

Press release

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Liberia, Mexico, Niger, Senegal and Sierra Leone to tackle barriers to the deployment of women in peace operations with the support of the UN Elsie Initiative Fund

The Elsie Initiative Fund, a UN Trust Fund, announced today the first five countries – Liberia, Mexico, Niger, Senegal and Sierra Leone to receive financial support to increase the participation of women military and police in peace operations. It also invited Member States to send letters of interest as it launches its second round of programming.

The five receiving countries are in the process of conducting an in-depth barrier assessment to identify the obstacles to women’s selection and deployment to international peace operations and to start implementing their national plans.

In addition, Niger and Senegal will establish national rosters of eligible and trained women military and police personnel for deployment, while they will reinforce the recruitment of women in their national security institutions through targeted campaigns. To address systemic and structural barriers, both countries also committed to adopt and implement a gender equality policy, strategy and action plan in their security institutions to ensure women have equal opportunities throughout their career and enable them to acquire the expertise needed to serve in international deployments.

Mexico, a rotating Member of the Security Council serving in 2021 – 2022, has committed to identifying the barriers that currently limit the participation of uniformed women in UN peace operations; and to implement solutions that help expand the training and meaningful participation of women within their security services.

“Accelerating women’s full, equal and meaningful participation in security institutions is essential to ensuring they are representative, responsive and accountable to all. While some progress has been achieved, we estimate that it will still take 30 years to reach gender parity for military troops, 12 years for formed police units, 8 years for individual police officers, and 7 years for military observers and staff officers. Women cannot afford to wait this long.” Said the Executive Director of UN Women Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, as Co-chair of the Fund.

“Institutional transformation is only possible when it is driven by leaders who create an enabling environment for women and who commit firmly to zero tolerance for sexual harassment and sexual exploitation and abuse, and an end to impunity for perpetrators.” She added.

The UN exceeded the 2020 gender targets set in the [Uniformed Gender Parity Strategy 2018 to 2028](#) for military observers and staff officers (19 per cent against 17 per cent), individual police officers (29 per cent against 22 per cent) and formed police units (14 per cent against 10 per cent) but it lagged considerably behind for military troops (5.2 per cent against 6.5 per cent), the latter category representing 84 per cent of total deployments – almost 70,000 in December 2020. Leadership positions in 2020 saw one woman out of 13 Heads of Military components (8 per cent) and four women out of 14 Heads of Police components (28 per cent), compared to one of 16 (6 per cent) and one of 17 (5.8 per cent) respectively in 2015.

The top 10 countries contributing military and police personnel deployed 46,000 officers, over half of the total 80,000 present in UN peace operations in December 2020. Only just over 2,700, averaging 6 per cent, were women. Senegal, the highest police contributing country in UN peace operations, has committed to deploy six gender-strong formed police units over three years subject to UN operational requirements, increasing their deployment of women to up to 30 per cent by 2023.

Niger has committed to increase deployments of women among military troops from a baseline of 0.5 per cent in January 2021 to 5 per cent in 2023, to double deployments among military observers and staff officers from 11 per cent to 23 per cent and to increase to 50 per cent women police from 37 per cent.

"We need to transform our institutions to allow women to participate and contribute fully as part of our peace operations. The Elsie Initiative has been an essential partner providing space and resources necessary to this goal," said UN Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations Jean Pierre Lacroix.

The Elsie Initiative Fund seeks to accelerate progress toward achieving the United Nations gender targets in line with Security Council resolutions and the Uniformed Gender Parity Strategy helping close the gap to parity. Created by the United Nations and Canada in 2019, it supports the sustainable deployment and meaningful participation of uniformed women peacekeepers by offering financial assistance through project funding and/or providing a Gender Strong Unit (GSU) premium where Member States deploy a substantial representation of women among formed units or troops including at command level.

Thus, the Fund provides an important mechanism to action a shared responsibility in implementing the ten Security Council resolutions on women, peace and security, as well as resolution 2538, adopted in 2020, dedicated to increase the deployments of civilian and uniformed women. The latter called for developing strategies and implementing measures in security institutions including access to information on deployment opportunities, training, identification of barriers to recruitment and deployment, development of national databases, recruitment and the establishment of incentives including childcare.

Australia, Canada, Finland, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway and the United Kingdom have contributed or pledged funds for up to USD 27.9 million. The target to operate the Fund during its five-year mandate is USD 40 million and the Fund is seeking additional contributions to meet its full potential with demand projected to increase.

For more information on the Elsie Initiative Fund, go to <https://elsiefund.org/> and <http://mptf.undp.org/factsheet/fund/EIF00>.