

Statement of the Friends of Mediation

Security Council Arria Formula Meeting 8th March 2012

Women's role in mediation and post-conflict resolution

PR of Turkey:

Madam Minister, Excellencies, Ladies and gentlemen,

At the outset, I would like to thank the UK and Portugal for organizing today's important meeting. Finland and Turkey would like to seize this opportunity to address the Council, as the co-chairs of the Group of Friends of Mediation, and contribute to the thought-provoking discussions.

Addressing gender and women's participation in mediation has a central place in the activities of the Friends of Mediation. As the Friends of Mediation spearheaded the first-ever UN resolution on Mediation last year, they ensured the inclusion of the aims of Resolution 1325 and subsequent resolutions on Women, Peace and Security in the resolution.

The Resolution on Mediation recognizes the importance of the full participation of women at all levels and stages of conflict prevention and settlement. It underlines the significance of women's involvement at the decision-making level. It also calls for adequate gender expertise to be provided throughout peace processes, and for further efforts in appointing women as chief and lead mediators.

This resolution thus attempts to address some of the shortcomings of peace processes. It is estimated that a significant number of peace agreements fail within five years of signature. Although there are many underlying causes, the failure to address root-causes of the conflict and the lack of inclusiveness stand out. In this context, it is clear that peace agreements must pay proper attention to the different impact of conflict on men and women. They must also give due consideration needs and expectations of women; otherwise, half of the population is neglected.

The disregard for women's needs for physical security, income control and access to decision-making can have serious costs. In the immediate aftermath of conflict, women's early recovery needs are vital, in order to increase women's empowerment and correct historical gender imbalances.

The UN plays a central role in standard-setting on the participation of women in peace-processes and the inclusion of a gender perspective in conflict settlement. For example, all UN mediators and their teams should be trained to take into account gender dimensions. The UN is crucial in streamlining the best practices in ensuring that a gender-perspective is present in all phases of mediation.

Therefore, it is very important for the Security Council to give greater attention to gender-related considerations, when discussing the mandates of operations aimed at assisting a political process. Decisions on political processes should aim at advancing gender equality. The mediators' mandates and performance objectives should require the incorporation of gender perspectives and consultation with women and the civil society. The Security Council should, as a normative body, also promote women's participation in mediation processes. On the other hand, the Security Council should also ensure, as appropriate, that ceasefire agreements include sexual violence in their definitions.

PR of Finland:

Madam Minister, Excellencies, Ladies and gentlemen,

Besides giving cross-cutting consideration of the gender dimension throughout the mediation process, it is important to increase the participation of women in conflict prevention and resolution.

According to UN Women in recent peace negotiations, for which such information is available; women have represented fewer than 8 % of participants and fewer than 3% of signatories. This despite constantly repeated calls for inclusiveness, and despite the fact that women are often active and crucial in local and regional level conflict prevention and mediation, and respected in their communities for their ability to engage different sides.

Exclusion from official peace tables invariably leads to a failure to adequately address women's concerns, such as sexual and gender-based violence, women's rights and post-conflict accountability. The inclusion of women actually helps to ensure a focus on critical, broader priorities and needs in the conflict areas that are important for the durability of peace agreements and for attaining sustainable peace.

The UN envoys should to meet with women leaders and peace activists early in a mediation process, in order to include women's points of view from the outset, i.e. in agenda formation and in determining the content of agreements. In addition to participation in official negotiations, regular consultations with women's civil society groups should be a standard part of any mediation process. The input from women should be considered formally at the peace table without forgetting also the need to examine the impact of conflicts on gender relations and then take into account the social and economic relations affected by the conflict as part of a peace agreement

Engaging women and addressing their needs requires appropriate technical support.

The Security Council stressed in its meeting last October "the importance of creating enabling conditions for women's participation during all stages of peace processes" including financial initiatives in this regard. The UN could facilitate women's participation in peace talks by underwriting the participation of women mediators and negotiators into UN led peace processes. The SG's report also emphasized countering negative societal attitudes regarding full and equal participation of women in conflict resolution and mediation. Women

can play a crucial role in the post-conflict peace-building phase in promoting the peace agreement and reconciliation at the grass-roots level, if their concerns have been taken onboard in the agreement and they feel that they are part of it.

Finally, we as the Friends of Mediation would like to call on the UN to set the example by nominating more women as Special Envoys, mediators and mediation experts. The Secretary General has made sincere efforts to nominate more women, and we recognize the progress with nominating female SRSGs and deputy SRSGs. However, there are no women serving as Special Envoys and no woman has ever been appointed UN Chief Mediator. This glass ceiling needs to be broken.

The group of the Friends of Mediation founded in September 2010 to promote and advance the use of mediation in the peaceful settlement of disputes, conflict prevention and resolution as well as to generate support for the development of mediation consists currently of 28 UN Member States, the United Nations and 7 regional organizations. The group is co-chaired by Finland and Turkey