

**Security Council**

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Letter dated 10 January 2022 from the Permanent Representative of Norway to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the pleasure to inform you that Norway, in its capacity as President of the Security Council for the month of January 2022, will hold a high-level open debate on the theme “Protecting participation: addressing violence targeting women in peace and security processes”, under the item entitled “Women and peace and security”. The open debate will take place on 18 January 2022, at 10.00 a.m.

In order to guide the discussions on this topic, Norway has prepared a concept note (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) **Mona Juul**
Permanent Representative of Norway to the United Nations



Annex to the letter dated 10 January 2022 from the Permanent Representative of Norway to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Concept note for the Security Council open debate on the theme “Protecting participation: addressing violence targeting women in peace and security processes”, to be held on 18 January 2022

I. Introduction and objective

As President of the Security Council for the month of January 2022, Norway will hold an open debate to address how the intimidation of and violence and reprisals against women – because of their engagement in peace and security processes – threaten our shared goal of ensuring women’s full, equal and meaningful participation in all stages of peace processes.

This kind of targeted violence is at an unprecedentedly high level,¹ and it is against this backdrop that the open debate will have a twofold aim:

- First, to shine a light on persistent shortfalls in creating a safe and enabling environment in order for women peacebuilders, human rights defenders and civil society representatives to carry out their work
- Second, to gather and share recommendations on ways in which we can strengthen and develop our prevention and response strategies

II. Background

The 2021 report of the Secretary-General on women and peace and security² lists 35 cases, verified by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), of the killing of women human rights defenders, journalists and trade unionists in seven conflict-affected countries in 2020 – thus surpassing the reported numbers for 2019 and 2018. While already alarming, these statistics remain comparatively low because of underreporting and self-censorship. Many more women are threatened and harassed, including for their engagement with the United Nations, in order to silence their voices and deter participation.

Intimidation and reprisals have also taken on new forms as lockdown measures adopted during the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic have forced many women activists to move to online platforms, exposing them to new forms of threats.

Women’s right to participate fully in all aspects of public and political life, both now and in the future, depends on their ability to do so in a safe and enabling environment. The United Nations and its Member States must all contribute to addressing violence targeting women in peace and security processes in order to meet the globally agreed objectives on women’s full, equal and meaningful participation in peace and security, as enshrined in the 10 resolutions of the Security Council on women, peace and security.

As the Secretary-General noted in his report, Afghanistan is perhaps this year’s most glaring example of the “juxtaposition of violence targeting women and their rights, on the one hand, and their extreme marginalization and exclusion, on the other,

¹ See S/2021/827.

² Ibid.

[which] still encapsulates the women and peace and security agenda in 2021”.³ OHCHR has also documented that this is part of a broader trend experienced in many other regions. In the past year, several women who had previously briefed the Security Council had to flee their countries after experiencing threats and reprisals for speaking out.

III. Interlinkages

Women have a right to participate in decisions about their future, and their participation in all aspects and phases of a peace process leads to more sustainable peace. Women’s direct participation and influence in peace and security processes and decision-making mechanisms also increase the likelihood that resulting protection measures will be more gender-sensitive, community needs will be better reflected and gender concerns will be included in prevention mechanisms in post-conflict situations to a greater extent.

Normalizing the participation of women in peace and security processes and elevating their important role, together with raising the cost of attacks against them through robust accountability measures, are critical to opening the space for participation. Conversely, attacks against women who are active in peacebuilding and the protection and promotion of human rights can have a detrimental effect on civic space as a whole and can even deter others from engaging and speaking up, for fear of retaliation. This is why the interlinkage between participation and protection is consistently highlighted by women themselves.

In its resolution [2493 \(2019\)](#), the Security Council strongly encouraged Member States to create safe and enabling environments for civil society, including in situations of armed conflict, and to address threats, harassment, violence and hate speech against women. However, today, few practical resources are available in urgent, life-threatening cases where women peacebuilders and human rights defenders find themselves at risk. The responsibility of supporting them falls largely to the civil society organizations themselves. This is a critical protection gap that both Member States and the United Nations must work on with civil society to address urgently, including through consultations with the individual women themselves to develop tailored, gender-responsive support to prevent and address those risks.

Ensuring an enabling environment, preventing threats, intimidation and attacks, and developing robust and well-resourced responses when such attacks occur is necessary to reach our shared goal of women’s full, equal and meaningful participation in all aspects and phases of international peace and security.

IV. Guiding questions

1. How can Member States help to create a safe and enabling environment and ensure protection in order for women who engage in peacebuilding and the protection and promotion of human rights in peace and security processes to carry out their work independently and safely?
2. How can the Security Council prevent and respond to intimidation, violence and attacks (including online) against women who actively engage in peace and security processes?

³ Ibid.

3. How can the United Nations and Member States prevent and respond to violence and reprisals against women for their engagement with the United Nations?

V. Participation and format

The open debate will be held in person, in the format of a meeting at the level of ministers for foreign affairs, to be chaired by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Norway, Anniken Huitfeldt.

Briefers:

- United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
- Two women representatives of civil society

Should the health and safety situation allow, the in-person participation of the broader membership is welcome. Delegations are kindly requested to limit their statements to no more than four minutes, masks are to be worn at all times, even while addressing the meeting, and delegations are kindly requested to limit their participation to one representative in the Chamber.

A provisional list of those who have requested to speak will be circulated in advance by email to those who have registered. The list of speakers will be available in hard copy in the Chamber shortly before the beginning of the meeting.

Member States wishing to participate in person should indicate the names of their speakers on the list of speakers through the eSpeakers module of e-deleGATE+. A letter addressed to the President of the Security Council, duly signed by the Permanent Representative or the Chargé d'affaires a.i., containing a request to participate in accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure must be uploaded to the eSpeakers module. Registration for the meeting will open at 9.30 a.m. on 13 January 2022. Delegations speaking in person should not submit a written statement via e-deleGATE+, as the delivered statement will be included in the provisional verbatim record of the meeting. The list of speakers will be determined by the order in which requests are received.

Furthermore, delegations wishing to submit written statements instead of participating in the meeting in person may do so through the eSpeakers module of e-deleGATE+ by uploading their statements in Microsoft Word format with a cover letter duly signed by the Permanent Representative or the Chargé d'affaires a.i and addressed to the President of the Security Council no later than the date of the meeting, that is, 18 January 2022. These statements will be published as part of an official compilation document containing the interventions submitted in connection with this open debate.

Delegates are invited to contact the access focal points of their missions to obtain access to the eSpeakers module of e-deleGATE+. Requests for technical support related to user logins and passwords should be directed to the help desk of the Office of Information and Communications Technology at 212-963-3333 or by e-mail at missions-support@un.int.

Other questions related to the open debate should be directed to the Security Council Affairs Division at dppa-scsb3@un.org.