediator towards teams.

A persistent challenge to increasing women's participation in mediation has been the fact that parties and mediators alike have not viewed women's participation as important. It is crucial to challenge the idea that gender and inclusion is only about women, but about enhancing the effectiveness of mediation more broadly. This will necessarily require engaging men and other communities such as religious actors who may not see a role for advancing women in mediation. It is not solely a case of advancing women, but addressing gendered structures of nomination and appointment of mediators and participation in mediation. Initiatives that speak only to and about women will not necessarily convey this message. Mediators have the potential to create new norms both in terms of the processes they design and the way they represent and role model diversity and behaviour. Having more women mediators can contribute to this goal but it must be integrated with the goal of speaking to those who are currently not supportive of advancing women in mediation.

***Objective 1: Foster effective alliances between the fields of mediation and WPS***

- Ireland benefits from significant indigenous experience and expertise in both mediation and gender equality. Fostering dialogue and learning between the two will bring very rich expertise to any potential Irish initiative in mediation, bridging the gap between the professional fields of mediation and women, peace and security in a way that has proved difficult in other contexts. This dialogue-based approach to inclusion could also usefully include religious actors and youth.

***Objective 2: Transparency in mediator recruitment***

- Addressing current gender imbalances in mediation requires challenging the culture of mediator recruitment. Transparency is required in the

nominations process. Ireland should consider advocating for a move towards open processes with a clear skills based selection criteria for high-level mediation positions to enhance diversity in international initiatives. This can be supported through the use of networks or other initiatives that seek to identify suitable candidates with mediation expertise from non-traditional backgrounds.

## **7. How should Ireland better promote knowledge of Women, Peace and Security locally, nationally, regionally and internationally?**

### **Goal: Facilitating links between local and global initiatives in the field of Women Peace and Security**

The recent trend towards the establishment of networks of women mediators has demonstrated a clear desire to make more effective linkages between grass roots mediation activities and high-level peace initiatives. Connecting the local and the global is now an acknowledged goal of mediation for sustainable peace, particularly in the field of peace and security.

### ***Objective 1: Governmental support for initiatives that connect local peace initiatives with official processes***

- While the language of inclusion is increasingly mainstreamed in international peacemaking, there remains a persistent gap between local and international peace efforts. Research with networks and women mediators to date demonstrates that women face significant barriers in accessing high-level official mediation processes. Once an international initiative begins women's mediation work is sidelined. Access to government is crucial to bridge the problematic divide between local and global work that has characterised efforts to increase the role of women in mediation to date. This approach is being pioneered through the creation of networks of women mediators, but this need not be the only

method for achieving the same goal. Governmental engagement with domestic mediation actors can cultivate a mutually constructive approach to projecting Ireland's domestic mediation expertise to a global audience.

***Objective 2: A connected approach to mediation across foreign policy activities***

- Ireland enjoys a recognised international reputation across the fields of defence, development and diplomacy. There is scope for much better synergy between these regimes internationally to enhance the effectiveness of mediation and its capacity for sustaining peace. A joined up approach to research, policy and practice in this area would be an innovative contribution that Ireland could make to the WPS agenda.

***Objective 3. Support the indigenous work of the reconciliation programme in relation to mediation in Northern Ireland.***

- While much work in the WPS field has an international foreign policy focus, the conflict in and about Northern Ireland remains outside the scope of UNSCR 1325 initiatives. At a time when politics in Northern Ireland is precarious, there is little support for mediation initiatives that would encourage dialogue between the opposing political views on core issues such as legacy and Brexit. As part of promoting connections between local and global mediation, support in the form of funding and political backing could usefully be provided to enable the use of mediation and dialogue to support the work of the reconciliation programme. This would build on existing capacity for mediation in Northern Ireland and could be linked easily to the promotion of women mediators.

**Further Reading:**

Turner C & F Heyworth (2019) 'Advancing Inclusive Mediation Through the Lens of Leadership' Strategic Security Analysis (Geneva Centre for Security Policy) (Forthcoming)

Turner, C (2018) 'Absent or Invisible? Women Mediators and the United Nations' *9:2 Global Policy* 244

Turner C (2018) 'Increasing the Visibility of Women Mediators: Some Thoughts for the New Networks of Women Mediators' *Global Policy Opinion*, January 2018 <https://www.globalpolicyjournal.com/blog/12/01/2018/increasing-visibility-women-mediators-some-thoughts-new-networks-women-mediators>

Turner, C (2017) 'Advancing Women in High-Level Mediation: Recommendations for States, Networks and the UN' (Durham Global Security Institute)

<https://www.globalpolicyjournal.com/sites/default/files/pdf/Women%20Mediators%20Network%20Workshop%20-%20Outcome%20Document.pdf>

Turner, C, (2017) 'Time to Celebrate the Unsung Women Heroes of Peace Mediation' *News Deeply*, August 2017.

Turner, C (2017) 'Women in Mediation: Connecting the Local and the Global' Strategic Security Analysis 5 (Geneva Centre for Security Policy)

**About the Author:**

Dr Catherine Turner is Associate Professor of International Law at Durham University, UK. She is the deputy director of the Durham Global Security Institute and a member of the Law and Global Justice research cluster in Durham Law School. Dr Turner's expertise lies in the field of international law and conflict. In addition to her academic work, Dr Turner is a trained mediator and was previously an Associate of Mediation Northern Ireland. She now uses this experience to train women in peace mediation skills.