



**Statement by Dr Naledi Pandor  
Minister of International Relations and Cooperation  
of South Africa  
during the Open Debate of the United Nations Security Council  
on Women, Peace and Security**

**25 October 2023**

Mr President,

South Africa would like to thank the Federative Republic of Brazil for convening this open debate to discuss how we effectively move from theory to practice to enhance women's participation in international peace and security.

We appreciate the informative presentations by the briefers this morning.

South Africa believes that as we prepare for the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of resolution 1325, enhanced international efforts are needed to focus on implementing the commitments made to advancing women's participation in all peace processes.

We made the same call in 2019 when this Council unanimously adopted resolution 2493, as proposed by South Africa.

It is therefore disheartening to note that the percentage of women in peace negotiations today stands at a measly 19 percent in UN-led processes, down from 23 percent in 2020. It is our belief that peace agreements are more sustainable when women are at the table.

The report of the UN Secretary-General points to several concrete actions that we member states can take to reverse this trend, and South Africa is broadly in agreement with these.

We also note that the current global security environment may contribute to the reversal of progress in the implementation of the WPS agenda. We, therefore reemphasise our call for urgent action to secure peace in the Israel/Gaza War, conflicts on the African Continent and Russia/Ukraine conflict.

In this context, it is alarming that the number of women and girls living in conflict-affected settings has increased by 50 per cent in 2022 compared to 2017 owing to the increasing number of armed conflicts since then.

Mr President,

South Africa initiated the Gertrude Shope Annual Dialogue Forum in 2015 as well as the Women Mediators Network, to train cohorts of African women negotiators and peace monitors.

The training has made an immense contribution to drawing women in communities together and is setting targets for women's direct participation in delegations and negotiating teams.

This initiative has shown how empowered women can contribute to peace and stability and support other women living in vulnerable conditions.

South Africa also continues to contribute to training and capacity building for women in peace processes at Continental and local levels. We provide annual youth and women's training programmes on Conflict Resolution, Mediation and Negotiation to women from conflict-affected countries.

Some of the trainees are now members of various peacebuilding initiatives in their respective countries.

We appreciate the partnerships we have with the African Women Leaders Network, FEMWISE Africa, the AU's platform for women mediators as well as the Government of Norway.

In the same vein, we commend the efforts of the Secretary-General as articulated in the Action for Peacekeeping Initiative Plus and the Uniformed Gender Parity Strategy, which continue to positively advance the WPS agenda.

We are pleased to note the contribution of South African, Female peacekeepers, making a difference on the ground, when deployed to missions

These include dedicated individuals such as Major Felicia Thobeka Mswane, who previously served as the Fire Support Coordinator for the Force Intervention Brigade in the DRC; Lieutenant-Colonel Martha Masango, Chief of the Intelligence Cell of the MONUSCO Force Intervention Brigade; Major Seitebatso Pearl Block, the MONUSCO Information Operations Officer who was awarded the United Nations' Military Gender Advocate of the Year award in 2017, and Lieutenant-Colonel Fhulufheto Kouter, the Contingent Commander of the South African Police Service in the UN Mission in South Sudan, who was recently recognised for sterling leadership she provides to her colleagues.

Mr President,

In light of our discussions yesterday on the situation in the Middle East and the Question of Palestine, I would in closing like to recognise the fundamental role played by civil society organisations in the search for sustainable peace. In this regard let me highlight the cross-community solidarity forged by Women of the Sun of Palestine and Women Wage Peace of Israel aimed at urging the parties to engage in dialogue and diplomacy to reach a just, comprehensive, and sustainable peace.

This is an example of positive activism and inspirational leadership by women striving to find a solution in the context of the continued occupation of Palestine. We

encourage these women to continue with their solidarity amid adversity and the deepening political and security crisis.

I thank you.