***24 November 2020***

***SESSION 1***

***GLOBAL AND REGIONAL EFFORTS IN PROMOTING WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY: REASSESSING OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES IN THE NEW CONTEXT***

***Panel on Promoting Regional WPS Cooperation:***

***Experience from the Nordic Women Mediators Network (NWM)***

**Talking Points by:Dr. Torunn Tryggestad, Director of the PRIO Center for Gender, Peace and Security**

* Excellencies, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen. Good afternoon to all of you – or rather good morning from Oslo.
* First of all, let me start by thanking the government of Vietnam for inviting me to speak on behalf of Nordic Women Mediators (NWM) at this important event.
* As we are commemorating the 20th anniversary of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 I think we can all agree that we have come quite far in developing the normative framework on WPS. However, as emphasized by Noeleen Heyzeer and other speakers this afternoon much work remains to be done when it comes to the actual implementation of this agenda.
* Not least when it comes to **women’s meaningful participation** in peace processes and peacebuilding efforts.
* While women in conflict areas – as we all know - are actively engaged in all sorts of informal conflict preventing and peacebuilding activities, they remain far too few in the formal Track 1 processes.
* When calls are made for the inclusion of more women in such formal processes, the responses have far too often been that “there are no women” or “there are no qualified women”.
* These types of arguments and excuses were important motivations for why the Nordic Women Mediators network was launched in Oslo in November 2015.
* We wanted to move away from the notion that “there are no qualified women”. We wanted to make qualified women visible and included!
* The establishment of this network was also inspired by a similar network in Southern Africa. It was the Norwegian ambassador to South Africa who back in March 2013 attended a conference for women mediators in the Southern African region. She was so impressed by all the powerful women she met that she immediately wrote back home to Oslo and suggested that Norway should initiative something similar for the Nordic region.
* So what has NWM achieved since its launch in 2015? And what have we done to promote regional collaboration on WPS?
* **At the Nordic level** the NWM gathers members from all five Nordic countries for **annual meetings**.These meetings are hosted by the member countries on a rotational basis. The last physical meeting was in Oslo in 2019. In 2020 – due to the pandemic - NWM held a digital annual meeting, hosted by Sweden. Next year’s annual meeting will be hosted by Iceland. Hopefully that will be a physical meeting. It is an important added value of these annual meetings that we are able to meet in person and network.
* At the annual meetings we address ‘business-like’ issues on how to best organize ourselves, the professional development of our members, communication plans etc.
* But we have increasingly also spent more time on discussing thematic issues in relation to concrete peace processes.
* At the annual meetings in 2018 and 2019 we invited special guests from outside NWM – these were **women peacebuilders** from countries such as Afghanistan, Libya, Syria and Yemen. Following these meetings, we established **resource groups** on these countries in support of the women peacebuilders.
* **At global level –** and perhaps more interesting in this context - NWM has put quite some time and effort into **supporting and cooperating with other regional networks** such as FEMWise, the Mediterranean Women Mediators Network and Women Mediators Across the Commonwealth.
* NWM also played a crucial role in initiating and supporting the establishment of the **Global Alliance of Regional Women Mediators Networks**. The first pre-launch gathering was organised by NWM-Norway in Oslo in 2018. The formal launch was at UN HQ in New York in October 2019.
* Sharing experiences with and **supporting new emerging national and regional networks** are important to the NWM.Our members have provided input and advice to networks in Argentina and Cyprus – and now the ASEAN Women Peace Registry.
* I would like to reiterate – the **main objective of the NWM** is to support women’s access and participation in peace processes! As such NWM – coordinated by the Norwegian branch – is currently providing support to women in the ongoing Afghan peace talks and the Libyan peace process.
* The NWM also contributes to advocacy for women´s inclusion through for instance **writing letters** to the Nordic Ministries of Foreign Affairs and to the UN Special Envoy to Syria. Members of NWM-Norway also meet with the Norwegian Foreign Minister.
* Finally, for NWM it is important to contribute to the visibility of women mediators and women peace and security experts. Our members participate in conferences, meetings and seminars as speakers – sharing their experience and expertise on various topics, and informing about the networks.
* Five years on from its launch in Oslo, our overall experience with the network is positive. The NWM has grown and we have become more ‘mature’ as network in the way we are organized and operate.
* The Norwegian branch of NWM has grown particularly fast and now counts 50+ members.
* Internationally we experience a growing curiosity in the NWM – and the other regional networks - and growing demand for our ‘services’.
* The existence of the regional networks – not only the NWM – is acknowledge by the UN Secretary-General as very important to the implementation of the WPS agenda in the years to come.
* Therefore - it is important that we continue to collaborate across regions and networks on;
  + Exchanging knowledge and experience from process work
  + Providing support and advice on how to best organize for best possible impact
  + And not least – on finding ways to nominate and promote women to positions as chief mediators or chief negotiators. Herein lie some real challenges, still.
* Thank you!