Virtual Dialogue Concept Note

**"Advancing the Implementation of the Women, Peace and Security
Agenda in a New Normal: Women's Leadership in Preventing
Conflict and Sustaining Peace"**

This year marks the 20th anniversary of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security (WPS). As an opportunity for stock taking of progress achieved and persisting challenges, it was intended to be another ground-breaking year for advancing this promising agenda. Instead, the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic is threatening the gains of the past decades and stalling future progress.

While impacting the lives of all people around the world, the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic have been far from even, especially for women. It is magnifying pre-existing inequalities and exacerbating women's political, social, and economic vulnerabilities, including in armed conflict and post conflict situations because of shifting priorities and reallocation of resources. Women's overrepresentation in the health sector disproportionately exposes them to COVID-19. Girls' education is disrupted by the crises more than boys, with lasting impacts on the skills and knowledge they need to succeed in today's economy.

The impact of the pandemic on peace and security can't also be overstated. It is most evident in armed conflict and post-conflict settings, where women are often on the periphery of decision-making processes, with their voices unheard or heeded, and with little or no access to shape political, social, economic, and health outcomes. It has complicated mediation and peacebuilding efforts, and stalled progress in the implementation of important peace agreements and electoral processes. Its socioeconomic impact has also aggravated existing grievances, leaving communities more vulnerable to radicalization and extremism leading to terrorism.

Despite these challenges, the pandemic has provided many examples of effective women's leadership in responding to the crisis. National governments are implementing gender-responsive strategies and devising gender-sensitive responses. For its part, the African Union – based on the assessment of the impact of the pandemic on women and girls in the continent - developed guidelines on gender-sensitive responses. Women's organizations continue to play key roles in peacebuilding, while supporting relief and recovery efforts in affected communities.

In many respects, the pandemic has acted as a magnifier to existing vulnerabilities, including those of women and girls in armed conflict-affected societies. And while the immediate focus will -understandably- continue to be on emergency response and relief efforts, how can we ensure that the notion of "rebuilding better" presents an opportunity to address the structural impediments to advance the Women, Peace and Security Agenda?

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The Virtual Dialogue

Acting in its capacity as the Secretariat of the Aswan Forum for Sustainable Peace and Development, the Cairo International Center for Conflict Resolution, Peacekeeping and Peacebuilding (CCCPA) is hosting a Virtual Dialogue, *as a follow-up to Aswan Forum I* titled:

"Advancing the Implementation of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda in a New Normal: Women's Leadership in Preventing Conflict and Sustaining Peace".

The Virtual Dialogue is organized in collaboration with the Egyptian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the National Council for Women and UN Women Egypt. The relevant outcomes of this event will also feed as appropriate into the process of developing Egypt's first National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security.

The event will bring together a select group of experts and practitioners from government officials, civil society organizations, and regional and international organizations, to address the following questions:

- What has the COVID-19 Crisis revealed about persisting and emerging challenges for Arab and African women in armed conflict and post-conflict settings? What opportunities has the pandemic presented for women peacebuilders? How can the lessons learned from the pandemic act as an accelerator for a comprehensive implementation of the sustaining peace and WPS agendas?

- The Sustaining Peace and Women, Peace and Security agendas both commit to prevention, preparedness and resilience. How can we ensure that the "new normal" will result in preventative and gender-inclusive **efforts in both conflict and post-conflict settings**? How can we maximize women's pivotal role in enhancing community resilience and building better **in such settings**?

Participation from:
  ➢ The National Council for Women
  ➢ The Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection, The Republic of Liberia
  ➢ The Ministry of Gender, Child and Social Welfare, The Republic of South Sudan
  ➢ UN Women Egypt, UN Women ROAS, UN Women Africa Regional Office in Nairobi, UNWomen South Africa
  ➢ Leading organizations and WPS experts in the MENA region: League of Arab States, UN ESCWA
  ➢ The Office of the African Union Special Envoy on WPS, FemWise-Africa, UN-PBSO
  ➢ The Global Network for Women Peacebuilders (GNWP)
  ➢ Women in International Security (WIIS), International Peace Institute (IPI)
  ➢ Aswan Forum I Strategic Partners

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