

5th Edition

APSACO

African Peace and Security
Annual Conference

5th EDITION - 2021

Women, Peace and Security in Africa

General Rapporteur

Pr. Rachid El HOUDAIGUI, Senior Fellow Policy Center for the New South

SUMMARY REPORT

Rabat, June 21-23, 2021

African Peace and Security Annual Conference – APSACO

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Introduction

The fifth African Peace and Security Annual Conference (APSACO) was held from June 21-23, 2021, under the theme ‘Women, Peace, and Security in Africa’. The three-day event, hosted and organized by the Policy Center for the New South (PCNS), was composed of four panels and three workshops:

- **Panel 1:** Bolstering Women’s Role in Conflict Prevention and Resolution
- **Panel 2:** Integrating & Reinforcing The Gender Dimension in Security and Defense
- **Panel 3:** Understanding to Act Better: Different Roles of Women in combatting Violent Extremism
- **Panel 4:** Reinforcing Women’s Presence and Participation in Peace Missions
- **Workshop 1:** Index Presentation: Global Peace Index
- **Workshop 2:** Report Presentation: ISIS Files
- **Workshop 3:** Report Presentation: Annual Report on Africa’s Geopolitics

As has become the trademark of PCNS conferences, APSACO brought together experts from different parts of the world, from various fields, and professions—from the military and political worlds to academia and civil society—to ensure a broad and fruitful conversation. This report presents and summarizes the chairs’ and speakers’ interventions and the main issues tackled during the conference.



Opening Remarks

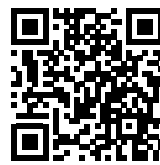
[WATCH VIDEO](#)


In his opening speech, Mr. **Karim El Aynaoui**, Executive President of the Policy Center for The New South, after welcoming the participants, introduced the objectives and history of APSACO. The goal of the conference is to establish a narrative regarding the issues of women and security that is uniquely and purely African. With the rise of complexities and challenges, it is important to gather professionals to create an intellectual infrastructure and framework within which a continued collaboration of ideas could be debated. The panels themselves are very equally balanced between men and women, and this should set a norm for the international community as a way of promoting the diversity of opinions and people.

PCNS is equally involved in research when it comes to the study of peace and security in the various regions of Africa. It is imperative that the next generation be properly prepared to deal with the future of the intricacies of African and international relations. These discussions should be based exclusively on respect and facts-based information. This year's gathering focused on the specific roles of women in the realm of security and peacekeeping operations, and recognized their valuable contribution to the issues plaguing the region, and the possible solutions that they offer. The most important fact to note is that these discussions and possibilities of solutions should be founded by and for Africans.



Mr. **Rachid El Houdaigui**, Senior Fellow of the Policy Center for The New South, welcomed the participants by acknowledging their diversity in gender as well as profession and nationality. This conference essentially creates a platform in which expert politicians and civil society actors can assess the general performance and execution of the agendas set forth. The enhancement of women in peace and security roles is of the utmost importance, and these discussions allow for debates on how best to accomplish this goal, as well as how to alert the international community to the importance of women's involvement locally, nationally, and internationally. The first panel will delve more deeply into how to best support women in roles of conflict prevention and resolution. The second panel will discuss how to aid women in taking on 'harsher' roles within peacebuilding and security areas. The third panel will go on to explain the role that women play in violent extremism and also debate the current situations of environments that have been increasing in violence. The fourth panel explains the means through which women peacekeepers, and women in other peace or security roles, can be better supported to contribute to the future of Africa.



Introductory Conversation

[WATCH VIDEO](#)


The introductory conversation was conducted by **Mabingue Ngom**, Regional Director, West and Central Africa, UNFPA, **Bineta Diop**, Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security, African Union Commission, and **Letty Chiwara**, UN Women Representative to Ethiopia, the Africa Union and the Economic Commission for Africa, UN Women. The group discussed the various agendas their work has provided them with, and debated the most effective forms of female involvement in peace and security.



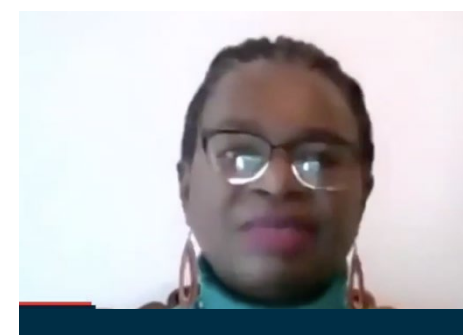
Mabingue Ngom, Regional Director, West and Central Africa, UNFPA, explained that the promotion of women's roles in the United Nations is one of the organization's main priorities. Women's formal contribution to the peacemaking process is still lacking and many current peace agreements are without agenda provisions that accurately address women's peace and security needs. This conference takes place in a world in which over 2 billion people are affected and many Africans are endangered by the worsening of security organizations and institutions. The Regional Office for West

and Central Africa has made its mission to strengthen the relationship between changes in demographics and armed conflicts in the Sahel. The objective is to establish and engage in political dialogue with governments and partners on the basis of data and evidence. The progress that has been made since Resolution 1325 should be referenced and advanced further in order to achieve a more prosperous and peaceful Africa.



Bineta Diop, Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security, African Union Commission, went on to explain that since the adoption of Resolution 1325 in 2000, about 30 African nations have adopted national plans to help achieve the goals set forth in the document; this is more than half of the continent. Much of the continent has

regional plans, including the Great Lakes and the Mano River. However there are still many complications with implementation. A continental results framework was adopted by the African Union in order to better reap the benefits of the resolution by the United Nations. The framework galvanized governments to present this commitment to more women; however women's participation in peacebuilding remains dangerously low. During the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been another 'shadow pandemic', resulting from women having less of a role in political proceedings and leadership roles. This has affected areas from refugee camps to capitals. The patriarchal attitude of the continent must be analyzed, as well as the continued general discrimination against women.



Letty Chiwara, UN Women's Representative to Ethiopia, the Africa Union and the Economic Commission for Africa, UN Women, contributed to the discussion with the agenda of the WPS since it is rooted in Africa, and Resolution 1325 was passed due to from the great support given by many African gender activists, policymakers, and practitioners. While the resolution has been driven passionately by African women,

there are still challenges that remain with its implementation in society. Implementation is extremely slow; these plans are not financed or included in national budgets. Rwanda is the only African nation that has been able to achieve equality of women in terms of parliamentary representation. While nations including Senegal and Cabo Verde have increased women's representation to 40%, other nations have regressed. This issue must be addressed and dealt with accordingly. The presence and role of women in conflict prevention remains small and WPS has made sure that women are leading in significant roles in larger numbers when it comes to peace negotiations. WPS trains women as mediators and deploys gender advisors to offices of special envoys in order to aid in increasing women's impact in peacebuilding.

Panel 1: Bolstering Women Role in Conflicts' Prevention and Resolution



This panel, moderated by **Badreddine El Harti**, Principal Rule of Law and Security Sector Reform Adviser, UN Special Adviser to the President of Burkina Faso, United Nations, examined the means by which Africa could better support and promote women's roles in peace and security on the continent. There was the recognition that with the lack of female moderators in peace talks, there was a lack of peace in general as a result.

- Women's participation in mediation and national reconciliation;
- Women leadership and decision-making processes;
- Raising awareness of gender equality in proposals for reforms of the security of Africa;
- Women's contribute to peace culture;
- Women in sustainable peace: institutional constructions, consolidation and development;
- Best practices to defeat violence against women;
- Women in the National Security Systems (NSS) in Africa.



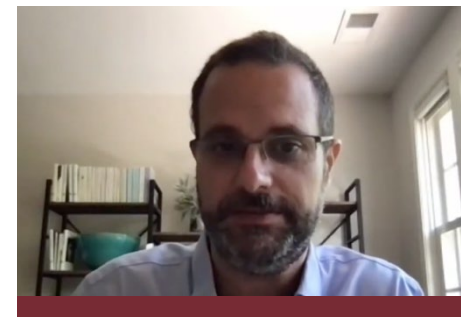
Mamphela Ramphela, Co-President of the Club of Rome and Co-Founder Reimagine SA, opened the discussion with the point that there is gender-based violence within the military. Enhancing women's roles in conflict prevention and resolution will not be reached through simple empowerment or policy changes. Cooperation on this

agenda will be difficult unless there are compromises and collaborations between those who wage war and peacemakers. Within conflicts that are driven by socio-economic and political factors, women are excellent keepers of the peace with qualities like empathy. Women are often the main victims of violent conflicts and are also a basis for all societal structures; unfortunately, the patriarchal narrative has prevented the military from adopting this set of ideals. The role of the United Nations' peace process seeks to not only sign peace agreements, but also to heal nations that have been wounded by violent conflicts. The inclusion of women into more peacekeeping and security roles would aid in the accomplishment of this goal.



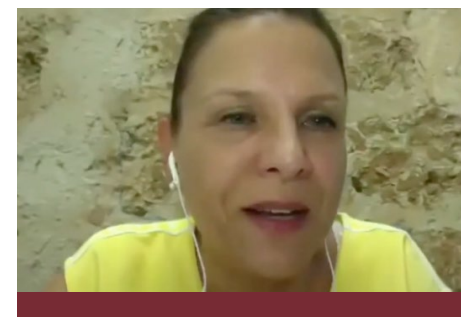
Erika Monticone, Engagement Advisor, NSD-S Hub for South, spoke of sport as an instrument of peace. Sports are a means of encouraging improvements in education and good values or morals. However, the patriarchal norms stand as an obstacle preventing women from changing their positions from those that system has

already dictated. More attention must be given to the environment in which Africa, and the rest of the world, lives, in order to make a significant difference in the role of women.



Federico Borello, Executive Director, Center for Civilians in Conflict, described that the way to effectively protect civilians is by devising a transformative approach and understanding their various needs by discussing solutions with locals, raising awareness about their rights, and organizing meetings between

communities and political actors. Women should be made an active part of these methods of connection, and issues relating directly to women should be presented for discussion. In order to provide an environment in which women feel safe and able to speak freely, these talks should be directed by other women. Presently, the United Nations has only about 11% of women within the police force and 5% as contingent staff, so they are in high demand. Both men and women should be given training in gender relations, while working to tackle gender discrimination and sexual violence.



Christina Foerch, Co-founder, Fighter for Peace, explained that women should not be exclusively classified as victims when they are equally capable of being perpetrators. Women are found to play as much of a role in war as they do in peace. However, there is a specific stigma attached to women combatants; women returning from

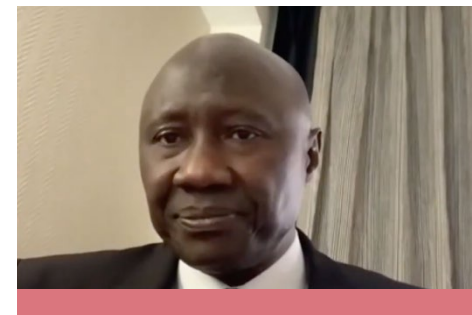
violent environments will find assimilation to be difficult as they are seen as having gone against their 'natural' qualities of empathy and kindness by partaking in acts of violence. Focuses should shift from the waging of war to reconciliation and peace agreements. There should also be the promotion of women within national peace and security strategies. Lebanon, specifically, has been facing the challenge of how to promote this agenda and then implement it. Social change needs to take place and it begins at grassroots level.

Panel 2: Integrating & Reinforcing The Gender Dimension in Security and Defense



This panel was moderated by **Hafsat Abiola**, President, Women in Africa Initiative, who opened the discussion with the sentiment that the enhancement of safety and security for women is of the utmost importance. Ms. Abiola went on to acknowledge the panelists and commend them for their expertise and willingness to participate in the discussion about how better to support women in security and defense.

- Action plans for women, peace, security in Africa;
- Reform proposals for the African security sector;
- Countries emerging from conflicts or in transition;
- Countries advanced in gender inclusion (Europe, America, Asia);
- Fragile states;
- Women in Security System Reform (SSR).



Birame Diop, former Army Chief of Staff, Republic of Senegal Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), explained that the discussion of gender was essential to security, stability, and development of the world's future. There appear to be positive trends around the globe with the consistency of gender integration.

The security sector should be the realm to ensure gender integration since it is the center of development for other sectors. In order for this inclusion initiative to occur, men and women equally must work alongside one another toward a common goal. This is a human rights issue for women and discrimination is one of the most prominent obstacles to expanding those rights. The continued segregation of women is a major hindrance to the goal of gender integration. Women and children are often the main victims of armed and violent conflicts. It would stand to reason that peacekeeping units deployed to the region would then include both men and women, so that those affected are able to feel as though they are able to interact with their peers.



Jakana Thomas, Associate Professor, Michigan State University, emphasized the point that Africa is at the forefront of implementing Resolution 1325. The main goal of the resolution is to successfully reach gender equality; however, the question of what the limits are to the initiation of gender-inclusive policies must be asked and debated. It is

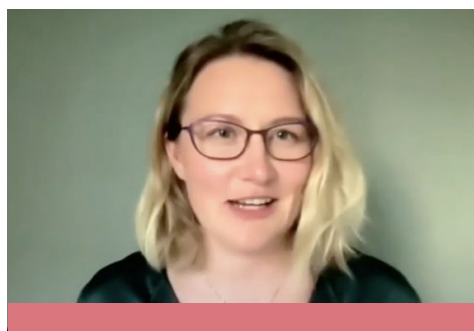
well known that women's involvement in political proceedings leads to longer-lasting peace agreements. This would also raise the question of which women would best contribute to these proceedings, since each woman would have a different agenda. Ms. Thomas recommended taking into account the diversity of women and the possibility of that minority voices could be overshadowed. The international community, for the majority, is still more comfortable and familiar with women's participation centered on peacemaking roles. However, data collected around the world suggests that women

are just as suitable for positions in the security sector or combat units. Women in the security sector are able to perform certain jobs that men are less qualified to do; checking other women at checkpoints or extracting intelligence through interpersonal connections are two examples. There is still a narrative that those fighting should be the same as those resolving the conflict, but this is incorrect and promotes the idea that men should be in charge of both actions.



Ibrahim Diarra Siratigui, Former Chief of Staff, Mali Republic Presidency, delivered his perspective on women's integration into security roles from the viewpoint of the armed forces of Mali. The nation has faced difficulties with infrastructure and coups d'état on three different occasions since 2012. Plus, the fragility of the state stems from

corruption and continued violence. Therefore, and as women are the main victims of this struggle, the feminization of the military structure is significant. Thus, a complete reformation of the security sector is required for gender integration to be completed successfully. The National Gender Policy was implemented in 2011, and resulted in better awareness of women's involvement in security. However, there is still a low level of representation. It is important to unite men and women within the public sphere and in the military to better promote their influence in the security sector. A major obstacle to incorporating more women into the military is the high level of sexual harassment.



Jonna Naumanen, Specialist on Gender Equality and Women's Human Rights, OSCE, opened her discussion with the feminist quote, "The personal is political." This phrase applies directly to the issues of peace and security as well, since women are affected in both contexts, and should thus have a place in addressing them. There is substantial

evidence of an increase in the effectiveness of security when women participate; it is

thought to have stemmed from a natural inclination to connect with a community, so women are able to make meaningful connections and collect information. Men within the military have a responsibility to protect both men and women, so understanding women's security needs is crucial. There needs to be a 'human rights culture' in which this view is widely accepted.

Index Presentation: Global Peace Index



The Global Peace Index (GPI) provides a data-based analysis of the status of peace globally, the economic value of peace, and how to best create a peaceful and prosperous society. The GPI and the research underlying it are utilized by governments around the world, international institutions, NGOs, academic institutions, and various think tanks. The index was moderated by **Khalid Chegraoui**, Senior Fellow, Policy Center for the New South. This year, 2021, marks the fifteenth edition of the GPI.



Serge Strobants, Director Europe and the MENA Region, Institute for Economics & Peace, stated that there are 23 indicators of whether a nation is swayed towards deterioration or restoration and peace; there are six for ongoing domestic and international conflicts, 10 for social security, and seven for measures of militarization.

The indicators marking the greatest rate of deterioration, as of 2021, were violent demonstrations, political instability, and militarization. According to the GPI, about 73 nations have deteriorated and about 87 have become more peaceful. While Iceland is still considered the most peaceful nation, countries including Burkina Faso and Belarus have deteriorated at an alarming rate. The COVID-19 crisis has contributed to an increase in civil unrest by about 10% since 2020, and political instability deteriorated in about 46 nations. The global peace gap continues to widen and over 80 million people have been displaced as a result. The assumed economic value of peace is \$14.96 trillion, equivalent to 11.6% of the world's GDP. The five nations at highest risk of violence are all in sub-Saharan Africa.



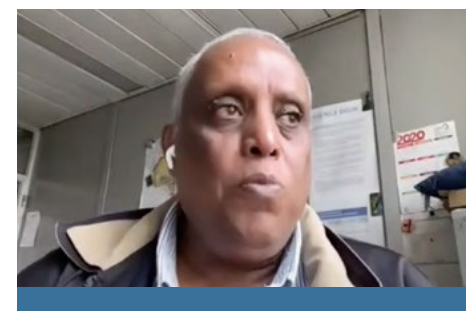
Annika Hilding Norberg, Head of Peace Operations and Peacebuilding, Geneva Center for Security Policy, spoke of the importance of gendered leadership roles. Attention should also be given to the importance of civil mobilization and the Pillars of Positive Peace, which is an action-based agenda that can pull people away from despair. Fortunately,

African women's involvement in peacekeeping roles has been steadily increasing; the continent is in a position to shape the future of leadership. There also remains the major impact of rising levels of sexual assault and violence against women. Gender parity has been achieved in sectors of the United Nations police force, which indicates progress towards gender equality of all aspects.



Yonas Adaye Adeto, Director, Institute for Peace & Security Studies (IPSS), reflected on the philosophy of peace and the impacts of domestic and daily violence. The holistic aspect results in the Global North against the Global South in terms of variance between their policies and agendas when it comes to issues where there is mutual interest and

involvement. Collaboration instead of competition between the North and South would be to the benefit of global peace and security. Women, as other panelists indicated, often make up the largest number of victims when it comes to either wars or even domestic instability or conflict. Investment in women's general education is needed, as is a global approach to women's empowerment.



Mr. **Jalal Abdel-Latif**, Senior Social Policy Advisor, Gender and Poverty, Social Policy Division, UNECA, raised a series of questions for the GPI:

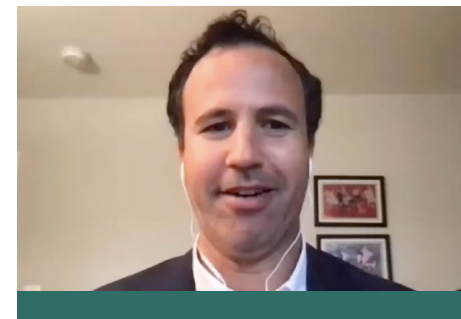
- How should internal security best be defined?
- Is regional aggregation of data taken care of?
- To what extent can these indexes be utilized as a means to inspire politics, policies, and strategies?

Panel 3: Understanding to Act Better: Different Roles of Women in Violent Extremism



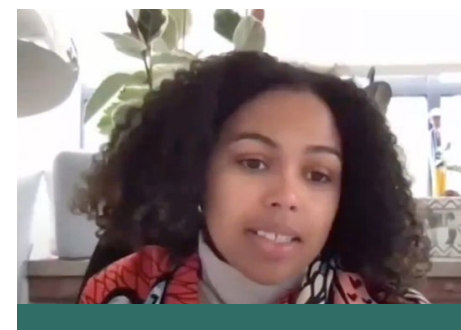
The second day of the APSACO event introduced the third panel, which discussed the various categories that women will find themselves in when faced with a violent environment. The panel was moderated by **Zineb Benalla**, CEO and Founder, Eirene Associates Int. Women can be victims as well as accomplices or militants. The panel delved into various forms of violence, different regions, female returnees, and rehabilitation processes for women.

- Profiles of women in violent environments;
- Kinds of violence women are subjected to;
- Lake Chad Basin and the Sahel situations;
- Women's roles and connections within ISIS;
- Rehabilitation processes and women;
- Integration of victims of violence into security systems.



Rida Lyammouri, Senior Fellow, Policy Center for the New South, focused on the Sahel and West Africa. Women are not the intended targets of violent extremism, but they are often the victims. However, trends within the Lake Chad Basin provide another outlook; women are trapped into forced marriages and kidnapped by Boko Haram. Women's

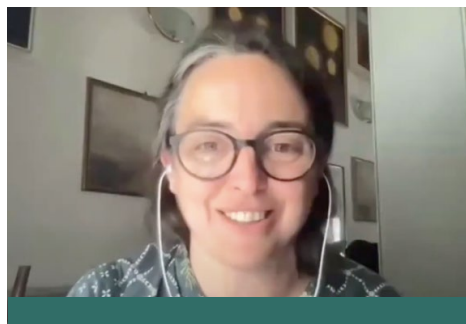
freedoms within this region are already extremely restricted when it comes to dress code, behavior, and activities. Despite these challenges, women have shown great resilience in bargaining and negotiating with terrorist organizations that use violent extremism in order to continue traveling to markets and trading. Mr. Lyammouri said that a major challenge faced by many researchers is the lack of data from this region, in terms of what women's roles are and what they may entail. A second challenge is that many of the extremist groups in the area are seen as protectors as opposed to a threat to civilians. A third issue would be that some data shows that many women face violence at the hands of other armed organizations, not only violent extremist groups. These precarious distinctions provide a major obstacle for prevention plans.



As **Nayanka Paquete Perdigão**, Program Associate, Global Internet Forum to Counter Terrorism (GIFCT), stated, it is known that women are involved in terrorism. There is evidence from the 2019 report from the Global Terrorism Index which recorded that women suicide bombers were more deadly than their male counterparts. The

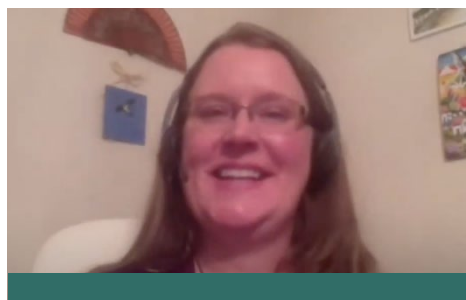
incentive to join terrorist organizations, from a woman's perspective, is the more diverse opportunities of participation. Women will aid in the radicalization process and urge others to join and fulfill their duty to carry out jihad. There are women on both sides of violent extremism; those who promote it and then those who attempt to prevent it. Some key findings from a series of studies collected from women in northern Nigeria were that women are often not radicalized while still holding a role in a terrorist organization. Factors such as illiteracy and financial dependence on men will result in women joining

groups such as Boko Haram. On the other side, women in roles of prevention of violent extremism will join civilian task forces to help with checkpoint searches and intelligence gathering. Their involvement is a direct protest against the lack of aid and support received from the government. Because of the growing gap between state and human security, violent extremism has begun to fill the space. Soft power policies must be adopted as a means of deradicalization of former members of violent extremist groups, and the idea that women are homogenous must be reformed, as it is not the case.



Harmonie Toros, Associate Professor, University of Kent, delved into the narratives of women affected by violent extremism. One of the more prominent narratives states that women are purely victims; this promotes stereotypes such as weakness, and portrays women as apolitical actors who are defined by their relationship to men.

Ms. Toros started with an analysis of empowerment and disempowerment through the lens of NATO. One of the findings from this research was that the idea that women are victims is often an attraction for a group that would use a narrative to create a future for women with empowerment as opposed to disempowerment. A second important aspect of these narratives is their impacts on state policies. Morocco has a victim-based narrative, while Tunisia has a threat-based one. There is a gap between policies and their implementation; a study from the United Kingdom found that women held supporting roles, but not other places in an organization; despite this idea being a part of policy, it was not practiced. It is imperative that there is acknowledgement of gendered constructions.



Alexis L. Henshaw, Assistant Professor, Troy University, used the phrase “feminist curiosity” to explain the phenomenon that the radicalization process for men is widely known, but when a woman becomes radicalized, it is portrayed as if it were the first of its nature. Ms. Henshaw’s research looked

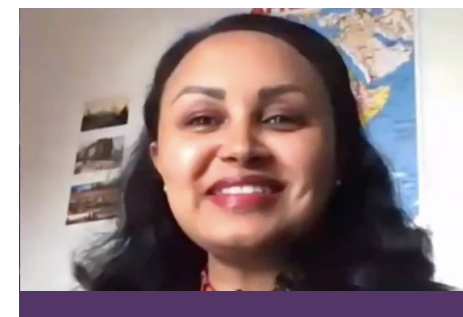
at where women participate in armed conflicts as combatants, and found that about 60% of all armed movements include women; 30% of those movements included them as combatants, and only in about a quarter of these conflicts are women in leadership roles. In Africa, specifically, there are less women involved in armed conflicts, but those that are have been coerced. Distinguishing between agency and coercion as factors explaining women’s involvement in armed conflicts is imperative and requires more data than currently available. There is also a strong emphasis on the reestablishment of states as a means of restoring it to its original state before the conflict and bringing back gender roles and norms. These norms neglect the talents of women combatants. Women must be generally more recognized, and recognized in processes that have the capabilities to reach them.

Panel 4: Reinforcing Women Presence and Participation in Peace Operations Missions



The fourth panel of the APSACO event was moderated by **Mohammed Louichki**, Senior Fellow, Policy Center for the New South, who warmly welcomed all of the panelists and thanked them for their valued participation and contributions. This panel aimed to hold an open and intellectual discussion on the roles of servicewomen, peace operations, and the overall enhancement of women's roles in the peacekeeping and security sectors.

- Insights/perspectives from peace operation missions in Africa;
- Integration of gender perspectives in peace operations;
- Power of gender-crossing within peacekeeping missions of UN;
- African Union experience: Enhancing women's roles in African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA);
- NATO, EU experiences, etc.



Tigist Yeshiwas Engdaw, Senior Advisor on Peacebuilding and Reconciliation UNDP to Ministry of Peace, Ethiopia, introduced the concepts derived from the Beijing Declaration 1995 and its main goal of establishing and advancing women's rights. There are 12 critical areas within the document. However, the main focus should be the

issue of armed conflict. There was a 46% rise in violence in Africa because of growing ethnic tensions in the face of the complications of the COVID-19 pandemic. Women play a key role in peacekeeping, but they remain overshadowed by men and underrepresented. When women are involved in peace negotiations, their lifespan is much longer; the Liberian Civil War in 2005 would be an example. A woman has yet to be appointed as the Chief Negotiator of the UN. There are challenges to the enhancement of women in peacekeeping roles, specifically with the Resolution 1325:

- Lack of awareness and a lack of implementation strategy;
- Active participation or involvement by women in the peace process;
- Complications with translation and danger of over-simplification;
- During armed conflict, nearly impossible to hold nations to resolution terms.



According to **Younes Abouyoub**, Director of the Governance and State Building Division for the MENA region, United Nations, peacekeeping operations directed by the United Nations are the most favored diplomatic tools, yet these policies face many challenges. There are very high levels of turnover; women will leave positions faster than they take

them. The UN has the goal of reaching a 50-50 gender balance; however the 8,000 women deployed in peace operations make up less than 5% of the UN's forces. More than 150 member states have shown solidarity with this goal and have adapted national strategies to reflect the goals of Resolution 1325. The underpinnings of a gender inclusive UN would be:

- Women as role models to young girls;
- Ensuring peace missions account for women's needs as well as men's;
- Africa will lead the world on gender-inclusive action in relation to peacekeeping missions.



Dominique Trinquand, Former Head of Mission, French Military Mission to the UN and NATO, raised the point that women are about half of the world's population and soldiers and peacekeepers are as likely to meet a woman as a man, so it would be reasonable to include an even number of women personnel in peace operations.

Within a unit, women offer the dynamic of rationality as well as a counter to men's often aggressive behavior; with women incorporated into a unit, there is a better balance. While women are invaluable within a unit or peacekeeping team, it is difficult for them to climb in the ranks of the military. The main focus currently should be on giving women greater incentives to join peace missions and military ranks.



According to **Rama Yade**, Director of Africa Center, Atlantic Council, the world should not pay as much attention to the sheer number of women participating in peace and security roles, but rather to their contributions and effectiveness. In a direct response to Resolution 1325, a woman was appointed head of an operation in Cyprus, and this was meant

to serve as an affirmation of women's roles within the peace and security sectors of the United Nations. There are certain regions of the globe where a woman in charge of a peacekeeping operation, or a part of one, would better reflect the situation and culture: a woman in Afghanistan would be able to search other women at checkpoints since the culture promotes more segregation between men and women. The Democratic Republic of the Congo has reported women peacekeepers as having better relationships

with civilians, and having the capability to establish trust and extract intelligence. Bias against women, and cultural or social norms, are still the most notable obstacles to enhancing women's roles in peace and security positions.



Annette Leijenaar, Head Peace Operations and Peacebuilding, Institute for Security Studies, expressed concern over a decline in women's participation in the peace and security sectors. Within the security sector, specifically, police forces and the military are typically male-dominated. Ms. Leijenaar asked why women are expected to justify their

involvement, when men are not asked the same. Decisions are made at operational levels within the peace and security sectors, and this coincidentally is where women are the most underrepresented: the managerial gap. It is projected that it will take about 700 years in order to close the managerial gap and reach gender equality at this level. Another obstacle to closing this gap is other women. Women can stand in the way of their peers just as easily as men can. It is crucial to have more women involved in peace and negotiation; the example of the Liberian Civil War in 2005 and women joining the Liberian National Police Force can be used as examples.



WATCH VIDEO ▶

Workshop 2: Report Presentation - ISIS Files



On the third day of the APSACO event **Mehdi Benomar**, Head of Department of Research in International Relations, Policy Center for the New South, moderated the session on the report on the terrorist group ISIS. Since the adoption of Resolution 1325 by the UN Security Council, women's security is still under threat, the massive bureaucracy

created by ISIS is one example. Groups such as ISIS use tactics to recruit, exploit, and dominate those under their influence; women and children are often the most affected. The ISIS Files are a series of documents that were collected from Iraq in 2018, and hold intelligence and statistics regarding the inner workings of the terrorist organization.



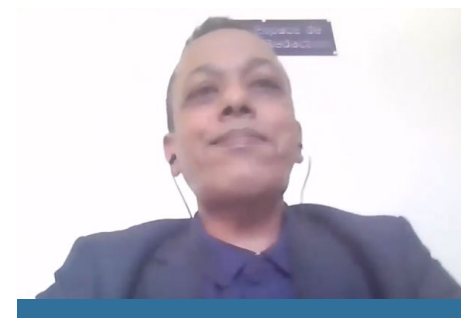
Devorah Margolin, Adjunct Professor, George Washington University, discussed the collaboration between the New York Times and George Washington University that resulted in the translation, analysis, and delivery of the files to the public. The files cover a broad sphere of information, including ideology, real estate, education, and

services that ISIS provides for those that fall under its control. The ISIS Files provide an opportunity to peer into the intricacies of the governing body of the organization, and into how their subjects' lives are conducted in the environment enforced around them. Ms. Margolin means to expand on the context of her work entitled, 'Women and the Islamic State, Victimization, Support, Collaboration and Acquiescence'. The paper analyzes the treatment of women living within the Islamic State and the differences between the 'in-group' and 'out-group.' Two main sources of data were used in these analyses: The George Washington ISIS Files and other data composed of existing records of other centers.



Dina Hussein, Counterterrorism Policy Lead for EMEA, Facebook, reported the policies of Facebook on removal of terrorist content and propaganda. There are 35,000 employees working to remove content that violates the safety of users and the guidelines in place; 350 of those employees work exclusively with terrorism. Facebook

regularly consults terrorism experts, like George Washington University departments, and asks for commentary or insights on extremism. Facebook monitors the exchanges and content in regards to terrorist actors, and examines dialogues between both perpetrators and subjects. Facebook wants to ensure that not only do they block content from terrorist organizations, but they also help to prevent the normalization of the discourse surrounding groups like ISIS. ISIS aimed to portray itself as a recognized state that provided services through a government in the same way as other legitimate states. However, Facebook's content monitoring results in a precarious gap between the right to freedom of speech and general security. To better deal with the 'grey areas'; Facebook has bought automated tools and artificial intelligence to better understand the language used, and has also utilized academic insights such as those offered by the ISIS Files. The removal of content is moving at a rate of 99%. A holistic strategy is nearly impossible in the face of the various forms of radicalization in the Middle East, especially for a technology company.



To **El Mostafa Rezrazi**, Senior Fellow, Policy Center for the New South, it was intriguing to see that the ISIS Files mainly related to regional and local management, the disparities between central leadership decisions and local or regional management, and also the implementation of what had been decided. While the ISIS Files

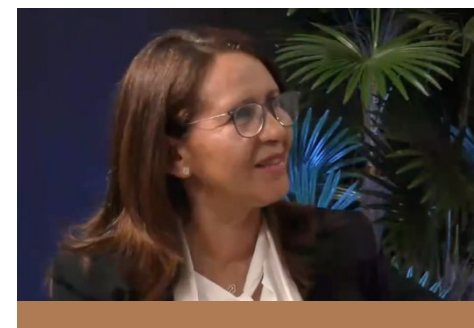
were focused on the intelligence collected, the information was very well categorized with clear academic coding. The Maghreb Union Organization was also able to publish

research on the new strategy that began in 2018 by some violent extremist groups. The information collected will often be found difficult in terms of legality by international militaries. The challenges will occur when attempting to convert the findings; in terms of national courts and the files being utilized as legal instruments.

Workshop 3: Report Presentation - Annual Report on Africa's Geopolitics



Abdelhak Bassou, Senior Fellow, Policy Center for the New South, began by acknowledging that the APSACO event is a tradition of the Policy Center of the New South to embrace the ideas and diversity of Africa. The annual convening of the APSACO meeting and the publishing of the report is not just about automatic production, it is also about looking to the future of the continent. A report in 2020 stated that African authors have allowed for the establishment of afro-realism. Afro-realism takes a step away from the negative perceptions of Africa, without saying that this continent is the best one.



Nezha Chekrouni, Senior Fellow, Policy Center for the New South, emphasized the need to keep an African perspective when speaking of the continent's security, as well as the importance of keeping an open mind. Policies that are proposed should mirror Africa's richness and wealth. The PCNS, as a Think Tank, has to diagnose and build knowledge specifically for those who are interested in Africa. It is important to disseminate and disclose information and share it with policymakers.



Chegraoui Khalid, Research Fellow, Senior Fellow, Policy Center for the New South, described the decolonization of African history and how the critique of western influence is not enough. He raised the question of what Africa should do in this situation. The answer should be formulated by and for Africans. There is a great need for African perspectives to shape the future of the continent. The number of women who are already a part of the policymaking process should be recognized and commended.

Closing Remarks



Mr. **Rachid El Houdaigui**, Senior Fellow, Policy Center for the New South, closed the fifth APSACO event by thanking all the participants for their contributions and insightful debate on women’s roles in Africa’s peace and security organizations. There were about 40 speakers, all experts in their fields of study, making for rich and diverse discussions. This conference certainly provided detailed plans for actions taken by the international community with the implementation and enforcement of the United Nations Women’s Peace and Security Agenda in Africa.

The debates and discussions were geared towards three specific themes within Africa. The first theme was the interesting situation in which women are the most affected by violent conflicts in Africa and, at the same time, are the most underrepresented in peacekeeping operations and security or defense roles in the United Nations. The lack of access women have to decision-making roles around the world persists. The second theme was the acknowledged progress that Resolution 1325 has contributed to forming a new framework. Many nations have begun to adopt specific national agendas in order to support the resolution. With the diversity of these nations, there is the lack of a homogenous agenda that would work for all; without a similar plan there is a struggle with implementation. A third and final theme was the shared sentiment that the conference provided an opportunity to discuss ways to strengthen the situation and find possible solutions to the presented challenges.

Mr. **El Houdaigui** warmly thanked the staff who organized the event so meticulously, the interpreters, and also thanked the participants a final time with a promise to convene again for the sixth APSACO event next year.

