

Meeting on *Women's Participation in Peace Processes*

EPLO & European Commission, 23 November 2010, Brussels.

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Peacemaking is still a very young and recent approach to settling violent conflicts.

Humanity has a long tradition of War-making. Our worldviews are shaped by a culture of Violence, a simplified image of good versus evil (where we usually are the good guys), and a number of myths about a glorious past. We have put the name of war heroes to streets, avenues, palaces and museums; we have immortalized their figures in statues and portraits; we celebrate holidays based on battle-field victories;... we praise the fighting spirit of our ancestors in national anthems.

Not until very recently – basically after the World Wars – has peace become a specific goal for political institutions. The UN is only 60 years old, peace research was conceptualized 40 years ago, the notions of peace-making/keeping/building are barely 20 years old... and UNSCR 1325 was just born 10 years ago!

Is it a wonder that we still have more questions than answers in the quest for peace?

And yet, when military approaches to conflict fail – as they often do despite centuries of theory and practice – all expectations are put on dialogue and relationship building. Only last week did NATO acknowledge in their new strategic concept – based on lessons from Afghanistan – that the civilian pillar is at least as important as the military one.

Despite this very recent history of proactive construction of peace, in a short period of time we have been able to:

- Reduce the number of armed conflicts (55–35)
- Reduce the number of casualties.
- Increase the number of peace processes (to cover almost all current armed conflicts).
- Increase the number of negotiated settlements, that between 2000 and 2005 tripled the number of armed victories.

It is safe to say that to a certain point we have had a *quantitative* success!

The challenge now is to move from quantitative to *qualitative* progress, because post-conflict situations rarely match the expectations people put on the peace negotiations and the peace agreement.

Recent developments in this field have been deeply influenced by women's thinking and action. At the end of the day, peace advocates and advocates for women's rights share the same approach: to deconstruct the worldviews, unmask the interests and change the power-structures that justify violence, oppression and injustice.

Inspired by women's perspectives and methods, the peacebuilding community is currently at a stage of re-assessing some of the mainstream assumptions, thus suggesting to move:

- From assuming linear processes (violence – negotiations – agreement – peace) to circular metaphors where different stages are present at the same time.
- From binary considerations of good and bad, war and peace, men and women; to more complex analysis of shared responsibilities, *violence continuum* beyond peace agreements, and gendered approaches.
- From amnesty to accountability.
- From elite-driven negotiations to inclusive peace processes.
- From essentially Western liberal values and some neo-colonial attitudes to acknowledgement of local and indigenous capacities.
- From male dominated peace negotiations to more democratic decision-making.

It may not be too far-stretched to suggest that peace negotiations have so far been shaped by a limited concept of security; driven by a small and armed elite; developed under a realist and pragmatic framework; and concerned with not altering too much the underlying power-structures. A male dominated model that has reached a threshold of impact.

If we are now challenging this practice we have to ask ourselves: “how do women become relevant at and beyond the negotiating table?”, which is the topic of this first sessions this morning.

My name is KH. I am the director of the Philippines and Colombia programmes at Conciliation Resources, a London based NGO focused on supporting peace processes in several countries. The issue of the role of women in peace became relevant to me because of CR's approach for inclusive peace processes and, especially, when we were invited to join the ICG on Mindanao last year. The ICG is the first and only formal international architecture to support the parties to the peace talks and the facilitator that includes states and INGOs at the same level. All of a sudden our status changed, moving from policy-framers to policy-targets on 1325 and related resolutions. We have a new responsibility and that is the reason why I am here.