ANNEX B

POST-CONFERENCE EVALUATION

GLOBAL CONVENING "GENDER- INCLUSIVE PEACE PROCESSES STRENGTHENING WOMEN'S MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION THROUGH CONSTITUENCY BUILDING"

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Executive summary

Between 7-27 July 2021, UN Women organized the global online conference "Gender-Inclusive Peace Processes: Strengthening Women's Meaningful Participation through Constituency Building," in partnership with CMI – Martti Ahtisaari Peace Foundation. The conference was made possible through a long-term collaboration with and financial support from the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) in cooperation with Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH and the Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

The conference aimed to explore good practices and strategies to strengthen women's meaningful participation and representation in all aspects of peacemaking, with a focus on constituency building approaches and with a particular view toward the Middle East and North Africa (MENA).

Hosted online for the first time since its inception in 2018, the conference took place on Zoom (synchronous component) and on the online platform of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), SparkBlue (asynchronous engagement). It saw the participation of **more than 320 peace practitioners from almost 70 countries**, with a focus on the MENA region.

Following the event, UN Women and CMI shared a post-conference survey (available in Arabic, English and Spanish) to gather participant views on this edition of the conference and recommendations for future engagements, and to gain a broad sense of attendees' knowledge at the end of this convening.

Out of all approx. 320 participants targeted, only **38 responses were received** (of which 22 to the English survey and 16 to the Arabic version, with nil submissions in Spanish). This is equivalent to **a 12 per cent response rate**. While this is possibly not enough to provide a comprehensive picture, results offer a first overview of conference success and lessons learned.

Overall, responses were positive in tone, with an overwhelming majority of respondents praising the organizers' handling of the conference and choice of topics. **Most participants said the conference helped them expand their knowledge base and network of contacts** and expressed a desire to attend similar engagements in the future (100 per cent of participants said that participating in the convening was beneficial and a very good use of their time).

Respondents were happy with the choice of a hybrid online format for this conference, with a mix of synchronous and asynchronous engagement over Zoom and SparkBlue (although they would like to see a return to some in-person engagement in future editions), as well as with the support received from the organizers. They recognized almost unanimously the added value of graphic recording and interpretation during Zoom sessions and of SparkBlue's embedded translation functionality.

Some participants were critical toward the choice of SparkBlue as a platform for online engagement, with a minority of them indicating it was not user-friendly/intuitive. Still, the overall sentiment toward the platform was mostly positive.

With more than 400 participants attending the live Zoom events[1] and around 140 invitees being active on SparkBlue, the conference was successful in reaching wider, more varied audiences beyond those who would have been targeted with an in-person engagement. Still, **some lessons can be learned** and should be considered when looking ahead at future convenings, including placing special attention to choosing the best event **format and timing** to ensure a vast and substantive participation.

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[1] This refers to the number of total participants across all Zoom sessions, rather than unique users.

Introduction

Between 7-27 July 2021, UN Women organized the global online conference "Gender-Inclusive Peace Processes: Strengthening Women's Meaningful Participation through Constituency Building," in partnership with CMI – Martti Ahtisaari Peace Foundation. The conference was made possible through a long-term collaboration with and financial support from the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) in cooperation with Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH and the Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

The conference aimed to explore good practices and strategies to strengthen women's meaningful participation and representation in all aspects of peacemaking, with a focus on constituency building approaches and with a particular view toward the Middle East and North Africa (MENA).

The conference was hosted online for the first time since its inception in 2018, and it took place on Zoom, where live events were hosted between 7-27 July (synchronous component), as well as on UNDP online engagement platform, SparkBlue (asynchronous engagement). In particular, on SparkBlue a private group was set up to foster engagement among attendees. The private space, open for posting between 1-31 July, was managed by UN Women and CMI with technical support from SparkBlue admins. It was structured in two discussion rooms, each of which was managed by moderators from civil society and from the organizations Inclusive Peace and Independent Diplomat.

During the weeks of activity, the conference saw the participation of **more than 320 peace practitioners from almost 70 countries** (including both SparkBlue and Zoom engagement), with a focus on the MENA region. On SparkBlue, 138 people either logged on or posted, with 90 comments received in total across two discussion rooms. On Zoom, around 400 logins were recorded across all live sessions[2], with spikes of 167 and 119 participants registered respectively during the opening and closing event.

Following the convening, a meeting report gathering key issues and recommendations from participants has been produced for dissemination among relevant decision-makers in the field of Women, Peace and Security (WPS) and to help inform further UN-led efforts in peacemaking spaces.

At the end of the conference, UN Women distributed a post-conference survey (available in Arabic, English and Spanish) to gauge the overall reception of this convening among attendees and gather recommendations on how to improve such engagements in the future. The results of this survey are included in this document, together with further considerations from organizers.

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[2] Please note, this number corresponds to the total number of logins to Zoom events, not to unique users/attendees, as some participants attended multiple sessions.

Zoom engagement – synchronous

On Zoom, the following live events were held, including a mix of high-level events, plenary discussions and engagement-oriented working groups:

7 July (10:00 - 11:30 EST)
High-level opening: Constituency-building for inclusive peace processes

8 July (10:00 - 11:30 EST)
Key topics: Framing key issues and concepts of constituency building

14 July (09:00 - 11:30 EST)
Working group session 1: How to build and nurture a constituency?

15 July (04:00 - 06:30 EST)
Working group session 2: Dynamics between constituency building and formal peace processes

27 July (10:00 - 11:30 EST)
Closing session: Reflection on key themes, topics and trends

Sessions were mostly open to selected invitees only, except for the opening and closing sessions (public). They aimed to offer a safe space for live exchange, where attendees could listen to contributions from key peace experts and share their own views.

Events were held under the Chatham House Rule of non-attribution to facilitate open discussion. Simultaneous interpretation in Arabic, English and Spanish was also offered to remove barriers to participation.

SparkBlue engagement – asynchronous

On SparkBlue, one private space was set up to facilitate asynchronous engagement among conference invitees and foster discussion ahead of and following the live Zoom discussions.

The space was accessible upon invitation only and was organized in two separate rooms (i.e. discussion room 1 "Working group session 1 – How to build and nurture a constituency?" and discussion room 2 "Working group session 2 – Dynamics between constituency building and formal peace"), moderated by civil society actors and experts from Independent Diplomat and Inclusive Peace.

In the discussion rooms, invitees had a chance to share their views, experiences and best practices for constituency building and engage with others ahead of, during and after the live sessions on Zoom. The private space remained open for posting between 1 to 31 July.

Out of all registered participants, 138 logged onto the platform (around 40%) from more than 40 countries. Of these, 28 posted in the discussion rooms, for a total of 90 posts across the two engagement rooms.

In addition, one public dashboard was set up on SparkBlue to allow everyone with an interest (beyond selected conference participants) to access dedicated material on constituency building and gender-inclusive peacemaking.

Post-conference survey

Aims and specifications

Following the conference, a post-conference survey was developed by UN Women and CMI to complement the work started with the [pre-conference questionnaire](#), which had been sent to participants to gather inputs ahead of the conference.

Purpose of the post-conference survey was to gather participant feedback on this convening, including recommendations for future engagements, and to gauge acquired knowledge and satisfaction. Respondents had an opportunity to express their views on various aspects of the conference, from the format and choice of platforms to the relevance of the themes and topics discussed.

The survey consisted of 24 questions in total, distributed into three sections:

Section	Questions	Purpose
Assessment of gained knowledge	1-5	Gather views on the value and level of the discussion and on whether it helped increase participants' knowledge base and network of contacts.
Evaluation of engagement – Zoom and SparkBlue	6-18	Evaluate how easily participants could access material and engage via the different online platforms.
Additional feedback	19-24	Gather views on other topics and tools used, including graphic recording, translation and interpretation.

The survey was made available in three languages ([Arabic](#), [English](#) and [Spanish](#), the official languages of the convening) to meet the needs of the major linguistic groups represented in the conference and to be accessible.

Responses were displayed as anonymous in order to safeguard participants' privacy and offer a safe space for them to express their unfiltered views.

The survey was sent out to all the approx. 320 participants who participated in the convening. Of all those targeted, only **38 responses were received** (of which 22 to the English version and 16 to the Arabic one, with no submissions in Spanish), equivalent to **only a 12 per cent response rate**. Of these respondents, the majority (61 per cent[3]) identified as experienced peace practitioners who have been working in the field for more than 5 years, with the remaining saying they have either limited (1-4 years) or no previous experience. Most of them (29 out of 38 respondents) were new to UN peace convenings and had not attended previous editions in 2018 and 2019. The latter observation is noteworthy in view of the convenors' aim to engage actors that had not participated in such spaces previously.

Although the volume of responses does not allow to gain a comprehensive and complex picture of participants' perspectives, these answers offer a starting point for further reflection, including with regards to the usefulness of this engagement, its themes and format.

Overall, answers were very positive in tone – with no major criticism raised and with a strong majority of respondents answering positively to most questions (See 'Analysis of engagement', from p. 2, for a detailed overview of data). They praised UN Women and CMI for their handling of the convening,

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[3] i.e., 29% have 5-9 years of experience; 11% have 10-15 years of experience; 21% have 15+ years of experience.

highlighting success and overwhelmingly stating the value of such engagements: the totality of participants said they **would like to see such events being replicated in the future**.
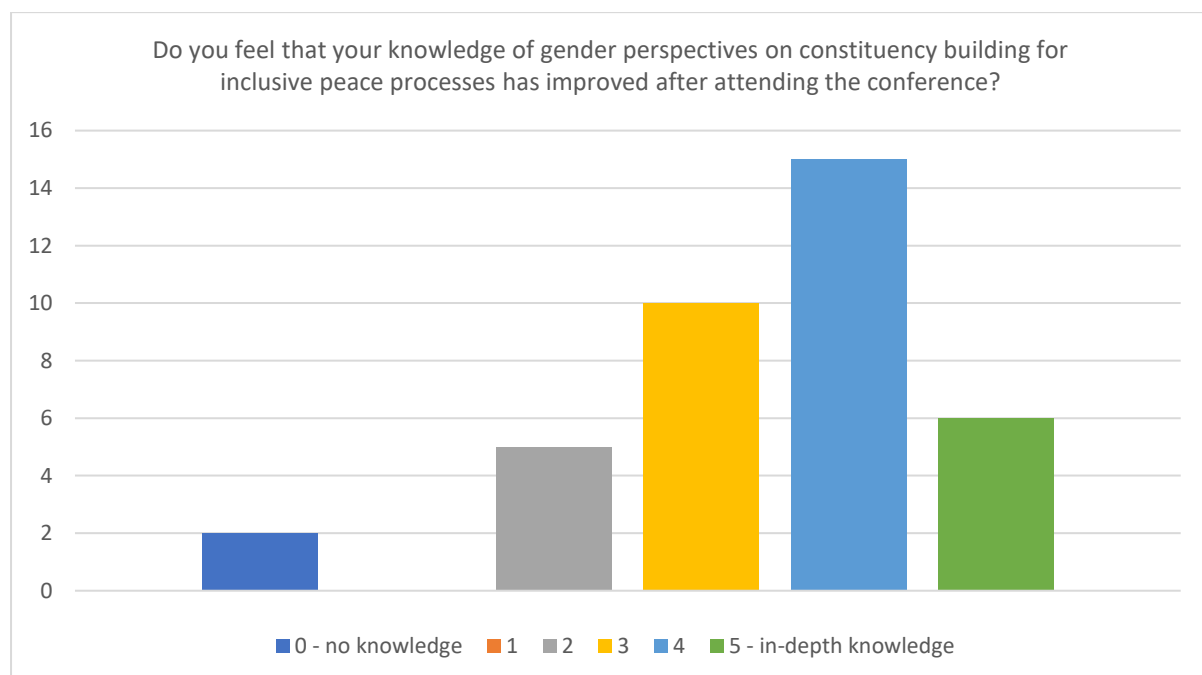
The only few critical comments mostly relate to the choice of SparkBlue as a platform for online engagement, with a minority of participants indicating it was not user-friendly and stating this represented a hindrance to engagement. Still, the overall sentiment toward the platform was mostly positive, with appreciation showed especially toward SparkBlue's embedded translation functionality, which helped break down linguistic barriers.

Analysis of engagement

Part 1 – Assessment of gained knowledge
Overall, respondents were satisfied with the conference and confirmed they gained new, or improved their existing, knowledge of constituency building for inclusive peace processes.

- **Gained knowledge**: almost all respondents noted that their knowledge of gender perspectives on constituency building for inclusive peace processes improved thanks to the conference, with around 64 per cent of them saying they acquired adequate to in-depth knowledge.
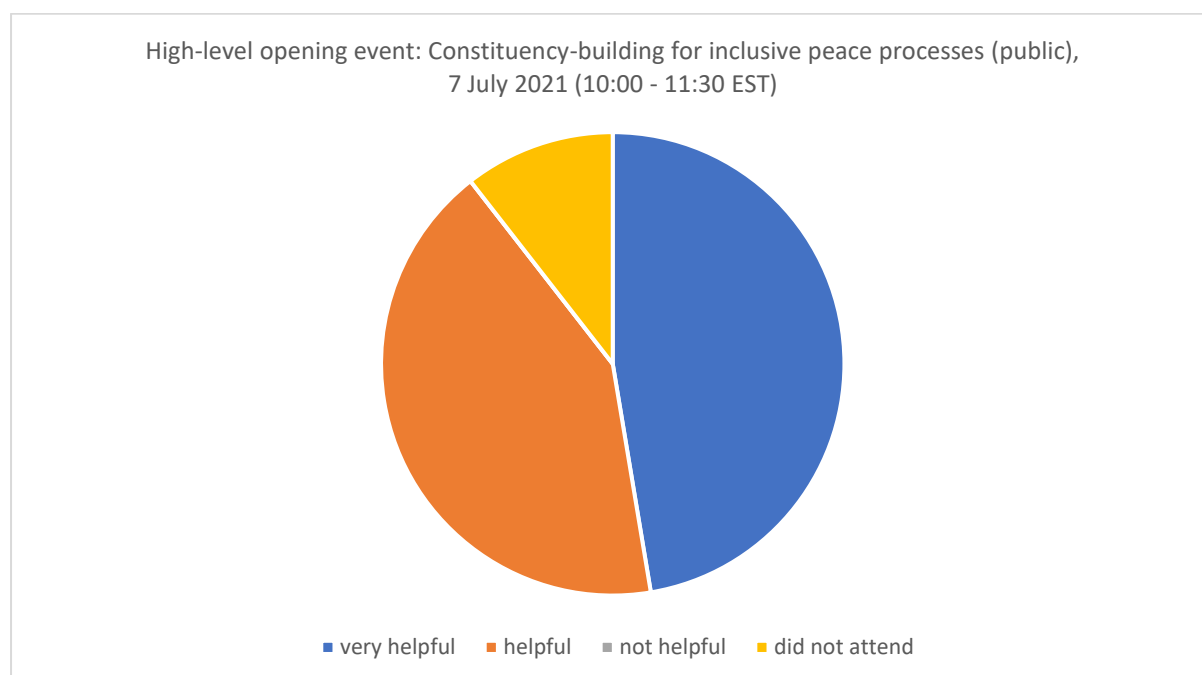

- **Improved confidence:** overall, participants said they found discussions around mediation process design and sequencing most useful for their work. Based on the knowledge acquired through the convening, almost 64 per cent of respondents stated they feel more confident addressing the issue of representation of civil society actors and political movements in peace processes; 58 per cent said they gained further confidence and knowledge of mediation process design to enhance women's representativeness; 45 per cent improved their confidence on the topic of temporary special measures (TSMs) and their value and use; finally, 34 per cent improved their knowledge and understanding of digital methods and consultative processes for constituency-building.
- **Future topics:** among others, some of the topics that participants would like to see treated in future conferences include exploring the use of social media and digital tools to foster women's

participation; supporting women political leaders in accessing decision-making spaces; further exploring the role of women in mediation processes; increasing male allyship and male support of gender-inclusive peace; exploring mental health issues and support available to women leaders.

Part 2 – Evaluation of engagement – Zoom and SparkBlue

Respondents were overall satisfied with the hybrid structure and choice of virtual platforms, as well as the involvement and support of the organizers (UN Women/CMI and SparkBlue moderators). They were happy with the format and content of the Zoom session, and with the level of discussion on SparkBlue. Yet, despite the overall positive feedback, some respondents expressed dissatisfaction with the choice of SparkBlue as the hosting platform of this online engagement as they found it difficult to access and navigate, despite detailed step-by-step instructions[4] and support from conference organizers.
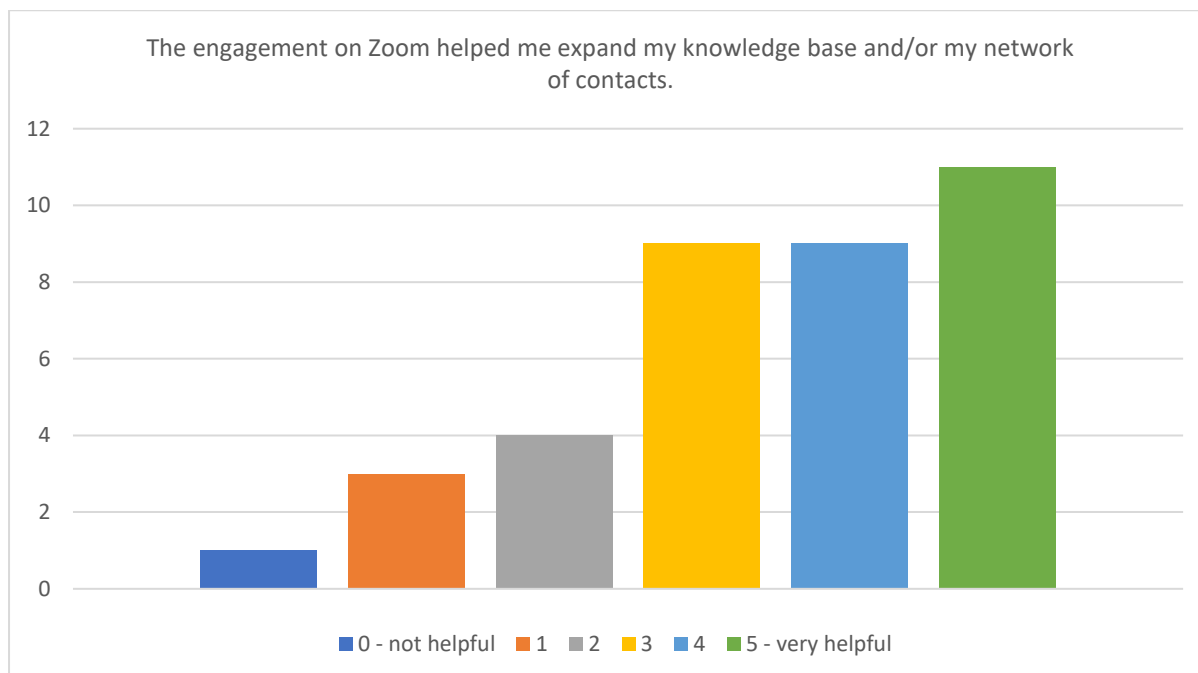
- **Zoom discussions:** an overwhelming majority of participants found the live Zoom discussions constructive and helpful. Especially among the English-speaking respondents, feedback was almost entirely positive, with rating ranging from 'very helpful' to 'helpful' (with the exception of one respondent saying they found working group session 1 on 14 July 'not helpful'). While positive feedback was received across the board, the session that was received most positively was the opening one, with a unanimous positive rating:

High-level opening event: Constituency-building for inclusive peace processes (public), 7 July 2021 (10:00 - 11:30 EST)

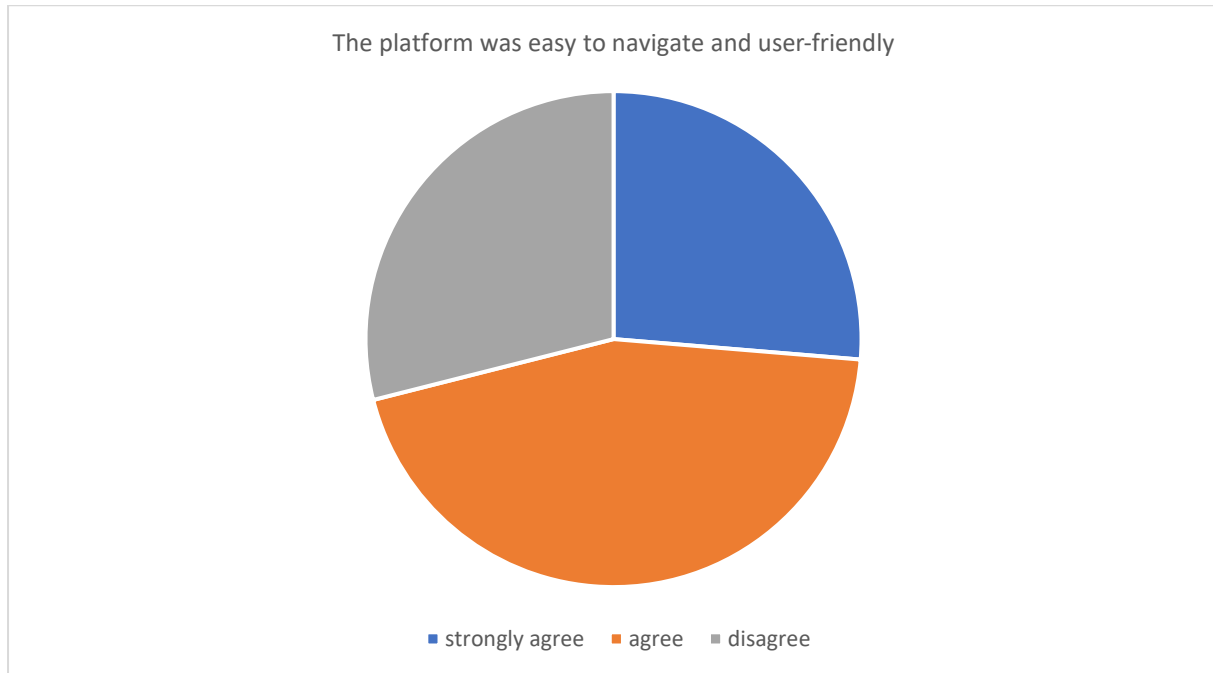■ very helpful   ■ helpful   ■ not helpful   ■ did not attend

All in all, respondents said the engagement on Zoom was beneficial to expand their knowledge base and network of contacts: almost 77 per cent of them (29 respondents) rated Zoom events from 'helpful' to 'very helpful', with only one person saying they didn't increase their knowledge.

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[4] Including a set of dedicated FAQs, instructions to set up a profile, login guide and overview of space structure and format.

The engagement on Zoom helped me expand my knowledge base and/or my network of contacts.

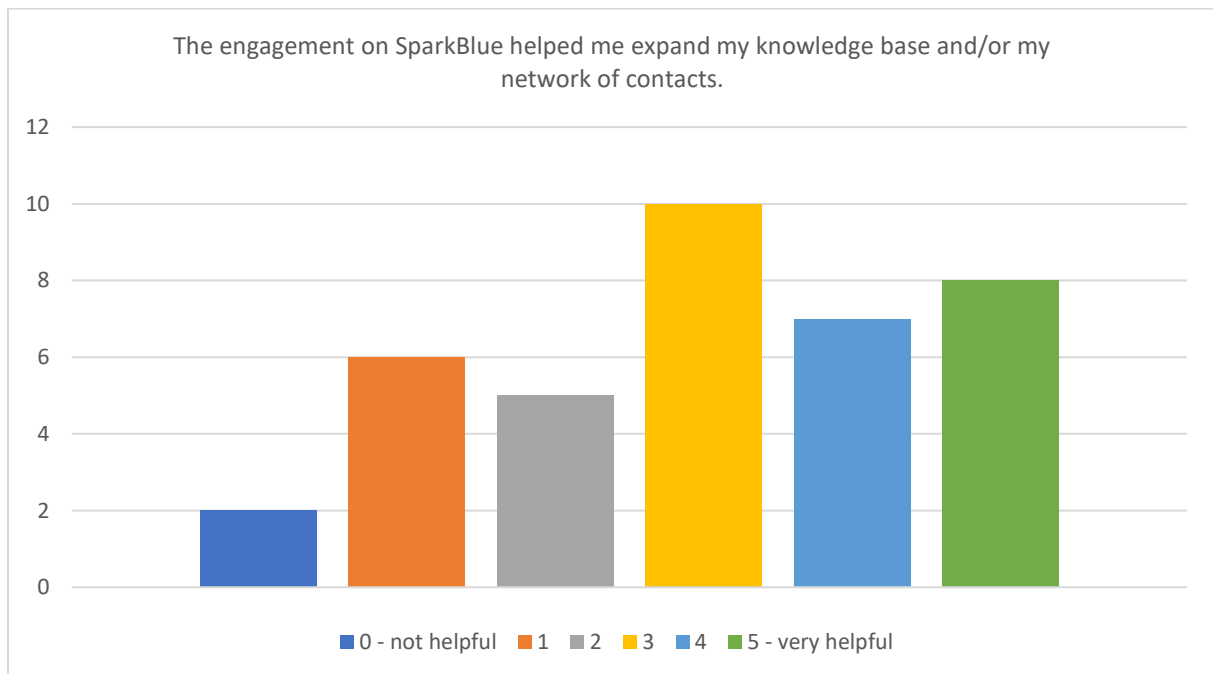Legend: ■ 0 - not helpful ■ 1 ■ 2 ■ 3 ■ 4 ■ 5 - very helpful

- **SparkBlue accessibility:** most respondents (29 out of 38, 77 per cent) said they found SparkBlue login instructions provided by the organizers clear and helpful, and that they received the necessary support to address technical issues. They were overall very satisfied with the embedded translation functionality of SparkBlue: a whooping 90 per cent said accessing their language of choice when posting and/or reading contributions in languages other than English was either 'very easy' or 'easy'.

- **SparkBlue user-friendliness**: most respondents (27, 72 per cent) were able to easily connect to SparkBlue and were satisfied with the choice of platform and organization of the space. Still, the remaining 28 per cent (11 people) said the platform was not user-friendly and flagged they struggled to connect.

The platform was easy to navigate and user-friendly

■ strongly agree ■ agree ■ disagree

- **SparkBlue discussions:** 77 per cent of respondents[5] said the overall conversation on SparkBlue was engaging and helpful to further their work in the field of peacemaking and peacekeeping (4 respondents were unable to log in). Still, from the further set of answers below[6] it emerges how most participants' opinions on the value of SparkBlue were tepid, with most critical views being expressed by Arabic-speaking participants.

The engagement on SparkBlue helped me expand my knowledge base and/or my network of contacts.

■ 0 - not helpful ■ 1 ■ 2 ■ 3 ■ 4 ■ 5 - very helpful

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[5] This refers to answers submitted to question 4, section 2 of the survey – SparkBlue: "The discussion on SparkBlue was engaging and helpful to further my work in the field and establish connections with my peers/other actors."
[6] This refers to answers to question 6, section 2 of the survey – SparkBlue: "The engagement on SparkBlue helped me expand my knowledge and/or my network of contacts."
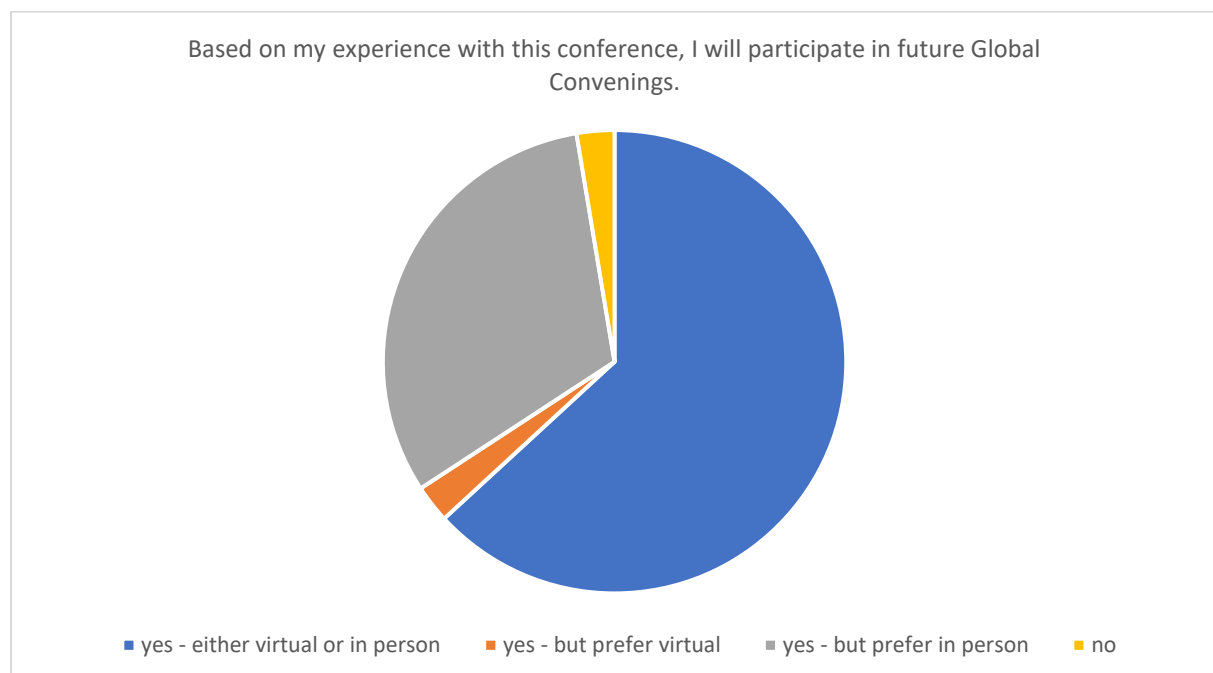
The picture emerging is contradictory and reflects some uncertainty, if not criticism, around the choice of platform. Organizers will continue to engage with participants in the future to get additional views before undertaking any similar initiative.

- **Future events:** all respondents said they would like to see similar events organized again in the future. This overwhelmingly demonstrates both the success of the convening and the need for more open and inclusive conversations with civil society and mediation community on some of the most unexplored issues of peacemaking and the wider WPS agenda.

Part 3 – Additional feedback

Overall, feedback on the event was positive, with respondents (98 per cent) confirming participation in the convening was a **"very good use of their time"** and highlighting the **need to continue to build on conference outcomes and to follow up with practical, tangible actions**.

They mostly agree that the graphic recording added value to the live events and overall engagement (90 per cent) – and that the hybrid online format, with mixed synchronous Zoom engagement and asynchronous SparkBlue discussions, was particularly engaging. Yet, a 10 per cent of responses (4 answers) disagree with this stance. From the graphic below, it emerges a **preference for hybrid events, followed by a strong preference for in-person engagement**. This sentiment was also echoed by some respondents when answering the final open question "Do you have any further comments or recommendations for the organizers?"

Based on my experience with this conference, I will participate in future Global Convenings.

■ yes - either virtual or in person   ■ yes - but prefer virtual   ■ yes - but prefer in person   ■ no

Other comments submitted by respondents via the open box include:

<table>
<tr><td valign="top">

English

"Well done and beneficial"

"There were many technical problems"

"how can I obtain a complete copy of the event, either video or e-copy of the conference? Can you kindly send me any, if available or the link?"

"To send us the recorded sessions to be able to revise the main points discussed suring the sessions."

"Good work and efficient management of tge resources."

"Countries should be provided resources so that hubs are establish for convening of rural women to enable them participate in the conference."

"It will be great to have a convening focused on subshara Africa and context that have different degrees of conflict situation."

"More convenings and preferably physical to help us meet and interact"

"Thank you for an enriching experience"

"I would like to register my appreciation for identifying me to be part of this important platform."

"Less high tech , more presencial , hopefully"

</td><td valign="top">

Arabic

"thanks for the invitation"

"I want to participate in more conferences organized on gender issues, and one of the advantages of the conference was the availability of simultaneous interpretation, so I thank the organizers"

"Activating a communication platform and a supporter network that includes the participants in this conference and working to support each member to spread the culture of peace as ambassadors for peace in accordance with the protocol defined by the United Nations"

"My participation in similar calls so that I can increase and expand my peacebuilding experience"

"I recommend the Foundation to build the capacities of young women and men in peace building issues, and I recommend that I be invited in the coming times for such conferences so that young women have a footprint and a role in peace building"

"Given the experience of my country, Sudan, in peace operations, especially when we are in a phase of conflict and conflict, followed by peace operations, and now we are going through a transitional phase facing many challenges."

"Thank you all for organizing and coordinating and inviting me to participate"

"Thanks all for the effort"

"I hope that there will be tangible things in the future that we can turn into a beneficial value for society"

"It is possible that there will be side or periodic meetings between women peacemakers from different parts of the world to exchange experiences and benefit from the experience and discuss the challenges they faced."

"Thank you, but I hope the upcoming events will be more practical with the guests"

"That there is a coordinator within each country that the participants can communicate with him/a to coordinate and address problems"

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Success and lessons learned

To summarize, overarching recommendations from responders include the **need for further convenings to continue to be inclusive** and involve more women leaders and peace practitioners from different backgrounds, including rural. In addition, some participants said that, while they have enjoyed the mixed on-/offline format and recognize its more democratic, inclusive nature, **future convenings should preferably include some in-person engagement** to best enable networking and exchanges.

Other key recommendations:

- **Act upon convening outcomes and recommendations with tangible actions** "with a beneficial value for society"
- **Organize similar events in the future** and/or do regular conference follow-up meetings with women peacemakers from different countries to exchange views and discuss shared challenges
- **Set up a platform for continued exchange** among conference participants so that they can engage further and strengthen connections
- **Continue to build the capacities of women and men in peacemaking**, including via hosting similar conferences, so that practitioners "have a footprint and a role in peacebuilding"
- **Set up a system of country/regional focal points** that participants can communicate with to coordinate and address problems
- **Maintain simultaneous interpretation** in future events as it was instrumental in enabling some participants to join the discussion

Despite the good level of engagement and high-quality discussions that took place during this convening, some aspects should be considered when gauging the success of this engagement.

Critical issues and lessons learned

- **Timing**: The choice to host the event over the month of July heavily impacted the levels of participation. On the one hand, some people could not participate due to pre-existing leave plans; on the other, participants possibly engaged less or were less motivated to join the discussion because they were still overwhelmed by previous engagements over the Spring/Summer period, including the Gender Equality Forum at the end of June 2021
- **Format**: The mixed nature of this convening, with engagement happening over both Zoom and SparkBlue, possibly contributed to de-centralizing and dispersing engagement. Instead of offering a further opportunity for continued, integrated discussion, SparkBlue was at times perceived as an additional, optional tool and seen as a duplication of Zoom engagement rather a further added value. These observations may also speak to the general limitations of such online discussion forums and audiences' motivation and interest to use them.
- **Moderators**: Overall, SparkBlue moderators carried out their moderation duties in a very timely and precise manner. Their posts were very informative, linking up to valuable and recent literature resources, and their summaries of Zoom/SparkBlue discussion were informative. Yet, especially in the initial phase, a more proactive attitude in leveraging their knowledge and role to seek out key participants might have helped ensure higher participation.

Conclusions

From this survey, it emerges clearly that respondents were **satisfied with the conference and the way it was organized** (including the availability of simultaneous interpretation, translations and graphic recording). They strongly believe their participation in this event was "beneficial and a good use of my time."

Most participants confirmed the conference helped them expand their knowledge base and network of contacts, as well as their knowledge of constituency building. They reiterated the **need for more discussions of this type in the future**, which should continue to be inclusive and involve women from various backgrounds.

It also emerged that participants favour mixed engagements with both an online and an offline component. For the future, this should be explored further, and the possibility to **offer some sort of in-person engagement** should be sought.

Another critical issue to explore is the **use of SparkBlue as a tool for online engagement** for similar events in the future: while its usefulness is recognized when doing online consultations, it is debatable whether its use next to live events constitutes and added value.

Finally, UN Women and CMI worked on producing an **extensive set of resources**, including a public SparkBlue dashboard with information on constituency building and peacemaking for audiences beyond convening invitees; a Trello board with varied, enticing material for online promotion (i.e. social media flashcards, quote cards, GIFs, Zoom backgrounds, etc. – all in three languages); a podcast (135 unique plays); a series of useful readings, including a dedicated background paper; and email messages/prompts to attendees. All these resources were well received by participants and consulted extensively. The Trello board and other social media assets, including the public dashboard, were used less widely as this engagement was not public-oriented and discussions were mostly private and limited to selected audiences only. **As the production of these resources was very time-consuming and labour-intensive, in the future it might be helpful to streamline efforts and focus on the production of fewer assets, but more targeted**.

Looking ahead to 2022 and beyond, if similar convenings are to be organized, UN Women and partners should build on the success of this engagement and address issues and lessons learned to ensure productive, successful and more inclusive discussions with a wider audience base.

See also:

Pre-conference survey in [Arabic](), [English]() and [Spanish]().

Post-conference survey in [Arabic](), [English]() and [Spanish]().