

ROLE SHEET

Women for Peaceful Asia

CONTEXT:

Women for Peaceful Asia (WPA) is an international nongovernmental organization established with the mission of promoting a postcolonial feminist approach to ending gender-based violence, and ensuring the global Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda reflects local women's voices in Northeast Asia. WPA was founded on the principles of access, freedom, and peace, recognizing the importance of access to decision-making in the pursuit of freedom from sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression, and the critical role women play in sustainable peacebuilding.

WPA critically addresses the implementation of the WPS agenda in Northeast Asian countries. It highlights that the current approach is often narrowly applied, focusing predominantly on areas outside the region affected by direct conflict. WPA advocates for a broader application of the agenda, emphasizing the need to address the underlying issues of patriarchy, colonialism, and militarism that are often root causes of present conflicts in the region. One priority is closing the gap between states' WPS rhetoric and actions. Despite wide support for including women in peace negotiations, only 3 in 10 peace processes in 2021 included women as mediators or signatories. In 2021, women's representation in UN-led peace processes was only 19%. In 2021, only 32% of peace agreements explicitly took into account the needs of women and girls.¹

Recognizing the importance of local knowledge, WPA actively centers communities of women in Northeast Asia in order to ensure the WPS agenda reflects their specific challenges and needs. The organization facilitates dialogues and workshops that empower women to be active participants in peace and security matters. It also works to reduce stigma and promote the inclusion of women in all aspects of society, particularly in areas related to disarmament, security, and peacebuilding. WPA aims to influence policy change at both national and regional levels, advocating for the integration of gender mainstreaming in all peace and security efforts, and ensuring that women's voices are heard and valued in the pursuit of lasting peace in the region.²

¹ Congressional Research Service. (2023). "Women, Peace, and Security: Global Context and U.S. Policy". In Focus

² Parashar, Swati. (2019). "The WPS Agenda: A Postcolonial Critique", in Sara E. Davies, and Jacqui True (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Women, Peace, and Security*, Oxford Handbooks

IN SUPPORT OF:

As WPA enters negotiations, there are items that they would like to bring to the table and are willing to push to include in the Regional Action Plan. These items include:

1. Acknowledging that the long-term stationing of foreign military in Okinawa, Japan has a negative impact on human security of local women, and developing solutions.
2. Advocate for member states to address domestic WPS issues, including historical harms, gender-based violence, and the gendered impact of militarization. Current WPS plans often limit application of WPS principles to foreign policy as international development cooperation assistance to countries in conflict or post-conflict areas.³
3. Resume annual civilian-level meetings between women and men from countries in the region to discuss and promote the WPS agenda. WPA sees this as important international solidarity.
4. Establish international political and financial supports that address conflict-related sexual violence, including access to safe and legal abortions.
5. Call for all member states to repeal excessive government sponsorship requirements and all other disproportionate restrictions on NGO registration that stifle an active civil society. WPA sees this as a protection of individual freedom.

OPPOSED TO:

There are also items which WPA does not want to include in the Regional Action Plan, but may be willing to compromise on if an adequate trade off is met. *Remember that you don't have to offer these right away in a negotiation.* These include:

1. Using the WPS agenda as a means to increase militarization in the Northeast Asia region under the justification of increased security for women. WPA sees increased militarization as a threat to human security.⁴
2. Moving past historical violence committed against women in the region without proper acknowledgement and reparations to the survivors. WPA sees this lack of acknowledgement and reparations as denying justice.
3. Embracing a WPS agenda that perceives women in the Northeast Asia region as merely recipients of global norms, without inclusion of local perspectives and needs in the agenda. WPA sees this as a form of disempowerment.
4. Framing of discussions where rights are used as a weapon to polarize and undermine countries. WPA does not see international shaming as a productive path leading to an improvement in human rights.
5. Denial of investment for women starting small businesses, especially due to government bureaucracy and political infighting.

³ Akibayashi, Kozue. (2020). "How Can the Women, Peace and Security Agenda Be More Relevant in Northeast Asia?". Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung

⁴ Weiss, Cora. (2011). "We must not make war safe for women". Open Democracy