

**Written Statement of Support for Women In Governance Organization (SWIGO) Submitted to the UPR Info
Pre-cessions 40 Program – Giving A voice to Society**

For December 8, 2021, Pre-Session on:

**“Women, Peace, and Security: the Current Situation in South Sudan in Advancing Women’s Meaningful
Participation in Preventing and Resolving Conflict”**

The UPR Info Pre-session Team and Fellow Panelists:

Support for Women In Governance Organization (SWIGO) is pleased to submit this statement in strong support of the implementation of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda in South Sudan.

Founded in 2005, is a women-led and activist non-profit, non-denominational, non-political, and non-sectarian NNGO and a multi-cultural Civil Society Organization (CSO) functioning to advance and sustain values and create enabling environment and processes in which every woman and girl can exercise her human rights and live up to her full potential.

About WPS Agenda: The Women, Peace, and Security Agenda is an innovative toolbox to leverage more equitable peace. The violence and conflicts in South Sudan have shown again the gender impacts and consequences of violence and war, particularly against women and children. The WPS agenda rests on four pillars: **prevention, participation, protection and relief, and recovery**. Hence, this Agenda has transformative potential - the potential to escape cycles of conflict, to create inclusive and more democratic peacemaking, and to turn from gender inequality to gender justice. Women's agency, voice, and capacities are critical to local dialogues, better policies, and more equitable peace deals. The UNSCR 1325 is the most translated Security Council Resolution ever!

Why Women, Peace, and Security?

- Women have the voice and power to be agents of change.
- Women's agency, voice, and capacities, and a real gender perspective are critical to local dialogues, better policies, and more equitable peace deals.
- The WPS Agenda has a powerful transformative potential for:
 - Moving from exclusive to democratic decision-making,
 - From gender inequality to gender justice, and
 - From conflict and violence to sustainable and feminist peace.

Current Situation in South Sudan in Advancing Women’s Meaningful Participation in Preventing and Resolving Conflict

- The Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (R-ARCSS) on 12 September 2018 & the Revitalized Transitional Government of National Unity (RTGoNU) on 22

- Furthermore, they provided for a Women's Enterprise Fund and women's representative seats in key transitional institutions.
- The South Sudanese women played a major role during the High-Level Revitalization Forum (HLRF) that led to the signing of the R-ARCSS.
- Women from political entities participated in the R-ARCSS process, in addition to women representing other stakeholders, like women networks (Women Bloc and Women's Coalitions), women from other CSOs organizations, (CSOs Forum, Youth, Academia, Business Community, Faith-based organizations, CSOs Alliance, eminent personalities) were highly active in pushing women and civilian protections and rights issues in the agreement.
- The participation of women in the formal peace process (Track One) contributed to ensuring that aspects of the four pillars of UNSCR 1325 (Participation, Prevention, Protection, and Recovery) – though inadequate - were addressed in the Revitalized Agreement.
- Although the Agenda is now recognized nationally, there are still implementation gaps and challenges, and priorities for action to advance South Sudanese women's meaningful participation and resolving conflict

Implementation Gaps and Challenges to Advance South Sudanese Women's Meaningful

Participation and Resolving Conflict

- Patriarchy, inequalities, militarized masculinities & discriminatory power structures inhibit effective conflict prevention, inclusive peace, women's rights, and participation.
- Lack of resources is a barrier to women's effective work in preventing and resolving conflicts, followed by lack of trust and cooperation between government and civil society, gaps between international policies and action and local level realities not being addressed, as well as the misinterpretation of culture and related to women's dignity.
- Patriarchal views of men's leadership continue to hinder women's meaningful participation in preventing and resolving conflicts. E.g. the year 2019 witnessed several CSOs and women restrictions to work on peace-related issues including signatories of the Revitalized Peace agreement².
- Lack of Political Will: South Sudan has in place the necessary legal, institutions, and policy framework to substantially increase the participation of women in preventing and resolving conflicts, but lacks the political will to implement them.
- The shrinking of the political and civil space limits women's organizations to effectively engage at the grassroots level as well as push women's issues at the national agenda.
- Media coverage of women's participation in preventing and resolving conflicts in South Sudan is limited and prominent female leaders are often not featured in key updates on women's engagement.

¹ <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/03AWomenPeaceNeg.pdf>

² https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s_2020_946.pdf

- **Illiteracy Rate:** The illiteracy rate of women in South Sudan is over 80%, making illiteracy a critical obstacle to the full participation of women in preventing and resolving conflicts and other aspects of nation-building.
- **Ethnicity and Political Status:** South Sudan is so diverse to the extent that this diversity has become counterproductive to women’s efforts in meaningfully participating in preventing and resolving conflicts. Moreover, the political culture in South Sudan plays a role in hindering the effective participation of women in meaningfully participating in preventing and resolving conflicts. Accessing most political processes, appointments, funding, and information is all about whom you know in South Sudan.

Priorities for Action to Advance South Sudanese Women’s Meaningful Participation and Resolving Conflict. To realize a transformative potential of the WPS Agenda, it’s time to move from verbal commitments to action: the Government, the United Nations entities, the UN Security Council, CSOs, the private sector and other actors must implement relevant commitments across all thematic areas. There is need for tangible monitoring tools:

- In strengthening accountability and promoting a progressive gender-perspective in preventing conflict and creating peace at the local and national levels.
- To strengthen the effective and meaningful participation of women in peace and security matters and to bridge global and local efforts to implement a holistic and transformative WPS Agenda
- To hold the government of South Sudan accountable and mobilize key stakeholders to move from commitments to accomplishments

Conclusion. In the 31 years since the WPS Agenda was adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations, it has made a difference in the lives of women, families, and communities in South Sudan. But as the struggle for women’s human rights continues, far too many women are still denied dignity, self-determination, and meaningful participation in preventing and resolving conflicts. By meaningfully creating spaces for women to participate in preventing and resolving conflicts, the newly-born South Sudan and the TGoNU would signal their commitment to these women both at home and abroad. I urge TGoNU to significantly implement WPS Agenda and stand up for women and girls in South Sudan.

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