



Kingdom of Belgium

Speech by Mrs Karen Van Vlierberge, Ambassador, Deputy Permanent Representative

To the United Nations Security Council

Open Arria Meeting
Inequalities between men and women in political participation

New York, 13 March 2019

Madam Minister,

- Burkina Faso and Mali are two of the three key countries in our third action plan on Women, Peace and Security. The participation of women in peace and security processes is one of the horizontal objectives. This subject is therefore of particular importance for our country and we thank France and Germany for organising this Arria.
- Belgium welcomes the efforts undertaken to better integrate women into the implementation of the Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in Mali. This suggests that there is the political will, but we call on these ambitions to be realised, and our country has financially supported initiatives in this regard. Including local female mediators is essential, as they are more familiar with the situation on the ground. Indeed, there is no shortage of expertise: a large number of women have vast experience in civil society and organisations promoting women's rights in Mali since the 1990s. Including the gender dimension in the mandate of the Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission could be developed and broadened to other parties to the peace process. At this stage of the implementation of the Agreement, there is still time to promote greater participation of women in the peace process.
- Our country welcomes the efforts that Burkina Faso and Mali have undertaken to promote the presence of women - and a gender-sensitive approach - within the defence and security forces as part of the security

sector reform (SSR) processes initiated in these two countries. It has been shown that this approach has an important impact on strengthening security, by building bonds of trust between the civilian population and the defence and security forces.

- By actively ensuring greater participation of women in mediation processes, we can also enhance their involvement more broadly in the society we want to build. Belgium supports the regional initiatives in this regard, notably the African Women Leaders Network (AWLN). Our country and the African Union co-organised a seminar with this network in 2018 on the role of African women mediators, in the presence of our Queen and Minister of Foreign Affairs. Finally, I would like to share with you the 5 main conclusions that came out of this event, which remain valid today:
 1. The (low) participation of women in mediation reflects the (low) participation of women in general; the factors are structural or societal. Making the role of mediator more professional would, we believe, make this function more credible for women, offer them easier access and underscore their competence in this area which today is still largely masculine.
 2. Inclusive mediation (ensuring, among other things, the participation of women) is more conducive to lasting peace than transactional mediation;
 3. Capacity building (training) is useful but not a panacea; it is necessary to build on existing capacities and competencies. Women are often subjected to more demands than men to be accepted in a process;
 4. Exchanges of experience are also (or more) useful. Today's event makes a contribution in that respect;
 5. The media and the education system need to be used to popularise the image of women as serious and positive partners.