
Reporting on the Gender Learning Day – 18 September 2019

This year, the Gender Learning Day 2019 was held as a conference, organized by cfd – the feminist peace organization, PeaceWomen Across the Globe (PWAG) and the Swiss Platform for Peacebuilding KOFF in cooperation with the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA) on the topic **Women, Peace and Security: Reclaim Prevention!**

The day focused on the critical reflection of the implementation of the Swiss National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (NAP) 1325 – in the spirit and as a result of the project “Civil Society Contribution to the Implementation of the Swiss NAP 1325”. The conference shed light on its political relevance at the domestic and international level from a variety of perspectives and contexts. It brought together renewed experts from civil society, academia, and state institutions to discuss the following questions:

- How can civil society play a role in shaping the debates on Women, Peace and Security to strengthen the link between policy and practice, in Switzerland and beyond? To what extent are women involved in decision-making about peace and security at community, national and international levels?
- How is the Swiss NAP 1325 reflective of peacebuilding and violence prevention work on the ground? What are the implications of linking Women, Peace and Security (WPE) and the prevention of violent extremism (PVE)?

1. Welcome and Introduction

Flurina Derungs (PeaceWomen Across the Globe) welcomed the audience by illuminating the background and history of the Swiss National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (NAP) 1325. The UN Security Council resolution 1325 on women and peace and security (adopted in the year 2000) places women’s interests at the center of the international peace and security agenda for the first time. This is considered a milestone in international peace politics. However, Derungs states that apart from slight successes there is little achieved in the implementation. Besides the lacking implementation, non-governmental actors observe that the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda was linked to issues of terrorism and violent extremism. Civil society actors are concerned by the securitization of the WPS agenda through the linking with the Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE) agenda. The publication “Women, Peace and Security and the Prevention of Violence: Reflections from Civil Society in the Context of the Fourth Swiss National Action Plan 1325” that was launched by the organizing NGOs of the conference provides a critical reflection on these linkages.

2. Plenary: Key Messages from the Workshops



After three interactive workshops, six representatives from these workshops presented the respective key messages. The workshops were titled:

- Implementation of National Action Plans on UNSCR 1325: Challenges and Opportunities
- The Future of the Women, Peace & Security Agenda: Towards a Sustainable Peace
- Linking the Women, Peace & Security and Preventing Violent Extremism Agendas: Tensions and Possibilities

© swisspeace

Reoccurring suggestions for further working on these topics were the possibilities of making NAP's legally binding, the need for a better coordination between stakeholders, the need for finding creative solutions in a sometimes politically difficult environment, and the need to ensure there is action following the policies.

3. Speech by Pascale Baeriswyl (State Secretary, FDFA)



State Secretary Pascale Baeriswyl gave the official opening speech for the conference. You can read the complete speech [here](#). Baeriswyl stressed the importance of the partnership between civil society actors and state actors for the Swiss National Action Plan 1325. According to her, listening to the critical voice of civil society is crucial for the work on women, peace and security.

© swisspeace

4. Parliamentary 1325-Ambassadors Input



© swisspeace

The four parliamentarians Carlo Sommaruga (Social Democratic Party), Yvonne Feri (Social Democratic Party), Sibel Arslan (Green Party) and Rosemarie Quadranti (Conservative Democratic Party) (from right to left) held an input on the importance of the implementation of the agenda 1325 and the responsibilities of politics for the implementation of this agenda. The parliamentarians stressed the domestic dimension of the of the agenda 1325 and the resulting domestic responsibilities. As an example of these responsibilities, restrictions on arms exports as well as restrictions on the availability of arms in Switzerland were called for. All four ambassadors are pushing motions in the running session of parliament in the area of the NAP 1325 such as for example on domestic violence.

5. Panel 1: Women, Peace & Security and Violence Prevention: Critical Reflections on the Preventing Violent Extremism Agenda

© swisspeace



Elizabeth Mesok (KOFF/swisspeace), Barbara Affolter (FDFA/SDC), Fauziya Abdi (WIIS), Daniel de Torres (DCAF), Sima Samar (AIHRC), France Bognon (ICAN), Anna Leissing (KOFF/swisspeace)

The first panel of the afternoon focused on critical reflections on the PVE agenda. The panellists shared their critical and diverse perspectives on PVE. Barbara Affolter (FDFA/SDC) asked, how the instrumentalization of the WPS agenda for the means of the PVE agenda can be avoided. She

emphasized the importance of a human security understanding, opposed to an understanding of security from a state's perspective only, since human security and state security can potentially diverge. According to her, it is crucial to stress a human rights-based approach in order to avoid the instrumentalization and weakening of women's rights. Several panellists made reference to the UNDP report "[Journey to Extremism in Africa](#)", which makes clear that one of the main factors on the journey to extremism is violent action performed by the security sector of the state.

Another focus in the discussion was the need to find ways for the grassroots level to be represented in policymaking processes. The connection between violence at home with national security was especially emphasized by Sima Samar (AIHRC). Daniel de Torres (DCAF) stated that understanding gender roles and stereotypes is important in understanding root causes of extremism.

6. Panel 2: Looking Towards the Future: Women, Peace & Security in Switzerland and Beyond



© swisspeace

Flurina Derungs (PeaceWomen Across the Globe), Yannick Reichenau (FDFA), Maria Butler (WILPF), Maj i Gst Fabrice Dubosson (SWIS-SINT), Magdalena Küng (GSoA), Amal Khreishe (PWWSD)

The second panel and last session of the conference focused on future perspectives of the Women, Peace and Security agenda in Switzerland and beyond. The panellists shared their visions for Switzerland and its foreign policy. These included a variety of perspectives such as:

- The call to hold companies accountable for human rights violations (Maria Butler)
- Moving away from understanding security policy as military policy (Magdalena Küng)
- The expectation on the Swiss government to push for a local establishment NAP's (Amal Khreishe)
- The hope for more women in the Swiss military (Maj i Gst Fabrice Dubosson)
- The hope for more men as catalysators for gender equality (Yannick Reichenau)

The conference ended with a recurring cited quote from panelist Fauziya Abdi: "Peace is not a project, but a process. It cannot be founded in elites, but it must be grounded in communities."