

## ICAN's 9<sup>th</sup> Women, Peace, and Security Forum: Reclaiming Power, Restoring Peace

### Concept Note

From 31 May to 3 June 2022, ICAN will host its 9<sup>th</sup> Women, Peace, and Security forum in partnership with Addu Women's Association (AWA) Maldives, bringing together locally rooted women peacebuilders from the Women's Alliance for Security Leadership (WASL) from over 40 countries with other key international actors and policymakers.

It has been almost three years since the last ICAN forum in Oslo and ten years since the first ICAN forum in 2012 in Istanbul. Much of what was predicted at the original gathering has come true. Since 2020 the world has changed dramatically. The pandemic continues to ebb and flow in our midst with its complex social, economic, and security implications. Over 25% of the world's population live in contexts of fragility. Some 84 million people are displaced or refugees. Global peacefulness has been on the decline both within and between states.

Last year's withdrawal of NATO from Afghanistan has also prompted tectonic geopolitical shifts. On the one hand, transnational violent extremist groups that weaponize religious and ethno-national identities are resurging in the wake of and inspired by, the Taliban's victory. On the other hand, we are seeing a rise in state authoritarianism as evident in Russia's war on Ukraine. The war is already having devastating impact not only in Ukraine but globally in terms of economic insecurity that feeds further political insecurity.

The failure of the international community to uphold its commitments to human rights – and especially the failure to protect Afghan civilians, particularly those clearly targeted by the Taliban including women, minorities, civil society activists, former government officials, journalists, lawyers and judges – has deeply undermined any remnant of credibility of states which nominally support universal human rights and a rule-based international order. It is evident that multilateral organizations and the peace and security architecture that shaped and informed international norms and relations since 1945, while desperately needed, has not only failed to evolve to tackle the challenges of this century but continues to be severely damaged by the very states that have the greatest power and responsibility to uphold the system. These man-made disasters are unfolding against an even more complex and profound threat of climate change, which is exacerbated by and exacerbating violent conflict.

### *Women Peacebuilders Take on the Responsibility to Protect*

While policy makers and pundits spend much time and energy analyzing this perfect storm of threats and risks, in the most fragile contexts across the world women peacebuilders are at the frontlines, taking on the responsibility to protect their communities while facing the emergent challenges and searching for effective strategies and tactics to mitigate violence and foster peace, resilience, equality and pluralism. While we could not have foreseen the incredible shifts resulting from the pandemic, we did project the increasing closure of

civic space, threats to women peacebuilders, and societal fragility. The pandemic experience proved the value and importance of women peacebuilders as trusted interlocutors in their local and national contexts.

The two years of isolation reinforced the importance of the WASL network as we sustained our dialogues virtually and found solidarity and strength among each other. But these virtual connections underscored the invaluable nature of being physically together and it is now essential for our community of practice to come together in person. This forum marks the first opportunity to be physically together to restore ourselves, our solidarity and our energy for this work to reclaim power and restore peace.

### *Forum Design and Objectives*

The forum will be held over four full days and will include strategic discussions, sessions for peer-to-peer learning and exchange, and opportunities for reflection, care, and joy. Given the decade that has passed since the first ICAN forum, the 2022 event will be an opportunity to reflect on progress and regression in our field of practice. The forum will provide space to highlight the impact of women-led peace and security work and the investments needed to sustain it in these increasingly challenging times.

The objectives of ICAN's 9<sup>th</sup> Women, Peace, and Security Forum are to:

1. Deepen our bonds of solidarity and collective sense of purpose as women peacebuilders and members of the Women's Alliance for Security Leadership (WASL), so as to rekindle our energies and inspiration to continue the vital work of peacebuilding;
2. Reaffirm and redefine our individual and collective voice and vision, "What the Women Say", regarding current global political and security challenges through situational and trends analysis from our unique perspectives at the frontlines; and,
3. Share women peacebuilders' effective strategies and innovative approaches, "What the Women Do", for tackling emergent issues through policy and programming at the local, national, and international levels.

Key themes to be addressed throughout the forum sessions are:

- ⇒ Participation and leadership of women peacebuilders in critical peace and security processes and spaces. Session topics will include advocacy for inclusive and gendered peace processes, peace education, gender and identity in extremism, and peacebuilding from the diaspora.
- ⇒ Protection and security of women peacebuilders including attention to care and wellness. Session topics will include psychosocial support, risk and security assessment, indicators for protection and care, and advocacy for protection.
- ⇒ Resourcing and sustainability, including of women-led peacebuilding work. Session topics will include culture as sustainable livelihood, advocacy for sustainable financing, and capacity-building for project management.
- ⇒ Storytelling and legacy building are vital to documenting and communicating the value and impact of women-led peacebuilding. Session topics will include intergenerational collaboration and exchange, digital media 101, podcasting, and demystifying design, monitoring and evaluation (DM&E).

Our analysis and findings will be collated in a "What the Women Say" briefing paper to inform national and international public and policy discussions as well as our global collaborative She Builds Peace campaign to stand with women peacebuilders.