

Conflict Weekly

An initiative by NIAS-IPRI and KAS India Office

A brief review of conflict and peace processes across the world

09 March 2022, Vol.2, No.50

International Women's Day: Gap between policies and realities on gender equality

Mallika Joseph



International Women's Day was celebrated on 8 March 2022 across the world. (Image Source: UN Women)

International Women's Day: Gap between policies and realities on gender equality

In the news

On 8 March, the world celebrated International Women's Day (IWD). The UN's theme for International Women's Day 2022 was "gender equality today for a sustainable tomorrow," with a special emphasis on climate change. It was aligned with the priority theme of the 66th meeting of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) held in March every year. This year's priority theme is "achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls in the context of climate change, environmental and disaster risk reduction policies and programmes." In his statement on IWD, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres pointed out that women primarily bear the brunt of climate change and environmental degradation. Further, he acknowledged that the clock on women's rights was moving backwards in many areas, particularly due to the pandemic, and called for bold action and massive investment to address gender inequality.

Various UN agencies partnered with key stakeholders to showcase women's footprints across disciplines and sectors. For instance, in partnership with Photoville in New York, the UN organized a photo exhibit profiling 14 women peacebuilders captured through the lens of local young women. In Thailand, UN Women offices showcased women climate activists from Bangladesh, Cambodia and Vietnam.

Similarly, governments, intergovernmental organizations, media houses, the corporate sector, and universities, found opportunities to highlight the accomplishments of local women peacebuilders and women leaders and their achievements. For instance, The Economist invited Nobel Laureate Malala Yusufzai to guest edit a special edition carrying compelling stories relating to girls' education, be it conflict, climate change, digital inclusion or discrimination.

Issues at large

First, the significance of International Women's Day. For over a century, IWD has been observed to acknowledge and recognize women's socio-economic, political, and cultural achievements despite the various structural, cultural and institutional hurdles women face. The IWD also serves as a grim reminder of persisting bias and barriers that prevent the fulfilment of women's full potential.

Second, the gap between policies and reality. There is a persistent gap between global frameworks and local realities. The lived experiences of women in conflict areas tell a different story than the multilateral instruments in place to protect the marginalized and vulnerable groups. And nationally, the gap between national policies and local implementation is steep due to varied opportunities pre-existing ethnic and cultural narratives in vogue in different parts of the same country.

Third, hurdles to gender justice and equality. Studies after studies have clearly shown that an inclusive economic model alone is sustainable. Regardless, the gender gap in labour, in wages, in corporate leadership, and in political representation is ever-persistent and in some instances, continues to increase. Segregation in professional sectors, for instance, a higher percentage of women in health care, in tourism and hospitality industry, in addition to the disproportionate burden of unpaid care are the biggest hurdles towards gender justice and equality.

Fourth, climate change and the vulnerability of women. Of those displaced due to climate change, about 80 per cent are women. Statistics show that more women, particularly more women of younger age, get killed due to climate-induced weather incidents. Between 2030 and 2050, the effects of climate change are expected to kill an additional 250,000 people, a majority of whom will be women. The impact of climate change will also be acutely felt by women from low-income and marginalized communities and, in many instances, migrants.

In perspective

At the centre of gender inequality is the need to challenge the power dynamics. As the UN Secretary-General rightly said, "gender inequality is essentially a question of power, in a male-dominated world and a male-dominated culture. Power relations must be reversed... Starting now, on International Women's Day, it's time to turn the clock forward for every woman and girl."

Be it a peacebuilder at the forefront of a conflict, a mediator, a political leader, an accomplished sportswoman, or a migrant worker, women in all walks of life are re-negotiating the contours of their engagement and bringing down patriarchal frameworks. We are still a long way to go from breaking the victim narrative engulfing women. But days such as the IWD help in shifting the focus on women from victims to victors and champions charting a new pathway for a sustainable tomorrow.

Also, from around the world

By Padmashree Anandhan

Peace and Conflict from East and Southeast Asia

China: Premier Li vows to bring down trafficking of women and children

On 05 March, Chinese Premier Li Keqiang, during the fifth session of the 13th National People Congress, promised to clear out trafficking of women and children. The vow comes after the case “chained woman with eight children,” gained attention amongst the public. In this case, 17 people were investigated and punished for the inhuman act. China’s Ministry of Public Security launched a campaign across the nation to control the trafficking, and legislators are also called for stricter punishments for those involved in buying and selling.

China: State officials assert to boost the production to meet the energy supply needs

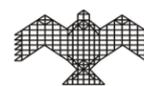
On 07 March, China’s state planning official said that China could serve as an alternative to supplying energy by increasing its production capacity and shooting up the reserves to keep away from an escalation of prices. According to the vice head of the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC): “Geopolitical conflicts and the changes of global energy supply and demand have challenged our safe energy supply. Despite the increasingly severe challenges we face, China has the conditions, ability, confidence and means to ensure a safe and reliable supply of energy.”

Japan: Officials discuss to prevent Russians from using cryptocurrencies platforms

On 04 March, Japan financial regulator and industrial body of cryptocurrencies met to analyze the effectiveness of sanctions that can be levied on Russia. On the same, the US Treasury Department was questioned by the senators on how to handle digital currencies from being used by Russia to alternate sanctions. According to blockchain-analysis firm Chainalysis, head of international policy said: “Unlike in previous sanctions, we haven’t yet seen any specific crypto wallet addresses named as identifiers for those sanctioned entities.”

Australia: Residents furious over government response to Sydney floods

On 09 March, Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison said that he would soon announce a national emergency due to over flooding in New South Wales (NSW) and Queensland. In recent two weeks, more than 20 people have died, and thousands have been displaced due to continuous rains. The federal and state government has been criticized by the residents for inaction and slow response to the flood situation. Morrison said that the locals and businesses affected by the floods would be provided with relief payments and asked the Australian Defence Force to deploy to help clearing the towns.



Myanmar: Clash between the regime and police kills seven soldiers

On 08 March, in continuity of the ambushes in the border between Chin State and Magway Region, a clash took place between 20 soldiers and policemen during the morning patrol. In the attack, close to seven junta soldiers were killed, and around seven others were injured. According to Kyaukhtu People's Defence Force (PDF) spokesperson: "The patrolling column was attacked with explosives and then the revolutionary forces opened fire on them using light weapons. We ultimately had to retreat as 40 more soldiers and a tank from the artillery unit arrived." So far, Myanmar has not been able to verify the number of regimes involved in the attack.

Singapore: Financial sanctions on Russia without UNSC support

On 05 March, the Singapore Ministry of Foreign Affairs released a statement imposing sanctions on exports to Russia, which can be used as weapons. It added financial measures to certain Russian banks, restricting cryptocurrency transactions which can be an alternative for Russia to ease down its financial pressure. A former diplomat remarked the move as the first time for a city-state to sanction a foreign country without the assistance of the UNSC. The statement said: "The patrolling column was attacked with explosives and then the revolutionary forces opened fire on them using light weapons. We ultimately had to retreat as 40 more soldiers and a tank from the artillery unit arrived." Under the stated measures, the banks in Singapore will also be banned from providing any services to help the Russian government.

Peace and Conflict from South Asia

Sri Lanka: Head of Roman Catholic Church urges to investigate easter Sunday attacks

On 07 March, the head of the Roman Catholic Church in Sri Lanka urged the UN in the 49th session of the UN Human Rights Council to inspect the Easter Sunday attacks in 2019. He said: "The first impression of this massacre was that it was purely the work of a few Islamic extremists. However, subsequent investigations indicate that this massacre was part of a grand political plot." In the previous investigations, it helped the authorities to track down the network of Islamist radicals who were responsible for church attacks in Colombo.

India: Ambassador urges Sri Lanka to opt for the necessary measure to protect Tamil community

On 05 March, Permanent Representative of India, Ambassador Indramani Pandey, in an interaction on the UN Human rights Chief's report, remarked on the issue of safeguarding the interests of Tamils in Sri Lanka. He urged the Sri Lankan government to take needed measures to meet the "legitimate aspirations" of the Tamils. He said: "As its friend and immediate neighbour, India has consistently called upon Sri Lanka to fulfil its commitments on addressing the issues related to protecting the interest of Tamils in Sri Lanka."

Afghanistan: WFP report food insecurity and lack of funds to support crisis

On 07 March, the World Food Program (WFP) said that the fund reserve of the organization to support Afghanistan's humanitarian crisis was nearing exhaustion. It reported that the crisis situation in Afghanistan is worsening, where it estimated 23 million people to be suffering acute food insecurity. The WFP found 95 per cent of the household to have lost access to food, and the same concerns were raised by the Afghanistan Chamber of Commerce and Investment (ACCI), urging for support to economic challenges.

Pakistan: Militant group attack Shia Mosque

On 04 March, Lady Reading hospital confirmed the death of 57 people, including civilians and policemen, along with 194 injured in an attack in Shia Mosque. In the statement released by LRH, close to 37 people injured were in critical condition thereby the death toll increased to 62. Interior Minister Sheikh Rashid Ahmed called the police to investigate and were able to identify three suspects in connection to the attacks. The police forensic confirmed that six kilograms of explosives were used to carry out the detonation. Prime Minister Imran Khan expressed condolence and condemned the attack. Later, it was reported that the militant Islamic group claimed the bombing.

Peace and Conflict from Central Asia, Middle East and Africa

Iran: IRGC launches second satellite into orbit

On 08 March, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) launched its second satellite from the northeastern Shahroud Desert. The satellite named Noor-2, meaning “light” reached the earth’s surface using a Ghased satellite carries that have mixed fuel. Although the Head of the US Space Command commented that it was “a tumbling webcam in space,” which will not serve as intelligence for Iran, the efforts show the capacity of Iran to make its satellite reach orbit.

Iraq: Protests arise due to the rise in the price of basic commodities

On 09 March, Iraq witnessed protests in the southern city of Nasiriya against the rise in prices of food such as oils and flours. The prices of the basic commodities arose due to the ongoing war in Ukraine. Iranian government in response announced measures such as a monthly allowance to pensioners and civil servants under certain income category to counter the price increase. Along with the measures, it also suspended customs duty on basic food commodities. The Interior Ministry also took action by arresting those involved in selling the commodities at unfair prices.

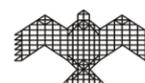
Mali: Jihadist launch another attack on the military camp

On 05 March, an attack was launched by the Jihadists on the military camp in central Mali. In the attack, 27 soldiers and 47 terrorists were brought under control as per the army report. The country has been experiencing Jihadist movements and Islamic State group for the past decade. Recent attacks are seen due to a shift in the military scope in the Sahel as France withdraws from Mali and Russia have entered.

Peace and Conflict from Europe and the Americas

Ukraine: Russian airstrike on a maternity hospital in Mariupol

On 09 March, Russia launched an airstrike on a maternity and children’s hospital situated in the south-eastern city of Mariupol. It was confirmed by the head of the regional military administration, and President Zelensky tweeted that: “People, children are under the wreckage. Atrocity! How much longer will the world be an accomplice ignoring terror?” With the strike, Russia has once again breached the ceasefire, which was agreed for 12 hours in six cities, including Mariupol.



Ukraine: Attacks on various port cities surrounding capital

On 08 March, Russian forces launched hundreds of missiles and artillery attacks in the residential areas of Chernihiv, Mykolaiv and Kharkiv. Ukrainian forces defended Ukraine's largest port city of Odesa from Russian ships. The Ukrainian forces said they had killed more than 11,000 Russian troops. However, sources from Moscow only confirmed the loss of 500 soldiers. On the same day, nine civilians were killed, this included two children who were bombed by an airstrike in the Ukrainian city of Sumy. In addition, a senior Russian General, Vitaly Gerasimov, the first deputy commander of Russia's 41st army, was killed in Kharkiv.

Ukraine: Firm fighting of Ukraine forces against Russia; fleeing of refugees to Poland

On 09 March, Ukraine's General Staff of Armed Forces released a statement on "operative information," saying that the Ukraine forces were firmly fighting against the continuing attacks launched by the Russian military. It termed it "covert mobilization," where Russia was using its training camps to carry out the attacks. Apart from the above, the Polish Border Guard agency reported that close to 1.33 million people have fled to Poland. The government has already hosts two million refugees since the Russian invasion. The first success in the evacuation at Sumy gives hope for a ceasefire, at least in a few parts of Ukraine; the Ukraine army observed this as slow in Russian progression as Ukraine defends strong in the areas of strikes and carries out the evacuation.

Russia: Symbol "Z" invoke curiosity

On 07 March, Russian gymnast Ivan Kuliak will face disciplinary procedure conducted by International Gymnastics Federation for wearing the symbol "Z." In recent days, the symbol has been found to be present on the cars, advertisements, bus shelters, recently in the Serbian demonstrations and social media. When looked into, the audience of the Russian news channel mentioned that the "Z" was a marking to distinguish the Russian military. According to the US Air Force Lt Col Tyson Wetzel: "de-confliction measure to help prevent fratricide."

Russia: ICC to investigate war crimes

On 03 March, the International Criminal Court (ICC) Chief Prosecutor launched a war crimes investigation on Russia on suspicion of its military bombing civilians. After 39 countries raised the concern to ICC, filed the investigation on Russia. According to the Chief Prosecutor, ICC has already sent its team to the conflict area to collect evidence that comes under war crimes, crimes against humanity, or anything violating under the Geneva Conventions. In addition, the investigation will track individuals involved in ordering the attack on civilians in the invasion and help target them to impose charges.

Sweden: Prime Minister Andersson denies calls by the opposition to join alliance

On 08 March, Sweden's Prime Minister Magdalena Andersson turned down calls by the opposition to consider acceding into NATO. Andersson stated that applying for accession now would further jeopardize European security. The Prime Minister added: "I have been clear during this whole time in saying that what is best for Sweden's security and for the security of this region of Europe is that the government has a long-term, consistent and predictable policy and that is my continued belief." Sweden's foreign policy is founded on non-participation in military alliances; however, it has created close ties with NATO following growing Russian aggression in the Baltic region.

The US: Biden announces ban on Russian oil and gas

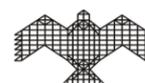
On 08 March, Biden said that the US would ban Russian oil and gas. The US would additionally release 60 million barrels of oil from its reserves to avoid an energy scarcity. He also assured security assistance to Ukraine, which would be worth more than USD one billion. Biden said: “Shipments of defensive weapons are arriving in Ukraine every day from the United States, and we in the United States are the ones coordinating delivery of our allies and partners of similar weapons from Germany to Finland to the Netherlands.” He also reiterated the US support in providing humanitarian aid to the people of Ukraine.

The US: Poland's decision to transfer fighter jet refused

On 09 March, the US refused Poland’s offer to receive MiG-29 fighter jets to transfer them to Ukraine. The Pentagon rejected the proposal as it raised serious concerns with the NATO alliance. The Pentagon said the prospects of flying a combat aircraft from NATO territory into a war zone could have implications for the entire bloc’s alliance. As reported by Euronews: “Pentagon Press Secretary John Kirby questioned the prospect of jets departing from a US/NATO base in Germany to fly into Ukrainian airspace contested with Russia.”

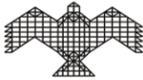
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National Institute of
Advanced Studies



About NIAS-International Peace Research Initiative (IPRI)

The International Peace Research Initiative (IPRI), initiated in 2018 at the National Institute of Advanced Studies (NIAS), is a part of the Conflict Resolution and Peace Research Programme at the School of Conflict and Security Studies.

IPRI undertakes research on various issues relating to peace with special emphasis on radicalisation, sustainable peace, gender roles in peacebuilding and global protest movements. IPRI research are published as briefs, reports and commentary.



About Konrad Adenauer Stiftung

The Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) is a political foundation. Established in 1955 as “Society for Christian-Democratic Civic Education”, in 1964, the Foundation proudly took on the name of Konrad Adenauer, the first Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany. With 16 regional offices in Germany and over 120 offices abroad, the Konrad Adenauer Foundation is committed to achieving and maintaining peace, freedom and justice through political education. KAS promotes and preserves free democracy, social market economy, and the development and consolidation of the value consensus. KAS also focus on consolidating democracy, the unification of Europe and the strengthening of transatlantic relations, as well as on development cooperation.

KAS cooperates with governmental institutions, political parties and civil society organizations, building strong partnerships along the way. In particular, KAS seeks to intensify political cooperation in the area of development cooperation on the foundations of its objectives and values. Together with the partners, KAS makes a significant contribution to the creation of a global order that empowers every country to determine its own developmental priorities and destiny in an internationally responsible

About Conflict Weekly

The Conflict Weekly an academic endeavour to bring every Wednesday/Thursday a weekly analysis of the conflict and peace processes in the world; aiming to look at the larger peace picture. It is published by the NIAS-IPRI in collaboration with the KAS India Office.



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