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WOMEN IN CONFLICT: ADVANCING WOMEN'S ROLE IN PEACE AND SECURITY

HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON WESTERN HEMISPHERE, TRANSNATIONAL CRIME, CIVILIAN SECURITY, DEMOCRACY, HUMAN RIGHTS, AND GLOBAL WOMEN'S ISSUES

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WOMEN IN CONFLICT: ADVANCING WOMEN'S ROLE IN PEACE AND SECURITY

THURSDAY, JUNE 13, 2019

U.S. SENATE,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON WESTERN HEMISPHERE,
TRANSNATIONAL CRIME, CIVILIAN SECURITY, DEMOCRACY,
HUMAN RIGHTS, AND GLOBAL WOMEN'S ISSUES,
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS,
Washington, DC.

The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:05 a.m. in room SD–419, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Marco Rubio, chairman of the subcommittee, presiding.

Present. Senators Rubio [presiding], Risch, Gardner, Cardin, Shaheen, and Kaine.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. MARCO RUBIO, U.S. SENATOR FROM FLORIDA

Senator RUBIO. Good morning. I would like to welcome everyone to today's hearing of the Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere, Transnational Crime, Civilian Security, Democracy, Human Rights, and Global Women's Issues. We got to come up with an acronym. This is way too long.

[Laughter.]

Senator RUBIO. It does not fit on letterhead.

Anyway, today's hearing is on a very important topic: Women in Conflict: Advancing Women's Role in Peace and Security.

We only have one panel today, but a great panel. Ms. Andrea Bottner is the Senior Advisor to the Independent Women's Forum and founder of Bottner Strategies. Ms. Jamille Bigio is the Senior Fellow for Women and Foreign Policy at the Council on Foreign Relations, and Ms. Palwasha Kakar is the Senior Program Officer for Religion and Inclusive Societies at the United States Institute of Peace. I want to thank all of you for taking the time to be with us today and to discuss this issue of critical importance to our national security and to international stability.

I would like to thank first my colleagues that are here today for their partnership and their individual work as well on issues affecting women and girls around the world. The chairman of this committee, Jim Risch, has been a great leader in the Senate and chairing this committee on this topic, as well as the ranking member, Senator Menendez. I also want to note the work of Senator Shaheen, who has been a tireless advocate on ensuring women around the world have equal opportunities to succeed. She led the

Women, Peace, and Security Act of 2017 that was signed into law by President Trump last year—2 years ago.

Earlier this week, the Trump administration rolled out the new Women, Peace, and Security Strategy, as required by law. And the strategy seeks to ensure women's meaningful participation and leadership in political and civil life and empower them to play key roles in decision-making and peace processes. It rightfully recognizes the critical role that women play in enacting change, resolving conflict, counterterrorism, and advancing peace.

The United States is the first country in the world to enact a comprehensive law on this issue. I think this is an achievement we should be proud of, and I look forward to now, along with all the members of this committee, supporting its implementation in the years to come.

As we look at the map of the world today, unfortunately we have ongoing conflicts on almost every continent. From South Sudan to Afghanistan, to Burma, to Syria, to the major humanitarian disaster in our own hemisphere, Venezuela, it seems no region is untouched by conflict.

Though conflict inflicts suffering on everyone, women are particularly and uniquely affected by conflict. Women and girls are the most vulnerable when conflicts erupt, and they are often targeted with violence, specifically sexual violence. These gender-based assaults are used as a weapon of war. The accounts are heartbreaking and harrowing.

In Burma, during the 2017 violence, Rohingya women were subjected to unspeakable horrors. They were lined up and brutally raped by Burmese military forces and in some cases their babies taken from them and murdered.

In Iraq, under ISIS, Yazidi women were forced to endure years of torture and rape. Girls were separated by eye color and sold as sex slaves, often sold multiple times to ISIS fighters based on the ISIS fighters' personal preferences.

In Nigeria, Boko Haram militants kidnapped girls, forced them into marriages, and committed sexual violence, and deployed women and girls as suicide bombers.

I could go on for hours unfortunately, but women are, more often than not, marginalized during the end of conflict. They are left out of discussions to find political solutions in peace processes. They are barred from making decisions about their own future.

However, thankfully there is a growing recognition by international organizations, backed by research, by policymakers and others of the links that connect economic, social, and political stability and security with the wellbeing of women. The protection of women and girls in conflict in humanitarian settings should be a top priority for the United States and for our partners, especially since this is where the risk of sexual and gender-based violence is highest.

But as we focus and prioritize the protections that must be in place, we need to also focus on ensuring that women are involved in preventing conflicts from breaking out in the first place and that they are active participants in resolving them because women play a key role in the prevention of conflict during and also post-conflict. Research now has proven that when women are able to meaning-

fully participate in peace negotiations and processes, there is a higher likelihood of lasting stability.

Just to provide a few examples, one study found that peace agreements are 20 percent more likely to last at least 2 years and 35 percent more likely to last for more than 15 years when women are involved.

Another study investigating 82 peace agreements and 42 armed conflicts between 1989 and 2011 found that peace agreements with women signatories are linked with durable peace.

Research by the Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace, and Security finds that women from civil society helped craft more comprehensive agreements in support of both ending war and building peace.

So the research is clear. We need women to play a role at the negotiating table not only exchanging ideas and leading discussions, but also as implementers of peace agreements.

Women in civil society tend to prioritize larger social issues beyond the cessation of hostilities. These include reconciliation, development, education, human rights, gender equality, justice, and democracy. Even with all of this evidence, significant gaps remain in both the protection of women and girls in conflict, as well as support for women's involvement in peace initiatives and security.

It has been 19 years since the U.N. Security Council adopted the landmark resolution 1325 which calls on member states to increase women's participation at all levels of decision-making. Sadly, we have not seen significant progress on women's participation in those 19 years. Acknowledging that women should be part of these discussions is easy, but we have struggled to implement it.

It is in the national security interest of the United States to have stable partners around the world who respect the fundamental rights of their citizens, including women. Gender equality, according to the Belfer Center, is associated with a lower propensity for conflict both between and within states, which is directly linked to U.S. security and global stability.

Currently the ongoing peace talks in Afghanistan provide us with an opportunity for the U.S. to prove its dedication to women's participation in negotiations. And I hope we will do all we can to ensure that women have a seat at that table.

In March 2019, more than 700 Afghan women gathered to advocate and make clear that while they support peace, they are fearful of losing their rights they have gained. The empowerment and equality of Afghan women are key to a more stable and sustainable Afghanistan.

So I look forward to discussing the role of women in the peace talks in Afghanistan further during this hearing.

But the bottom line is if 50 percent of your population is left out of the peace process and is left out of key leadership and decision-making roles, you are setting yourself up for failure. Women are the backbone of society and must play an active role in securing long-term peace and security.

The ranking member.

STATEMENT OF HON. BENJAMIN L. CARDIN, U.S. SENATOR FROM MARYLAND

Senator CARDIN. Well, Senator Rubio, first of all, thank you for your leadership in convening this hearing. And I very much concur in your statement as to the importance of this hearing and U.S. leadership. This hearing advances the U.S. leadership in promoting gender equality and in promoting peace and security. So thank you very much for your leadership.

It underscores the importance of women's equal participation in a country's economic, social, and political institutions. Here in the United States, we have seen the benefit firsthand by the increased numbers of women that are in the United States Senate. It has made an incredible difference in the strength of our democracy here in the United States.

I particularly want to acknowledge Senator Shaheen. She is the only woman who serves on this committee, and her participation has made a very, very significant difference.

And I think I need to underscore this because you serve on committees here because of your preference. You put down where you want to serve on a committee. It is tough enough for a woman to get elected to the United States Senate and to get reelected. And when you make your committee selections, you do that based upon, in part, what you think is best for your own political future on reelection and for the people you represent in your state.

Senator Shaheen recognized the need to deal with global issues that affect the security of people around the world. It may not get her votes in New Hampshire, but it has certainly made a huge difference for the global security. So I thank her for her leadership on this committee. It has made a huge difference in the way that we see issues.

In this case, she partnered with Senator Capito on the 2017 Women, Peace, and Security Act, which was enacted. It sets up a U.S. strategy for participation of women to prevent conflicts and to resolve hostilities and to preserve peace and to develop U.S. leadership on these issues.

Yesterday, we had, I thought, an extremely productive meeting with Ivanka Trump as the Trump administration presented to us their strategy for implementing the 2017 law that was passed by Congress. I agree with Senator Rubio. We now need to get additional information on that strategy. We have to make sure it is executed in a way that is effective in carrying out the goals that Congress intended. And we need to find out how Congress and the administration can work together in order to achieve those objectives.

This follows the success we had on the WE Act, which provided economic empowerment for women through the use of our development assistance programs here in the United States.

It is critically important that we incorporate women in conflict prevention, mediation, and resolution procedures as leaders and as decision-makers. We need to involve women in order to get effective results. Women and girls, as the chairman pointed out, have unique threats in conflict settings, from sexual violence to economic isolation. Policymakers must understand these risks to effectively incorporate necessary protection measures. Women must have a place at the table not just for gender equality. Women's participa-

tion in peacekeeping, combating violent extremism, and promoting security is absolutely critical to the success of these efforts.

Numerous studies—as the chairman points out, that the success of a peace process with women participation is much higher because you are including the population, and you are providing the input that you need so that you can have lasting peace in an area.

Numerous challenges today. The chairman mentioned several of those: civil wars in the Middle East, violence in Central America, terror and conflict in West Africa, the Rohingya issues in Asia, and the list goes on and on and on. If we are able to successfully deal with these conflict challenges, women must be part of the solution. That is particularly true in Afghanistan where we have been struggling with the peace process and we have not been able to effectively engage women in that process. We must do a more effective job if we are going to be able to bring peace to that troubled country which has been at war for so long.

While the efforts like Women, Peace, and Security Act and WE Act are positive steps, there is substantially more that we have to do. Mr. Chairman, I will just mention one. You mentioned that we are approaching the 20th anniversary of the U.N. resolution 1325. Well, we are approaching the 100th anniversary of women's suffrage here in the United States. And it is long past time that the United States leads by their own example first and that we pass the Equal Rights Amendment. I have teamed up with Senator Murkowski with a resolution that would allow us to ratify the Equal Rights Amendment with one more state ratifying. And I would urge my colleagues that in this 100th year celebrating women's suffrage and promoting our leadership globally, let us get the Equal Rights Amendment in our Constitution.

With that, I look forward to hearing from our witnesses.

Senator RUBIO. Thank you.

And the chairman of the committee has joined us. I thank him for being here. This has been a big priority for him. I have seen his schedule. It looks like he is the Secretary of State. So we appreciate that. I know how busy he is and he needs to be in other places.

Senator RISCH. I am not paid like the Secretary of State.

Senator RUBIO. He says he is not paid like the Secretary of State. [Laughter.]

Senator RUBIO. Senator Shaheen. Because of the work she has done, I would like to give her an opportunity as well to have an opening statement.

STATEMENT OF HON. JEANNE SHAHEEN, U.S. SENATOR FROM NEW HAMPSHIRE

Senator SHAHEEN. Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chairman and Senator Cardin. Thank you both for your very kind remarks.

And thank you to all of the witnesses for being here today.

As has been pointed out, earlier this week, Senator Risch hosted a roundtable where we had representatives of the administration come in and actually launch the Women, Peace, and Security national strategy. And Mr. Chairman, if I could introduce this for the record.

Senator RUBIO. Without objection.

[The information referred to is located at the end of the hearing]

Senator SHAHEEN. This is the strategy that gets included.

And I was really please to join Senator Capito, Senator Risch, and Senator Cardin, as well as Ivanka Trump, who represented the White House, and the Deputy Secretary of State, John Sullivan, USAID Administrator Mark Green, and Acting Chief Management Officer at the Department of Defense, Lisa Hershman.

What I was particularly impressed with was the commitment that each of them gave to implementing this strategy because as you all have pointed out, we are the first country in the world to legislatively put in place a law that says we have an official strategy that says women should be at the table in all stages of security situations from conflict prevention to peace building.

And furthermore, we have actually funded that strategy. Last year, we provided $4 million to hire gender advisors in the Department of Defense.

So we have already begun, and the challenge now, as everyone has said, is ensuring that we implement this strategy in a way that is effective and that recognizes the role that women have to play around the world.

And I was pleased that both the chairman and ranking member mentioned Afghanistan as one of the opportunities that we have to encourage the participation of women in any peace negotiations. You know, if we look at what we have done in Afghanistan, the commitment of the United States and NATO to that country since the overthrow of the Taliban, probably the single most effective effort has been around empowering women. And we are at a point now where we have an opportunity to work with Afghanistan and to ensure that women continue to be a very important part of that country.

There are, as the chairman pointed out, so many conflict areas around the world where having women participate will make a significant difference. I would like to add Syria, as you did, Mr. Chairman, when you talked about ISIS. As we look stability in Syria, women need to be a significant part of any resolution to the conflict there. And Ukraine is another one where women are a critical part of any resolution.

And then there are countries where they have very intolerant policies towards women where they do not provide rights and protections that we are working hard to ensure in the United States. Saudi Arabia is one of those countries, and I think it is important for us, wherever we see that, to have an official policy on the part of the United States where we point out the challenges that those countries are facing and why it would be important to ensure rights for women.

And just to add to what the chairman and Senator Risch said, what we know from the data—you know, it is not just because we think it is a good idea to include women. Obviously, we do think that. But the data shows that women's participation in peace processes, as our witnesses know, today makes a huge difference because any agreement from a peace negotiation is 35 percent more likely to last at least 15 years. And civil society participation, including women's groups, makes a peace agreement 64 percent less likely to fail. And yet according to the Council on Foreign Rela-

tions, from 1990 to 2017, women made up only 2 percent of mediators and 8 percent of negotiators in peace processes.

So we have an opportunity. We have legislation. We have an implementation strategy. We have a commitment. Now it is up to all of us to ensure that it gets implemented in a way that helps to empower women around the world.

So thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, for this opportunity.

Senator RUBIO. Thank you.

As we get to our testimony, I wanted to just—we have talked briefly. You have 5 minutes, but I would encourage you if you can abbreviate this so we can get into the questions because we have a vote at 11:30. It has been ongoing issue around here—these votes. They are cutting them off on time and so forth. And so we will lose attendance.

By the way, we have got a conflict in the Senate right now in which these votes are like 15 minutes, but they are taking like 2 hours and messing up people's schedules. So yesterday the Efficiency Caucus, made up almost entirely of the Women's Caucus—I think we had a couple interlopers there at the end to join them—but basically sat at their seats and forced us to vote within the 10-minute time frame, led by the women of the Senate. So there is an example of the U.S. putting these practices to use.

Anyway, I want to thank all of you. And I guess I will begin with you, Ms. Bottner. Thank you for being here and we will move right to left.

STATEMENT OF ANDREA G. BOTTNER, SENIOR ADVISOR TO THE INDEPENDENT WOMEN'S FORUM; FOUNDER, BOTTNER STRATEGIES, LLC, CHEVY CHASE, MD

Ms. BOTTNER. Good morning, and thank you, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Cardin, Senator, Senator. Thank you for inviting me here today. It is an honor to appear before this distinguished committee and to join my fellow panelists.

Today I am representing the Independent Women's Forum, a nonprofit dedicated to developing and advancing policies that enhance people's freedoms, choices, and opportunities.

I will draw heavily from my past experience as the Director of the International Women's Issues Office at the U.S. State Department during the George W. Bush administration and my work since then with survivors of sexual assault, domestic violence, and rape.

I want to thank Senator Shaheen particularly for her leadership regarding the Women, Peace, and Security Act. This bipartisan legislation that President Trump signed into law will ensure that the perspective voices and contributions of women will be considered and respected as conflict is addressed and as lasting peace is sought.

Women around the world are disproportionately affected by violent conflict. Rape is used to demoralize entire communities. Sexual violence is used as a method of torture. It is estimated that one in three women worldwide have experienced physical and/or sexual violence in their lifetime. Practices like female genital mutilation occur in many countries around the globe, and young girls are often trafficked or married off at an unbelievably young age.

Many societies still do not recognize the contributions that women can make to their economies, their educational systems, and their governments. But we do. And it is in America's best interest to continue supporting women's participation in peace processes and subsequent post-conflict reconstruction.

We know that women being involved increases the likelihood a peace agreement will last longer than 15 years by as much as 35 percent. We know that women not only need a seat at the table, but they have to exert real influence. When women are involved in peace negotiations, we see agreements that focus not just on an end to the fighting, but on building a lasting peace. We have seen success in many different countries around the world when women have been involved.

For example, the 2016 Colombian peace agreement is often cited as a success story. I actually flew over the jungle with the only female Blackhawk helicopter pilot in the Colombian anti-narcotics police. This was before the agreement was reached. But I saw firsthand the grit and the bravery of the Colombian women.

Today we watch anxiously as Afghanistan decides upon its country's future. Since the Taliban was toppled, millions of women have worked to create a more inclusive society and future for their country. The United States and the women of Afghanistan share a very special relationship that began in 2002 with the creation of the U.S.-Afghan Women's Council. That council continues to thrive today and is an example of U.S. investment and support in the empowerment of Afghan women. The ongoing Afghan peace process is a real test of our commitment to the women of Afghanistan and indeed the world.

As we move forward and seek to implement this new government strategy on Women, Peace, and Security, let us make sure we try to understand the local barriers to women's participation in each unique community, strengthen the role of civil society, develop public-private partnerships with faith-based organizations and businesses that can improve the status of women, provide technical assistance and training to female negotiators and mediators and U.S. Government personnel, empower women and girls to be active participants in efforts to address terrorism and violent extremism.

The United States occupies a unique place in the world and must continue to lead efforts on behalf of vulnerable and voiceless women. We have work to do in the months ahead to implement this administration's robust government-wide strategy, and I look forward to the work and thank you.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Bottner follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF ANDREA G. BOTTNER

Chairman Rubio and Ranking Member Cardin, thank you for the opportunity to be here and discuss the critical importance of involving women in the advancement of peace and security.

Today, I'm representing the Independent Women's Forum, a nonprofit dedicated to developing and advancing policies that enhance people's freedom, choices, and opportunities.

I draw heavily from my past experience as the Director of the International Women's Issues Office at the U.S. State Department during the George W. Bush administration and my work with survivors of sexual assault, domestic violence and rape.

The Women, Peace and Security Act of 2017 ensures that the United States will be a global leader in promoting the participation of women in conflict prevention, management, and post-conflict relief efforts.

I enthusiastically commend the U.S. Congress and President Trump for making this the law of our land.

This important legislation recognizes that including women in conflict prevention and resolution will promote more inclusive and democratic societies. The addition of women to these discussions is critical to country and regional stability. It is within the national interest of the United States to ensure the participation of women and a true demonstration of our global leadership.

The participation of women in peace processes has contributed to increased success in reaching agreements and the subsequent longevity of those agreements.

According to studies conducted by the United Nations, when women have a substantive role in peace negotiations the likelihood the agreement will last beyond 15 years increases by as much as 35 percent.

However, it is not always easy to insert women into the peacemaking process. Between 1990 and 2017, according to the United Nations Executive Director of U.N. Women, women constituted only 2 percent of mediators, 8 percent of negotiators, and 5 percent of witnesses and signatories in major peace processes.

Only 3 out of 11 agreements signed in 2017 contained provisions on gender equality. Of 1,500 agreements signed between 2000 and 2016, only 25 raise the role of women's engagement in the implementation phase.

These statistics underscore the point that the Women, Peace, and Security Act is desperately needed. We need to examine the barriers and challenges that keep women from participating fully in their societies and work to eradicate them.

Women around the globe are disproportionately affected by violent conflict. Women and girls face violence as they flee armed conflict and as they strive to survive in a new place.

Rape is used as a weapon of war and other forms of sexual violence occur before, during and after conflict. According to the United Nations, there are eight different forms of conflict-related sexual violence: rape, sexual slavery, prostitution, forced pregnancy, forced abortion, enforced sterilization, forced marriage, and other forms of sexual violence of comparable gravity.

Another human rights abuse that women and girls face is female genital mutilation (FGM). This is any procedure involving the partial or total removal of the external female genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs. FGM is often performed on girls between the ages of 4 and 14 to ensure their virginity until marriage.

The World Health Organization reports that FGM has no health benefits and can cause serious and often lifelong physical and psychological health problems. It is estimated that 200 million women worldwide have undergone this procedure.

American women should note that while this is most predominant in Africa, the Middle East and East Asia, it is estimated that over 500,000 young women and girls are at risk of FGM in the United States.

We need to be concerned about this rising threat and work to raise awareness this practice will not be tolerated in the United States.

Gender-based violence exists in epidemic proportions around the world, whether it occurs in the form of domestic violence, the trafficking of human beings, or in the context of war and conflict, such violence and coercion has devastating effects on women's personal health, the families, communities and emerging societies.

A continued emphasis on fighting these atrocities needs to continue if we want to make sure women are included in peace and security discussions.

There are many reasons why the involvement of women can change the outcome. These reasons have to do with how women are viewed and how they naturally interact with others. Women tend to be more collaborative in their approach to problem solving.

Collaboration demands working with others and would naturally include those of different cultural, religious and other groups.

In most societies around the world, women and men still play very different roles in their families and communities. Often, women are not as directly associated with the power structures and are viewed as more transparent and honest. They can be viewed as more impartial than their male counterparts and therefore, more trusted.

When women show courage and stand up for their rights, it can make a huge public impact. An example of this bravery is the story of the "Abuelas" of Sepur Zarco.

Guatemala endured a decades long civil war while indigenous women were systematically raped and enslaved by the military in the small community of Sepur Zarco. From 2011–2016, 15 women survivors fought for justice in the highest court of Guatemala.

The case resulted in the conviction of two former military officers of crimes against humanity and granted reparation measures to the women survivors and their community.

Another example of the successful involvement of women in the peace process is the Colombian Peace Agreement. In 2016, the Columbian government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces (FARC) came to a peace agreement after 50 years of armed civil conflict.

The peace agreement set an international example for women's involvement in peace building. When negotiations began in 2012, only 1 of the 20 negotiators was female. Civil society took note, organized a summit about women and peace and a few years later about 20 percent–30 percent of the negotiators were female.

The involvement of women in the Colombian story made a large impact in many different ways. The women helped broaden the agenda, negotiated local cease-fires, increased accountability and helped build public support.

In 2008, I had the honor of flying with Captain Erika Pedraza Murillo, who was the only female Blackhawk helicopter pilot with Colombia's anti-narcotics police. Her strength and courage reflect the traits of so many Colombian women.

We have an ongoing peace process effort in Afghanistan today. Since the Taliban government fell, millions of women have voted in local and national elections.

In 2002, the United States Afghan Women's Council was created as a Presidential Initiative under President George W. Bush. This effort was a joint U.S.-Afghan effort to promote public-private partnerships and mobilize resources to ensure that women can gain the skills and stability they had been deprived of by the Taliban.

An example of the progress made by Afghan women with the support of the United States is the Afghan Fulbright Program. This educational program offers grants to qualified Afghan graduate students to study at the graduate level in the United States.

In 2002, there were no women qualified to apply, due to years of being denied access to education. Today, half the applicants are women and the Afghan Fulbright Program is one of the largest in the world. Coincidentally, the current Afghan Ambassador to the United States, Roya Rahmani is a Fulbright alumnus.

The Council continues to thrive today.

Since 2010, women have played a role seeking to end the conflict. They have been appointed to the High Peace Council, negotiated with Taliban fighters and continued to demand women are included in the ongoing peace negotiations.

The United States has strong influence with Afghanistan and needs to use that leverage to ensure that women are involved in peace negotiations in Afghanistan. Our actions in support of Afghan women will show the strength of our commitment to the world.

As we view today's global challenges and consider the robust involvement of women, we should continue to promote a few effective strategies. We need to seek the input from women about their societies before conflict occurs. We have to support women's leadership in their communities and when conflict occurs, give them equal access to aid.

We recognize women and girls are at a disproportionate risk of violence during conflict and must protect them and seek justice for acts committed against them. We can work to bolster the number of women in law enforcement and the military. We can provide support to female negotiators, mediators, and peace builders.

We can support women's peace-building organizations and encourage a robust civil society. We can recognize the value brought by faith-based organizations, nongovernmental organizations and businesses, as we work to identify effective ways to empower women.

The United States has a unique role in our world. We must continue to lead efforts on behalf of voiceless and vulnerable women, especially those in conflict situations working desperately for peace.

We know women are essential to the development of open and prosperous societies. When we invest in women, we are promoting peace and stability. When we attack poverty, fight violence, combat injustice and work for the empowerment of women, we are changing the very nature of society.

It is in America's best interest to always remember the importance of women, as we work to implement the United States Strategy for Women, Peace and Security.

Senator RUBIO. Thank you.

Ms. Bigio.

STATEMENT OF JAMILLE BIGIO, SENIOR FELLOW FOR WOMEN AND FOREIGN POLICY, COUNCIL ON FOREIGN RELATIONS, WASHINGTON, DC

Ms. BIGIO. Thank you, Chairman Rubio, Ranking Member Cardin, Senator Shaheen. Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today.

Let me begin by applauding the bipartisan lawmakers, led in the Senate by Senator Shaheen and Senator Capito, for coming together in 2017 to pass the Women, Peace, and Security Act. I also welcome as a positive first step the Women, Peace, and Security Strategy launched this week by the Trump administration.

Both the law and the new strategy recognize that including women in peace and security efforts is not just a matter of fairness. It is a strategic imperative. Parties are more likely to reach sustainable agreements. Women's participation strengthens the security sector. Women can be effective partners in countering terrorism. And we also know that countries are more prosperous and stable as the gender gap closes. Stability improves as more women participate politically and as women become more empowered at the household level.

Despite this evidence, we see that women are often excluded from peace and security efforts. As the Council on Foreign Relations has found, women comprised 2 percent of mediators and less than 8 percent of negotiators between 1992 and 2017. They are routinely under-represented in peacekeeping operations and security forces. Local women's groups receive just .4 percent of the aid to fragile states, and policymakers rarely enlist women's participation in efforts to combat radicalization.

Even with few formal roles and with many barriers for civil society to influence peace and security efforts, women continue to make valuable contributions. But it is not without a cost. Many face significant and targeted harassment and violence. And in fact, we see that peacemakers and human rights activists promoting security are themselves under growing attack with the rise in political violence targeting women.

In Sudan's recent protests, women have accounted for up to 70 percent of the protesters, but first the regime and now the military are using sexual violence as one of their deliberate tactics to terrorize civilians.

Sexual violence and human trafficking are not simply gross violations of human rights, they are also security challenges. Wartime rape fuels displacement, weakens governance, and destabilizes communities. Conflict, weak rule of law, and large-scale displacement also expose civilians, including women and girls to increased risk of trafficking from Iraq to Burma to Venezuela. Yet, prevention efforts are plagued by insufficient training for security officials, limited accountability, and resource gaps.

Just as one example, while one in five women who have fled their homes experience sexual violence, just .1 percent of humanitarian funding addresses violence against women and girls.

Conflict further limits women's and girls' access to education, health care, economic opportunities. As an example, 9 of the top 10 countries with the highest rates of child marriage are affected by conflict.

So the Women, Peace, and Security Act envisions that the United States is a global leader in promoting the meaningful participation of women. But there are many missed opportunities where women could have improved the effectiveness of U.S. operations if we had included them.

I will touch on a few suggestions here based on gaps I observed while helping to draft the U.S. Government's first-ever policy on Women, Peace, and Security issues.

From bilateral talks in Afghanistan and Yemen to serious constitutional commitments and beyond, the U.S. Government should advocate for women's participation. It is easier and quicker to just negotiate with the men with the guns, but a more inclusive process lends to a longer lasting agreement.

And then to strengthen its own teams and to lead by example, the U.S. Government should likewise ensure that its delegations have women represented.

The U.S. Government should allocate more resources to women's groups. They are rarely considered relevant security partners, an omission that overlooks benefits of women's participation and the contributions of half the population.

Agencies are now developing the congressionally mandated implementation plans for the new strategy. In doing so, they should better connect their commitments to supporting women's contributions to their broader security policies and programs. It will make them more effective. That is from peacekeeping to building security partners, capacity to combating the sources of terrorist support. Congress and this committee can hold the administration accountable for ensuring its efforts to advance national security, invest in an important but overlooked strategy, the inclusion of women. It is the right thing to do, but it also holds the potential to significantly improve security around the world.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for this opportunity to testify.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Bigio follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF JAMILLE BIGIO

Chairman Rubio, Ranking Member Cardin, distinguished members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today about advancing women's roles in peace and security.

Let me begin by applauding the bipartisan lawmakers—led in the Senate by Senator Jeanne Shaheen (D–NH) and Senator Shelley Moore Capito (R–WV)—who in 2017 came together to pass the Women, Peace, and Security Act, the most comprehensive law in the world to support women's meaningful participation in efforts to prevent and resolve conflict. This week, the Donald J. Trump administration fulfilled one of the law's key requirements by launching a Women, Peace, and Security Strategy, laying out an ambitious agenda to ensure women are part of peace negotiations, security sector forces, and post-conflict transitions, while addressing the effects of conflict on women and girls.

Including women in peace and security efforts is not just a matter of fairness—it is a strategic imperative. Research suggests that when women and civil society groups participate in a peace process, the resulting agreement is 64 percent less likely to fail and 35 percent more likely to last at least 15 years.[1] As security and peacekeeping officials, women provide insights and information that can be mission-critical to stability efforts.[2] They also improve dispute resolution: women in police forces are less likely than male counterparts to use excessive force and far more likely to de-escalate tensions and build trust with the communities they serve, thereby advancing stability and the rule of law.[3] Because of their distinctive access and influence, women are crucial antiterrorism messengers in schools, religious institutions, social environments, and local government.[4] Countries are more prosperous and stable as the gender gap closes, with stability improving as more women

participate politically and as women become more empowered at the household level.[5] On the other hand, allowing gender inequality and violence against women to persist increases the risk of instability and conflict.[6]

Despite ample evidence demonstrating the importance of women's involvement, they are often excluded from peace and security efforts. A Council on Foreign Relations report tracking women's participation in peace processes found that between 1992 and 2017, women comprised less than 5 percent of mediators and less than 10 percent of negotiators around the world.[7] Women are routinely underrepresented in peacekeeping operations, even though their participation has been shown to improve mission effectiveness and advance stability: in 2017, only 4 percent of U.N. military peacekeepers and 10 percent of U.N. police personnel were women.[8] And while local women's groups lead grassroots efforts to prevent and resolve conflicts, they received just 0.4 percent of the aid to fragile states from major donor countries in 2012–2013.[9] U.S. policymakers rarely enlist women's participation in efforts to combat radicalization—an omission that forfeits their potential contributions as mitigators against extremism.

Although women are underrepresented in today's peace processes, women continue to make valuable contributions to addressing violence and securing peace at the grassroots level in their countries.[10] Women organize across cultural and sectarian divides and broaden the agenda, raising issues in negotiations that help societies reconcile and recover, like political and legal reforms, social and economic recovery priorities, and transitional justice concerns. They stage mass action, employing visible and high-profile tactics to pressure parties to begin or recommit to peace negotiations, as well as to sign accords. Drawing on their different social roles and responsibilities, they access critical information that can inform negotiating positions and areas of agreement.

In Colombia, for example, women improved the security situation in local communities by mediating local cease-fires, convincing guerrillas to lift roadblocks preventing the passage of people, food, and medicine, and negotiating the release of hostages. Representing 33 percent of the negotiators in the final rounds of talks, women ensured the agreement addressed some of the primary grievances of affected communities, including land restitution and the right to justice and reparations for victims.[11]

In Syria, women facilitated humanitarian access in areas aid convoys had difficulty reaching, secured the release of detainees, and have done the work local governments should do, from staffing field hospitals and schools to distributing food and medicine to forming an all-female police brigade that has access to areas that their male counterparts do not and providing families with critical services. Yet they remained underrepresented throughout the U.N.-led peace process starting in 2012—in the 2017 talks, women comprised 15 percent of negotiators.[12]

In Afghanistan, women negotiated directly with insurgent leaders to support the reintegration of demobilized Taliban fighters into local communities, mobilized local support for the peace process, including by encouraging local insurgents to participate in talks, and worked in schools to counter extremist narratives. They also broaden the agenda, as Wazhma Frogh, a member of the Afghan Women's Network, recounted: "when women engage in the process, we talk about the needs of the communities, about justice, about schools, about health, about education. It becomes about communities and issues, not just about men deciding which power positions to hold."[13] Yet in 23 rounds of Afghan talks between 2005 and 2014, on only two occasions were Afghan women at the table.[14]

Women overcome social and economic inequalities to assume leading roles in nonviolent campaigns, from Chile to Liberia to the Palestinian territories. Nonviolent movements—driving social, political, and economic change—are nearly twice as successful as violent ones at achieving their objectives.[15] In the recent mass protests in Sudan that ousted Omar al-Bashir, women accounted for up to 70 percent of the protestors, and one woman—Alaa Salah—became a symbol of the Sudanese revolution when an image of her leading protestors in a chant went viral on social media.

Women are also on the front lines when it comes to preventing and countering violent extremism in their communities. Women are well positioned to recognize early signs of radicalization because attacks on their rights and physical autonomy are often the first indication of a rise in fundamentalism.[16] Female security officials gather critical intelligence about potential terrorism threats, while the prominent role that many women play in their families and communities renders them especially effective in diminishing the ability of extremist groups to recruit and mobilize.[17] Women-led civil society groups are particularly critical partners in mitigating violence, though counterterrorism efforts too often fail to enlist them.

As women seek to contribute to peace in their countries, they face systematic harassment and violence. The peacemakers and human rights activists promoting secu-

rity are themselves under growing attack. Twice as many acts of political violence targeting women have been reported during the first quarter of 2019 than in the first quarter of 2018. And many of these acts take place in conflict-affected countries: the Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia, Syria, Sudan, and Yemen all rank in the top 10 countries for levels of violence targeting women.[18] Take the example of women protesting on Sudan's streets in the last few months: the regime, before it was overthrown, ordered soldiers on the ground to systematically beat and rape women—a strategy continued by military officials now in charge, with paramilitaries using sexual violence as a deliberate tactic to terrorize civilians.

Sexual violence and human trafficking are not simply gross violations of human rights—they are also security challenges. Wartime rape fuels displacement, weakens governance, and destabilizes communities.[19] Conflict, weak rule of law, and large-scale displacement also expose civilians—including women and girls—to increased risk of trafficking, including forced labor, child soldiering, sex trafficking, and forced marriages. From Iraq to Myanmar to Venezuela, refugee women and girls are at heightened risk of sexual exploitation and trafficking.[20] Yet current security-sector efforts to address sexual violence and human trafficking in conflict are inadequate, plagued by insufficient training for security officials, limited accountability through national and international judicial systems, and resource gaps. For example, while one in five women who have fled from their homes go on to experience sexual violence, only 0.1 percent of humanitarian funding addresses violence against women and girls.[21]

Conflict further limits women's and girls' access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunities, which contributes to cycles of exploitation and poverty; in humanitarian contexts, for example, adolescent girls are two-and-a-half times more likely to be out of school than their male peers. Nine of the top 10 countries with the highest rates of child marriage are affected by conflict; crisis situations can exacerbate income inequality and poverty rates, leading families to become more desperate to stay financially afloat.[22] Yemen's conflict, for example, prompted an increase in the number of child marriages: in 2017, more than two-thirds of girls were married before their 18th birthday, compared to half before the conflict escalated.[23]

U.S. government policy and programs pay little attention to the role of women, despite their contributions to peace and security. The Women, Peace, and Security Act envisions the United States as a global leader in promoting the meaningful participation of women in conflict prevention, management, and resolution, and post-conflict relief and recovery efforts. The Trump administration's new strategy is a positive step, but there remain many missed opportunities where women could have improved the effectiveness of U.S. operations and advanced global security. I've outlined here a few suggestions based on the gaps I observed while helping to draft the U.S. government's first-ever policy on women, peace, and security issues, and then overseeing its implementation from the National Security Council staff.

To strengthen its peace and security efforts, the U.S. government should pursue the following steps:

In any peace or transition process in which it is involved—from bilateral talks in Afghanistan and Yemen to Syria's constitutional committee and beyond—the U.S. government should advocate that women represent at least 30 percent of negotiating bodies and mediating teams, a threshold that research suggests affords a critical mass to enable women's influence. To strengthen its own teams and to lead by example, the U.S. government should likewise ensure that its delegations have at least 30 percent women.

The U.S. government should allocate more resources to support women's contributions in efforts to prevent and resolve conflicts and to counter terrorism. Women's groups are rarely considered relevant security partners, and their work remains chronically underfunded. Investment by the United States in this area has been limited to small grants or stand-alone programs, an omission that overlooks the benefits of women's participation and the contributions of half the population. Now is the time to scale successful women-led initiatives and incorporate them into core peace and security programs and budgets.

Agencies are now developing the Congressionally-mandated implementation plans, which can translate the lofty goals put forth in the administration's new strategy into diplomatic, development, and defense efforts abroad. In doing so, they should improve broader security initiatives by ensuring they draw on women's contributions. For example, as the U.S. government pushes peacekeeping operations to be more effective and less costly, it should help countries to address the barriers that limit the pipeline and deployment of female peacekeepers. To strengthen security forces around the world, the U.S. government should increase security training opportunities for female officials. Courses like the International Military Education

and Training program or the Antiterrorism Assistance program should double within 3 years the total number of women receiving training.

To combat the sources of terrorist support, the director of national intelligence should produce a National Intelligence Estimate and form an operational task force on the relationship between women, violent extremism, and terrorism, including an analysis of women's roles as recruiters, sympathizers, perpetrators, and combatants. The intelligence community should require data collection of indicators related to women's equality and autonomy as potential early warning signs of growing fundamentalist influence. And given the rise in women's participation in extremist groups, the United States can no longer afford to ignore the ways in which women can strengthen counterterrorism efforts.

To discourage the use of sexual violence in conflict by militaries, police, and armed groups, the U.S. government should—for example, through its Group of Seven (G7) presidency next year—encourage partner countries to condition bilateral assistance and weapon transfers to foreign militaries on the security units' human rights record, including with respect to sexual violence. Such a commitment would be modeled on the U.S. Leahy Law (1997) and Section 502B of the Foreign Assistance Act, which prohibits the use of funds for units of foreign security forces that have committed gross violations of human rights. In parallel, the Departments of State and the Treasury should use sanctions to apply a travel ban and asset freeze on human traffickers.

To respond effectively to modern security threats and address the failure of traditional peacemaking methods, the U.S. government should ensure that the rising generation of American diplomats and security professionals recognizes that women's participation in security efforts around the world advances U.S. stability and should nominate or appoint the necessary leadership to guide the government's policy and programs, including an Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women's Issues and a full-time senior-ranking coordinating position at the Department of Defense.

The success of the Women, Peace, and Security Act and of the administration's new strategy can only be measured through action. Congress and this Committee can work to hold the administration accountable for ensuring that its efforts to advance national security invest in an important but overlooked strategy: the inclusion of women. It's the right thing to do—and holds the potential to significantly improve stability around the world.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for this opportunity to testify.

Notes

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Senator RUBIO. Thank you.

Ms. Kakar.

STATEMENT OF PALWASHA L. KAKAR, SENIOR PROGRAM OFFICER, RELIGION AND INCLUSIVE SOCIETIES, UNITED STATES INSTITUTE OF PEACE, WASHINGTON, DC

Ms. KAKAR. Thank you. Chairman Rubio, Ranking Member Cardin, Senator Shaheen, Senator, and members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify.

I have submitted my testimony for the record, and I will try and summarize and tell a story.

The timing of this hearing is especially important given the escalation in violence in Afghanistan over the past few weeks and the potential peace process.

I am a senior program officer on religion and inclusive societies at the U.S. Institute of Peace, although my views that I express here are my own. I focus at USIP on a comparative country approach analyzing women, religion, and peace-building in countries, including Afghanistan, Pakistan, Libya, Syria, Iraq, Burma, Philippines, among others.

With 10 years of experience working in Afghanistan on women's inclusion and religious engagement, my current focus at USIP is based on my experiences in Afghanistan where I have found case after case of women, especially elderly religious women, who have successfully negotiated with the Taliban. These women have brokered local ceasefires, helped to release hostages, and even negotiated to keep girls' schools open.

Today's hearing also comes at an opportune moment with the release earlier this week of the U.S. Strategy on Women, Peace, and

Security. Thank you for mentioning the possibility for this strategy to be applied to the peace process the United States has started with the Taliban in Afghanistan. I cannot stress enough how much Afghan women are worried about the U.S.-Taliban talks and how the outcome might negatively impact their gains made in women's empowerment in Afghanistan.

I would like to highlight three main points for the subcommittee as you consider advancing women's roles in peace and security in the case of Afghanistan.

Number one, Afghan women are essential to the success and sustainability of a peace process. And as you all have mentioned, it is from the beginning of the peace talks to the end and the monitoring of agreements that it is important for their inclusion.

Number two, Afghan women are adamant in calling for the peace process that protects their rights and the gains made over the last 18 years. They have started a campaign, #AfghanWomenWillNot GoBack, which is now 2 million strong.

Number three, Afghan women, young, old, activists, religious scholars, and civil society, along with many men in the same fields, called for an immediate ceasefire and an end to the bloodshed in Afghanistan. They have also started a campaign, #Ceasefire ForPeace. Afghan women are urging the international community, particularly the United States, to work with the Afghan Government to strengthen security and rule of law, to continue funding the Afghan National Security Forces and the police, and provide funding for the protection of women and girls. They support a responsible and gradual withdrawal of U.S. troops from Afghanistan to ensure security and stability prevail on the ground.

In the face of all the challenges Afghan women have seen, they have made gains in the past 18 years. They have been involved in key successful peace settlements at national and local levels. Afghan women also have the skills and technical expertise in negotiation, mediation, constitutional reform, transitional justice, and ceasefire monitoring. Currently, Afghan women are well organized and have taken concrete initiatives towards the peace process.

Last year, the largest Afghan women's coordination body, the Afghan Women's Network, worked with Afghanistan's First Lady, Mrs. Rula Ghani, and her office to coordinate nationwide consultations with women in all 34 provinces of Afghanistan. That effort culminated this year in a Declaration of Afghan Women's National Consensus for Peace that captured women's perspectives across the country.

Leading up to the intra-Afghan and U.S.-Taliban talks in Moscow and Doha, the Afghan Women's Network consulted with their members and organizations beyond from all the provinces of Afghanistan to construct a declaration of women's demands and their redlines and prepare a delegation of 41 women from diverse backgrounds of the political spectrum, including the government, to participate in peace talks. They were well prepared to participate, but the male political party members and government had not come to an agreement on substance or participation. When the process for developing a delegation broke down between the male political opposition party members and the government in Kabul, it was the women of the Afghan Women's Network who went to all the groups

to urge the parties to come back to the table to move the peace process forward while conveying women's demands. Eventually the parties were able to come together to draw up a list of delegates and move forward on the process before it fell through on the Doha side.

However, women's civil society organizations have not given up hope on the peace process. They have come together from across geographic, ethnic, and religious divides to put together a diverse roster of women's civil society experts that the U.S. or other international mediators could draw upon for participation and expertise in the peace talks.

Looking back, Afghan women have been part of successful peace processes throughout Afghanistan's history. They have had a role in the Bonn process, which included the formation of important institutions like Afghanistan's Independent Human Rights Commission and the Ministry of Women's Affairs.

Let me end with a story about a woman from a village in Helmund in the south of Afghanistan. There are many more like her. To protect her identity, I will call her Bibi Halima. She is a Koran teacher, and through her knowledge of religion and her skills at conflict resolution, many families have called on her to help resolve domestic disputes within families and across families. An elderly woman with religious knowledge, she is well respected.

One day a family came to her distraught and seeking her help. Their daughter had sought to elope with her lover, and in searching for their daughter, they found out that she had been captured by the Taliban. They pleaded with Bibi Halima to intercede and negotiate with the Taliban for their daughter's release. Bibi Halima agreed and went to the Taliban checkpoint to ask about the runaway girl. The Taliban were planning to stone both the girl and the boy publicly and make an example of them. Bibi Halima calmly talked to the Taliban commander, requesting that she see the girl and to take her back to her family. She worked to find common values that they shared through scripture and built on their understanding of respect and forgiveness to convince them to allow her to escort the girl back to her family. Eventually she was allowed to stay with the girl in captivity overnight and escorted her home safely.

In many ways, it was a miracle. But what Bibi Halima did was to use her skills and knowledge to courageously navigate across lines of conflict and negotiate her way out.

We need women like Bibi Halima who know who to navigate negotiations with the Taliban in this peace process, alongside the women experts in constitutional law, transitional justice, government reform, mediation, negotiation, and ceasefire monitoring.

In conclusion, Afghan women are essential to the successful peace process and are demanding meaningful participation in the peace process at all levels. They are demanding respect for their rights within the constitutional order and protection from violence with a responsible U.S. withdrawal supporting the Afghanistan National Security Forces to maintain security and stability through this process to ensure a sustainable peace for their homeland.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Kakar follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF PALWASHA KAKAR

INTRODUCTION

Chairman Rubio, Ranking Member Cardin and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify on "Women in Conflict: Advancing Women's Role in Peace and Security" and particularly on women's involvement in the Afghan peace process. The timing for this hearing is especially important given the escalation in violence in Afghanistan over the past few weeks and the heightened drive for a peaceful solution of the country's conflicts in the near future.

I am a Senior Program Officer on Religion and Inclusive Societies at the U.S. Institute of Peace (USIP), although the views expressed here are my own. I have over 10 years of experience working in Afghanistan on women's inclusion, religious engagement, governance and education. I focus at USIP on a comparative country approach analyzing women, religion and peacebuilding in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Libya, Syria, Iraq and Burma. Specifically, based on my experiences in Afghanistan where I have studied religious women who have successfully negotiated with Taliban, women are brokering local ceasefires, helping release hostages, and negotiating to keep girls' schools open.

Today's hearing also comes at an opportune moment with the release earlier this week of the U.S. Strategy on Women, Peace, and Security and while the U.S. has committed to a peace process with the Taliban on Afghanistan.

THREE MAIN POINTS

I would like to highlight three main points for the Subcommittee as you consider advancing women's role in peace and security in the case of Afghanistan:

1. Afghan women are essential to the success and sustainability of a peace process—from peace talks to monitoring agreements.
2. Afghan women are adamant in calling for a peace process that protects their rights and gains made over the last 18 years. #AfghanWomenWillNotGoBack
3. Most Afghan women, men, young, old, activists, religious scholars and civil society call for an immediate ceasefire and an end to the bloodshed in Afghanistan. Afghans are urging the international community, particularly the United States, to work with the Afghan government to strengthen security and rule of law, continue funding to the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) and the police, and provide funding for the protection of women and girls. They support a responsible and gradual withdrawal of U.S. troops from Afghanistan to ensure security and stability prevail on the ground. #CeasefireForPeace

AFGHAN WOMEN ARE ESSENTIAL TO THE PEACE PROCESS

Afghan women make up more than 50 percent of the population and have experienced the war in a myriad of different ways than men. Yet, in the face of all the challenges, Afghan women have made gains in the past 18 years. They have been involved in key, successful peace settlements at national and local levels. Afghan women have the skills and technical expertise in negotiation, mediation, constitutional reform, transitional justice, and ceasefire monitoring. Currently, Afghan women are well organized and have taken concrete initiatives towards the peace process.

Women in Afghanistan, as in so many countries around the world, have felt the brunt of war. They have been and continue to be attacked, raped, maimed, kidnapped, bought and sold as well as being killed in suicide bombings and general attacks on schools, markets, government buildings and places of worship. Amid all of this, women are expressing their leadership and convictions throughout Afghanistan. Women, who comprised almost 20 percent of the Afghan peace jirga in 2010 and 30 percent this May in 2018, continue to demand they be included in peace processes. As a result of the 2010 jirga, nine women were appointed to the 64-member High Peace Council that came out of the gathering of tribal leaders.

Women's groups since then have proactively consulted with women across the country to identify their needs and expectations regarding the peace process and communicated their findings to the Afghan government, political leaders and the international community. Women have reached out to Taliban fighters, pleading with them to stop the bloodshed. This is reminiscent of 2014 when the female members of the High Peace Council collected 300,000 signatures calling for peace and cessation of armed hostilities.

Last year, the largest Afghan women's coordination body, the Afghan Women's Network (AWN), worked with Afghanistan's First Lady, Mrs. Rula Ghani and her office, to coordinate nation-wide consultations with women in all 34 provinces of Af-

ghanistan. That effort culminated in a "Declaration of Afghan Women's National Consensus for Peace" that captured women's perspectives across the country.

The Afghan Women's Network consulted with their member organizations and beyond, from all the provinces of Afghanistan, to construct a declaration of women's demands and their "red lines" leading up to the Moscow talks in February 2019, the subsequent U.S. Taliban Doha talks and the intra-Afghan Doha talks in April and Moscow talks in May. In the run up to intra-Afghan talks with the Taliban in Doha that fell apart in April, the AWN had prepared a delegation of 41 women from diverse backgrounds and the political spectrum, including the government, to participate in the peace talks. When the process for developing a delegation broke down between the male political opposition party members and the government in Kabul, the women went to all the groups to urge the parties to come to an agreement to move the peace process forward while conveying women's demands. Eventually, the parties were able to draw up a list of delegates and move forward on the process before it fell through. However, women's civil society organizations did not give up. They came together from across geographic, ethnic, and religious divides to put together a diverse roster of women civil society experts that the U.S. or other international mediators could draw upon for participation and expertise in the peace talks.

Looking back, Afghan women have been part of successful peace processes throughout Afghanistan's history. Although Ahmed Shah Durrani is credited with founding the modern state of Afghanistan in 1747, it was his mother, Nazo Anna, whose contribution to uniting the warring tribes became the lynchpin to bringing peace and stability in the founding of the Afghan State.

When the Taliban were driven out of power in 2001 by U.S. troops and allies, women were part of the successful political settlement in the Bonn process and constitution drafting that has led to 18 years of a stable, democratic government—albeit still under attack from the Taliban who were not included in the Bonn process.

Afghan women's role in the Bonn process was successful and led to the formation of important institutions, including the Afghanistan's Independent Human Rights Commission and the Ministry of Women's Affairs. Both were created to address the specific experiences and concerns women had from the conflict. Women were also involved in the constitution drafting processes, including being a part of the drafting council, committee and consultations that ensured women's equal citizenship, access to education, health care and representational quotas in Parliament.

There were prominent women's rights activists who boycotted the Bonn process because they wanted the bombing to stop and a lasting peace to be built that included the Taliban in the peace process and political settlement. Many of those women predicted the Taliban would continue to fight and cause instability in the country. According to some Afghan women, as a result of not including the Taliban in the Bonn process [1], the Taliban are now demanding a clean cut from the Afghan constitution and the political system that was built without their inclusion, despite experts calling it the most Islamic constitution in the world.

After the fall of the Taliban, many Afghan women, especially in the urban centers, saw major and immediate improvements in the quality of their lives and their access to basic rights. In short, after 18 years of American-backed governments, Afghan women and the society have changed significantly for the better with the emergence of female entrepreneurs, political leaders, and even nightly news anchors. The Taliban, by contrast, has made very little progress on women's issues since being pushed from power in 2001, despite persistent claims to the contrary. The group's record is spotty at best in the areas of Afghanistan it controls, and its leaders continue to make ominous statements on gender, such as calling for girls' education to end by age 12 years of age.[2]

Women have also been successful at negotiating on behalf of their communities at the local level. Women are able to navigate across lines of conflict and negotiate settlements using traditional and moral authority. These courageous women have negotiated with Taliban and other armed groups on behalf of their communities to end violence and bring peaceful settlements to issues of conflict around hostages and access to land. At the national level, four women were part of the peace negotiations that ended in a settlement in 2016 between the government and Hekmatyar's Hezbi-Islami that has so far been successful. This peace agreement was seen as a possible model for the Taliban to follow or at least to see if the government would keep its promises.[3]

Despite these achievements, women continue to be absent or remarkably underrepresented in peace talks. Women's experiences of exclusion from peace agreements from 1992 to 2001 under the Mujahedin and Taliban regimes show that what is power sharing and peace for men is not peace for women or others left out of the equation, nor is it sustainable. In response, women rights advocates and civil society

activists have taken to traditional and social media as well as to international community to express their dismay about their exclusion from dialogues between the government and the representatives of the Taliban.

#AFGHANWOMENWILLNOTGOBACK

After nearly 40 years of war, Afghanistan and the international community are urgently seeking paths for a peace process. But amid the tentative efforts—a 3-day ceasefire last June, the peace march across the country by hundreds of Afghans, the Afghan Women's Peace Movement and talks by led by U.S. envoy Zalmay Khalilzad—a somber question hangs for women and human rights advocates: How can Afghanistan make peace with the Taliban while protecting democracy and women's rights? While that question is universal in peacemaking, Afghanistan's history of abuses against women, including by the Taliban, makes it a tough case. In response, a 2 million strong social media campaign has taken off with the hashtag: #AfghanWomenWillNotGoBack.

Afghan women have expressed their demands for a peace process that is inclusive and respects the constitution and rule of law through the large national consultation process and civil society leaders' consultations process. Afghan women want meaningful participation at all levels of the peace process. They firmly reject any backsliding on rights enumerated in Afghanistan's constitution and legal code. Enforcement must be guaranteed for laws that bar violence against women and abolish discriminatory and unjust practices and traditions.

There is clear consensus by women's groups that Afghan women's participation at all levels of the peace process should guarantee that women's rights be protected in any agreement and there be proper mechanisms and incentivized resources to ensure the agreement is upheld, including women's monitoring of the peace agreement. Furthermore, they are calling for an immediate ceasefire to create space for a meaningful peace process to begin.

#CEASEFIREFORPEACE

Afghan women across the country in solidarity with Afghan men, peace marches, Afghan Ulema and broader civil society are calling for a hashtag #CeasefireFor Peace. They are calling for an end to the bloodshed and demanding that the violence stop immediately. This call for a ceasefire is a call for trust building with the Afghan public to create room for meaningful dialogue and reconciliation to begin as part of the peace process.

All recent surveys, including the Survey of the Afghan People, have shown that women are most concerned about security. This does not mean that they want the U.S. military to stay in Afghanistan forever. What they are asking for is a responsible withdrawal that leaves behind a well-trained Afghan security force and an inclusive and sustainable peace agreement that protects women's rights, democratic institutions and the constitutional order.

Afghan women are urging the international community, and the U.S. specifically, to ensure women and girls are protected through this precarious transition process by supporting and funding the ANSF and police. They fear that if the U.S. pulls out its military without these safe guards, more instability with arise in the vacuum and women will again be disproportionately impacted. They fear an irresponsible pull out of the military will perpetuate the war, similar to the effect of the Soviet's pulling out its military in the 1990s that led to even more war. Afghan women fear this possibility, but they are not asking the U.S. military to stay forever, but to leave responsibly and with systems in place in Afghanistan that protect women and establish stability and security on the ground from possible future extremist threats.

In conclusion, Afghan women are essential to a successful process and are demanding meaningful participation in the peace process at all levels, respect for their rights in the constitutional order and protection from violence through this process to ensure a sustainable peace for their homeland.

The view expressed in this testimony are those of the author and not the U.S. Institute of Peace.

Notes

[1] According to 2019 interview with Palwasha Hassan, Executive Direct of Afghan Women's Education Center and co-founder of Afghan Women's Network for USIP blog piece.

[2] Belquis Ahmadi, "Afghan Talks: No Women, No Peace" USIP Analysis and Commentary (Washington, DC: USIP March 2019).

[3] Palwasha Kakar, "How can Afghans make peace AND protect women? Meet Ayesha Aziz." USIP Analysis and Commentary (Washington, DC: USIP March 2018).

Senator RUBIO. Thank you.

We are going to start with the ranking member.

Senator CARDIN. Well, let me thank all three of you for your powerful testimony. Particularly putting a face on the issues is powerful because we are talking about people's lives.

This weekend, I was in France as part of the 75th celebration of D–Day. I took that opportunity as my role on the Helsinki Commission to meet with a group in Paris that deals with tolerance of people of different religions. They are called "Coexisters." They have 40-some chapters in France involving 2,500 young people to try to do something about the growing trend of hate in Europe.

I mentioned that because a young woman is the leader, and I asked her a simple question as to what is her greatest challenge, expecting her to tell me it was peer pressure not to join these groups. Instead, she told me it was peer pressure from the families not to join these groups, particularly their fathers that were concerned that it would be a risk with them meeting with people of different religions. But the woman told me she was encouraged by her mother to do this.

So we definitely have gender issues, but we also have generational issues. And that is part of the problem that we have involving women and lasting peace.

I was impressed by some of your individual stories. And I want to suggest that as we develop a U.S. strategy to deal with the subject of involving women for stability and peace, we need to highlight best practices. Now, you have mentioned some, but I would just encourage you to share with us what has worked in order to engage women in a meaningful way in mediation, in conflict prevention, in implementing peace, negotiating peace. What has worked? And how can we use that as our template for U.S. support of organizations that can advance those types of practices in different countries around the world? If you have ideas now, fine. If not, if you could make it available. I see some people shaking their heads. So I will give you an opportunity to respond, if you would like.

Ms. BIGIO. Great. Thank you. It is a great question because we do have the commitment to support women's meaningful participation and are now looking to put that into practice.

First is ensuring that women have a sufficient number of formal seats at the table so that they can actually have influence. The number 30 percent comes out of research saying that it is with that number that women can have more influence on the dialogue itself. So the extent to which the U.S. continues to encourage countries, parties, negotiating parties, mediating teams to have at least 30 percent women represented and as we are calling on countries to lead by example and to live that ourselves with having diversity on our own delegations.

Second is ensuring civil society has a channel in to influencing the process. There are civil society groups that have networks across their countries that are talking with women's groups, with communities in the most rural parts of the countries that may not have a sense of what is happening in the negotiations that may even be occurring in a different country. They are a channel. They are helping to build the community support for an agreement that is reached and to help feed information back up to negotiating parties of what is actually happening on the ground for people facing and living the conflict every day.

And third is making sure that the issues that women do raise, whether through their formal roles or in civil society, are actually included in the agreement. So these may be issues like transitional justice, securing the release of detainees, investing in education, and employment, issues that will set the country up actually being able to recover once the agreement is reached.

Senator CARDIN. They are three great suggestions. In my work with the Helsinki-OSCE, the first two are matrix that we use, percentage of women that are on each of the committees, percentage of women that are involved in civil society. We will not go to venues that do not give full access to civil societies. And we have had some countries that we have had challenges with. So I think that is an extremely important point.

The agenda is something that we have got to work on because I think that is more challenging. We have not developed that as effectively as we need to in a lot of our advocacy work to advance peace. So I think that is a great suggestion.

And it is the second point—the first and the second are pretty much related. When we talk about best practices, how do we judge success? How do we judge whether the resources we are putting out really result in progress? Obviously, the ultimate progress is stability and peace, but to get there, what are the matrix that we are looking at to give us the best chance of that success? As we work with different groups and help fund different groups, what do we expect to achieve? And I think you have given us three avenues that we need to develop specific matrix to or specific numbers so that we can have a better understanding of how we are making progress. So thank you for those points.

Senator RUBIO. Senator Shaheen.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And just to follow up a little bit on Senator Cardin's question about matrix, one of the things we heard at the roundtable earlier this week from Administrator Green was that USAID has developed metrics to include women. But are there places within the administration—are there particular metrics, in addition to the ones that you have named, Ms. Bigio, where we think we should add more metrics? Are there concerns about the State Department and the Department of Defense where they have maybe not developed similar metrics where we need to think about what they should be doing?

And finally, I would like to ask you. When I talk to people about how we change minds about this issue, changing the laws, developing the metrics is the easy part. It is the cultural changes that

is really the hard part. So how do we get at that piece as well? So I would open it up to anybody who would like to respond.

Ms. BOTTNER. Thank you, Senator.

I can certainly address the cultural change. I think it is the biggest challenge that we face. I think it is so important, when you are going into a society, to get as many voices as possible involved. You know, when you are going in each community, each country, every culture is going to be different.

And I think we have had success going into a community. It is not necessarily who we should be talking to. It might not be the groups that are top of mind or you are told to reach out to, but to really be looking at some of the more disenfranchised groups where often women's networks and women's organizations tend to have very close relationships, really to solicit their input and their ideas. And sometimes that is something that is done off track. Sometimes that is something that is not as forward or as public as is typically done. But I think the more voices and the more diverse viewpoints that we can bring to the table, bring to the debate, that is obviously going to help change the culture, start perhaps a new culture, and then serve as an example in that community to the next day, to the future.

Ms. BIGIO. And if I may build on that. On the first part on the metrics there with the implementation plans, I do hope that the agencies will set very specific targets about what more they will do to advance women's participation across peace and security. And here that will help translate the lofty goals that are in the Women, Peace, and Security Strategy into more concrete policies and programs.

So, for an example, in the security forces space, the U.S. can help strengthen security forces around the world if the U.S. Government were to increase training opportunities for female officers. Programs like the International Military Education Training program, or the anti-terrorism assistance programs—they include very few female officers. So if the U.S. were to, for example, double the total number of women receiving training through the programs that we provide, it would help advance the career of promising female officers around the world but also help set a norm of men and women in security sectors working together effectively.

In the peacekeeping space, the U.S. could commit to supporting five countries and addressing the barriers to recruiting and retaining women in their security forces and deploying them as peacekeepers.

There are also targets around funding and support. I think the proposed Central American Women and Children Protection Act is a great example of supporting accountability for sexual violence survivors and of committing to a certain number of countries that we will support to do that.

In the cultural change aspect, that is where there are also steps that the agencies can take in their implementation plans to better institutionalize these commitments.

First is training. Right now, there may be many government officials across the agencies who have never heard of U.N. Security Council resolution 1325 or of the Women, Peace, and Security Act. I was in charge of this at the NSC and the State Department. Staff

would turn over as Foreign Service officers rotated, and I would start again at the beginning of explaining where we came to. So first is making sure our training actually reaches all of our U.S. Government officials so that they know the evidence, know the commitments that they have made.

A second area is performance reviews, that they are actually held accountable to ensuring that what they can do in their daily jobs actually advances women's participation and security and that there is a check on that each year that they are following through.

And having the tools and resources and the top level support will help create a culture change within the U.S. Government that we are actually putting our goals into action.

Senator SHAHEEN. I am out of time, but I just wanted to comment. You talked about women in security forces. It is my understanding—and, Ms. Kakar, you could probably confirm this—that while recruitment of men for the Afghan Security Forces are down, that actually the recruitment of women has increased. What better way to begin to help reflect change than to see more women in the security forces and the police forces.

Ms. KAKAR. May I comment on that?

Senator SHAHEEN. Sure.

Ms. KAKAR. I think that is very true, and it is really interesting to see how they have been able to create safe spaces for women in the national security force. I know that has been a challenge in creating those safe spaces to be able to improve recruitment of women into the security forces.

But in terms of metrics, one of the things that Afghan women have mentioned is to incentivize women's participation by asking the political parties, when they come around the table, that they should make sure that women are represented from each of those political parties.

And then also on the ground, if there is any talk of withdrawal, to also incentivize the Taliban to say that it will be gradual if we see certain things met like girls' schools being opened, like women being allowed to go to work, and hospitals still having women doctors there for women.

So some of those issues to lay those out as conditions in very clear metrics. And that will be then specific to each country, obviously in Afghanistan.

The other thing I wanted to say about cultural changes as well was that support the cultural changes from within. There are a lot of amazing women doing this kind of peace negotiation work in countries that we are working in. I know from the work that I have done in Afghanistan, there is a long history and tradition of women doing all kinds of peace negotiation work from the local level to the national level. We have historical examples and we have examples in tribal communities where there are tribal women leaders who are making decisions.

But similarly in other countries, for example, in Libya, there are women doing the same thing. That has been a tradition that people do not know about and even many Libyans do not know about, and it is being rediscovered internally.

So to find those change makers, those agents of change, internally and support those I think is really important to change the culture.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator RUBIO. Thank you.

Senator Kaine, are you ready or do you want me to go?

Senator KAINE. Yes. No, I was kind of getting my head out of the meeting I was just in. But in the last answers, I have now gotten my head into this meeting.

So thank you for calling this hearing, and thanks to the witnesses for your work and for being here today.

I want to ask a Central America question and then I want to ask a Saudi Arabia question.

So women like the late Berta Caceres in Honduras and Claudia Samayoa in Guatemala have been at the forefront of social change movements in Central America, but they are also impacted by government targeting of their role and the breakdown of rule of law in these countries.

With Senators Rubio and Menendez, earlier this year I cosponsored the Central America Women and Children Protection Act of 2019, feeling that, A, it is good for us to do it, and B, it is also going to help us in some of the immigration challenges that we are facing if we deal with root causes and try to promote more stability, public safety, and economic development and respect for rule of law in Central America.

What kind and level of assistance from the United States do you think could best support women in Central America and start to try to deal systemically with root causes of some of the challenges that we are seeing in the United States from the migration challenge?

Ms. BIGIO. Thank you, Senator Kaine, and thank you for the introduction of that bill because the research and experience fully points to what you are touching on, that there are incredible women leaders in these countries who are advancing security, who are being targeted themselves, as well as women and girls more broadly are being targeted in their communities. And that is one of the drivers of migration, and we see on migration routes that women and girls are also at higher risk of human trafficking.

So as the bill rightly does, there needs to be greater investment in the countries directly in helping to address the violence itself of supporting accountability measures by police, by judicial systems to make sure that there is greater response to the violence when it occurs, also broader investment in education and employment opportunities so that the societies can—that women have an opportunity to contribute to their societies and to help build the stability in their societies and to have an active role in that regard. And the extent to which the U.S. can take a lead from the women leaders themselves, they will tell us what their priorities are in each of their countries and what the best routes are to helping to achieve those. That will help us direct our dollars in the most effective way to help ensure that they are both safe and able to fully participate and fully contribute across Central America, across the Northern

Triangle countries to truly shifting the tide of violence there and to building greater stability.

Senator KAINE. Let me do this because I now just have 2 minutes left. I want to switch to Saudi Arabia, and this is a Saudi Arabia question but it is also a bigger question.

So Saudi Arabia has imprisoned a number of women's rights activists. Aziza al-Yousef is a Saudi professor who went to college at Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond where I live. She has been imprisoned for leading protests against the driving ban and the guardianship issue. Her son, who is also a Virginia resident but a Saudi citizen, has also been imprisoned, along with others. It seems that there is sort of an attitude of we have to make some changes, allow women to drive, but if you led a protest to promote women to drive, we are going to put you in jail. I did this. You did not force me to do it, and you are going to jail because you had the temerity to speak up about it.

This enrages me not only because these are Virginians in many ways, but it just enrages me that this behavior is allowed to happen.

When we raised this with the administration, we are often told, look, if we insist upon these kinds of human rights protections, Saudi Arabia will deal with Russia or China, other nations that do not insist on human rights protections. The same argument is advanced if we say why would we transfer nuclear technology without appropriate safeguards. Well, if we do not do it, Russia and China will do it. This is an old argument that comes up every time the United States insists upon human rights. Oh, but other nations do not. If we insist on human rights, then country X will do business with Russia and China instead of with the United States.

Tell me why we should continue to insist on human rights, including for these imprisoned women, women's rights activists in Saudi Arabia. And that is really a question for all of you.

Ms. BOTTNER. Thank you, Senator. I think you are absolutely right. We need to continue to insist on their rights. It is not unusual that the same argument comes up I think from outside. We can continue when we are over there when we are working with civil society, Saudi women trying to give them soft support, trying to work as an example, lend them assistance in a way that might not be as direct as communication with the White House, but with others.

I was actually in Saudi Arabia years back, and it was just a stunning experience. I had a particular schedule that was a public itinerary and we were so cheered to see that there were women law students. And we tried to applaud publicly the progress they were making.

But I will say that the most information I gathered was in the off-the-record private meetings that were set up, and they were set up because we had contacts inside the country that were working with domestic violence, sexual assault victims, and it was truly that underground vibrant network of women. So to continue to information gather and try to lend that solidarity to those women I think is so important, but it is certainly frustrating to get that same argument.

Senator KAINE. Mr. Chair, I am out of time.

Senator RUBIO. Go ahead. Absolutely.

Senator KAINE. But could I ask the others to respond?

Senator RUBIO. Yes, absolutely.

Senator KAINE. Thank you.

Ms. KAKAR. Thank you. I think, of course, it is important that the United States be an example and continue to support human rights across the board no matter what.

But in particular countries where it is difficult, I think taking a peace-builder's approach is really important, and looking internally to those who do support this idea and how that change can happen from the inside, as well as regional supporters, so building on regional support of those who do support human rights and are worried about what Saudi Arabia and other countries like that are doing I think is really important. So taking a peace-builder's approach, looking for regional support, and also change agents within that can be supported.

Senator KAINE. Thank you.

Ms. Bigio.

Ms. BIGIO. On your first point, just to note that ACTA just released a report that found that political violence against women, targeted violence like you mentioned in Saudi Arabia, is actually on the rise. There were more reports in the first quarter of 2019 than in the first quarter of 2018. So this is something that human rights activists and women leaders around the world are facing with rising attacks, rising assassinations, and rising imprisonments, as you pointed to in the Saudi Arabia case.

So it is critical that the U.S. continue to face that issue, as well as continue to raise the broader focus on human rights that we do. And I think the argument there is that when countries do protect and promote human rights, when they close the gender gap, they are more stable, they are more prosperous. It advances U.S. interests and U.S. global interests in peace and security when we encourage partners to take those steps. So if we are not raising this issue, then it is taking pressure off of governments to assess where there are opportunities, where they can take some positive steps forward in this space. We need to continue to raise it so that they continue to look for and identify where they may be able to take some steps forward that in the end advances their own stability and prosperity and, in that regard, makes our own investments more effective at the outset.

Senator KAINE. Thank you.

Mr. Chair, if I just might say one more thing, not a question but just a comment.

There has been controversy this week over the administration's direction to U.S. embassies to not have a pride flag up during Pride Month. And the situation of LGBTQ women around the world is an important one. I was in Turkey about 2 years ago and met a woman named Sadef Kakmak, who was the first LBGT official elected to political office in Turkey. She was elected to an equivalent of a town council within the Istanbul metropolitan area. She started as an activist in organizing the Istanbul Pride Parade 15 years ago with about a dozen people. It eventually grew to 14,000 or 15,000 people, and when it did, the government shut it down.

I was really fascinated when I met with her, and I met with her since in the United States too. She talked about how critical the support of the U.S. embassy—in this case, the consulate in Istanbul—the embassy is in Ankara—how incredibly important the support of the consulate in Istanbul was to the pride movement, pride flags advocating for them, participating, marching, being there with them, allowing them to meet in the consulate. She said that basically they could not have gone from a handful of people to a big group of people. They could not have done that without active support from the U.S. advocating for the equality of LGBTQ women and all LGBTQ people.

So when the news happens about the flag, okay, I think some people read that story and they think, well, does that really matter. Does it make a difference? Is it just symbolic? No. It is not just symbolic. That is a symbol of our values and our commitment to the equality principle that was articulated in the Declaration of Independence. It gives hope to people and inspiration to people around the world. And when we decide we want to step back from that, that puts people like Sadef Kakmak and others in a less protected, more vulnerable position. We have an incredible power, even using soft powers like to fly a rainbow flag during Pride Month.

We have an incredible power to give people hope and inspiration, and I hope we will continue to do it. And I think there is a lot of women in the world that really have grown to count on us over the years, and I hope we do not let them down.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Senator RUBIO. Thank you.

I wanted to start kind of almost taking off on one of the questions Senator Kaine had. It has been answered already. But I have not been here forever, but I have been here long enough to know that these reports like this—they get issued and then a few years later are like, whatever happened to or do you remember when. And there are a lot of reasons for it. Sometimes change in administrations. But oftentimes it is because we have not answered the fundamental question of why.

As a policymaker for the United States, each of us works for the people of the state that we serve, and we have to, first and foremost, answer to the people that elected us and for whom we speak here in the Senate why this is more than just a nice thing to do. Why? Why is this in the national interest of the United States of America? That is the most important question because if you do not answer that, why it is in our national interest, then I think it is very difficult to sustain this beyond being just something we do because we are good people.

So I wanted to give each of you, since you are so deeply involved in this, if you were speaking to someone in Florida or in Virginia or Maryland or New Hampshire and asked this is great, but why should this be a priority with all the problems that are going on in the world and all the challenges that we have domestically? Why should we be focusing on this? You would say? Whoever wants to go first.

Ms. BOTTNER. Thank you, Senator.

I would say bluntly when we empower women, societies are more stable. When they are more stable, there is not going to be the risk or the incidence of chaos, conflict, war. So if we are sitting here in Florida and we are wondering about what is going on in the world and why it matters, you could bring it right back to when the world is more stable, we are less threatened. Take the arguments off the table about it being the right thing to do, which I think we all agree, but at the end of the day, a more stable world is less threatening for us.

Women's economic empowerment—when we see things like boosting women's economic and access to capital and some of the strategies that have come out of this administration and others, that is all good for women, but it also contributes to a more stable society and community, which is again less threatening to us.

Senator RUBIO. Ms. Bigio, same question. Somebody comes and asks me somewhere, this is terrible what is happening to these women, but we have got so many problems in this country, why are we focused on this? Because?

Ms. BIGIO. First off, that no country can get ahead leaving half its population behind. So if we want to advance security and global prosperity, then that means ensuring that half the population has an opportunity to participate. And the evidence is there for any issue that one of your constituents cares about. If it is health care, if it is climate change, if it is education, that in all of those cases, we will be more effective at advancing that around the world if we ensure that women and girls have——

Senator RUBIO. I think the question they would ask me is why do we want to advance this issue around the world? That is their problem. It is their country. Let them fix it. If they said that to be, we would say?

Ms. BIGIO. We would say we are more secure as a nation when there is greater peace and prosperity around the world. There are more opportunities to trade and to engage with countries around the world when they themselves are more peaceful. There is less trafficking. There are great opportunities to exchange and to learn from one another when there is global prosperity. So I think the priority there is that if we do want to ensure that our nation is secure, that means ensuring that countries around the world share in that prosperity and peace as well, and that means investing in half the population being able to contribute to peace and security.

Senator RUBIO. And, Ms. Kakar, you are probably going to get the toughest question of all just because I am going to kind of centralize it to your comments. But you know, we all recognize there is a significant level of fatigue in this country about U.S. engagement in Afghanistan, almost 20 years now. And so a lot of people would say—this is not my view. I am just expressing—pretend that I am a constituent of one of us. And they come to us and say, look, what is happening in Afghanistan is a terrible thing, but that is never going to be fixed. That is another country. It is far away. It is nothing like us. We went after al Qaeda and ISIS. It is terrible what is going to happen to women there. It is terrible—the situation. But why should we care about it when all these other things are going on? Let us just get out as soon as possible and let it be

what it is. You know, they have got to solve their problems. And we have to answer that to our constituents. We would say what?

Ms. KAKAR. So what I would say to somebody like that, we do not want to have happen what happened in the 1990s when the Soviets withdrew from Afghanistan and there was a vacuum. We do not want 9/11 to happen again. We do not want there to be a safe haven for terrorists in a country like Afghanistan.

We want to support a successful peace process, and to make sure that that peace process is the most successful, we need women's inclusion in that peace process. We do not want to leave a vacuum. We do not want to commit the same mistakes that have been committed in the past. We want to make sure that there is a safe and stable country so that we do not have to deal with the terrorists that might come from leaving a vacuum in a place like that.

Senator RUBIO. Great answers. To all of you, thank you because we are going to get asked and it is going to be helpful. But it is important to answer that because it leads us to the other points I wanted to raise.

The first is for these strategies to work, they have to be systemized. They have to be formalized. It has to be engrained in how we operate across the board. And so I wanted to ask each of you, is it your sense that we are—do we have in place, for lack of a better term, a curriculum to train applicable U.S. Government personnel, diplomats, members of the military, our developmental personnel to take into account the priorities laid out here? In essence, are our diplomats, our military personnel, our development personnel—do we have a way now—does the curriculum exist to train them to be sensitized to this as part of the work they do to instill it in the work that they do as they operate?

Ms. BIGIO. There is some training available now, but it is not widespread and it is not very effective. So there are some standalone courses at the Foreign Service Institute where the State Department and USAID and others can participate, but they are small courses that only a few pass through. And when they are touched upon in broader courses for Foreign Service officers that are coming in or deploying around the world, it is touched on in a very short segment that is not very effective.

The Defense Department, with some of the support of previous appropriations, has been developing gender training courses at combatant commands. So they have done that now for a few of the combatant commands but not all, and that is something that they want to make more regular and what to make more available.

So hopefully the implementation plans will include attention to more training opportunities at State, USAID, DOD, across the intelligence community, Department of Homeland Security, all of the agencies that are implicated to make sure that they actually have the skills to put the commitments into action.

Senator RUBIO. I think that is one of the first challenges we are going to have here in conducting oversight over this implementation is not just ensuring that every year the people being deployed are put in these positions or watching some 1-hour mandatory video and then that is your training. I mean, we really need to make sure that that is happening across the board because you cannot implement it.

The second is I think that we need to be able to track how the strategy is being implemented in real time. I know we are going to get a report back every 90 days. But in addition to having metrics, we have to have a system to sort of be able to look at all the dozens of agencies that are going to be in charge in some level in sort of implementing the strategy, sort of real-time tracking of who is performing.

My guess is the ranking member and I are actually—you know, we serve next to each other on this committee, on this subcommittee, and also in Small Business. People start confusing us for each other.

[Laughter.]

Senator RUBIO. But as we talk about it, we look at, even with something like the Small Business Administration where there is this requirement—not to this topic, but there is this requirement for small business set-asides and small business help. And some agencies in government are better at doing it than others.

And I think this is going to be the same issue here. So we have to have some system set up, and part of that is going to be the question I wanted to ask is based on just your interaction on this issue, what suggestions do you have on creating an interagency coordination process so that when all these of these stakeholders are sitting down to construct policy towards any place on earth—let us say we are talking about Afghanistan and the peace talks. From the Intelligence Committee to all the principals that go in these National Security Council meetings, from USAID to the intelligence community, to DOD and everybody in between, that they are all part of that conversation. Who is in charge, I guess is my question, of ensuring that part of that interagency coordination, as they set up these plans? Who is in charge of making sure that one of those things that they are discussing and creating a plan for is the strategy? Because I do not know who is in charge of implementing this.

Ms. BOTTNER. Thank you, Senator.

I would encourage that the Secretaries of those particular departments that have been called out to be implementing this—the leadership is so important from the top. And if the Secretary takes that commitment truly to heart—I know years ago I saw that at State. When you are talking about interagency working groups, so often if your secretary, your boss, is not making that definitely a critical element and a goal of the department, it is very easy to have it fall by the wayside. So I would just stress, DOD, USAID, State, all of those departments who is really going to take ownership, because it is so important that the leadership comes from the top of that agency.

Ms. BIGIO. I served on the National Security Council staff as a civil servant in the previous administration, and women, peace, and security was in my portfolio. So I saw the critical role that the National Security Council staff can play in helping ensure implementation of the Women, Peace, and Security Strategy now, the new one.

And there the challenge is on a daily basis ensuring that U.S. policy decisions on a given country on a given security issue bring

attention to women's participation and their protection from violence into those discussions.

And so in that regard, I think in the ideal world, the National Security Council staff and the leads on Women, Peace, and Security in the agencies—they are a source of expertise for the whole of government, for anyone shaping policy on a given region and security to help ensure when the NSC is hosting a meeting on Yemen, on Syria, on Afghanistan, on peacekeeping, that at the table is that expertise and that perspective of, in this case, how are we going to improve our security priorities by integrating attention to Women, Peace, and Security into it.

It is integrating it into those conversations that will make sure the Women, Peace, and Security Strategy actually is real and has effect on the ground. And in that regard, the White House, the National Security Council is critical in working across the interagency to make sure that not only do each agency do this work but the top-down leadership from their secretaries, but that as the interagency is shaping policy together, that they are bringing attention to Women, Peace, and Security into that.

Senator RUBIO. I do not know if anyone would disagree. I think the first test of whether this strategy is real and is working and is being implemented is going to be Afghanistan because when you go into that meeting, if the stated goal of it is let us figure out a way to get out and withdraw U.S. troops, I mean, that is not a hard thing to negotiate. Right? You just say this is the day we are leaving. It is the implications of that withdrawal. And I even think it is possible—I think it is not as easy as some people think it is, but it is possible to come up with a deal, quote/unquote, in which all kinds of promises and assurances are made about elections and this, that, or the other.

But I think all of us would recognize—and, Ms. Kakar, you point this out in your answer to the first question that I had—that if any deal does, in fact, not have in it real protections and verifiable measures to ensure the role that women are going to play in that society—in essence, this is going to be going back to how things were for women in 2001—this deal is not going to be real. We are going to go right back in time to the same point. And someone in that room needs to be raising that as part of that conversation because I do not care what people tell you about how great this deal is, it is getting us out and there are some structures set up for it to work, it is not a real deal if it does not take that into account.

Which, Ms. Kakar, leads me to my last question, and that is one of the arguments being used for why this is so difficult—because we can push countries to change their laws. They still have to implement them. So that is a challenge. But one of the places where we really get the realists in the room to say, look, we can get them to sign whatever you want. This is not a political issue. This is a cultural, a religious—this is thousands of years of the way have treated women in those societies, and they view this as an imposition of Western values and Western ideas on them. And some will argue—I am not making that argument—who are we to tell them what their culture should be. Others will just say it would be a great thing to achieve but it is not realistic. And so that is a point I wanted you to address because we have heard and we will hear

that argument that this is a cultural and religious issue and that we cannot force people to all be Western in their views. I mean, that is the argument they would make.

Ms. KAKAR. Thank you for the question.

I would actually push back, particularly in the case of Afghanistan, that this is not a Western imposition. This is very indigenous to Afghanistan. Women have been involved in all kinds of decision-makings throughout Afghan history. Starting from the beginning, the very inception of the Afghan modern state, it was the mother of Ahmed Shah Durrani who—Nazu Anna. She was the one who actually was able to bring the tribes together to form the Afghan state. It was on her—it was her initiatives that really brought the state together.

Senator RUBIO. In Afghanistan, do people know that?

Ms. KAKAR. The story of Nazu Anna is known in Afghanistan, yes.

And we have examples of women who are on the local shuras, the tribal jirgas who make decisions who have been there—as part of Afghanistan's culture, have been there for centuries on the councils. This is part of Afghan culture in terms of women being part of the solution of a peace process.

There are even specific—how should I say it—in terms of local justice systems, there is the Pashtunwali code of conduct, which I have written and researched about, where women are the catalysts for resolving conflict. There are all kinds of traditional codes where women are the ones who go and initiate the conversation. They go across enemy lines and initiate the conversations to end conflicts. So this is not something that is coming from the outside. This is very, very indigenous.

And just to add to that, currently what we are seeing in terms of how the Taliban have, at the local level, respected women crossing those lines and have listened to them, that creates this opportunity and a door and a window to open things up.

Yes, it needs to be framed within a religious framework, and I think women in Afghanistan realize the importance of framing it within an Islamic law framework to talk about their rights. But there are many indigenous examples, and this is not a Western imposition.

Senator RUBIO. So the bottom line is the treatment of women by the Taliban is the foreign idea here.

Ms. KAKAR. Yes, it is.

Senator RUBIO. All right. I am done.

Do you have anything else?

Senator CARDIN. Mr. Chairman, first, these values are universal values. These are not Western values. The United Nations has spoken to this and sustainable development goals and so many other universal rights. There are so many areas that we talk about empowerment of women is not a Western value. It is a universal value. And I think we always have to underscore that.

Your questioning I thought was extremely important as to the capacity we have in this country to understand all this through our curriculum. I like that. We really do need to have that.

Ms. Bigio, I wanted to get your view, before we conclude this hearing, on what went right and wrong with the U.N. Security

Council resolution. It is a big deal to get a U.N. Security Council resolution passed. When we look at the results, are they favorable or not? Seventy-nine nations I understand have submitted their response to the resolution. That means the majority have not. And that is just submitting a strategy. It does not mean they have implemented it.

So from your experiences in representing the United States on this, where did we go right? Where did we go wrong? What did we learn from this, and how do we use the experiences over the last 19 years to have greater success in penetrating the international community on these subjects?

Ms. BIGIO. Thank you. It is a great question and it is critical, as we come on the 20th anniversary of that first U.N. Security Council resolution, to look back and assess where we are and what more can we do.

So, first off, in those 20 years, it is critical that there are more voices of support. That was the first time that anyone put the issue of women's participation in preventing and resolving conflicts as a security issue, as a security imperative. And now to have growing voices, now nearly 80 countries, with that commitment, NATO, the EU, the African Union, regional bodies around the world have made those commitments as well. So that is a starting point that we have a shared value and recognition that it is in our security interests to support women's meaningful participation in conflict.

From that, we do see some steps forward. We see cases like in the Philippines it was a female chief negotiator that helped negotiate that peace process. In Colombia, women had 30 percent representation at the negotiating table, and the peace agreement reflects that. There is a whole broader set of issues that are part of that agreement that will help set the country up on a better course in their efforts to recover from conflicts there. There are commitments underway now to actually have countries deploy more female peacekeepers so that peacekeeping missions can be more legitimate. There are meaningful commitments that are being made.

But the progress has lagged and the transformational change has not happened yet. So it really is case by case that we are still making the argument that women need a seat at the table. In too many cases they do not. Women-led groups need our support. They are doing incredible work on the ground in their communities negotiating local ceasefires, negotiating humanitarian access and movement abilities for people in the midst of conflict zones. They are doing things local governments should be doing but are not. They are forming female police brigades to provide security and staffing hospitals and schools and helping build a framework for peace in their communities. But they get, as I said before, just .4 percent of funding. And that is an area where we need to talk to them more, listen to them, have that shape our own policies in those governments and support them so that they can do more of the critical work they are already doing.

Senator CARDIN. I think the chairman raised a very important point, that we are always accused of trying to impose our values on other countries, which is not the case. The impetus, as I understand it, for the U.N. Security Council resolution came from Western Africa, as we talked about before when the hearing started.

When I travel, as I do a great deal as a member of this committee, as a Member of the Senate, and also for the Helsinki Commission, I find that the United States is not in the forefront on these issues. When you look at the representation groups, we usually are behind the curve rather than in front of the curve on women representation. So it is something that we need to talk about: how we leverage the U.S. critical support that is necessary to bring about global change with the fact that there are groups around the world well ahead of where we are here in the United States, and how we utilize that for an effective U.S. leadership to accomplish change.

So it really is a challenge, Mr. Chairman. I think you raised it because we are always looked at as trying to mold the world as we see it rather than, in many cases, the world has changed and the United States needs to catch up a little bit but also use our leadership for global security.

Thank you.

Senator RUBIO. Senator Shaheen.

Senator SHAHEEN. Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman.

A lot of our discussion today has been around Afghanistan. And I agree with the chairman. This really does offer the best opportunity immediately to see how we implement the Women, Peace, and Security Strategy in a meaningful way.

I was in Afghanistan in April meeting with a number of women leaders, and I heard the same thing you mentioned, Ms. Kakar, that they were very concerned that the United States was going to cut a deal with the Taliban that would not ensure that rights of women continue.

So what can we be doing as we look at implementing the strategy? What should we be doing to reassure Afghan women to make sure they have a seat at the table? You talked about the metrics, having that be part of any withdrawal agreement, having incentives to the political parties. But what do Afghan women want to hear from the United States now to assure them that this is a commitment that we have and we will continue to have through any peace negotiations?

Ms. KAKAR. Thank you for the question.

I think it is really important to continue to be public about those assurances and continue to talk like we have at this hearing about the implementation of the strategy on Women, Peace, and Security and how that will be implemented in Afghanistan. That is a huge assurance to hear that. And I am sure many Afghan women will find assurances in that. But to continue to have these conversations and to make sure that these conversations are public. Women have said that it is not enough to just have a few women behind a closed door and have consultations with them, but it is important to have public conversations. It is important for, for example, Khalilzad's team who is there negotiating on behalf of the U.S. Government to be public with the women and have public conversations with them on some of the issues and on these reassurances of how it will be implemented.

So these are issues that they are very, very concerned about, and I think a continued public conversation about this showing transparency in the conversation, making sure that the incentives are

well known and the push for the incentives are well known, and how the strategy will be implemented in Afghanistan, I think that will really help alleviate some of these concerns.

Senator SHAHEEN. Well, thank you.

I hope, Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member Cardin, that this committee will take an active role in trying to assure that we keep the women forefront as we look at any peace negotiations and that we work to ensure that this strategy gets implemented in Afghanistan as we are looking into that conflict and thinking about how we can engage in that.

Senator RUBIO. I think in all these conversations, one of the critical points that is going to have to be raised repeatedly is that, if done hastily and without the proper safeguards in place, not only are we going to see the unraveling of almost 20 years of commitment to this. It is actually going to be worse than it was in 2001 because there are now women and girls that have gone to school, that have actually done things, that are on a list somewhere of the first ones they are going to go after to punish and make an example of them. So in many ways, this is not just going to be as bad. It is going to be worse because there are actual people that are going to be targeted for having the audacity to go to school and things of this nature. So it is a really tenuous situation, to say the least.

Is there anything else?

Senator CARDIN. Thank you all.

Senator RUBIO. I want to thank you. It was a very good hearing and I think we have learned a lot, and I think we have a lot to think about in terms of our role in conducting oversight so that this is a sustained effort. Unfortunately, the world is going to continue to have conflicts, and this is going to continue to be raised. So again, I want to thank you, and I want to thank everyone for being here. This is a phenomenal hearing.

The record for the hearing will remain open for 48 hours.

And with that, the hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 11:30 a.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

WOMEN, PEACE, AND SECURITY NATIONAL STRATEGY
SUBMITTED BY JEANNE SHAHEEN

UNITED STATES STRATEGY ON WOMEN, PEACE, AND SECURITY

JUNE 2019

★★★★

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Introduction

The United States is unapologetic in championing the principles upon which our country was founded: individual liberty, free enterprise, equal justice under the law, and the dignity of every human life. The President's *National Security Strategy* (NSS) highlighted that these principles form the foundation of our most enduring alliances, since governments that respect citizens' rights "remain the best vehicle for prosperity, human happiness, and peace." Further, the NSS also noted that "governments that fail to treat women equally do not allow their societies to reach their potential [while] societies that empower women to participate fully in civic and economic life are more prosperous and peaceful."

The Trump Administration is committed to advancing women's equality, seeking to protect the rights of women and girls, and promoting women and youth empowerment programs. The United States Strategy on Women, Peace, and Security (WPS Strategy) responds to the Women, Peace, and Security Act of 2017, which President Donald J. Trump signed into law on October 6, 2017.[1] This is the first legislation of its kind globally, which makes the United States the first country in the world with a comprehensive law on WPS, and *de facto*, the first with a whole-of-government strategy that responds to such a domestic law. The WPS Strategy recognizes the diverse roles women play as agents of change in preventing and resolving conflict, countering terrorism and violent extremism, and building post conflict peace and stability. The WPS Strategy seeks to increase women's meaningful leadership in political and civic life by helping to ensure they are empowered to lead and contribute, equipped with the necessary skills and support to succeed, and supported to participate through access to opportunities and resources.

Key departments and agencies that will implement the WPS Strategy include, but are not limited to, the Departments of State, Defense (DOD), and Homeland Security (DHS); and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). This Administration will capitalize on the opportunity to link our new,

[1] The WPS Strategy responds to the Women, Peace, and Security Act of 2017 (Public Law 115-68-Oct. 6, 2017), which requires, within 1 year of the enactment of the Act, and again 4 years thereafter, the submission of a strategy to the appropriate Congressional Committees and its publication. The WPS Strategy supersedes the 2016 U.S. National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security; complements relevant laws, appropriations, and Executive Orders, including the State and Foreign Operations Acts and the National Defense Authorization Act; and satisfies Executive Order 13595.

strategic approach to women, peace, and security to the NSS and other national strategic guidance on matters of peace and security, including the 2018 National Strategy for Counterterrorism; the 2018 National Defense Strategy (NDS); State, DOD, and USAID 2018 Stabilization Assistance Review; the 2018 Strategy to Support Women and Girls at Risk from Violent Extremism and Conflict; efforts to counter trafficking consistent with the NSS, including pursuant to the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA); and National Security Presidential Memorandum (NSPM) 16: Promoting Women's Global Development and Prosperity, which the President signed in February 2019, establishing the Women's Global Development and Prosperity (W-GDP) Initiative. In line with the NSS, the W-GDP Initiative seeks to empower women economically around the world, and in so doing, create conditions for increased stability, security, and prosperity for all.

The Strategic Challenge

Around the world, conflict and disasters adversely and disproportionately affect women and girls, yet women remain under-represented in efforts to prevent and resolve conflict, and in post-conflict peace-building or recovery efforts. Research has shown that peace negotiations are more likely to succeed, and result in lasting stability, when women participate.[2] The barriers to women's meaningful participation are numerous, and include under-representation in political leadership, pervasive violence against women and girls, and persistent inequality in many societies.

Despite advancements in women's social, political, and economic rights, women still enjoy fewer freedoms and opportunities than men worldwide. Instability and conflict magnify these challenges in places where malign actors frequently exploit individual, community, and societal vulnerabilities for their own gain. In these instances, women and girls are often targeted for various forms of violence, exploitation, and abuse. Oftentimes, their physical vulnerability can be directly traced back to their politically and socially disadvantaged place in society.[3]

The United States recognizes the linkage between women's empowerment and global peace and security. Social and political marginalization of women strongly correlates with the likelihood that a country will experience conflict. One metric indicates that 14 of the 17 lowest-scoring countries in the Index for Gender Discrimination of the Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development have experienced armed conflict in the last two decades. Global insecurity also affects the national security of the United States, as regions of conflict often provide safe haven for terrorists and other illicit actors; become proxies for broader wars between nation-states; and lead to massive population displacement, migration, and further regional instability.

This Strategy promotes the meaningful inclusion of women in processes to prevent, mediate, resolve, and recover from deadly conflict or disaster. While the United States maintains a deep commitment to promoting women's equality, we recognize that fully achieving that goal globally has proven elusive. Much remains to be done, both to enhance the equality of women and girls, and to secure the meaningful inclusion of women in preventing and resolving conflict, and in post-conflict peace building and recovery.

[2] Valerie Hudson, Bonnie Ballif-Spanvill, Mary Caprioli, and Chad F. Emmett, *Sex and World Peace* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012).
[3] Report of the *United Nations Secretary-General on Conflict-Related Sexual Violence*, March 23, 2018, S/2018/250, Section 11, p. 4

The Theory of Change: A National Strategy on Women, Peace and Security

The WPS Strategy acknowledges a tremendous amount of untapped potential among the world's women and girls to identify, recommend, and implement effective solutions to conflict. At its core, the WPS Strategy recognizes the benefits derived from creating opportunities for women and girls to serve as agents of peace via political, economic, and social empowerment. The WPS Strategy therefore aims to make meaningful progress around the world to empower women in preventing conflict and building peace, while endeavoring to rectify the disproportionate, adverse impacts of armed conflict on women and girls.[4] The United States embraces these concepts and recognizes the powerful role that women can play as peacemakers and political agents in societies that are transitioning out of conflict and toward peace. It is therefore crucial that ongoing United States efforts to engage in preventing and mitigating conflict around the world strategically factor in the participation, perspectives, and interests of women, including those from under-represented groups.

This Strategy defines women's political empowerment and equality as the end state whereby **women can meaningfully participate in preventing, mediating, and resolving conflict and countering terrorism, in ways that promote stable and lasting peace, including in conflict-affected areas.**

To work toward this end state, the WPS Strategy identifies three separate, yet interrelated, strategic objectives that must be achieved. These strategic objectives aim to make demonstrable progress (defined below) by 2023:

- Women are **more prepared and increasingly able** to participate in efforts that promote stable and lasting peace;
- Women and girls are **safer, better protected, and have equal access** to government and private assistance programs, including from the United States, international partners, and host nations; and
- United States and partner governments have **improved institutionalization and capacity** to ensure WPS efforts are sustainable and long-lasting.

The WPS Strategy also identifies four lines

[4] Security Council Resolution 1325, October 31, 2000, S/RES/1325

of effort, which are the separate-yet-interrelated ways to synchronize and prioritize United States actions to achieve the strategic objectives. Importantly, actions (tasks) completed within each of the lines of effort will focus on improving women's empowerment and equality in one or more of the conflict phases: preventing conflict and preparing for disasters; managing, mitigating, and resolving conflict and crisis; and post-conflict and post-crisis efforts in relief and recovery.

LINE OF EFFORT 1: Seek and support the preparation and meaningful participation of women around the world in decision-making processes related to conflict and crises;

LINE OF EFFORT 2: Promote the protection of women and girls' human rights; access to humanitarian assistance; and safety from violence, abuse, and exploitation around the world;

LINE OF EFFORT 3: Adjust United States international programs to improve outcomes in equality for, and the empowerment of, women; and

LINE OF EFFORT 4: Encourage partner governments to adopt policies, plans, and capacity to improve the meaningful participation of women in processes connected to peace and security and decision-making institutions.

Further, we acknowledge that we will likely not be able to advance WPS principles in every corner of the globe. As with all matters of national security, the United States will continue to engage selectively, and in ways that advance America's national interests. The United States Government will also serve as responsible stewards of taxpayer dollars, seeking to optimize investments and ensure accountability. When and where the United States does choose to engage, the WPS Strategy will help inform how the United States approaches and prioritizes its involvement, including in coordination with like-minded partners, to secure more effective and lasting gains.

Line of Effort 1:

Support the preparation and meaningful participation of women around the world in informal and formal decision-making processes related to conflict and crisis.

The Goal

Increase women's meaningful participation in political, civic, and military processes to prevent and resolve conflicts, prepare for disasters, and set conditions for stability during post conflict and post-crisis efforts.

The Problem

In spite of the growing evidence of a direct correlation between the equality and empowerment of women and a nation's stability, women remain critically under-represented in conflict prevention, conflict-resolution, and post-conflict peace building efforts. The voices and concerns of women affected by violence during conflict — those who will carry much of the burden for healing and rebuilding their communities in peacetime — are routinely absent from, or overlooked at, the negotiating table. Despite numerous examples of women who have provided leadership to prevent and resolve

conflict at local, national, and regional levels, persistent inequality and marginalization often prevents women from realizing their full potential and influence as negotiators, mediators, and decision makers. The United Nations (UN) reports that between 1992 and 2011, women made up just 2 percent of mediators, 4 percent of witnesses and signatories, and 9 percent of negotiators in formal post-conflict peace talks.[5]

The first step in advancing WPS principles requires that we empower women and girls with the tools and capabilities they need to engage meaningfully in conflict and crisis situations, whether before, during, or after these events, and then encourage their meaningful participation in efforts to promote stable and lasting peace. Increasing women's capacity to participate meaningfully in peace and political processes provides them with the distinct advantage to be prepared to contribute to a range of formal and informal peace proce sses, dialogues, and negotiations that determine the fates of their families and communities.

The factors that preclude women's meaningful participation vary from one country to the next. Legal, structural, and other barriers also often interact with deeply entrenched social norms to undermine women's influence and representation. For the United States to be successful in its efforts, it is critical that we understand local barriers before setting out a program to overcome them. The design of efforts must go hand-in-hand with research, and implementers must seek the continuous input of the women they are trying to serve.

The WPS Strategy Approach

Departments and agencies will tailor their engagements and programs in ways that help women around the world be more prepared for, and able to participate in, decision-making processes related to conflict and crisis.

Illustrative activities in support of the above goal could include (and noting primarily in which conflict or crisis phase(s) the activities would be focused):

ALL PHASES:

- Encourage the increased, meaningful participation of women in security-sector initiatives funded by the United States Government, including programs that provide training to foreign nationals regarding law enforcement, the rule of law, and professional military education. United States courses that historically attract only male international students from certain countries or regions should consider ways to incentivize the inclusion of female students as well.

- Integrate women's perspectives and interests into conflict prevention, conflict-resolution, and post conflict peace-building activities and strategies, including women from under-represented groups, via consultation with local women leaders in the design, implementation, and evaluation of United States initiatives;

- Encourage the inclusion of women leaders and women's organizations in the prevention and resolution of conflict, and in post-conflict

[5] UN Women, "Women's Participation in Peace Negotiations: Connections between Presence and Influence," (October 2012) p. 3.

peace-building efforts. Where appropriate, United States diplomatic, military, and development interventions will lead by example through inclusion of American women in such efforts, and will engage local women leaders as vital partners, including through support that advances their meaningful political participation and empowerment, capacity, credibility, and professional development; and

- Use relevant analysis and indicators, including the collection of sex-disaggregated data, to identify and address barriers to women's meaningful participation in the prevention and resolution of conflict, and in post-conflict peace-building efforts and programs, including early warning systems related to conflict and violence.

PREVENTING CONFLICT AND PREPARING FOR DISASTERS: Provide, as appropriate, technical assistance and training to female negotiators, mediators, peace-builders, and stakeholders.

MANAGING, MITIGATING, AND RESOLVING CONFLICT AND CRISIS: Provide, as appropriate, logistical support to female negotiators, mediators, peace-builders, and stakeholders, particularly during democratic transitions, which is critical to sustaining democratic institutions, creating more inclusive democratic societies, and contributing to long-term stability.

POST-CONFLICT AND POST-CRISIS RELIEF AND RECOVERY: Support, as appropriate, local women's peace-building organizations.

Line of Effort 2:

Promote the protection of women and girls' human rights, access to aid, and safety from violence, abuse, and exploitation around the world.

The Goal

Women and girls' security, human rights, and needs are protected – by their governments, augmented as appropriate with regional or other security sector forces – so they can meaningfully contribute locally, nationally, and globally.

The Problem

Women and girls bear unique, and sometimes disproportionate, impacts of armed conflict.[6] In many conflict-affected and fragile settings around the world, malign actors deliberately target and attack women and girls, often with impunity, for various forms of violence, including, but not limited to, physical and sexual violence, torture, mutilation, trafficking, and slavery. While women and girls sometimes voluntarily join terrorist organizations, some may be coerced or manipulated into becoming terrorists or foreign terrorist fighters themselves. Post-conflict, women and girls continue to experience high levels of violence and insecurity. Most survivors never receive justice, and, instead, face considerable challenges in gaining access to the medical, psychosocial, legal, and economic support that is necessary to help them heal, recover, and rebuild their lives. These patterns have been shown to have devastating

[6] Security Council Resolution 2106, S/RES/2106, 24 June 2016

effects on societies, and lead to continued cycles of insecurity and instability.[7]

Breakdowns in the rule of law and forced displacement from conflict and disaster expose refugees and internally displaced persons, particularly women and girls, to additional risks of violence and exploitation. Women cannot fully participate in the prevention or resolution of conflict or participate in recovery efforts if they themselves are victims of violence or intimidation, and pervasive violence against women and girls undermines the recovery of entire communities and countries affected by violence or disaster.

In situations of conflict and crisis, during which populations rely on humanitarian assistance and other aid to meet their basic needs and begin the challenging process of recovery, the United States Government must design our efforts to address the distinct needs of women and girls, including women's economic security, safety and dignity. Women cannot participate in the prevention or resolution of conflict or recovery from disaster if they cannot meet their basic needs or provide for their children.

Data also indicates that the consequences of terrorism and terrorism-related violence in conflict uniquely affect women and girls. Women are often the first targets of terrorism and violent extremist ideologies, which restrict their rights and can lead to increases in violence against them. Terrorists often advocate for, and carry out, the enslavement of women and girls. Tactics such as human trafficking, sexual slavery, and recruiting women to become terrorists themselves have become a hallmark of terrorist groups, trapping thousands of women and girls in cycles of repression and violence. Ongoing efforts to address the adverse impact of terrorism and violent extremism are therefore more effective and sustainable when we empower women and girls to be active participants and leaders in preventing and responding to terrorism and political violence.

The WPS Strategy Approach

Departments and agencies will support countries' local and regional efforts to seek to ensure women and girls are protected from all forms of violence, and benefit equally from governmental and non-governmental assistance and development programs.

Illustrative activities in support of the above goal could include the following:

ALL PHASES: Address security-related barriers to the protection of women. This includes the following:

- Identify and reduce obstacles or barriers not codified in formal rules or regulations but that nonetheless reflect sex-based discrimination, sex-based bias, or lack of recognition for women's rights;
- Address the use of violence, intimidation, or harassment to prevent women from participating in decision-making or related political, diplomatic or military processes;

[7] According to the UN Secretary General's 2018 *Report on Conflict-related Sexual Violence*, the accumulation of unresolved crimes fuels new cycles of violence, vengeance and vigilantism, which are inimical to reconciliation. *Report of the Secretary-General on Conflict-Related Sexual Violence*, Sec. 20 p. 7, S/2018/250 (March 23, 2018).

- Champion efforts to prevent and respond to sexual abuse and exploitation by peace-keepers and relief workers; and

- Encourage countries' local law-enforcement and judicial systems to appropriately address gender-based violence against women and girls, especially as part of transitional justice processes and initiatives.

PREVENTING CONFLICT AND PREPARING FOR DISASTERS:

- In coordination with broader United States efforts to provide humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, ensure women and girls have safe and equal access to humanitarian assistance, including food, shelter, and heath security targeted at saving lives. This includes efforts to increase access to humanitarian assistance in line with the Unites States Government's interpretation of the laws of armed conflict and International Human Rights Law;

- Support solutions to prevent and respond to violence against women and girls. This includes collecting and analyzing sex-disaggregated data for the purpose of developing and enhancing early warning systems of conflict and violence; supporting multilateral efforts, including at the UN, to address violence in conflict, including sexual violence, human trafficking, and slavery; and integrating efforts to combat drivers of violence against women and girls into conflict and efforts to prevent atrocities; and

- Empower women as partners in preventing terrorism and countering radicalization and recruitment. This includes promoting voices of pluralism and tolerance, undermining the power of terrorist ideologies; undercutting terrorist recruiting; and raising awareness of radicalization and recruitment dynamics via outreach, training, and international exchanges.

POST-CONFLICT AND POST-CRISIS RELIEF AND RECOVERY:

- Design United States diplomatic, military, and development interventions in conflict- and disaster-affected areas to maximize protection for women and girls, and seek to ensure women and girls receive equal access to justice, humanitarian assistance, appropriate medical care, and psycho-social support for survivors of violence, exploitation, and abuse, including for their children; and

- Design humanitarian-assistance programs to reduce risks faced by women and girls in crisis and conflict, and to meet the specific needs of women and girls who have experienced or are at risk of violence, exploitation, and abuse.

Line of Effort 3:

Adjust United States international programs to improve outcomes in equality for, and the empowerment of, women.

The Goal

The United States maintains its role as a leader on the world stage in promoting the meaningful participation of women in preventing, managing, and resolving conflict, and efforts in post-conflict relief and recovery.

The Problem

The United States has long proven its commitment to address injustice against women and girls in conflict areas, alongside our broader commitment to help those in need and those trying to build a better future for their families. Through engagements with partners and at multilateral organizations such as the United Nations, the United States has won recognition from friends and competitors alike as a champion of women's empowerment across the phases of conflict and crisis resolution.

As noted in the NSS, the competitions, rivalries, and challenges that face the United States are real and ongoing. As the United States responds to growing political, economic, and military competitions around the world, we must also ensure we mitigate conflict at its source – including the role that systemic inequality faced by women and girls serves as a known driver of conflict.[8] Just as the United States Government is modernizing and integrating our tools to counter terrorism and protect the homeland, we will also update our policies, training, and approaches to emphasize the relationship between women and security, helping ensure our WPS efforts are sustainable and long-lasting. This will include giving consideration to the unique security requirements of both females and males, while finding opportunities to promote the equal rights and opportunities of women and girls.

The WPS Strategy Approach

The United States Government must equip and empower its diplomatic, military, and development personnel to advance the goals of this strategy through an ongoing process of training, education, and professional development in partnership with specialists who can provide insight and understanding to this challenging field.

Illustrative activities in support of the above goal could include the following:

ALL PHASES:

- Train United States diplomatic, military, and development personnel, as appropriate, on the needs and perspectives of women in preventing, mediating, and resolving conflict, including women from under-represented groups; on protecting civilians from violence, exploitation, and trafficking in persons; and, in accordance with the United States Government's understanding, on International Humanitarian Law and International Human Rights Law;
- Support research into, and the evaluation of, effective strategies and the development and sharing of best practices for ensuring the meaningful participation by women, to include exchanges with international partners;
- Expand and apply gender analysis, as appropriate, to improve the design and targeting of United States Government programs;
- Conduct assessments of new initiatives, including perspectives from affected women, including women from under-represented groups;

[8] See Mary Caprioli, "Primed for Violence: The Role of Gender Inequality in Predicting Internal Conflict," *International Studies Quarterly* 49, No. 2 (2005): 161–178.

- Develop public-private partnerships; leverage non-Federal entities such as non-governmental organizations, faith based organizations, and businesses; and foster relationships between non-Federal partners and partner governments to increase burden-sharing and ensure the sustainability of programs;

- Target assistance strategically, by identifying a limited set of cases in which United States Government WPS programs have a significant opportunity for measurable impact and avoiding duplication, reduced impact, and wasted resources; and

- Demonstrate and quantify the tangible outcomes and impact of its assistance under the WPS.

Line of Effort 4:

Encourage partner governments to adopt policies, plans, and capacity to improve the meaningful participation of women in processes connected to peace and security and decision-making institutions.

The Goal

Partner governments are reforming policies, programs, and plans to increase women's meaningful participation in processes connected to peace and security and decision-making institutions.

The Problem

Around the world, a wide range of factors prevent women from participating meaningfully in efforts that promote stable and lasting peace. Some of these factors stem from biases based on normative perceptions about the roles of women and men. However, others are consequences of legal, regulatory, and structural barriers designed to prevent women from having a formal say in how issues related to peace and security are brokered in their societies. These barriers are often supported by imbalanced or corrupt systems of power and influence that neglect and exploit women at the cost of effective governance and lasting peace.

Research indicates that when women are involved in peace negotiations, they are more likely to raise social issues that help societies reconcile and recover. Furthermore, studies suggest that when women meaningfully participate in peace negotiations, the likelihood that the resulting peace plan will last more than 2 years increases by 20 percent, and the likelihood that it will last more than 15 years increases by 35 percent.[10] Considering that more than half of all peace agreements fail within 5 years, the inclusion of women in conflict resolution arguably saves lives and limits the devastating economic costs of war.

Experience further indicates that when women participate in security sector roles, they achieve substantive and lasting gains in peace and security. For example, female peacekeepers are more likely to gain admission to geographic and

[10] Laurel Stone, "Annex II: Quantitative Analysis of Women's participation in Peace Processes," *Reimagining Peacemaking: Women's Roles in Peace Processes* (New York: International Peace Institute, 2015) (study of 156 peace agreements, controlling for other variables).

population sectors traditionally closed to their male counterparts, which gives them unique access to information about the local security environment and potential risks. Women peacekeepers are also more likely to enjoy the trust and confidence from the communities they serve, and more likely to empower women to join security sector ranks, including the military and law enforcement.[11]

The WPS Strategy offers a foundation for long-lasting change. However, sustainability will require the support of the global community, including non governmental entities, such as civil society and faith-based organizations, and private businesses, which have a long-term presence in country and often play a role in helping to rebuild post-conflict and fragile states.

The WPS Strategy Approach

Departments and agencies will aim to reduce barriers and enhance protections in partner countries' policies, laws, regulations and practices that impede women's ability to engage or participate in preventing conflict and preparing for disasters; managing, mitigating, and resolving conflict and crisis; and post-conflict and post-crisis relief and recovery.

Illustrative activities in support of the above goal could include the following:

ALL PHASES:

- Address host-nation barriers that discriminate against the meaningful participation of women. This includes encouraging partner governments to revise formal laws, rules, and regulations that disadvantage women as equal participants in all phases of conflict and crisis resolution; support the effective implementation of laws, rules, and regulations that promote women as equal participants in all phases of resolving and responding to conflict and crisis; and adopt plans to improve the meaningful participation of women in processes connected to peace and security and decision-making institutions;
- Assist partner governments to increase the opportunity for women to serve in security sector forces, including peacekeeping, military, and law enforcement organizations. This includes developing women's technical and professional competencies so they can better compete for security sector roles, and seeking to cultivate and promote qualified women in peace operations, peacekeeping missions, and national administrations, including at senior leadership levels across all relevant areas, including political, diplomatic, development and military sectors, on par with their male counterparts. This also includes encouraging partner governments to foster professional growth for women as security sector professionals via career counseling, networking, targeted recruitment, and mentoring programs;
- Support, and coordinate with, other countries in their efforts to improve the meaningful participation of women in processes connected to peace and security, conflict-pre-

[11] UN Women Policy Brief, *Exploratory Options On Using Financial Incentives to Increase the Percentage of Military Women in UN Peackeeping Missions* (UN Women, 2015), http://wps.unwomen.org/resources/briefs/financial.pdf .

vention, peace-building, transitional justice, and decision-making institutions;

- Confer with host governments and non-governmental organizations to reduce barriers to and enhance the meaningful participation of women in economic, political, and security spheres, including the engagement of men and boys in support of women's equality; and

- Promote the American values of individual liberty, religious freedom, and equal treatment under the law in our engagement with other nations to implement the WPS Strategy.

PREVENTING CONFLICT AND PREPARING FOR DISASTERS: Support partner countries' training, education, and mobilization of men and boys as partners in support of the meaningful participation of women in society.

MANAGING, MITIGATING, AND RESOLVING CONFLICT AND CRISIS: Encourage the development of transitional justice and accountability mechanisms that are inclusive of the experiences and perspectives of women and girls, including women from under-represented groups. Work with willing partners to strengthen their national frameworks for justice and accountability with the goal of ending impunity for all types of crimes and atrocities, including gender-based violence in conflict. This includes supporting survivors of violence by providing access to healing and recovery programs, combating norms that exacerbate violence in conflict, and seeking timely justice and accountability for crimes committed.

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Metrics and Targets

To track progress toward women's ability to participate meaningfully in and contribute to preventing, mediating, and resolving conflict and countering terrorism, the Administration will commit to rigorously track and report on metrics across the interagency on an annual basis, and will seek meaningful change in all three strategic objectives by 2023. This will include reporting on training requirements for applicable United States Government personnel, as well as a summary and evaluation of this strategy's implementation by departments and agencies; applicable interagency coordination completed; and the monitoring and evaluation tools, mechanisms, and common indicators to assess progress made within this strategy's lines of efforts and to achieve the strategic objectives by 2023. Departments and agencies will coordinate this reporting with the reporting requirements of NSPM 16: *Promoting Women's Global Development and Prosperity*, to ensure data tracking for the two efforts is complementary and non-duplicative. To the extent common metrics are reported and counted towards both efforts, departments and agencies will clearly indicate where that is the case.

The WPS Strategy understands "meaningful" as having a measurable, enduring impact on one or all of the identified strategic objectives, and in one or all phases of conflict or crisis prevention and resolution. "Meaningful" participation is not defined by a set proportion of women's participation in every context. Instead, we will take relevant circumstantial factors into account, and, where necessary, apply lessons learned from the past, analytic rigor, and evidence-based research to inform targeted and effective policies and programming going forward. We will develop context-specific markers by which to measure progress on our efforts.

To fulfill our responsibility to be good stewards of national resources, programs carried out in furtherance of the WPS Strategy must measurably accomplish their goals. Departments and agencies must modify or reassess programs that fail to do so, and must harness learning to inform future planning and implementation. To ensure accountability, departments and agencies will provide measurable goals, benchmarks, and timetables for their proposed WPS initiatives as part of their implementation plans, in addition to estimating resource requirements.

Resourcing and Reporting

No later than 90 days after this Strategy goes into effect, departments and agencies will nominate criteria to the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs (APNSA) for inclusion in a United States Government-wide WPS framework for monitoring and evaluating programs. Nominated criteria must include proposed measures of effectiveness in furthering each of the Strategy's articulated goals. After the approval of the WPS monitoring-and-evaluation framework, relevant departments and agencies will use it to assess and report on progress and results under the WPS Strategy.

Within 120 days of the approval of this WPS Strategy, State, DOD, DHS, and USAID shall each develop, in coordination with the APNSA and Office of Management and Budget, and provide to the Congress a detailed, consolidated implementation plan that provides the following information with respect to their WPS Strategy implementation plan:

1) The anticipated technical, financial, and in-kind contribution of each department or agency;

2) Roles and responsibilities across the department or agency;

3) Processes required to support the WPS Strategy, such as new policy or doctrine, or capabilities assessments;

4) Corresponding timelines and milestones, with clear benchmarks and deliverables for each necessary action; and

5) Approved measures of effectiveness and associated methods of assessment that, at minimum, measure involvement both pre- and post intervention, to ensure the policies and initiatives are effective at achieving strategic goals.

Not later than 1 year after submission of this strategy, the Secretary of State, in conjunction with the Secretary of Defense and the Administrator of USAID, shall brief the appropriate Congressional Committees on existing, enhanced, or newly established training for relevant United States personnel on the participation of women in conflict-prevention and peace building.

Not later than 2 years after submission of this strategy, the Secretary of State, in conjunction with the Secretary of Defense and the Administrator of USAID shall submit to the APNSA, and be prepared to brief the appropriate Congressional Committees on, a report that summarizes and evaluates departments' and agencies' implementation plans; describes the nature and extent of interagency coordination on implementation; outlines the monitoring and evaluation on policy objectives; and describes existing, enhanced, or newly established training. ■

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