Afghan Women Leaders Peace Summit 2020
20 November 2020

Declaration

The Afghan Women Leader’s Peace Summit 2020, where a cross section of Afghan women from the provinces, Kabul and the Diaspora have gathered in this historic event, reiterate their call for peace. The Summit, organized by Afghan Women’s Network in collaboration with the Afghanistan Mechanism for Inclusive Peace (AMIP), culminated in the agreement on a set of Common and Shared positions that we, the women of Afghanistan, all stand behind and deliver our message with one voice. We also articulate a set of roles that women should play in the peace process, which together form this Declaration, which is to be delivered to actors involved in the current peace process, including the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan negotiation team, the Taliban and the international community.

The Afghan Women Leader’s Summit recognised that Peace is not just the absence of war. Peace entails freedom from all forms of violence and coercion, respect for human dignity, justice, human rights, and equality for women and all citizens. It also entails economic and social development and the ability to live in harmony.

While the World and Afghanistan are on the brink of the Geneva conference, the conference comes at a crucial and critical time for Afghanistan. Since the start of peace negotiation, we note a high rise in the number of civilian casualties including women and children, according to the recent UNAMA report. Women activists, civil society and journalists are subjected to targeted killing and the number of internally displaced people and asylum seekers is on rise. While we want negotiations to succeed in bringing an end to violence, as women we are deeply concerned that Women’s rights do not become the price to be paid for peace.

Afghanistan is THE conflict in which the centrality of women cannot be denied or overlooked. People from around the world will be watching to see if national, regional and international actors supporting the Afghan peace talks live up to their international commitments on the women, peace and security agenda; and to the preservation of democracy, human rights and freedom of expression as an outcome of the peace process and in line with their commitments to international conventions they are signatories to.

Below are a set of positions agreed upon as priorities for the Peace Process and peace in Afghanistan thereafter:
CEASEFIRE

*Recognising* that the increase in violence and targeted civilian casualties in Afghanistan is unacceptable; that people on all sides suffer from suicide attacks and IEDs, aerial attacks and night raids;; that a safer and secure environment is needed for the Afghan people to rebuilt lives and economies; and that trust and confidence in the viability of peace talks must be built with the Afghan people.

*Furthermore*, the Afghan Women Leader’s Peace Summit declares that parties to peace negotiations should not negotiate peace and commit violent offensives at the same time. This duality only serves to undermine the peace process and lower the level of confidence people have in the peace process. A ceasefire should not be the goal of the peace talks, but instead, a ceasefire should pave the way for the peace process.

We call for:

- The negotiating parties to make a firm public commitment to stop using violence as a strategy to influence negotiations.
- An immediate, viable and stable ceasefire.
- A ceasefire monitoring and verification mechanism should be established, and involve women, victims and civil society groups in monitoring.
- Regional and international states, especially those with greatest influence to exert utmost pressure to end violence and support the Afghan people especially women’s call for an immediate ceasefire.
- International guarantees on the ceasefire and a role for civil society to monitor the ceasefire.

VICTIMS

*Recognising* that many Afghan families and communities have lost loved ones; that most victims are civilians and that civilians continue to be disproportionately affected by ongoing violence; that women and children feature highly among the casualties; that security forces and their families have suffered enormous losses, that people in all of Afghanistan have suffered.

The Afghan Women Leader’s Peace Summit recognised that support should be provided to victims and survivors; that we must ensure that grievances and revenge do not continue, that the peace process should not exclude victims’ and survivors voices.

- There should be meaningful engagement with victims, survivors and their networks and victims’ voices must be heard in the peace talks and in all other forums of the peace process.
- Negotiating parties should meet with victims to listen to their grievances and demands and reflect these in the negotiations, ensuring that all parties to the negotiations ( the government and the Taliban) are made aware of victims’ issues.
- Victims must be involved in the relief and recovery mechanisms and be able to determine and shape the services and support they need.

JUSTICE

*Recognising* that most of the 5,000 Taliban prisoners who were released were accused of war crimes and serious human rights violations; that this did not deliver a ceasefire or reduce the
violence in reciprocal confidence building; that it also served to legitimize the Taliban and emboldened them to intensify their attacks on civilians.

- The Government must establish a culture that respects the rule of law and that does not promote or condone impunity and undermine transitional justice and recovery from our violent history.
- The negotiating parties must agree upon transitional justice measures to reconcile and build society as part of any peace agreement, such as a Truth Commission and reparations mechanism

**Security**

*Recognising* the imminent reduction in US troops and the additional pressure on Afghan national security and defence forces and NATO; that Afghan people’s fear that the insecurity will intensify, that insecurity increases flows of refugees and IDPs; that there are targeted attacks on civil society, women’s human rights defenders and journalists.

*Recognising* that women must have confidence in police protection and response to their reports of threats and intimidation.

- Government must build capacity in civilian policing which is human rights compliant and gender responsive.
- Fully-funded mechanisms, safe houses and shelters should be established to support vulnerable women, women human rights defenders, journalists and others.
- Security training should be provided to women including training in risk mitigation, security action planning and cyber security.

**Regional and International Agreement**

*Recognising* that Afghanistan is a battleground for regional or international rivalry; that interference by some neighbouring states who provide weapons and support the continuation of violence which deepens instability; that there are political interventions by neighbouring and foreign states.

*Recognising* also that regional and international states can play a positive role in supporting negotiations and the Afghan people to reach a peace agreement; that many neighbouring and other states have provided a safe space for Afghan refugees; that any negative implications of politicisation of refugees must be countered.

- Regional and international states, especially those with greatest influence should exert utmost pressure to bring violence to an immediate end, achieve a ceasefire and encourage good faith in negotiations for peace.
- Regional and international states should demonstrate their commitment to bi-lateral and multilateral agreements by implementing them fully (APPS, Istanbul Process, BSA, trilateral agreement on refugees with South Asian countries, Colombo Process outcomes and agreements).

**Inclusive Peace Negotiations**

*Recognising* that peace talks are sensitive; that peace talks must not be allowed to stagnate but be driven forward; that conducting them outside Afghanistan fuels concerns about accessibility, transparency and accountability; and that peace talks need the trust and confidence of Afghan people.
Recognising that an independent mediator is an asset; that inclusivity in negotiations and wider peace process mechanisms are more likely to engender confidence in the processes and the outcomes; that greater women’s participation is imperative and a benchmark for meaningful inclusion; that this extends to challenging all forms of discrimination including gender-based discrimination; that meaningful participation in peace talks impacts positively on women’s role in the political process going forward, post-agreement;

- The current negotiation process should be designed with greater inclusion aspects within it.
- The process should have a mediator - 1 woman and 1 man as co-mediators.
- Women should make at least 30% in all levels of the peace process and post-agreement development.
- Civil society should have a distinct delegation at the negotiating table that considers demographic, geographic and gender representation.
- Women should play the play following roles in the peace process: direct participation at the table in the negotiation teams, as observers or in technical working committees; and as advocates and activists or in consultative forums beyond the negotiating table.
- A gender technical committee consisting of national and international experts, should be appointed to provide technical support to the mediator to help gender mainstream in the substantive negotiations.

DEMOCRACY AND GOOD GOVERNANCE

Recognising that democratic integrity increases empowerment possibilities for women and makes more likely that women will retain their status and rights; that a pluralist government that reflects women, minorities, ethnic diversity and youth is a positive benefit.

Recognising that gender quotas must be fully implemented and extended; that women should fill a minimum of 30% positions in all elected bodies and key institutions; that all local councils should be elected and also contain a minimum of 30% women.

Recognising that donors to Afghanistan seek tangible results on anti-corruption, good governance, democracy and that civil society organisations should have a central role.

- The peace talks must guarantee that the Constitutional rights and values and civil liberties including freedom of speech, media and expression must be guaranteed in the peace agreement.

There is a need for the establishment of a joint civil society-government-international community anti-corruption mechanism.

STRENGTHENING CIVIL SOCIETY

Recognising that civil society, women peacebuilders and women’s rights defenders face distinct challenges; that the diplomatic, political, moral and financial support of the international community is important to enabling women to protect their rights and values; that the share of bilateral aid dedicated to programmes on gender equality and women’s rights in conflict-affected and fragile countries has decreased in recent years to just 4.5 per cent;

- Regional and international states should increase the technical and financial support directed towards women, peace and security in Afghanistan including to building a broad-based, diverse coalition of civil society to strengthen unity and effectiveness in the face of the many challenges.
- Civil society should be represented in negotiations and in implementation and monitoring bodies, relief and recovery mechanisms and policy making processes post-agreement.