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# Regional Women Mediator Networks<sup>1</sup>

## State of Play & Support Options

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## List of abbreviations

AWMN	Arab Women Mediators Network
APSA	African Peace and Security Architecture
AU	African Union
CLIP	Country Level Implementation Plan
CMI	CMI – Martti Ahtisaari Peace Foundation
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Australia)
DG ECHO	Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations
DG INTPA	Directorate-General for International Partnerships
DG NEAR	Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations
EEAS	European External Action Service
ERMES	European Resources for Mediation Support
FCDO	Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (UK)
GAP	Gender Action Plan
GCP	Gender Country Profile
GPPAC	Global Partnership for Prevention of Armed Conflicts
IAI	Istituto Affari Internazionali (Italy)
ICCN	International Center on Conflict and Negotiation (Georgia)
LAS	League of Arab States
MAECI	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (Italy)
MWMN	Mediterranean Women Mediators Network
NAP	National Action Plan
NWM	Nordic Women Mediators
NWMSC	Network of Women Mediators of South Caucasus
PWMN	Pacific Women Mediators Network
REC	Regional Economic Community
RNMSC	Regional Network of Women Mediators of the South Cone
SEAWPM	Southeast Asia Women Peace Mediators
SEGIB	Ibero-American General Secretariat
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
WIIS	Women in International Security (Italy)
WMC	Women Mediators across the Commonwealth
WPM	Women Peace Mediators Germany Network
WPS	Women, Peace and Security

## **Executive summary**

Despite the normative commitments enshrined in UNSCR 1325 and the growing body of evidence which shows that women's meaningful participation contributes to more sustainable peace, women continue to face multiple obstacles to their inclusion in peace processes. In the past decade, a growing number of regional women mediator networks have been established in a bid to overcome these persistent obstacles and to increase women's meaningful participation in both formal and informal peace processes. Regional women mediator networks represent a diverse cohort of women mediators with a broad set of differing experiences in mediation, including those who have mediated in their own communities and those who have contributed to or led regional or international mediation efforts.

This report examines nine regional women mediator networks, namely the Arab Women Mediators Network, FemWise-Africa, the Ibero-American Network of Women Mediators, the Mediterranean Women Mediators Network, the Nordic Women Mediators, the Network of Women Mediators of South Caucasus, the Pacific Women Mediators Network, the Southeast Asia Women Peace Mediators and Women Mediators across the Commonwealth, as well as the umbrella network, the Global Alliance of Regional Women Mediator Networks. The report describes the membership criteria, governance structure and activities of each of the networks.

Membership of a regional women mediator network confers many advantages on the members. While women's contributions to peace processes are often overlooked, the very fact of belonging to a network of women mediators is a recognition of the value of members' contributions to peace. Members benefit from intercultural and intergenerational knowledge exchange within and between networks, as well as informal, psychological support from their peers. Membership often offers opportunities for professional development through formal training, peer-to-peer exchange and networking. Beyond the impact on the members themselves, the establishment of the regional women mediator networks has contributed greatly to the visibility of women mediators globally, amplifying the voices of women mediators to international audiences. The sharing of thematic expertise and the exchange of experiences and best practices have allowed members to make more effective contributions to peace efforts around the globe.

Despite their sustained advocacy efforts, regional women mediator networks face persistent barriers to the full attainment of their objectives. While much has been achieved in advancing the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda since UNSCR 1325, in recent years, the global political context has become increasingly hostile towards women; there has been a global pushback on women's rights, accompanied by an increase in anti-feminist rhetoric and policies. There has not been a significant increase in political willingness among power holders to address the persistent barriers to women's inclusion in peace processes, which include structural barriers,

exclusionary process design, inclusion as tokenism or a box ticking exercise and the continued bid to undermine women's legitimacy as mediators and negotiators. Perhaps the most pressing challenge to regional women mediator networks is the lack of sustainable funding mechanisms to maintain the networks and support the work of members. Waning donor interest, decreasing budgets and rigid funding mechanisms threaten the sustainability of the networks.

### **Opportunities for EU support to regional women mediator networks**

Institutionalising support to and partnership with regional women mediator networks offers the EU the opportunity to meet the objectives outlined in the policy frameworks on gender and the WPS agenda, namely the Gender Action Plan III, the Action Plan on WPS and the EEAS Peace Mediation Guidelines. These objectives include increasing the amount of women participating in EU activities related to peace processes, increasing consultation with grassroots CSOs and women activists, facilitating connections between women mediators and women's groups and political leadership in relevant states and regions and leading by example on WPS.

### **Recommendations for the EU**

In light of the EU's role as a normative actor, its policy commitments and the persistent barriers faced by regional women mediator networks, this report recommends that the EU:

1. **Use existing EU tools, platforms and financial instruments to support regional women mediator networks**, for example framework contracts or the Community of Practice on Peace Mediation;
2. **Establish strategic partnerships with regional women mediator networks**, in line with relevant objectives laid out in EU regional strategies and policies;
3. **Provide targeted support to each network**, based on their stated needs during direct consultation;
4. **Provide support to the Global Alliance of Regional Women Mediator Networks**, which would fund the secretariat function of the Alliance, facilitate the convening of additional meetings, fund a mentorship programme across the member networks and fund psychological support to women mediators;
5. **Advocate internally and externally for the work of women mediator networks**, recognising and soliciting their skills, knowledge and experience for active peace processes.

## I. Introduction

The European Union, in its commitment to promoting gender equality as a key political objective in its external action, commissioned a study on regional women peace mediator networks. The study is based on a literature review (see Annexe C) and interviews with eleven representatives of the governing structures of regional women mediator networks. It also draws on knowledge gathered through a study developed by Conciliation Resources for the French Ministry for European and Foreign Affairs on women mediators in the francophone space, based on over 30 interviews with women mediators. Given the limited timeframe of this study, it provides a first stage of the analysis of the needs women mediator networks may have. The study therefore focuses more precisely on ten networks, which are: 1) regional, 2) women networks, and 3) specifically focused on peace mediation. A note that there are many more women networks that have a broader peacebuilding outlook that are not included in this study, some of which are listed in Annexe B.

For the past decade, women mediator networks have started to emerge at the community, national and regional levels in an attempt to respond to the lack of meaningful participation of women in peace processes. Today, while some networks have not survived due to a lack of financial support or political will, others continue to emerge in response to the need. At the 2023 EU Community of Practice on Peace Mediation<sup>2</sup>, women mediator networks' representatives called on the EU for support, in particular for a strategic level event bringing women mediator networks together with the EU to discuss their needs and potential strategic partnerships. This study is a first step responding to this call.

Indeed, as mentioned in the terms of reference for this study, the EU's policy frameworks refer to gender equality as a priority in the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), and the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda through its third Gender Action Plan (GAP III). GAP III states that "there is not a single country in the world that is close to achieving by 2030 gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls".<sup>3</sup> Finally, the EEAS Mediation Guidelines reiterate the need for gender-sensitive mediation processes and the strengthening of linkages between WPS and EU-supported mediation engagement, further reinforcing the need for EU's attention on women mediator networks.

This study will explore the state of play of women mediators and their networks today; it will also look at the EU policy frameworks within which EU support could be located.

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<sup>2</sup> Conciliation Resources' panel on *Can Women Mediator Networks Shift the Practice of Mediation and Peacebuilding?*. Available at <https://www.eupeacemediation.info/>

<sup>3</sup> European Union, European Commission, 2020. Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council: EU Gender Action Plan (Gap) III – an Ambitious Agenda for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in EU External Action, p. 1.

It will provide a description of the operational structures of ten women mediator networks and a description of some of the barriers women mediators and their networks face in reaching their full potential. Finally, it will provide concrete recommendations to the EU on potential avenues for support to regional women mediator networks.

## **Background:**

### A. State of play for women mediators today

Over 20 years ago, the UNSCR 1325 called for all UN member states to increase representation of women at all decision-making levels in relevant institutions and mechanisms which contribute to the prevention, management and resolution of conflict. The landmark resolution recognised that “peace is only sustainable if women are fully included, and that peace is inextricably linked with equality between women and men”.<sup>4</sup>

Despite the normative commitments enshrined in the resolution, little progress has been made in increasing women’s participation in the formal peace and security architecture. Analysis by the Council of Foreign Relations shows that in the major peace processes which have taken place worldwide between 1992 and 2019, women made up only 6% of mediators, 13% of negotiators and 6% of signatories.<sup>5</sup>

These low levels of representation have persisted despite the evidence that more inclusive processes have better outcomes for sustainable peace. An analysis of 40 peace processes from 1999 to 2013 carried out by the Graduate Institute of Geneva/Inclusive Peace and Transition Initiative’s Broadening Participation Project showed that in cases where women were able to exert a strong influence over the negotiation process, there was a much higher chance an agreement would be reached than in cases where women exerted little or no influence.<sup>6</sup> Beyond merely reaching agreements, an argument has also emerged that women’s full participation in peace processes is a precondition for the sustainability of said agreements. According to UN Women, women’s participation increases the probability of a peace agreement lasting at least two years by 20%, and by 35% the probability of a peace agreement lasting 15 years.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Coomaraswamy, R., 2015. Preventing Conflict, Transforming Peace, Securing the Peace: A Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325. *New York: UN Women*.

<sup>5</sup> Council on Foreign Relations, 2019. Women’s Participation in Peace Processes. Available at: <https://www.cfr.org/womens-participation-in-peace-processes/> (Accessed 9 December 2023)

<sup>6</sup> Paffenholz, T., 2015. Making Women Count: Assessing Women’s Inclusion and Influence on the Quality and Sustainability of Peace Negotiation and Implementation. *Geneva: Graduate Institute Geneva*.

<sup>7</sup> Coomaraswamy, R., 2015. *Ibid*, p. 41.

This analysis has led to the emergence of a functionalist, rather than merely normative, argument for women's inclusion in peace processes. The participation of women is now routinely linked to the inclusion of women's interests in peace processes and any resulting agreement. When women are invited to the table, they are expected to represent all women.<sup>8</sup> However, there is a need to move beyond this approach and see women's participation as not only representing women's interests but recognising that women's participation improves the overall dynamic of a peace process and the content of resultant agreements.

## B. EU policy framework

The EU Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) 2019-2024 is guided by three cross-cutting principles; participation, gender mainstreaming and leading by example. In terms of participation, externally, the EU aims "to help increase women's leadership and participation worldwide in all policy-making decisions/processes in all areas related to peace and security", including mediation.<sup>9</sup> The Union has committed to support and conduct capacity-building and mentoring for women's leadership, for women negotiators and mediators to improve their effectiveness and the quality of their participation in peace processes, and to work towards reaching the minimum of 33% women participating in all EU activities and projects related to peace processes. The EU also commits to establish and institutionalise consultative mechanisms on all conflict-related issues with grassroots women activists and CSOs.

The Action Plan also envisages the EU leading by example on WPS, enhancing political commitments and actions at local, regional and international levels. The implementation of the Women, Peace and Security agenda is named as a key area of engagement in the Gender Action Plan (GAP) III, while increasing the participation of women in matters related to peace and security is a key priority.<sup>10</sup> WPS monitoring and reporting is aligned with GAP III in order to integrate the EU's policy commitments on WPS into its gender equality policy framework.

The European External Action Service's Peace Mediation Guidelines<sup>11</sup> urge those involved in EU and EU supported mediation to engage with women and women's groups from the planning phase of peace processes. The Guidelines insist that active, meaningful participation of women is ensured at different stages of the peace process and that men and women have access to professional training and skills development

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<sup>8</sup> Turner, C., 2020. 'Soft ways of doing hard things': women mediators and the question of gender in mediation. *Peacebuilding* 8(4), pp. 383-401.

<sup>9</sup> European Union, 2019. EU Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) 2019-2024.

<sup>10</sup> European Union, European Commission, 2020. *Op.cit.*

<sup>11</sup> European External Action Service, 2023. Peace Mediation Guidelines.

in order to meaningfully contribute. The need to create linkages between the various formal and informal processes and spaces is recognised, as is the need to link political leadership with women. The Guidelines recognise the emergence of women mediator networks as an “important instrument to ensure active participation of women in peace processes and for the creation of linkages between formal and informal mediation fora”.<sup>12</sup>

## **Presentation of regional women mediator networks**

### **A. Regional Women Mediator Networks**

Due to the persistent structural and material barriers to their inclusion at the negotiating table in formal peace processes, many women have used civil society mobilisation and organisation in order to make their voices heard. This has taken the form of informal groups, networks or movements or legally established associations or organisations with long term goals.<sup>13</sup> Women have been mobilising in this way in various groups, networks and coalitions for decades. In fact, women’s inclusion in peace processes has been achieved with greater ease in conflict contexts where there was already an established presence of women’s coalitions relating to peace or human rights.<sup>14</sup>

Building upon or inspired by this mobilisation, a new cohort of women mediator networks has been established in recent years, often with support from states or regional organisations. In a bid to meet the obligations set out in UNSCR 1325, many states have been bolstering support to women’s participation in peace processes through commitments in their national action plans on gender or the Women, Peace and Security agenda. One of the ways these commitments are being fulfilled is through the establishment or support of national or regional women mediator networks. The networks in this cohort did not spring from grassroots movements, but rather have a “common political genesis and have been created in support of a specific (foreign) policy agenda”.<sup>15</sup>

Annexe A provides a brief description of ten regional women mediator networks, six of which are members of the Global Alliance of Regional Women Mediator Networks

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<sup>12</sup> European External Action Service, *Op. cit.* p. 26

<sup>13</sup> Murray, J., Hamilton, M. and Mtasa, K., 2021. Briefing Paper: Women Mediation Networks: A Mechanism for Localisation and Inclusion. *Africa Portal*. Available at: <https://africaportal.org/publication/women-mediation-networks-mechanism-localisation-and-inclusion/> (Accessed 8 December 2023)

<sup>14</sup> O'Reilly, M., Ó. Súilleabháin, A. and Paffenholz, T., 2015. Reimagining peacemaking: Women's roles in peace processes. International Peace Institute.

<sup>15</sup> Fellin, I., and Turner, C., 2021. Women’s Mediator Networks: Reflections on an Emerging Global Trend. In C. Turner, & M. Wählich (Eds.), *Rethinking Peace Mediation: Challenges of Contemporary Peacemaking Practice*, pp. 285-306. Bristol University Press.

namely FemWise-Africa, Women Mediators across the Commonwealth (WMC), Southeast Asian Women Peace Mediators (SEAWPM), Mediterranean Women Mediators Network (MWMN), the Arab Women Mediators Network, and the Nordic Women Mediators (NWM). We have included a description of the Global Alliance as well as an additional three networks as they are regional and specifically aimed at women mediators, namely the Network of Women Mediators of South Caucasus (NWMSC), the Ibero-American Network of Women Mediators and the Pacific Women Mediators Network (PWMN).

The coordination amongst regional women mediator networks occurs at the level of the Global Alliance and also bilaterally between networks. There have been few joint initiatives among the individual member networks, aside from co-organising panel discussions or events. Nascent women mediator networks often reach out to other regional networks on a bilateral basis for support and guidance during the inception phase.

## **Barriers to women mediator networks**

### **A. Barriers to women's participation in peace processes**

#### **Women's perceptions of peace**

While women play a variety of roles in conflict, including as combatants and perpetrators of violence, it is widely accepted that their experiences of conflict differ from those of men. Women are more likely to die from war's indirect and often gendered effects, related to a breakdown in social order, economic deprivation, human rights abuses or infectious diseases. They also suffer not only from conflict-related sexual violence but the increase in domestic violence which accompanies conflict. The predominantly male-led, securitised conceptions of peace fail to take into account multidimensional threats to women's security and categorise settings as 'conflict' or 'post conflict' based on the cessation of formal combat. Women however, "face a continuum of violence and insecurity" that does not neatly fit into either category.<sup>16</sup>

Women's perceptions of peace and security influence their priorities at the negotiating table, with women tending to bring issues of development and human rights to the table in a bid to address structural violence and reinforce factors that sustain a 'positive peace'.<sup>17</sup> The dominant understanding of peace and security in the international system remains focused on state security and questions of territory, sovereignty or power. Women's differing security needs are often at odds with the dominant conception of peace in the international system, labelled as 'women's issues' or 'social

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<sup>16</sup> O'Reilly, M., Ó. Súilleabháin, A. and Paffenholz, T., 2015. Reimagining peacemaking: Women's roles in peace processes. *International Peace Institute*. p. 5.

<sup>17</sup> Anderlini, S.N, 2007. *Women Building Peace*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers.

issues', rather than as hard security issues which have an impact on peace agreements and subsequent implementation.<sup>18</sup>

### **Structural barriers: patriarchal societies and lack of political will**

One of the most significant barriers to women's participation comes in the form of the predominance of patriarchal systems of power and governance worldwide. While women often take the lead at grassroots level in community-based mediation and peacebuilding, they remain underrepresented or absent from decision-making levels in national, regional and international mechanisms and bodies aimed at preventing or resolving conflict. As leaders of track I mediation processes are often diplomats or heads of state, any increase in the number of women engaging as mediators in these positions is dependent on women having risen through the ranks in greater numbers to senior diplomatic positions more generally.<sup>19</sup>

With men overrepresented in political positions, it is unsurprising that the inclusion or exclusion of women in peace processes hinges on the political will of those in power. Despite the various normative commitments which the international community is beholden to regarding women's participation, they sometimes succumb to requests from conflict parties to exclude women.<sup>20</sup> Women's participation is often linked to a broader trend in increased calls for greater democracy, accountability and more meaningful representation in societies, with waves of protest aiming at renegotiating the social contract within states. Many powerholders at the negotiating table resist the participation of women, who, with their more holistic or human-centred perception of security, are seen as more likely to call for transformation of conflict structures, governance and societal norms. The inclusion of women's groups in peace processes then tends to rely on sustained lobbying by local or international organisations, rather than by mediation teams or conflict parties.<sup>21</sup>

### **Legitimacy**

Women's legitimacy as peace mediators and negotiators and their right to a seat at the table is challenged in various ways, from their role in conflict to their expertise.

The participation of women in peace processes is often called into question due to what is described as a "the broader dilemma about the ends and means of peacemaking"; if the overall end of a process is the cessation of violence, then women, who rarely take up arms, are unlikely to be considered relevant or legitimate

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<sup>18</sup> de Langis, T., 2011. Across conflict lines: Women mediating for peace. *The Institute for Inclusive Security*. Available at: [https://www.inclusivesecurity.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/2011-Colloquium-Report\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.inclusivesecurity.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/2011-Colloquium-Report_FINAL.pdf) (Accessed 7 December 2023)

<sup>19</sup> Aggestam, K., and Svensson, I., 2018. Where are the women in peace mediation? *Gendering diplomacy and international negotiation*. pp.149-168.

<sup>20</sup> O'Reilly, M., Ó. Súilleabháin, A. and Paffenholz, T., *op. cit.*

<sup>21</sup> Paffenholz, T., 2015b. Main Results of 'Broader Participation in Political Negotiations and Implementation' Project 2011–2015. Available at: <https://www.graduateinstitute.ch/library/publications-institute/main-results-broader-participation-political-negotiations-and> (Accessed 23 November 2023)

participants.<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, the conflict parties present at the negotiating table are ultimately renegotiating power,<sup>23</sup> and want to restrict the parties vying for power or those calling for accountability. Beyond the conflict parties, mediators themselves are reluctant to push for women's inclusion at the table for fear of wasting political capital with the conflict parties and due to the alleged risk of overloading the table.

The onus is on women and women's groups to prove their legitimacy and credibility at the table by meeting a varying set of requirements, often "determined by the whim or interest of the mediators involved".<sup>24</sup> While armed actors qualify by dint of their capacity toward violence, women must prove that they have high levels of technical expertise, negotiation experience and that they act as activists representing a large grassroots constituency. Despite women often being instrumental in conflict resolution in communities, effectively laying the ground for peace talks, they are excluded from Track I talks, while their efforts at Tracks II and III are viewed as naive and too removed from the policy setting agenda.<sup>25</sup>

### **Process design**

Women can face multiple hurdles due to the design of processes, generally due to the fact they do not take part in the design phase itself. Women's inclusion tends to be limited to a certain timeframe within talks, rather than a sustained participation from the design and preparatory phase through to the implementation.<sup>26</sup> Organised women's groups can form broad-based, representative coalitions to lobby for a place in negotiations and represent women's demands, however, this is most effective if a strategy is developed in advance or at the outset of a process.<sup>27</sup> However, women are not given adequate or timely information on the structure, design and procedures of peace processes or the mandate of international peacekeeping missions and their mediation teams.<sup>28</sup> This leads to women expending time and resources last minute in order to organise, advocate and find entry points.

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<sup>22</sup> O'Reilly, M., Ó. Súilleabháin, A. and Paffenholz, T., *op. Cit.*, p. 4.

<sup>23</sup> Margaret Vogt in interview with Marie O'Reilly, 2013. Democratizing Peace Processes: Women at the Table, *The Global Observatory*. Available at <http://theglobalobservatory.org/2013/09/democratizing-peace-processes-women-at-the-table/> (Accessed 13 December 2023)

<sup>24</sup> Anderlini, S.N., 2010. What the Women Say: Participation and UNSCR 1325: A Case Study Assessment. *International Civil Society Action Network (ICAN) and MIT Center for International Studies*, p. 26. Available at: [https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/Gender/What\\_the\\_Women\\_Say.pdf](https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/Gender/What_the_Women_Say.pdf) (Accessed 15 December 2023)

<sup>25</sup> de Langis, T., *op. cit.*

<sup>26</sup> Coomaraswamy, R., *op. cit.*

<sup>27</sup> Diaz, P. C. and Tordjman, S., 2012. Women's Participation in Peace Negotiations: Connections between Presence and Influence. *UN Women Sourcebook on Women, Peace and Security*. Available at:

<https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/Library/Publications/2012/10/WPSsourcebook-03A-WomenPeaceNegotiations-en.pdf> (Accessed 23 November 2023)

<sup>28</sup> Anderlini, S.N., 2010. *Op. cit.*

The inclusion of women in peace processes, where it is considered as part of the process design, often contributes to the marginalisation of women, confining their participation to issues related to gender and housing them in sub-committees separate to the main negotiations. Gender issues are taken to be circumscribed, rather than related to all issues discussed at the negotiation table, while the expertise of women is taken to be limited to gender.<sup>29</sup> In other instances, women's inclusion has been built into the design but the decision making processes are designed in such a way that decision-making is confined to male leaders.<sup>30</sup>

### **Which women? Props, tokenism and ticking the box**

The functionalist argument for women's participation has perhaps led to quantitative increases in the number of women present at negotiating tables, however, this does not necessarily translate into qualitative improvements in peace processes. When women are present in significant numbers at the negotiating table, it is not guaranteed that they represent broad constituencies of women or that they will manage to advance the Women, Peace and Security agenda. When women sit at the negotiation table as a representative of a conflict party, they do not necessarily represent the needs or interests of other women, nor will they necessarily have a positive effect on the implementation of subsequent agreements.<sup>31</sup> In some cases, women present in formal processes are the wives of leaders of conflict parties, with varying influence over the conflict parties themselves and no broader constituency among women. The conflation of women with gender when it comes to mediation not only places the burden of gender sensitivity on individual women but risks reducing the responsibility on others, namely the men at the table, to apply a gendered lens to all aspects of the mediation process.

### **Logistical barriers**

When women are invited to take part in peace processes, they then face further logistical barriers to their participation, often due to a lack of resources. Women's needs in terms of childcare, accommodation, transport and security are often not addressed, leading to their effective exclusion, or to their taking on undue levels of risk or high personal costs.

## **B. Barriers to women mediator networks**

### **Changing global context**

Regional women mediator networks have, after several years of operations, found their footing. However, the networks find themselves operating in an increasingly

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<sup>29</sup> Anderlini, S.N., 2010. *Op. cit.*

<sup>30</sup> Coomaraswamy, R., *op. cit.*

<sup>31</sup> O'Reilly, M., Ó. Súilleabháin, A. and Paffenholz, T., *op. cit.*

hostile political environment. In recent years, there has been a global pushback on women's rights, accompanied by an increase in anti-feminist rhetoric and policies. In various countries around the world, from Afghanistan to the United States to Sweden, women's rights organisations and activists have been the target of extremist backlash, violence and repression, sexual and reproductive rights have been limited or rolled back, feminist foreign policies have been abandoned and women and girls have been increasingly excluded from public life.<sup>32</sup>

In recent years, due in large part to the full-scale invasion of Ukraine by Russia, and the rise in insecurity globally, states and multilateral organisations are taking a more militarised approach to conflict resolution. Defence budgets have been soaring,<sup>33</sup> with ODA contributions declining accordingly. The renewed focus on hard security approaches to conflict resolution and peace reinforces the male-led, state-led narratives which some women's movements have been working for decades to transform and also reduces the resources available for their work.

Not only is the space for mediation shrinking, but mediators are facing more fragmented conflicts and interlinked negotiation and peace processes. This makes the administrative and political management of processes more complex. With many actors already reluctant to include women in peace processes, it becomes even more difficult for women to find a footing unless they have the institutional support to do so.

### **Persistent barriers**

Despite the stated objective of the majority of the networks to increase women's participation in formal peace processes, they have not managed to make significant progress, largely due to the fact that major political, societal and cultural shifts are necessary to achieve this objective. While the Women Mediators Networks have been instrumental in putting and keeping inclusion on the agenda, women have not yet risen through the ranks in sufficient numbers in the political domains which feed pools for mediators, remaining underrepresented in the ranks of Heads of State, Ambassadors, Envoys and Special Representatives and UN officials.<sup>34</sup> Whilst some of the early expectations of the Regional Women Mediator Networks (RWMNs) were unrealistic, it must be noted that the first network was created eight years ago, it may, therefore, be too early to assess their impact given that change takes time.

Another common objective of the regional networks is to increase the visibility and recognition of women mediators. If the proliferation of networks is anything to go by,

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<sup>32</sup> Bergsten, S.S. and Lee, A.A., 2023. The Global Backlash Against Women's Rights. *Human Rights Watch*. Available from: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/03/07/global-backlash-against-womens-rights> (Accessed 17 December 2023)

<sup>33</sup> Military expenditure in Europe saw its steepest year-on-year increase in at least 30 years according to research published by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. See: <https://www.sipri.org/media/press-release/2023/world-military-expenditure-reaches-new-record-high-european-spending-surges>

<sup>34</sup> Fellin, I., and Turner, C., *Op. cit.*

women mediators are increasingly recognised by states, regional organisations and multilateral institutions. There has been increased political will to establish and support women mediator networks as entities, however, this has not necessarily translated into the political will to utilise the networks and the experience and expertise of their members or the will to fund their work. A representative of the WMC stated that the primary barrier to leveraging the full potential of the network lay in “the lack of political will of those deploying mediators”, in addition to their “lack of flexibility, unwillingness to include diversity or creativity” and their “limited understanding of the approaches of women in peace processes”.<sup>35</sup> For the networks which have institutional links with states or regional organisations, these links do not necessarily translate into deployments in peace processes;<sup>36</sup> there are a limited number of peace processes ongoing and there is no guarantee that the state or organisation in question is a party to it.

Beyond deployment however, there seems to be little willingness among the institutional partners of the network to consult or solicit the expertise of the network. Some institutional partners have failed to harness the power of the networks as political and technical tools; their political will to continue backing the networks has waned as they fail to see their added value, beyond ticking a box in their national strategies.

### **Sustainability and funding**

At the time of establishment of the various regional networks, the commitment of the various donors and institutional partners was high, as were the accompanying funding allocations. The funding allocated allowed for the setting up of the networks and over time the consolidation of their structures, processes and practices. However, this initial momentum has slowed considerably and donors are reluctant to continually commit funding to the networks.

Networks need to continually lobby for sustained support. Some networks are reliant on the relevant National Action Plan on WPS, under which they are funded, being approved by parliament, leaving the network vulnerable to changes in government. In addition, some of the networks must re-apply for the available funding on an annual basis through a call for proposals or similar procedure. This is not only a yearly drain on the resources of the secretariat, diverting resources from the network’s primary activities, it also leaves networks at the mercy of the call cycle with frequent gaps in funding of several months, negatively affecting the continuity of the network activities.

With the secretariat functions of the networks often underfunded or sometimes completely without funding for periods of time, there is increased pressure on the

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<sup>35</sup> Interview with Quhramaana Kakar, representative of the WMC.

<sup>36</sup> Femwise-Africa is the exception among the networks as it is institutionally linked to the AU and has direct opportunities for deployment.

networks to diversify their funding sources and carry out fundraising. However, given the already strained resources, they often do not have the capacity to do this. The short term nature of the funding not only increases the administrative burden on the networks, but hampers their ability to carry out medium- or long-term planning and risks undermining their ability to act at pace in response to developments in conflict situations.

The stretched finances of many of the networks has the potential to have a knock on effect on the membership and ultimately the sustainability of the networks. Due to either a lack of available funds, or strict donor requirements, many of the members of the networks cannot be compensated for their time spent representing the network or providing expertise when solicited. This work is not consistently compensated by institutional and state partners and many of the networks are unable to fill the gap and provide honorarium payments to members due to budget shortfalls or funding rules. The inherent message that the time, expertise and work of these women is not valued enough to be adequately compensated is at variance with the mission of the majority of these networks. Furthermore, from a practical sense, the members of these networks carry out this work in addition to the various professional positions and the functions they hold in their daily life. This can limit the extent to which the members can engage in network activities and how quickly. If the expectations placed on these women for engagement with the network are too high, it is likely that their motivation and willingness to contribute will wane over time.

The financial precariousness of the networks should not be underestimated. The Nordic countries have long been a model for the rest of the world in terms of equality, inclusion and the empowerment of women. The Nordic Women Mediators have been instrumental in supporting the establishment of other regional networks and in the creation of the Global Alliance. However, the effects of changes in the political context of the region are beginning to show. The Swedish government is no longer providing funding for the Swedish Women's Mediation Network, while the Danish government, though vocal in its support of the Danish national network, is reluctant to commit the funding necessary for its running. The Nordic Women Mediators are unsure whether they could continue as an umbrella network if one of their members was no longer operational.

The secretariat role of the Global Alliance in theory rotates between members. However, in reality the role is assumed by the network with the funds to resource the various functions and, ideally, to cover the costs of the annual meeting. When the term of the MWMN as secretariat of the Global Alliance came to an end, none of the networks were in a position to take over. As a result, the MWMN continued in the role, with limited funds, in order to uphold the functions of the Alliance. Based on this experience, the Global Alliance member networks agreed on the need to ensure that coordination of the Secretariat can be maintained for a period of two years by whichever network taking on the role.

With funding for each of the individual regional networks dwindling, it becomes increasingly likely that there will be insufficient funds to contribute towards the running of the Global Alliance. The addition of new member networks, with bigger budgets, may help in the short term but will only be a sticking plaster if the funding trends seen thus far persist.

### C. Rationale for supporting women mediator networks

While the networks continue to face difficulties in increasing the number of women in formal peace processes, in the past decade, they have successfully supported and financed the work of women mediators in many informal peace processes. Small grants and honorarium payments issued by some of the RWMNs have provided vital funding for women to carry out mediation and mediation support work. As this work does not necessarily align with donor desires to work at a larger scale, there are few opportunities for it to be funded. Several of the women mediator networks have served to fill this gap. The success of these initiatives provides evidence which shows the impact of small scale, often community-based mediation initiatives. This is particularly important in the context of a shrinking space for mediation and a reduced number of ongoing formal, regional- or state-led peace processes.

Regional women mediator networks have many beneficial effects beyond their contribution to promoting and maintaining peace in different regions. Membership of a regional women mediator network confers several advantages on members. The very fact of being a member confers a sense of legitimacy on many of the women who join. Membership of a network constitutes recognition of their work, allowing them to position themselves professionally in their own context and in the international arena. Membership also increases their visibility, by showcasing their work on network websites, in publications and at conferences and events.

While network members are expert members, many of the women welcome the opportunities for further training offered by the RWMNs. While some feel that a focus on training by institutional partners feeds into an implicit underestimation of the expertise of women mediators, others see it as critical in advancing women mediators' careers. The training provided often seeks to broaden the skill sets of members and to recognise and develop women's expertise beyond topics that are stereotypically considered 'women's issues'.<sup>37</sup> Beyond formal training, RWMNs encourage peer to peer learning and exchange, often in dedicated spaces and working groups. Such

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<sup>37</sup> Conciliation Resources and Women Mediators across the Commonwealth, 2021. Beyond the vertical: What enables women mediators to mediate. Available: <https://www.c-r.org/learning-hub/beyond-vertical-what-enables-women-mediators-mediate> (Accessed 20 March)

spaces facilitate the exchange of best practices and the intergenerational transmission of knowledge, which serve to strengthen women's mediation practice.

RWMNs are spaces in which women mediators can enjoy the benefits of informal support from fellow members. As members forge connections within and across women mediator networks, they have access to a diverse range of women to whom they can turn to for professional advice, for collaborative problem solving and soundboarding, or for providing contacts and facilitating introductions. These creative, informal mechanisms for supporting and advancing women mediators professionally are vital in a context where structural inequalities persist.<sup>38</sup>

## **Rationale for EU support to women mediator networks**

### **Lesson learning on supporting women mediator networks**

As regional women mediator networks have been up and running for several years now, there is an opportunity to reflect on institutional and donor support and draw out best practices. While some of the networks are limited by restrictive donor requirements, others have found donors more willing to employ a flexible approach which respects the autonomy and the independence of the network and which also promotes meaningful recognition of the work of the members.

Lessons can be learned from the Australian government, which has shown a strong commitment to collaborating with women mediator networks. Australia's National Action Plan (NAP) on Women, Peace and Security (2021-2031) includes the objective of supporting "women's rights organisations and networks to represent and lead discussion on international peace, security and stability, and human rights frameworks that strengthen international norms" and a commitment to partner with such organisations and networks in implementation.<sup>39</sup> The Draft Implementation Plan of the NAP on WPS mentions collaboration with the Global Alliance of Regional Women Mediator Networks in advocating for greater participation of women in conflict resolution and peacebuilding processes.<sup>40</sup>

The Australian government, through funding to ActionAid Australia and the Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies, supports the Pacific Women Mediator Network and the Southeast Asia Women Peace Mediators (SEAWPM) respectively. The Department

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<sup>38</sup> Conciliation Resources and Women Mediators across the Commonwealth, *op. cit.*

<sup>39</sup> Australian Government, 2021. Australian National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security 2021-2031, p. 49. Available: <https://www.dfat.gov.au/sites/default/files/australias-national-action-plan-on-women-peace-and-security-2021-2031.pdf> (Accessed 14 December)

<sup>40</sup> Australian Government, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2021. Draft Implementation Plan - Australia's National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security 2021-2031. Available: <https://www.dfat.gov.au/sites/default/files/australia-national-action-plan-women-peace-security.pdf> (Accessed 14 December)

of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) has committed to four years of flexible funding to the SEAWPM, using a new funding model without onerous reporting requirements or specific expected outcomes. Furthermore, it stipulated that the funding be used to remunerate the members for their work as part of the network.<sup>41</sup>

DFAT also supports the Pacific Women Mediator Network. The network focuses, among other topics, on the intergenerational transmission of knowledge and expertise. The network, in collaboration with the University of the South Pacific, has developed an 18-month training programme on mediation and conflict resolution for young women mediators aged between 18 and 30. Donor funding has not only supported the development of the curriculum but will also cover honorarium payments for the young women while they study.<sup>42</sup>

In line with the NAP on WPS, which commits to “supporting women’s organisations and peace networks to share good practice”,<sup>43</sup> DFAT has encouraged exchange between the two women mediator networks it supports.

### **Fulfilling EU policy commitments**

Partnership with regional women mediator networks provides opportunities for the EU to concretely address the aims enshrined in its policy frameworks. The EEAS Peace Mediation Guidelines name women mediator networks as “key allies for EU mediators to advance more gender inclusive processes”. Up until now, this allyship has been limited and where it has taken place, it has been driven by the women mediator networks themselves, for example, cooperation between the SEAWPM and the EU Special Envoy for Myanmar. Formalised partnership with women mediator networks, particularly those with a strong focus on local level mediation, would contribute to the EU’s goal to institutionalise consultative mechanisms with grassroots women activists and CSOs as outlined in the Action Plan on WPS.

In order to reach the quota of 33% women participating in all EU activities and projects related to peace processes, the Union could draw on regional women networks. The networks are populated by women with decades of experience, thematic expertise, in-depth contextual knowledge and well-established links and networks across communities, countries and continents. These connections can be harnessed by EU mediation actors in order to support the EU’s aim to link the various tracks or active dialogue spaces in a peace process. They would also allow the Union to be of service to the networks in facilitating linkages between the members and political leadership in relevant states and regions.

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<sup>41</sup> Interview with Emma Leslie and Venus Mae Gatdula, representatives of SEAWPM.

<sup>42</sup> Interview with representative of Pacific Women Mediator Network

<sup>43</sup> Australian Government, 2021. *Op cit.*

Given the EU's role as a normative actor, interviewees indicated that EU support to regional women mediator networks would send a strong political signal to other states and institutional actors about the importance of this work. The Nordic Women Mediators stated that the EU should highlight the importance of the networks, using them as a go-to source of qualified women when seeking individuals for appointments. They expressed a desire for political support from the EU; "if this is something that is referenced and talked about by the EU, it will also be looked upon as something important to be followed up on politically in the Nordic countries".<sup>44</sup> Through formalising partnership with regional women mediator networks, the EU has the opportunity to fulfil its commitment to leading by example on the WPS agenda, as outlined in the Action Plan. The EU should "use its political leverage to advocate for more space for women mediators. It should include them in different initiatives and reflections and create job opportunities".<sup>45</sup>

### **Efficiency gains**

The mid-term review of GAP III highlighted that the EU still lacks capacity in terms of dedicated resources and attention in order to integrate WPS into EU external action and the related institutional framework under GAP III.<sup>46</sup> The review found that there are no dedicated financial resources for actions on gender equality or WPS in the EEAS, and that human resources dedicated to WPS are similarly limited and insufficient in providing tailored and specialised advice throughout the EU, especially to EU Delegations. The EEAS could consider how partnership with regional women mediator networks could fill the reported gaps in expertise. However, this would imply dedicated financial resources so that the networks or individual women are compensated for their work.

A representative of the MWMN spoke about the potential in cooperating with networks in avoiding the duplication of efforts and creating synergies. At the minute, there is a lack of coordination and synergy as the WPS agenda and the work of regional networks is seen as an initiative of women for women, rather than cross-cutting work, connected to different geographical and thematic agendas.<sup>47</sup> Duplication is common as institutions mount initiatives on the ground without speaking to the various networks. Coordination and partnership with regional women networks would allow for consultation with the networks at the beginning of a process to understand which initiatives are ongoing in a context, what spaces need to be filled and what gaps need to be addressed.

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<sup>44</sup> Interview with representatives of Nordic Women Mediators.

<sup>45</sup> Interview with Loredana Teodorescu, Head of the MWMN Secretariat; President of WIIS Italy and Senior Fellow at IAI.

<sup>46</sup> MacKeller, L. et al, 2023, Mid-term Evaluation of the Implementation of the EU Gender Action Plan III. Directorate General for International Partnerships.

<sup>47</sup> Interview with Loredana Teodorescu, Head of the MWMN Secretariat; President of WIIS Italy and Senior Fellow at IAI.

## Recommendations for the EU

### 1. Use existing EU tools and financial instruments to support regional women mediator networks:

- a. Both in our interviews and at the Global Alliance Annual Meeting (Addis, 11-13 December 2023), the needs of women mediators for funds to initiate and maintain their work remained prominent. This was particularly true of women mediators operating at community levels, as their work is often overlooked by donors. Funding opportunities should enable them to respond quickly and flexibly to situations that arise that are in need of mediation, as well as provide resources to plan mediation support that is needed over an extended period. The EU should consider the creation of a fund available to women mediator networks to support the mediation work of networks and individual members, to fund training and to support the existing learning spaces within and between networks;
- b. The EU could institutionalise a link between women mediator networks and relevant existing EU framework contracts such as ERMES and the framework contract on Conflict Prevention and Mediation ensuring that members of the RWMNs are put forward and considered as potential experts in assignments. Under future iterations of the framework contracts, a dedicated amount of the overall value of the contract could be committed to work on WPS;
- c. The EEAS could establish a framework contract dedicated to Women, Peace and Security. The framework contract could be inspired by the Women, Peace and Security helpdesk<sup>48</sup> developed by the UK's Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO). The framework contract could function as a call-down facility, drawing on the expertise housed in the RWMNs, to provide support to the EEAS and EU Delegations, DG INTPA and DG NEAR. Activities under the contract could include:
  - Gender and conflict analysis at a local, national or regional level to inform policy and programming;
  - Training sessions on mediation, gender and conflict analysis;
  - Support to the drafting of Gender Country Profiles (GCPs) and Country Level Implementation Plans (CLIPs);<sup>49</sup>
  - Reviewing plans, strategies and documentation;
  - Facilitating dialogue with civil society.
- d. The EU could provide resources to women mediator networks to take part in the yearly EU Community of Practice on Peace Mediation.

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<sup>48</sup> See: <https://www.c-r.org/our-work-in-action/women-peace-and-security-helpdesk>

<sup>49</sup> The mid-term review of GAP III highlighted that EU Delegations' human resources are stretched when it comes to the production of GCPs and CLIPs.

e. The EU could include, provide platforms for, and help connect the RWMNs with relevant political processes, with particular focus on EU and other regional and international processes.

2. **Strategic partnerships with individual networks:** The EU could develop strategic partnerships with, and across, women mediator networks in line with the objectives laid out in regional strategies and policies, such as the Africa-EU Joint Vision for 2023, the European Neighbourhood Policy or Connecting Europe & Asia: The EU Strategy, and in line with the objectives of relevant Partnership and Cooperation Agreements and Partnership Priorities of relevant conflict-affected and fragile states.

For example, the Mediterranean Women Mediators Network is active in Europe and the Neighbourhood, with members representing most of the Southern Neighbours. While the Arab Women Mediators Network is linked with the League of Arab States and Femwise-Africa with the AU, the EU has no direct links to the networks which represent EU member states and the Neighbourhood such as the MWMN or the NWM.<sup>50</sup> Through partnership with the MWMN, the EU could tap into the thematic expertise of the network which is not centred on the WPS agenda, but rather on the issues which affect peacebuilding in the region such as migration or deradicalisation.<sup>51</sup>

3. **Targeted support to each network in accordance with identified needs:** While the networks generally share similar needs in terms of resources, political and institutional support and visibility, their individual needs vary depending on their levels of funding, restrictions imposed by donors, the peace processes they are actively engaged in and the objectives of the members. It is recommended that the EU consult with the relevant representatives of each of the networks in order to identify areas for short-term, projectised support or collaboration. During the course of the interviews conducted for this study, the following discrete needs were identified:
- a. The Ibero-American Network of Women Mediators wishes to carry out an analysis of needs in the region, both in terms of the broader policy needs and the concrete needs for mediation. The uptake of the WPS agenda across the countries where the network operates varies considerably as do the levels of conflict. By establishing the state of play in the areas concerned, the network can carry out more strategic planning for its development.

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<sup>50</sup> Due to the nature of the membership of the NWM and its activities, a network member has stated that political support from the EU would be more appropriate than funding or a sustained partnership.

<sup>51</sup> Interview with Loredana Teodorescu, Head of the MWMN Secretariat; President of WIIS Italy and Senior Fellow at IAI.

- b. The Mediterranean Women Mediators Network wishes to have a strategic level discussion with the EU in order to discuss areas of common interest and opportunities for joint activities. A representative of the network described how a direct meeting with EU officials would be symbolic in and of itself.<sup>52</sup>
- c. Following years of operations and through the ongoing strategy of localisation, Femwise-Africa and the AU has developed extensive experience in harnessing the expertise which exists among grassroots women. Lessons learned could be shared with other multilateral organisations.

A next step to this study could envisage a policy analysis of mediation needs for each region and how the women mediator networks could respond to these needs, in addition to direct consultations with each network if there is an appetite to provide EU support.

4. **Support to Global Alliance:** The following suggestions address some of the needs which emerged through the course of interviews with network representatives. Direct discussions with the Global Contact Group of Global Alliance would be needed to explore the practicalities of such initiatives.
- a. As it stands, the Global Alliance’s presidency and secretariat function are handled by a member for a two-year period, using their own funds and staff resources to maintain it. Funding could be provided to the Global Alliance member during their presidency to support the secretariat responsibilities and the organisation of the yearly meeting.
  - b. Funding of additional meetings throughout the year in order to forge stronger connections between the networks and to increase opportunities to develop joint actions.<sup>53</sup>
  - c. Funding a mentorship programme within the Global Alliance. Many of the networks interviewed stressed the importance of the transmission of knowledge across generations of women peace mediators. However, the regional networks and their members lack the time and resources to support such intergenerational exchange. One interviewee stated: “Global Alliance has a good opportunity to establish a cohort which will train the next generation of women mediators and leaders. However, they don’t have the capacity”.<sup>54</sup> A cross-network mentorship programme, operated by the Global Alliance, would forge better connections between the regional networks, while funding could support honorarium payments for the women involved, boosting participation.

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<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> Only eight members of each network could attend this year’s annual meeting of the Global Alliance.

<sup>54</sup> Interview with Quhramaana Kakar, Women Mediators across the Commonwealth.

- d. Collaboration on conflict analysis to broaden and deepen the EU's understanding on specific conflict contexts (to complement EU's existing CAS) and thematic areas based on the expertise of the network members. The Global Alliance creates space for regular sharing of analysis on specific conflicts, offering the opportunity for members of each regional network to present analysis of a conflict context, with the hope that this will inform recommendations made by the Alliance or its Member Networks on response mechanisms. These spaces could feed into the EU's existing Conflict Analysis Screenings process and allow for joint thinking on potential follow up action.
  - e. Funding for psychological support to women mediators: Women operate in fragile contexts with limited support and often undertake mediation work while continuing to take on demanding tasks in relation to their social/family roles. There is a need to provide support to women to manage their resilience and to deal with the psycho-social burdens that mediators often face. The EU could fund a mechanism for the provision of psychological support services to network members, with the mechanism overseen by the Global Alliance.
5. **EU internal and external advocacy**: the EEAS can undertake advocacy both internally amongst colleagues from different DGs such as DG INTPA or DG ECHO, and, in particular, delegations, to use the women mediator networks and call on them for advice and mediation support, and externally with EU Member States and other regional and international partners. An exchange could be envisaged between women mediator networks and EU Ambassadors during the visit of EU Ambassadors to Brussels and/or during the annual EU Ambassador week in Brussels. Similar exchanges could be considered with EU Member States in connection with relevant topical or thematic discussions, as well as with regional and international partners.

### **Global Alliance of Regional Women Mediator Networks**

The Global Alliance of Regional Women Mediator Networks, established in 2019, brings together six regional networks: Nordic Women Mediators, FemWise-Africa, Women Mediators across the Commonwealth, Arab Women Mediators Network, Mediterranean Women Mediators Network and the Southeast Asian Network of Women Peace Mediators.

The Global Alliance harnesses its collective voice to call for the full implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and the creation of meaningful spaces for women to influence global peace and security.<sup>55</sup> The mission of the umbrella group is to create a platform for mutual support between the networks, to share information, create synergies and avoid duplication. The Global Alliance engages in joint advocacy and outreach and develops joint actions to enhance women's participation in peace processes and to secure better gender outcomes in peace agreements. The Alliance also works with international mediation actors, providing names for senior mediation positions and bridging the gap between track I and tracks II and III.

The Global Alliance holds an annual meeting, gathering representatives from each network to discuss key thematic priorities and develop recommendations both for the networks and for policymakers.<sup>56</sup> It also holds regular meetings of various thematic working groups.

The secretariat role of the Global Alliance rotates between members, however, it is reliant on the network in question having the resources available to fund the secretariat work and the hosting of the annual meeting. The Global Contact Group, made up of representatives of the secretariat or the equivalent of each network, meets monthly online and also convenes during the annual meeting.

### **FemWise-Africa**

The Network of African Women in Conflict Prevention and Mediation, otherwise known as FemWise-Africa, is a subsidiary mechanism of the Panel of the Wise, one of the key pillars of the Peace and Security Architecture of the African Union (APSA). The Network, established in 2017, aims to strengthen the role of women in conflict prevention and mediation by providing a platform for strategic advocacy, capacity-building and networking.

FemWise-Africa counts 465 members from 50 countries in Africa.<sup>57</sup> Both those

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<sup>55</sup> Global Alliance of Regional Women Mediator Networks, 2020. A key alliance for implementing the women, peace and security agenda. Available at: <https://www.globalwomenmediators.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Global-Alliance-of-Regional-Women-Mediator-Networks.pdf> (Accessed 5 December 2023)

<sup>56</sup> Global Alliance of Regional Women Mediator Networks, 2020. Virtual Global Alliance Annual Meeting 2020. Available at: <https://cmi.fi/2020/11/10/global-alliance-annual-meeting-2020-report/> (Accessed 5 December 2023)

<sup>57</sup> Global Alliance of Regional Women Mediator Networks, 2020a. *Op. cit.*

experienced in negotiation and mediation and those interested in mediation were encouraged to apply. The first cohort included former presidents, politicians, women engaged at regional level, national level and those engaged with communities at grassroots level.

In terms of governance, the network consists of a Steering Committee, Secretariat and Assembly. The Steering Committee provides guidance to the Secretariat and contributes to the annual work plans of the network. Members of the Committee include the Panel of the Wise, representatives of the Regional Economic Communities (REC), the Peace and Security Department and 10 experienced women mediators from the five regions of the AU. The Assembly includes all members of the network, and meets at least once per year. The Assembly approves the annual Action Plan of the network. The Secretariat is housed in the Peace and Security Department, in the AU Commission headquarters in Addis Ababa. The Secretariat oversees coordination, reporting and monitoring of the network, provides operational technical support to members and is responsible for managing the network's relationships with other pillars of the APSA, the African Governance Architecture and the AU Gender Architecture.

The activities of the network are centred around four key pillars, membership accreditation and rostering, capacity building, deployments and preventive diplomacy and mediation interventions. Due to the mix of expertise among the first cohort, initially basic mediation training was provided, including specific training on supporting AU processes. In recent years, capacity building has been tailored to meet the needs which emerged from regional consultations with members. Specialised and advanced training has been delivered to members on a range of thematic issues, including: Countering Violent Extremism, Terrorism and Radicalisation; Prevention of Electoral-related Violence; Enhancing Women's Political Participation; Understanding and prevention of Inter-ethnic and Inter-communal conflicts; Prevention of Conflict Related Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV); Sensitisation and Prevention of Trafficking and Proliferation of small arms and light weapons and Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in the peace and security context.<sup>58</sup>

The ultimate aim of the network is to increase the meaningful participation of women in peace processes, including as heads of official high-level mediation missions.<sup>59</sup> As such, the network has a structural link with the African Union, allowing its members to be called upon and deployed in AU or Regional Economic Community (REC) missions. For long-term deployments, FemWise-Africa members are typically deployed to AU liaison offices in countries actively in conflict, with an ongoing peace process, or in post-conflict countries with a peace agreement in place. Short-term deployments include supporting electoral observation missions. Despite the overarching ambition to have FemWise-Africa members take the lead in AU mediation processes, and their unique place at the centre of the AU's peace and security architecture, for the most

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<sup>58</sup> African Union, Information and Communication Directorate, 2023. Strategic Reflection on Strengthening Femwise-Africa. Available at: <https://www.peaceau.org/uploads/strategic-reflection-on-strengthening-femwise-africa-.pdf> (Accessed 21 November 2023)

<sup>59</sup> FemWise-Africa, 2018. Strengthening African Women's Participation in Conflict Prevention, Mediation Processes and Peace Stabilisation Efforts. Operationalisation of 'FemWise-Africa'. Available at: <http://www.peaceau.org/uploads/final-concept-note-femwise-sept-15-short-version-clean-4-flyer.pdf> (Accessed 22 November 2023)

part they remain confined to playing supporting roles.<sup>60</sup> The choice of lead mediator is usually a political decision and results in the appointment of a former head of state, a pool that is dominated by men.

The Secretariat will soon publish a call for applications for the second cohort of members. The network will be prioritising thematic expertise at the continental level, in order to move beyond women only being called upon to provide expertise on issues relating to the Women, Peace and Security Agenda. Successful candidates will join the African Standby Capacity Roster, an AU Commission civilian expert roster providing civilian capacity under the APSA.<sup>61</sup> They will be on the roster for a term of three years, renewable once.

In 2019, FemWise-Africa decided to decentralise, establishing regional and national chapters across Africa which are integrated into the Regional Economic Communities/Regional Mechanisms and National Peace Infrastructures.<sup>62</sup> The decentralised chapters share the overarching mission of the continent-level network.

### **Southeast Asian Women Peace Mediators (SEAWPM)**

On the initiation by Her Excellency Retno Marsudi, the Foreign Minister of the Republic of Indonesia, the Southeast Asian Women Peace Mediators (SEAWPM) was established in 2020.

The SEAWPM aims to facilitate and engage in initiatives aimed at preventing or resolving the escalation of violent conflict. The network also aims to advance the meaningful participation of female mediators and negotiators in all phases of conflict resolution and peace processes.

The eight network members are individual women from the Southeast Asian region; they were identified by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs based on their expertise in mediation and negotiation or other mediation support roles in peace processes. Members represent their respective experiences in peace processes, rather than their identities or cultures. Members include civil servants, government negotiators, former combatants and civil society representatives.

Governance of the network is less formalised than that of similar regional networks. SEAWPM members meet at least once a year. Decision making on priorities and actions and on funding proposals is based on consultation and consensus among all members. Members of the SEAWPM are chosen in their personal capacity based on their expertise and experience as a mediator or negotiator, while also considering the needs and capacity of the network.

The network arranges for secretariat support from one of the partner organisations on

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<sup>60</sup> ISS Africa, 2022. WiseYouth: do Africa and its youth need another AU project? Available at: <https://issafrica.org/iss-today/wiseyouth-do-africa-and-its-youth-need-another-au-project> (Accessed 22 November 2023)

<sup>61</sup> Matambo, R. and Langa, W., 2020. Five years of the African Standby Capacity Roster: taking stock of lessons learnt. *Training for Peace*. Available at: <https://trainingforpeace.org/analysis/five-years-of-the-african-standby-capacity-roster-taking-stock-of-lessons-learnt/> (Accessed 21 November 2023)

<sup>62</sup> Murray, J., Hamilton, M. and Mtasa, K., *op.cit.*

a case by case basis. Secretarial support is currently jointly provided by the Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies, based in Cambodia, and Integral Knowledge Asia, based in Indonesia.<sup>63</sup>

Uniquely, the network plans to establish an Eminent Persons Group (EPG) of between five and seven women, a mechanism of the network which will be convened at certain points in peace processes or in representing the network in certain fora. It is intended that the women will have held senior positions in government or public life, have significant leverage, network and access to eminent people and groups. The EPG will not be required to attend broader meetings of the network but will be called upon to lend their name and reputation, skills, insight and their access to the network when needed.

Activities of the network include deployment and active contribution in resolving conflicts in the Southeast Asian region and beyond and building confidence in mediation through non-formal, non-structural ways.<sup>64</sup> Rather than waiting to be invited to contribute to a peace process, members take the initiative to share analysis with key stakeholders in peace processes or use their combined leverage to convene spaces for dialogue between relevant stakeholders and conflict parties.

The network allows members to share insights, analysis and access to each other's respective networks. It aims to develop the profile of members in the field of mediation and conflict resolution; it promotes their identity primarily as mediators, with their identity as women being secondary.

### **Mediterranean Women Mediators Network (MWMN)**

The Mediterranean Women Mediators Network (MWMN) was established by the Italian government in 2017 as one of the flagship initiatives of the Italian mandate as non-permanent member of the UN Security Council. This was aimed at strengthening the role of women as agents of peace in the enlarged Mediterranean, a key region for global peace and stability. The establishment of the MWMN was also included in Italy's National Action Plan (NAP) on Women, Peace and Security, with the commitment to the network renewed for the 2020-2024 period. The initiative was developed and launched by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (MAECI) in conjunction with the Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI) and Women in International Security (WIIS) Italy, which have been implementing partners since its launch.

The aim of the MWMN is to strengthen women's participation in peace processes at all levels, and provide networking and capacity building opportunities for Mediterranean women involved in mediation, in addition to supporting and giving visibility to the contribution women are already bringing to stability and peace.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Interview with Emma Leslie and Venus Mae Gatdula, SEAWPM.

<sup>64</sup> Global Alliance of Regional Women Mediator Networks, 2020a. *Op. cit.*

<sup>65</sup> Mediterranean Women Mediators Network, 2018. Founding Principles and Declaration of Intent of the Mediterranean Women Mediators Network. Available at: <https://womenmediators.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/MWMN-Founding-Principles-and-Declaration-of-Intent.pdf> (Accessed 20 November 2023)

Membership of the network started with 40 women who were nominated by MAECI, IAI and WIIS due to their engagement in peacebuilding and mediation. Membership now stands at 60 members from 21 countries of the four shores of the Mediterranean Sea. In terms of membership criteria, members must identify as a woman, live in or be a citizen of a Mediterranean country temporarily deployed abroad and be actively engaged in mediation at community, national or global level. The network is currently focused on expanding membership to ensure full geographic representation of the region and to include younger women.

The primary activities of the network centre on capacity building of its members, local and global advocacy, local level activities, synergy with other networks, organisations, stakeholders and institutions, and experience sharing. Capacity building includes not only formal training but also peer-to-peer learning within the network, which operates as a community of practice.

The network is committed to working at grassroots level, aiming to address the gap between the work women do at local level and the international peace mediation architecture. The MWMN tries to create bridges between institutions and the network in order to render the work of its members more visible.

Advocacy activities of the network are aimed at showing the value of the network to relevant national governments. The network uses high level international fora to showcase the work of the network and has progressively shifted toward members providing insight on broad political, security and economic issues, rather than being restricted to issues surrounding the WPS agenda.

Since 2018, the MWMN has been working on decentralisation of the network, developing local antennae (in Cyprus, Türkiye, Kosovo and Lebanon) to increase engagement at local level, developing initiatives and activities tailored to the country's needs. Moreover, the MWMN regularly works in synergy with other women mediator networks in the context of the Global Alliance of Regional Women Mediator Networks, of which it is one of the founding members. The MWMN, under the responsibility of WIIS Italy, coordinated the Secretariat of Global Alliance from June 2020 until the end of 2022. The MWMN engaged also in experience-sharing initiatives with new networks, such as the Southeast Asian Women Peace Mediators, and the Pacific Network of Women Mediators.

### **Women Mediators across the Commonwealth (WMC)**

The creation of the Women Mediators across the Commonwealth (WMC) stemmed from the commitment in the UK's National Action Plan on WPS 2018-2022 to increase women's meaningful participation in conflict prevention and peacebuilding processes. In 2018, it was announced that the UK government would provide funding to support the work of women peacebuilders and mediators. The geographical scope of the network reflects the UK's position as chair in the Office of the Commonwealth during the inception phase.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Fellin, I., and Turner, C., 2021. Women's Mediator Networks: Reflections on an Emerging Global Trend. In C. Turner, & M. Wählisch (Eds.), *Rethinking Peace Mediation: Challenges of Contemporary Peacemaking Practice*, pp. 285-306. Bristol University Press.

The aim of the network is to increase the participation of women mediators in all spaces of mediation and increase the visibility of women's role in resolving conflict and sustainable peacebuilding.

The network has 48 members from 22 countries across the Commonwealth. Members have experience from the community, national and international spaces of mediation<sup>67</sup> and bring practical knowledge and experience in political conflicts, electoral conflicts, bridging divided communities, reducing political tension, mediation of indigenous conflicts and engaging with non-state groups. Members were initially recruited through an open call. The aim was to build a diverse network of women from different socio-political and economic backgrounds and with varying thematic expertise. The criteria for membership were mediators, either early career or well experienced, from Commonwealth countries who were willing to represent the network, collaborate with fellow members and share experience. There is a plan to recruit or replace members in 2024 in order to fill thematic and geographic gaps in the membership.

In terms of governance, the key decision making body of the network is the Steering Committee, which was established in 2021. The Steering Committee is composed of ten women, elected by the members. Members serve for two to three years and can be elected for a second term. Re-election of the Committee is a two step process; 50% of the Committee stand down and are replaced first, in order to ensure continuity. The secretariat function is currently held by Conciliation Resources.

The primary activities of the network include deployment of members to provide strategic mediation support in peace processes, advocacy actions, professional development opportunities for network members and peer to peer learning and best practice sharing. The network has created a Strategic Mediation Fund (SMF), providing short-term small grants to its members to allow them to continue mediation when funding runs out or disbursement is delayed.

### **Arab Women Mediators Network**

In line with their efforts to implement the WPS agenda, in 2020, the League of Arab States (LAS) in collaboration with the UN Women Regional Office for Arab States launched the Arab Women Mediators Network. The network functions within the framework of the Regional Strategy and Executive Action Plan on the Protection of Arab Women: Peace and Security, which serves to aid implementation of UNSCR 1325 across Arab member states.<sup>68</sup>

The Strategy of the Arab Women Mediators Network<sup>69</sup> outlines multiple objectives, the first being to enhance women's exercise of their right to participate in mediation, peacebuilding and diplomacy. The network aims to build women's capacities in

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<sup>67</sup> Women Mediators across the Commonwealth, 2023. About the Network. Available at: <https://www.womenmediators.org/about-the-network/> (Accessed 25 November 2023)

<sup>68</sup> Global Alliance of Regional Women Mediator Networks, 2021. Arab Women Mediators Network. Available at: <https://www.globalwomenmediators.org/arab-women-mediators-network/> (Accessed 17 November 2023)

<sup>69</sup> League of Arab States, UN Women, 2021. Strategy for the Arab Network for Women Peace Mediators.

mediation through the development of specific qualification programmes. In terms of the League of Arab States, the network aims to strengthen LAS member states' commitment to peace and to increase the success rate of peace agreements. The network promotes integrated peace efforts as well as promoting a gender-responsive approach to peacebuilding and security. The network also has as an objective to support the development of an authentic narrative that recognises women's efforts in mediation and diplomatic work in the region. The network has aspirations of eventually working beyond the region as it aims to create a hub for women's mediation and a source of women mediators for nomination to peace processes which are ongoing globally.

The ANWM is one of the mechanisms of the Women's Committee of the League of Arab states and is affiliated to the Women, Family and Childhood Department in the Social Affairs Sector of the LAS. This department acts as the technical secretariat of the network; it coordinates the work and develops programmes and work plans for discussion with the network members in addition to working on external communication and promotion.

In terms of membership, members are nominated by the member state and their admission to the network is subject to approval by the Arab Women's Committee. Members must work in the diplomatic corps at the level of ambassador or minister plenipotentiary and must have proven previous contributions and achievements in the field of women's empowerment and advocacy. The network currently has 18 members, each ambassadors, representing Jordan, Bahrain, Tunisia, Algeria, Sudan, Syria, Somalia, Iraq, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Egypt, Morocco, Mauritania and Yemen.

The key activities of the network include the provision of advice and technical expertise on mediation, advocacy activities such as awareness raising on gender responsive mediation and the promotion of quotas for women in peace processes, training mediators and supporting LAS member states to establish national networks of women peace mediators.

### **Nordic Women Mediators (NWM)**

The Nordic Women Mediators, inspired by a South African initiative which brought together women mediators for training courses and peer-to-peer exchange, was launched in Oslo in 2015.<sup>70</sup> Since its inception, the five Nordic countries, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Denmark and Iceland, have developed national networks and drawn up goals for the umbrella Nordic network. The NWM operates at inter-state level, with a governmental level contact group composed of representatives of each of the respective Ministries of Foreign Affairs providing strategic level oversight and coordination.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Norwegian Ministries, 2019. The Norwegian Government's Action Plan: Women Peace and Security (2019-2022). Available at: [https://www.regjeringen.no/globalassets/departementene/ud/dokumenter/planer/actionplan\\_wps2019.pdf](https://www.regjeringen.no/globalassets/departementene/ud/dokumenter/planer/actionplan_wps2019.pdf) (Accessed 20 November 2023)

<sup>71</sup> Fellin, I., and Turner, C., *Op. cit.*

The network aims to strengthen women's participation in peace processes at all levels by amplifying the voice of women mediators in conflict-affected areas, advocating for inclusive peace processes and developing and fostering partnerships with other mediation and peacebuilding actors. The network also works to strengthen the efforts of Nordic women actively involved in international peace-making through enabling experience and knowledge sharing among members and promoting and supporting members in their functions.<sup>72</sup>

The five national networks combined have 130 members. There are no common membership criteria for the Nordic Women Mediators: each national network has its own criteria and process of acquiring new members. When the network was initially set up in 2015, the aim was to include women with specific experience in mediation, however, this idea has since been broadened as it was difficult to find high-level mediators in all of the Nordic states, for example in Iceland and Denmark to accommodate for a larger membership. The members of the various networks range from diplomats and lawyers, military and police officers to thematic experts, communications and logistics specialists. The members hold roles in the respective Ministries of Foreign Affairs of each country, multilateral organisations such as the UN, EU or OSCE, academia and civil society.

Each national network usually has its own operational partner; for Finland, CMI-Martti Ahtisaari Peace Foundation, for Iceland Gró GES, A Gender Equality Studies and Training Programme hosted by the University of Iceland and for Norway, NOREF and PRIO Centre on Gender, Peace and Security. None of the national governments of the Nordic countries fund the networks directly per se, but rather they fund the work indirectly through contributions to these operational partners or by contributing to the direct costs related to members' engagement. The Danish Refugee Council and the Folke Bernadotte Academy acted as the operational partners for the Danish and Swedish chapters respectively. Unfortunately, the Swedish and Danish national networks are currently without operational partners due to funding cuts by their respective governments. It is unclear whether these networks will continue to exist without the necessary institutional and operational backing.

In terms of governance, each national network has its own steering group. At the level of the Nordic umbrella group, the main coordination is carried out between the group of operational partners and the government level contact group.

Each year, the Nordic Women Mediators hold an annual meeting that brings together members from each national network, the contact group (representatives of MFAs) and operational partners. The meeting is convened by the coordinating country, with the role of host country based on yearly rotating between national chapters, depending on available resources. The coordinating country is also in charge of coordination of activities at the Nordic level.

In terms of activities, each national network has their own activities at the national level. In addition to the annual meeting, there have been some activities on the Nordic level, including connecting with Nordic actors and women from conflict affected

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<sup>72</sup> Nordic Women Mediators, 2023. Objectives. Available at: <https://www.nordicwomenmediators.org/> (Accessed 3 December 2023)

countries. While unusual, due to the professional roles in various governments or multilateral institutions of many of the members, some network members have difficulties in engaging proactively in activism or in the deployment of mediators in more formal activities. Members are often involved in mediation processes already through their job and must respect confidentiality and avoid conflicts of interest. The majority of members look to the network as a group of peers which they lean on for exchange, knowledge sharing and psychological support.

The Nordic Women Mediators were instrumental in the establishment of the Global Alliance of Regional Women Mediator Networks and have provided expertise and support to several other regional women mediator networks in their inception phase.

### **Pacific Women Mediators Network (PWMN)**

The Pacific Women Mediators Network was formed in 2022 with the support of the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. For decades, women peacebuilders and activists have been working to localise UNSCR 1325 among the island nations of the Pacific, forming regional, national and local partnerships, leading to the adoption of the Pacific Regional Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security, adopted by Pacific Forum Leaders in 2011. Diverse Pacific women, in collaboration with the then Secretary General of the Pacific Island Forum, developed a plan to reinvest in local action on climate, peace and security and women-led implementation of UNSCR 1325 and to reach the unmet goals of the Pacific Regional Action Plan on WPS. The plan was presented to Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade which at the end of 2022, committed resources to the newly established Pacific Women Mediators Network.<sup>73</sup>

The network aims to advance the meaningful participation of women as mediators and negotiators in all stages of peace processes in the Pacific and to “facilitate and engage in political processes aimed at driving a gender-inclusive conflict prevention agenda across the Peace, Development and Humanitarian Nexus”.<sup>74</sup>

The network currently consists of a Technical Working Group of 12 members, the majority of whom have been involved in endeavours relating to women, peace and security in the region for decades. The Technical Working Group receives strategic advice from Pacific Island women in national governments and regional intergovernmental organisations.

Intergenerational exchange and experience sharing is central to the network's objectives. As part of the strategic plan for the network, it will focus on leadership development of the next generation of women mediators in the region. A group of 15 women between the ages of 18 and 40 will be selected and mentored by members of the Technical Working Group. The women will be awarded a scholarship to study peace, conflict and conflict history in an 18-month tailor-made curriculum developed

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<sup>73</sup> Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC), 2023a. The power of connecting local, regional and global levels of action: The story of the Pacific Women Mediators Network. Available at: <https://www.gppac.net/news/power-connecting-local-regional-and-global-levels-action-story-pacific-women-mediators-network> (Accessed 14 December 2023).

<sup>74</sup> Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC), 2023. Our work. Available at: <https://pasifikapeacetalanoa.org/our-work/#pacific> (Accessed 14 December 2023)

in collaboration with the University of the South Pacific. The women will receive honorarium payments in the periods they need to take leave from work for their studies. By year three of the network, 15 women will graduate from the programme and become fully fledged members of the network. The Technical Working Group is working to identify candidates, reaching out to organisations in the member countries who can support the women with future sponsorship or employment once they graduate from the scheme.<sup>75</sup> In this way, by 2026, the network will have expanded in number to 30 Pacific Island women, “organised and resourced to lead CSO engagement in political dialogues including with local and traditional leaders.”<sup>76</sup>

### **Ibero-American Network of Women Mediators**

Against the backdrop of the proliferation of women mediator networks in recent years, and the launch of the Network of Women Mediators of the South Cone in 2021, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Mexico (SRE) and the National Institute for Women (INMUJERES) proposed the creation of an Ibero-American Network of Women Mediators. In February 2023, the formal application for registration of the Network was submitted to the Ibero-American General Secretariat (SEGIB), in order to institutionalise the network within the Ibero-American space, and the network was formally launched in Madrid in June 2023.<sup>77</sup> The network is in its infancy and is currently working on operationalising its 2023-2024 work programme and populating the governance structures of the network.

In terms of structure and membership, the network will be composed of the Committee of Women Experts and the Committee of Regional and International Organisations, which together form the Advisory Council. The Committee of Women experts will be composed of women from Ibero-America with three different profiles, all with expertise in mediation, conciliation, peacebuilding and conflict prevention. The first will include women leaders, diplomats and members of security forces. The second profile includes academics, religious leaders and representatives of civil society, while the third profile covers community leaders, representatives of indigenous communities and feminist collectives.<sup>78</sup> The women will participate in their personal capacity and will be selected by the member institutions of the network. Members of the Committee of Regional and International Organisations will include civil society organisations, United Nations agencies, sub-regional bodies, and other regional and international institutions relevant to the objectives pursued by the network. Members of this committee will also be chosen by the member institutions of the network. The presidency of the network rotates between members. The member countries of the network are Andorra, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Guatemala, Mexico, Peru, Spain, and Uruguay. The network does not currently have

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<sup>75</sup> Interview with representative of the Pacific Women Mediator Network.

<sup>76</sup> Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC), 2023b. *Op. cit.*

<sup>77</sup> Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores de México y Instituto Nacional de las Mujeres, 2023. Red Iberoamericana de Mujeres Mediadoras. Nota Conceptual. Available at: [https://dtic-my.sharepoint.com/personal/smendoza\\_inmujeres\\_gob\\_mx/\\_layouts/15/onedrive.aspx?id=%2Fpersonal%2Fsmendoza%5Finmujeres%5Fgob%5Fmx%2FDocuments%2FNC%2E%20Red%20Ibero%20%2820%20JUN%202023%29%2Epdf&parent=%2Fpersonal%2Fsmendoza%5Finmujeres%5Fgob%5Fmx%2FDocuments&ga=1](https://dtic-my.sharepoint.com/personal/smendoza_inmujeres_gob_mx/_layouts/15/onedrive.aspx?id=%2Fpersonal%2Fsmendoza%5Finmujeres%5Fgob%5Fmx%2FDocuments%2FNC%2E%20Red%20Ibero%20%2820%20JUN%202023%29%2Epdf&parent=%2Fpersonal%2Fsmendoza%5Finmujeres%5Fgob%5Fmx%2FDocuments&ga=1) (Accessed 21 November)

<sup>78</sup> Interview with a representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Mexico and a representative of the National Institute for Women Mexico (INMUJERES), representatives of the Ibero-American Network of Women Mediators.

a formal secretariat; the secretariat functions are being managed by SRE and INMUJERES while Mexico holds the presidency.

The aim of the network is to promote Ibero-American women mediators in special political missions, peacekeeping operations, country teams, and other initiatives dedicated to the peaceful settlement of conflict and disputes. A further objective is to strengthen the capacities of Ibero-American women in dialogue, prevention, mediation, peacebuilding and the reconstruction of the social fabric and to generate spaces for collaboration, exchange of good practice and lessons learned with women and women's networks in other regions.<sup>79</sup> It is important for the network to bring these women together, to increase dialogue between these groups and to promote synergies and complementarities. The network also insists on exchange with the Committee of Regional and International Organisations as they wish to foster the sense that "women are embraced by the institutions in their efforts to build peace".<sup>80</sup>

The network has received funding from the Ibero-American General Secretariat. The SRE and INMUJERES have also committed small amounts of funding to the network while holding the presidency. A longer term funding strategy will be developed for the network. The network also has ambitions to join the Global Alliance of Regional Women Mediator Networks.

In February 2024, the network held a three-day workshop centred on capacity building on mediation strategies, attended by the focal points of the network and the women experts designated by the member countries. Technical assistance was provided by UN Women during the workshop.

### **Network of Women Mediators of South Caucasus (NWMSC)**

The Network of Women Mediators of South Caucasus, an initiative of the International Center on Conflict and Negotiation (ICCN), was launched in 2018 at an initial NWMSC workshop held in Antalya, Turkey. The workshop, which included training on peacebuilding and networking for members, and the development of the network's action plan was financially supported by the EU Monitoring Mission in Georgia and the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC).<sup>81</sup>

The aim of the network is to increase women's participation in peace processes and multi-channel diplomacy, and to contribute to the recognition of the legitimacy and importance of the work of women mediators. The network advocates for inclusive peace processes and the meaningful, equitable engagement of women. Further goals of the network include increasing the mediation capacity of members through training, convening a space for knowledge and experience sharing and fostering partnerships

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<sup>79</sup> Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores de México y Instituto Nacional de las Mujeres, *op. cit.*

<sup>80</sup> Interview with a representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Mexico and a representative of the National Institute for Women Mexico (INMujeres), representatives of the Ibero-American Network of Women Mediators.

<sup>81</sup> Network of Women Mediators of South Caucasus, 2018a. Information Letter. Members of the Network of Women Mediators of South Caucasus adopted the Memorandum of Understanding. Available at: [https://iccn.ge/files/information letter - members of nwmsc atoped the mou.pdf](https://iccn.ge/files/information%20letter%20-%20members%20of%20nwmsc%20adopted%20the%20mou.pdf) (Accessed 15 December 2023)

with other regional networks.<sup>82</sup>

Members of the network are women representing 22 different organisations committed to conflict transformation, conflict resolution and peacebuilding in the South Caucasus. Due to the political sensitivities of the region there are challenges to cooperation within the network; for example, the geographical location of meetings is often politically charged and prevents some members from participating fully in network activities.<sup>83</sup>

The network has a Steering Committee which is open to organisations willing to make a contribution to the Network. Current member organisations of the Steering Committee are GPPAC and ICCN.

The network has struggled to secure funding for its continued operation and is currently unfunded. This has meant that the network's activities have slowed down and it has not met the needs among members for capacity building on mediation.

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<sup>82</sup> Network of Women Mediators of South Caucasus, 2018b. Leaflet. Available at: [https://iccn.ge/files/nwmsc\\_lieflet\\_2019.pdf](https://iccn.ge/files/nwmsc_lieflet_2019.pdf) (Accessed 15 December 2023)

<sup>83</sup> Interview with representative of the Network of Women Mediators of South Caucasus.

## Annexe B: Non-exhaustive list of women-led networks

- African Insiders Mediation Platform (AIMP)
- Arab Women Mediators Network
- ASEAN Women for Peace Registry
- ASEAN Women Peace Mediators
- Association of African Women Mediators (AAWM)
- N-Peace (Engage for Equality, Access, Community and Empowerment)
- Faith Women Mediator's Network
- FemWise–Africa
- Ibero-American Network of Women Mediators
- International Mediator's Community of Peace
- Mano River Women's Peace Network (MARWOPNET)
- Mediterranean Women Mediators Network
- Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers
- Nordic Women Mediators (NWM)
  - Nordic Women Mediators Denmark
  - Nordic Women Mediators Finland
  - Nordic Women Mediators Iceland
  - Nordic Women Mediators Norway
  - Nordic Women Mediators Sweden
- OSCE Networking Platform for Women Leaders including Peacebuilders and Mediators
- Pacific Women Mediators Network
- Pan-African Network of the Wise (PanWise)
- Regional Network of Women Mediators of the South Cone
- Shifting the Power Coalition
- South East Asian Women Peace Mediators
- Swiss Women in Peace Processes Network
- Women Mediators across the Commonwealth (WMC)
- Women Mediators of South Caucasus (NWMSC)
- Women's Network for Peace and Dialogue
- Women Peace Mediators Germany Network
- Women Waging Peace Network

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## Annexe D: Network websites

[Global Alliance of Regional Women Mediator Networks](#)

[Southeast Asian Women Peace Mediators](#)

[Mediterranean Women Mediators Network](#)

[Women Mediators across the Commonwealth](#)

[Nordic Women Mediators](#)

[Women Peace Mediators Germany Network](#)

[Pacific Women Mediators Network](#)