

## – Women, Peace & Security –

### Reviewing Women Support by the International Community

**Date:** Thursday, 27 February 2020, 4:30 pm – 6:00 pm  
**Venue:** KAS Office, Kabul – Wazir Akbar Khan

#### Concept Note

This women-only Roundtable aims to connect women working on political or security issues and in precarious security environments, coming from different fields and backgrounds: government & parliament, activists, media, think tanks, police & security forces, private business.

It is an initiative from which a platform of information, mentoring and career support for women working in and on politics & security may grow. As a result, we aim to build strong networks to provide women security and a political voice – for women, by women.

#### Agenda

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| 4:15 pm | Welcome & Introduction round  |
| 4:30 pm | <b>From Sewing-machine trainings to equal power-sharing: How honest and effective has been the international support in the past 20 years?</b>  |
| 4:45 pm | <b>Women Voices on international platforms: How are women included in international talks or delegation visits in Kabul?</b><br><b>International support to Afghan Women in politics (A government perspective)</b><br><b>International support to Afghan Women in NGOs and Think Tanks (A civil society perspective)</b> |
| 5:00 pm | <b>Afghan Women Empowerment: Obstacles and challenges faced by the international community (An international perspective)</b>   |
| 5:15 pm | <b>Open Discussion: Former Mistakes and Way Ahead: How should the international community promote Afghan women voices?</b>  |
| 5:30 pm | Dinner Buffet & Networking  |

## Shortcomings and drawbacks

Harmful narratives that are also fostered by the international community:

- "Afghan women are divided"
- "Urban-Rural-Divide"
- "Protection of women"
- "Women cannot be State President in Afghanistan" (culturally not accepted)

### "Afghan women are divided"

Narratives about women divided undermine women solidarity and creates harmful cleavages.

The narrative should acknowledge that society is diverse, but not divided

The discourse should promote unity and solidarity in diversity. Denying diversity and enforcing the streamlining of divergent societal views under one declaration would even be totalitarian.

Diversity of views, lifestyles and values is natural in society; women should stay diverse but unite in solidarity when core values and rights come under threat.

### "Urban-Rural-Divide"

Urban women are accused of defending rights and views of urban privileged women when they speak up for women rights end empowerment.

### "Protection of women"

Plays into the hands of the Taliban or paternalist argumentations.

Instead of using the narrative of "protection" of women, the aim should be clearly termed as "participation" and "power-sharing" of women.

### "Women cannot be State President in Afghanistan" (culturally not accepted)

More than one dozen Muslim countries have had a female head of state.

International community would do better not to simply follow this narrative grounded in harmful and misunderstood cultural empathy

## Demands for the Afghan peace process

Current events can be a game-changing moment for achieving true power-sharing or losing achievements of the past

Afghan women should negotiate directly with Taliban.

Male negotiators do not have the right to represent Afghan women or define the fate and rights of Afghan women.

### **Complaints to the international community**

Only five years ago, Afghan women had access and open doors in international embassy. In the Doha process Afghan women feel ignored and sidelined by the international community.

Many channels that Afghan women had in the past to international embassies are closed today.

Representation of Afghan women in the peace process is based on stereotypes.

### **Difficulties and needs of the international community**

No access to the provinces.

Donors struggle with understanding top messages from Afghanistan; confused with too many "male peace plans".

The international community needs useful and honest context information and feedback from the Afghan side.

### **Recommendation to the international community**

The international community should seek advice and knowledge from Afghan women for defining their agenda and programs.

Inclusion to high-level meetings and even small symbolic gestures (e.g. picture with Khalilzad) can be much more powerful for women than costly capacity buildings.

International embassies should maintain a close network with Afghan women; include Afghan women in international delegation visits to Kabul.

### **Main recommendations**

- Build strategic (gender-mixed) alliances in order to control what information is channeled through to the relevant male actors and centers of power.
- Strategic communication: Raise awareness against harmful language and narratives

### **Follow-up of the WPS roundtables: How to continue?**

- WPS roundtables as an informal network between Afghan women and international embassies
- Regularly (e.g. monthly) meetings of a fixed core group of 15-20 people
- Discussions should progressively build upon the former roundtables and become more focused on specific questions
- Chatham house rules
- Shared summary of points and recommendations (also with those members that could not participate)