



Women peacekeepers pose for a group photo at the 'Women in Peacekeeping: A Global South Perspective' conference in New Delhi on Monday. Supplied

BLUE HELMETS

Female peacekeepers gather in New Delhi for first Global South summit

Global South countries are top troop contributors to UN peacekeeping missions

Sanjay Kumar New Delhi

Female peacekeepers are gathered in the Indian capital for the first summit of UN blue helmets representing the Global South.

Hosted by the Indian Ministry of External Affairs, Ministry of Defense, and the Centre for United Nations Peacekeeping, the two-day conference, "Women in Peacekeeping: A Global South Perspective," brought together 35 women peacekeepers from 35 countries representing the developing world.

Global South countries are the leading contributors of troops to UN missions. India, alongside Bangladesh, Nepal, and Indonesia, has the biggest number of peacekeeping troops.

Women peacekeepers were sent to the field for the first time during the UN Operation in the Congo in 1960. However, their

involvement at that time was limited to non-combat positions such as medical personnel and administrative staff.

India became a pioneer in the provision women peacekeeping troops when it sent an all-female Formed Police Unit to Liberia in 2007. Today, women make up more than 20 percent of its 5,000 deployed military observers and staff officers.

"The participation of women in peace operations makes it more diverse and inclusive," Foreign Minister S. Jaishankar told the participants during the conference's opening session on Monday.

"It is essential that we continue to increase the representation of women in peacekeeping. This is not only a matter of quantity but equally of quality. Women peacekeepers often have unique access to local communities, acting as role models for women in conflict zones."

The peacekeepers were also

received by President Droupadi Murmu at her official residence, Rashtrapati Bhavan.

Those taking part in the conference told Arab News how important it was for them to meet and share their experiences.

HIGHLIGHT

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"We learn (from) all the thoughts, ideas that each of us has — by their own experience. For me it is powerful," said Lt. Marinliz Irene Chicas, a peacekeeper from El Salvador.

Maj. Mariam Thermit from the Republic of Guinea Armed

Forces, who has served in the UN Mission in South Sudan and in the engineer corps in Western Sahara took part in the New Delhi meeting to share her insights.

"We need to improve women's qualifications," she said. "Women are very important in peacekeeping ... These missions are very important for (the affected) women and children, and without women we can't (access them)."

UN Security Council Resolution 1325, adopted in 2000, recognized the importance of female participation in peacekeeping and called for the inclusion of women in all levels of decision-making and peace processes as critical to such operations.

Women's participation ensures that peacekeeping missions consider the security needs of all populations, including marginalized groups. Female peacekeepers help address issues such as the specific vulnerabilities faced by women and children in conflict areas.