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## Panel discussion Sustaining peace and providing justice to women and girls

**38th session of the Forum of Women Parliamentarians**

**Sunday, 13 October 2024, 14:30–17:00  
Plenary A (level 0)**

### Background

In today's world of tragic wars, geopolitical tensions and violations of international humanitarian law, the Forum of Women Parliamentarians has consistently called on parliaments to draw inspiration from UN Security Council resolution 1325 and related resolutions on women, peace and security. The WPS agenda is indeed crucial to sustaining peace, as it calls for ensuring that the needs of women and girls in conflict and post-conflict contexts are taken into account, recognizes their role in preventing and resolving conflict, and identifies gender equality in law and in practice as fundamental in preventing the recurrence of conflict.

Building on recent debates organized by the Forum on the central role of [gender equality in conflict prevention](#), and on the crucial participation of [women peacebuilders in conflict resolution and post-conflict recovery](#), this panel discussion will focus on the responsibility of all States to end impunity for crimes committed against women and girls, and to guarantee their access to justice and recovery, as a key element of sustaining peace.

Conflict and instability exacerbate existing patterns of discrimination and violence against women and girls, putting them at increased risk of human rights violations. Conflict also severely undermines women's and girls' access to justice. Access to justice for all women and girls encompasses the enjoyment of their fundamental rights as well as the means to access safe and effective channels to justice, to participate in fair trials and to seek appropriate redress and defence when their rights are violated. It also entails ensuring the meaningful participation of women in judicial institutions and processes. Women can act as agents of change and ensure that justice is delivered and fully meets the needs of women and girls. Women's representation in law enforcement and judicial institutions has been linked to more effective, victim-centred responses to crime.

States have the obligation to guarantee these rights both in times of conflict and in times of peace. They are bound by the framework of UN Security Council resolutions on women, peace and security, and other international obligations such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, as well as the Geneva Conventions and related customary law. However, the fact remains that women are often under-represented in post-conflict justice processes, at both national and international levels. Gender equality-related issues are also often absent from such processes.

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## **Objectives**

The discussion aims to explore the most effective ways, including the appropriate mechanisms, to achieve justice for women and girls living in conflict zones – those who have been forced to flee their homes because of conflict and violence, and all those whose rights are denied in post-conflict and peacetime. It will examine this issue at both national and international levels.

Participants will hear about the practice of international courts and tribunals, including how they have dealt with crimes committed against women during armed conflicts, in the past and today. They will examine how gender-responsive national legislation and judicial systems are crucial to women's access to justice in conflict and post-conflict situations, including women's meaningful participation in transitional justice to restore peace. Panelists and participants will be invited to share good practices and solutions for justice processes that are gender-sensitive and accessible to all women. Emphasis will also be placed on how parliamentarians can contribute to these goals, notably by strengthening the accountability of legal frameworks at the national level and ensuring the highest level of survivor-centered justice. Participants will also be invited to explore avenues to create a conducive post-conflict environment that can offer opportunities to advance women's and girls' rights and empowerment and, in so doing, sustain peace.

## **Guiding questions**

Panelists and participants will be invited to address the following questions:

- What is the state of women's participation in international courts and tribunals? How do such bodies deal with crimes committed against women during armed conflicts?
- How can a gender-sensitive transitional justice be achieved? What are the challenges and how can they be overcome?
- What are good practices in delivering justice to victims of gender-based violations, and in addressing the root causes of gender-based inequality and violence?
- What can parliamentarians, including women's parliamentary caucuses, do to pave the way for justice, namely the prosecution of perpetrators and reparations for women and girl survivors of conflict-related gender-based violence?