

FRAMEWORK FOR CIVIL SOCIETY-GOVERNMENT ENGAGEMENT ON WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY UNDER THE SECOND AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL ACTION PLAN ON WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY 2021-2031

1. Background

1.1 Australian civil society organisations (CSOs) have long been active in shaping Australia’s response to the women, peace and security agenda (WPS). Specifically, they have played an instrumental role in supporting the development of the first and second National Action Plans (NAP) on Women, Peace and Security, and promoting the WPS agenda across national, regional and international contexts.

1.2 During the first WPS NAP (2012-2019), through the mechanism of civil society dialogues, and the WPS network developed by the Australian Civil Society Coalition on Women, Peace and Security (the WPS Coalition), Australian CSOs held government accountable to its WPS commitments. The Shadow reports produced as a result of these dialogues sought to elevate the conversation on WPS, particularly the Australian Government’s response.¹ Funding support for dialogues was provided by the Australian Civil-Military Centre (ACMC).

1.3 In the interim between the end of the first NAP and the launch of the Australian Government’s second WPS NAP, engagement has been more ad hoc. The second NAP (2021-2031)² calls for “strengthening partnerships with civil society across two key functions — advice and accountability.” The ACMC has been tasked with hosting:

“open civil society advisory dialogues to bring together the experience, skills and expertise of government departments and agencies, academia and civil society across jurisdictions and sectors.

The dialogues will enable:

- discussions on implementation progress and recommendations from independent reviews
- ideas to be exchanged on emerging best practice and recent research, and
- new partnerships to support whole of government implementation.”

1.4 Further, the second NAP states that the Australian Government will encourage and support civil society to release shadow reports on government progress of National Action Plan commitments in an effort to support transparency and accountability.

1.5 This *Framework for Civil Society-Government Engagement on Women, Peace and Security* builds on the extensive work of the Australian Civil Society Coalition on Women, Peace and Security undertaken during the first WPS NAP, and an initial Government-Civil Society Engagement Meeting held on 12 November 2021, hosted by Department of Foreign Affairs (DFAT) - the coordination lead agency for the second NAP.

2. Framework

2.1 The following **principles** will underpin engagement between Government and Civil Society (CS).

- *Promotion of civil society’s voice* – leverage existing and create new structures and mechanisms for meaningful access and space for CSOs to formulate, articulate and convey informed WPS perspectives in national and international decision-making processes at the national, regional and international levels.

¹ Civil Society Dialogue Reports can be found at www.wpscoalition.org.

² Australian National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security 2021-2031. p. 49, p. 54-55.

<https://www.dfat.gov.au/publications/australias-national-action-plan-on-women-peace-and-security-2021-2031>

- *Mutual reporting for results* - The timely release of Government progress reports (as mandated in the NAP MEF) and CS shadow reports will demonstrate Australia's commitments to WPS to the Australian public.
- *Transparent communication and consultation* - Authentic communication between CS and WPS Government stakeholders will lead to improved programs and policies.
- *Respect for independence of CSOs* – Supporting open and transparent public debate without repercussions is a cornerstone of a healthy and thriving democracy
- *Appreciation of diversity* - Ensure that diverse voices have a seat at the table and different perspectives and needs are taken into account in women, peace and security agendas, issues and processes.
- *Shared learning* - Sharing appropriate information and data to help develop sound policy and program approaches.
- *Promotion of genuine dialogue between government and CS* – Ensure CSOs co-lead the development of agendas and processes, through formal dialogues and engagement as endorsed mechanisms of information sharing, and that government and CSOs have adequate time to prepare for these processes

2.2 The **purpose** of the Framework for Engagement between Government and Civil Society is to:

ensure that Civil society is meaningfully engaged with Government in Australia's efforts to advance the WPS agenda at national, regional and global levels, bringing its wide-ranging skills and expertise on relevant issues and contexts to establish mutually agreed goals, including the pursuit of Australia's Second National Action Plan on WPS.

2.3 The **platforms** for engagement will broadly include:

2.3.1 **Open civil society advisory dialogues** co-hosted by ACMC and the WPS Coalition. These dialogues will focus on NAP implementation, both progress reporting and interim and final reviews.

2.3.2 **Issue-based/thematic dialogues** co-hosted by DFAT and the WPS Coalition to be held twice a year to define a shared vision for the advancement of WPS in the context of emerging/ongoing conflicts/crises and preventing potential crises.

2.3.3 **Briefings** to the WPS NAP Inter-departmental Committee on CSOs' work on WPS.

2.3.4 **International and regional engagement discussions** to create space for CSO expertise to inform deliberations (e.g. Australia-ASEAN WPS dialogues, CSW, WPS Compact, CEDAW, UPR, UN Security Council (UNSC) Open Debates, NATO Committee on Gender Perspectives (NCGP))

2.3.5 **Shadow reporting** from civil society to align with the Government's NAP Progress Reporting (2023, 2025, 2028) and can inform discussions at the open civil society advisory dialogues.

3. Outcomes from Civil Society-Government Engagement

- Provide practical recommendations for the application of WPS to emerging contexts and crises, drawing on a pool of expertise and partners
- Build strategic partnership that can strengthen outcomes of WPS initiatives
- Share information and expertise to jointly tackle emerging challenges
- Elevate the voices of women affected by conflict and crisis - both in Australia and internationally
- Strengthen monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of NAP
- Share research that is being undertaken on a range of WPS issues

4. Review

4.1 Review of the *Framework for Civil Society-Government Engagement on Women, Peace and Security* to occur at the conclusion of each NAP progress reporting period (2023/2025/2028/2031), or as required.