Recognising women's voices in advancing equality, peace and security

Gender equality is not only a matter of fairness, and human rights, it is also an essential foundation for peaceful, inclusive and resilient societies. Lasting peace is strengthened when women have an equal voice and a meaningful role in shaping it.

As United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres stated in 2025, **"***Women are leaders of peace for all. The world does not need more reminders of that truth – it needs more results that reflect it.*"

Women and girls are disproportionately affected by armed conflict and face a higher risk of gender-based violence, including rape and other forms of sexual abuse. In this context, the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 in 2000 marked an important step forward in recognising the need to address the specific experiences of women and girls in situations of conflict. The Resolution calls on all parties to armed conflict to take measures to protect women and girls from gender-based violence, in particular rape and other forms of sexual abuse. At the same time, it also recognised the important role of women in conflict prevention and resolution, peacebuilding and peacekeeping, while calling for their increased representation at all levels of decision-making.

Despite the progress achieved since Resolution 1325, significant barriers to women's full and meaningful participation remain, while gender-based violence, discrimination and gender stereotypes can prevent women from having an equal voice in decisions that affect societies' peace and security. Addressing these barriers is therefore an important part of advancing both gender equality and lasting peace.

As highlighted by the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, Michael O'Flaherty, Women, Peace and Security (WPS) should not be considered in isolation, but as an integral part of the broader pursuit of peace, human rights and equality.

Peace cannot be truly inclusive if women do not have equal opportunities to participate, lead and influence the decisions that shape peace, and in turn, affect their lives and communities. The WPS Agenda therefore places women and their rights at the centre of efforts to prevent conflict, build peace and support recovery.

Gender stereotypes, discrimination and traditional expectations about the roles of women and men need to be challenged to bring about equal opportunities for women to participate in decision-making for greater equality and inclusion.

More than 25 years after the adoption of Resolution 1325, and at a time of increasing global instability, attention is now turning to the years ahead. This year's UN Security Council annual open debate on WPS focuses on the theme, *'Women, peace and security in the next quarter-century: fulfilling the promise through implementation'*. The theme highlights the need to build on the progress achieved so far while strengthening commitment and turning promises on gender equality and women's meaningful participation into concrete action in the years to come.

At national level, Malta has strengthened its commitment to this agenda through its second WPS National Action Plan 2025–2030, launched in December 2025. Building on Malta's first National Action Plan (NAP), launched in 2020, the NAP is aligned with UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and is structured around four key pillars: promotion, prevention, participation; and relief and recovery.

Through these four pillars, the NAP aims to increase awareness and understanding of WPS; strengthen measures against gender-based violence and harmful norms; increase women's leadership and representation, including in security, diplomacy and peacebuilding; and ensure that humanitarian and recovery efforts are inclusive and gender-responsive.

The work of the National Commission for the Promotion of Equality (NCPE) is closely linked to these objectives. Indeed, the NCPE is responsible for measures within the WPS National Action Plan 2025–2030. By promoting gender equality, raising awareness,

challenging stereotypes and supporting women's participation in decision-making, the NCPE contributes to creating a more equal and inclusive society where everyone has the opportunity to participate fully. Its awareness-raising, training and outreach activities reinforce an important principle of the WPS Agenda: representation must be meaningful.

This requires continued efforts to remove barriers to participation and to ensure that women from different backgrounds have their voices heard.

The National Commission for the Promotion of Equality (NCPE) can be contacted on: 2276 8200, equality@gov.mt or NCPE's social media platforms (Facebook, Instagram, X, and LinkedIn - NCPE.Malta)

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