# **The Nordic Women Mediators Network Gathered for a Virtual meeting on Women, Peace and Security and Covid-19 on 3-4 June 2020**

On 3-4 June 2020, the Nordic Women Mediators (NWM) Network gathered for a virtual meeting on ‘Beyond the pandemic – a critical time for the meaningful inclusion of women in mediation and peace processes’*.* The meeting focused on how to move forward with the implementation of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda in light of the Covid-19 crisis, with the aim to identify transformative approaches to peace mediation and peacebuilding, which put women’s leadership at the center.

On 3 June, two open sessions took place, which were broadcasted online. To date, over 350 attendees from 52 countries have viewed the sessions.

The opening session focused on how to support and sustain women’s engagement in all phases of peacemaking in light of the Covid-19 pandemic and what role the regional women mediators’ networks can play. The session included the following panelists: Ambassador Ann Dismorr and Astrid Thors from the NWM, Ambassador Mpeo Mahase-Moiloa from FemWise, the EU Special Envoy for Afghanistan Roland Kobia, Zahra’ Langhi, Co-founder and CEO of the Libyan Women’s Platform for Peace, and Petra Tötterman Andorff, Secretary General of Kvinna till Kvinna.

Panelists emphasized that despite the negative impact of Covid-19 on women’s role in peace processes, it has also opened up for opportunities. These include the use of innovative digital solutions by peace mediation actors to help promote women’s inclusion in such processes. At the same time, they also noted the need to bridge the digital divide between men and women to ensure that digital solutions do not become a means of exclusion of women.

A high-level ministerial meeting on ‘Cooperation and Leadership for Women, Peace and Security in the Time of Covid-19’ was held on the same day. It brought together the Foreign Ministers from Sweden, Denmark, Iceland, Norway and the State Secretary to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Finland for a discussion on what the Nordic countries can do to support women’s leadership and ensure accountability for the WPS agenda, during and beyond the pandemic. Several panelists highlighted the need to leverage opportunities for women’s inclusion and to enhance cooperation on the implementation of the WPS Agenda. The discussion also underlined the long-term commitment from all of the Nordic countries to work strategically in order to promote women’s inclusion.

Julia Karashvili, Chairperson of the civil society organisation IDP Women Association Consent in Georgia, participated in the high-level meeting. She noted that: “Covid-19 has created new windows of opportunities. As the virus is not a political issue, people across the divides are now cooperating in joint responses”.

On 4 June, closed group sessions were held, which focused on specific themes relating to WPS and Covid-19, including the role of women in mediated peace processes, and militarized and securitized responses to the Covid-19 crisis. The NWM national networks organized the group sessions, which gathered representatives from the regional women mediators’ networks, civil society and academia.

The unfolding of the Covid-19 pandemic has shed light on the urgent need to implement and deliver on the WPS Agenda. The promotion of women’s role in all phases of peacemaking lie at the heart of the regional women mediators’ networks – including the NWM – and they have an important role to play.