

Submission for Ireland's Third National Action Plan on WPS**14 December 2018****Bogotá**

The Institute for Integrated Transitions (IFIT) is an independent, non-governmental organisation dedicated to the effective integration of strategy and policymaking in the context of national dialogues and transitions arising in fragile and conflict-affected states. Beginning in 2014, IFIT provided independent expert advice inside the Colombian peace negotiations in Havana, which sought to create a transition out of a 50-year-long armed conflict. Following the end of the conflict with the FARC, IFIT has continued to advise on the implementation of the peace agreement.

As a strategic partner of the Government of Ireland, we are pleased to make this submission for the consultation on Ireland's Third National Action Plan for Women, Peace and Security. Part of the submission is focused on Colombia and includes ideas provided by members of IFIT's Brain Trust for the Colombian Transition (FCH). Comprised of fifteen Colombian experts who played a direct and significant role in the negotiations in Havana, the FCH aims to ensure that the wealth of knowledge acquired during the Colombian peace talks remains available, organised and actively engaged during the transition out of conflict.

Comments and Recommendations

We applaud the constructive vision of the first and second NAPs, as well as the collaborative model of the consultation process. The recommendations below follow mainly from our work in Colombia, specifically from our experience regarding the participation and influence of women during the recent FARC peace process and its subsequent implementation phase. The recommendations are provided with a particular focus on how Ireland's efforts may help reinforce women's rights, a gender perspective, and women's meaningful participation in peace and security actions more generally.

Our recommendations fall into two categories: (1) clarifying the framework of the NAP, and (2) promoting gender approaches and expertise internationally.

Clarifying the framework of the National Action Plan

From an external perspective, the differences between certain aspects of Ireland's NAP may be difficult to understand. In the Second NAP, for example, it is not easy to trace the differences and overlaps between the actions proposed in Pillar 1 (prevention) and Pillar 3 (protection, relief and recovery) with regard to sexual violence. The same is true for the actions with international reach in Pillars 1 (Prevention) and 4 (Promotion of the Women Peace and Security agenda in International, Regional and National Arenas).

In this regard, the following suggestions are respectfully offered:

- The systemic focus of previous NAPs, while implicit in Ireland's activities, could be clarified and emphasised further. Particularly, it may be helpful to highlight the ultimate objectives of social and cultural transformation as well as how various efforts should directly contribute to these objectives.
- Within Pillar 1 (Prevention), it may be helpful to include more of an explicit focus on identifying and responding to root causes of conflict and violence, including social, economic and cultural patterns (such as patriarchal systems or persistent gender inequality).

- Regarding Prevention (Pillar 1) and Protection (Pillar 3), it may be useful to include protection as a line of work within prevention and to separate it from Relief and Recovery (which in essence are reactive as opposed to preventive).
- It may be important to include protection of women from violence that may not affect them directly but has disproportionate effects on them based on their social, cultural or political roles and status.
- It may be interesting to include in Relief and Recovery (Pillar 3) special attention to women who assume primary caregiving roles in their communities.
- The relationship between the four pillars and the strategic aims in previous NAPs is not immediately evident. It may be helpful to create a clear link between the pillars and strategic objectives, including references to the Monitoring and Evaluation of the Second NAP.
- While the goal of incorporating a gender perspective appears to permeate all initiatives, it is not clearly emphasised in the four pillars. It may be beneficial to consider ways to place more focus on a gender perspective at this level.
- There is much to admire in Ireland's whole-of-government approach and the detailed and insightful strategies of various departments. These show the recognition of gender as a cross-cutting issue that should be worked from within each sector. However, the relationships among the actors in various departments is not always clear in the NAPs. As such, it may be helpful to formally update NAPs during implementation (at departmental levels) in order to provide a more detailed picture of the effectiveness of the whole-of-government approach.
- Departments frequently appear to take an intersectional approach to Women, Peace and Security. However, it may be helpful to emphasise within the NAP the importance of considering the intersectionality of other factors (political, ethnic and socioeconomic) as part of a gender perspective.

Promoting gender approaches and expertise internationally

Ireland has the in-house experience, the technical capacity and the resources to contribute significantly to the promotion of issues related to Women, Peace and Security globally. Such activities are already planned under Pillar 4. We would nevertheless wish to highlight the importance of such international activities and note certain approaches that have been particularly useful in Colombia.

At the beginning of the peace negotiations between the government of Colombia and the FARC, issues related to WPS were not at the forefront. It was only after sustained pressure from a well-coordinated coalition of women's civil society organisations that the parties 1) included women as negotiators, 2) invited high-level technical advisors on gender and 3) created a sub-committee on gender, midway through the negotiation, to revise the full text of the peace agreement up to that point and to incorporate a gender perspective in all remaining items.

Ireland may have a significant role in supporting similar efforts around the world. Several references, particularly in Pillars 1 and 4, make that apparent. In this regard, the following potential Irish roles may be worth considering (or expanding beyond what they currently are):

- Actively seek to bridge communication channels and facilitate coordination among relevant civil society organisations in order to help identify and advance their shared goals on WPS issues.
- Facilitate or encourage formal dialogues on WPS issues between civil society organisations and governments.
- Provide resources and offer technical know-how on WPS issues to civil society organisations and governmental entities. Given the prominent role of women in Ireland's peace process, notably through the NIWC, Ireland is particularly well-positioned to do this.

One final point regarding Colombia's experience. After the signing of the peace agreement in 2016, one of the principal challenges was determining appropriate indicators for the effective monitoring and evaluation of aspects of the agreement related to gender and women's rights, as well as indicators for assessing possible risks. As such, Ireland may wish to consider how, in order to ensure the effectiveness of monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, it can be vital to (1) obtain baseline measures, (2) select appropriate indicators to measure progress in implementation, (3) fully involve various state entities to guarantee an interconnected, integrated approach, and (4) include participatory mechanisms that guarantee a connection between selected indicators and the actual situation of women. In such matters, coordinated guidance and technical support are invaluable.

Thank you for your consideration of this submission. Please do not hesitate to reach out if it would be helpful for us to clarify or expand upon any of the points above.