Speech to the Independent Commission on Multilateralism

ICM retreat on Women, Peace, and Security

Keynote address by H.E. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka

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Excellencies,

Members of the International Peace Committee,

Members of the Independent Commission on Multilateralism,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my great pleasure to be with you today.

I thank their Excellencies, Mr. Rudd and Mr. Puri, for inviting me to discuss the vitally interconnected issues of women, peace and security.

It is a most timely discussion, as we learn from the 2015 Global Peace Index that more than two billion people now live in the 20 least peaceful countries,

And as the General Assembly approved a new resolution making today, 19 June, the International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict.

The ubiquity of the lack of peace, of displaced populations, and of sexual violence against women- are pressing subjects to resolve.

They are expensive problems.

The Global Peace Index tells us that, in 2014, conflict literally cost the equivalent of the combined economies of Brazil, Canada, France, Germany, Spain, and the United Kingdom - **an estimated 14 trillion dollars**.

And they are not new.

Just a few weeks after taking office, I stood before the Security Council, welcoming the adoption of a new resolution on women, peace and security.

It was a powerful signal –

- of the commitment of the Security Council and the international community to put women's leadership at the centre of all efforts to resolve conflict and promote peace,

- And the clearest recognition of gender equality and the empowerment of women as critical to international peace and security.

On the same day, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) adopted a landmark general recommendation on women in conflict prevention, conflict, and post-conflict situations.

This gave CEDAW countries important guidance on taking specific measures to ensure the protection of women's human rights before, during and after conflict.

These were promising steps.

Over the period of the following six months, I saw for myself the disconnect between the promise and the reality.

I visited Mali, still reeling from the effects of a sudden and unexpected civil war.

I visited South Sudan, shortly after a new war had plunged the world's youngest country into turmoil.

I visited Syrian women and girls in the refugee camps of what many now consider the worst humanitarian crisis since the Second World War.
	(Syria alone accounted for over a quarter of the world's displaced persons and over 20 per cent of its refugees in 2013)

I visited Nigeria in the wake of the horrific abduction of almost 300 schoolgirls by Boko Haram – still not returned.

And I visited the Central African Republic, in the midst of yet another civil war and with a large percentage of its population in need and in danger.

Everywhere, I met courageous, resilient, resourceful women leaders and peacebuilders **whose efforts were resisted, ignored, or marginalized by more powerful actors.**

And this was *before* the Ebola outbreak took a disproportionate toll on women and girls in West Africa;
before anyone had heard of ISIS;
before conflict erupted in places as disparate as Ukraine, Yemen, Libya, or the Gaza strip.

The latest report by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees tells us that:
-   some 60 million people were forcibly displaced across the world by conflicts in 2014,
-   that is 8.3 million more than in 2013.
-   In the same period we saw the biggest annual increase since 1990 in the number of refugees.

Never before has the United Nations been asked to reach so many people with emergency assistance.

This has prompted considerable reflection about our current models and tools, both within and outside the United Nations.

This year the international community has been busy negotiating new development goals and preparing for the first-ever world humanitarian summit.

The United Nations is also conducting a high-level review of the implementation of the women, peace and security agenda and reviewing its peace operations and peacebuilding architecture.

External groups like the Independent Commission on Multilateralism are putting the brightest minds in global policymaking to the task of charting a way forward.

It is painfully obvious that our current models cannot respond effectively to today's peace and security challenges on their own.

Any revisions of our current models that do not include gender equality and women's leadership as one of their most important ingredients are inconceivable.

We have established beyond a doubt that women's participation and inclusion makes humanitarian assistance more effective.

It strengthens the protection efforts of our peacekeepers.

It contributes to the conclusion of peace talks and sustainable peace, and it accelerates economic recovery.

Through the Global Study that we are preparing for the October high-level review, we have consolidated and added to this evidence base.

But it should also be a **clear moral imperative**.

Many of the armed groups place the subordination of women at the forefront of their agenda.

The international community must continue to place the promotion of gender equality at the top of ours.

UN Women's goal is simple:
- to ensure that women, peace and security lies at the heart of the UN's work on peace and security.

The gap between rhetorical support and actual political and financial commitment must close.

Recent research by OECD DAC shows that less than 2% of donor funding in conflict and crisis settings is going towards initiatives that meet women's needs.

Of this 2%, an even smaller amount goes to supporting the work of women's organizations in these settings.

And this amount is often released late in the process.

UN Women receives 0.1 per cent of the assessed UN budget.

We are past the point of insisting on the importance of gender equality for international peace and security.

We need **concrete commitments, policy shifts, accountability at all levels, and political and financial support**.

The good practice and examples set by some should become standard requirement for all.

What is missing are **the incentives and accountability measures that will bring all actors into compliance with these norms.**

We cannot continue to recycle the same unenforceable recommendations, some of which have been repeated for 15 years.

I am eager to hear your thoughts and contributions over the course of the next two days.

Thank you.