

An address to the
Gender Equity and Peacebuilding Workshop

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I would like to express our delight and appreciation at having such an illustrious group of experts participating with us in this workshop on gender and peacebuilding. You are advocates, official decision-makers, researchers, and practitioners in the field from all over the world, with experience of some of the most difficult – and in some cases, intractable – conflicts of recent years and decades. Some of you have travelled here at great inconvenience and with difficulty, which speaks to your commitment to the issues at hand today, and we would like to thank you for making such special effort to share your knowledge and experience with us for the next two days. I would also like to extend a special welcome to our partners in this initiative and the authors of the discussion paper that underpins this workshop, Richard Strickland and Nata Duvvury, of the International Centre for Research on Women in Washington, DC.

This workshop comes on the heels of the two-year anniversary of the passing of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security – a useful point of departure for our discussions here over the next couple of days. 1325 is a landmark resolution for women, opening many new possibilities for activism, programming, and research geared to improving the lives of women, men and

children in war-torn societies. IDRC sees this workshop as one small contribution to this global effort.

It is my hope that the results of your two days together will usefully inform our own and others' work in meeting women's special needs during conflict and in building peace, as well as in transforming unequal and harmful gender relations that take on especially ugly dimensions in contexts of inter- and intra-state violence.

At IDRC, we are committed to several key ways of working to fulfill our mission to give prominence to Southern perspectives on select development challenges. We understand part of our role as brokering knowledge by bringing together our partners and other experts in various fields to exchange information and analysis in order to further a research agenda, such as we are doing through this workshop.

We are also committed to supporting work that not only improves women's current daily lives, but also that opens up new possibilities for their lives and that broadens the scope of choice women have over their lives. IDRC's mission is to do this through capacity-building southern researchers to bring gender analysis to their work, as well as to bring focus on women's and men's differentiated needs and perspectives in policy-oriented research.

Our Peacebuilding and Reconstruction program initiative has tried to accomplish IDRC's mission on gender in a number of ways. PBR has supported research that includes women as key interlocutors and actors in research projects, but it has also supported research that challenges silence on women's perspectives on conflict,

peace and reconstruction, as well as research that seeks to shed light on how to transform unequal gender relations prevailing in specific societies.

For instance, one project initiated by Arias Foundation and CERCA in Costa Rica on Local Reintegration Strategies in Central America and Colombia, demonstrates what can be accomplished with active and substantial women's participation in research projects. This project was coordinated by a woman, with many local women researchers and coordinators, and included local women's organizations' participation. While the research methodology included no explicit gender analysis, women's perspectives emerged throughout the project and were given voice in the final research report, in large part because of the high level of women's participation in the project implementation.

PBR and IDRC's Gender Unit is supporting a UNDP project on citizenship in the Arab world that support local women's organizations to examine women's perspectives on, and experiences of, policies and practices of citizenship in up to six Middle East countries. In the Lebanon and Palestine country cases, refugee issues and confessionalism will take on special prominence. The project is informed by an explicit gender analysis of citizenship and seeks to change prevailing national legislation and policies to better meet women's needs and rights.

Finally, a CIET International project in South Africa, Action Research for Sexual Violence Prevention in Soweto, brought an explicit gender analysis to the project methodology, by analysing factors of resilience that caused men to refrain from sexual violence and including men's and women's participation. Its findings were

used extensively in local and national campaigns to transform gender relations underpinning sexual violence, and to inform support and intervention strategies directed at men.

While IDRC and PBR have made some initial progress in contributing to gender, peacebuilding and reconstruction issues, we are looking forward to working with you over the next couple of days to improve our own analysis of what gaps and needs constitute a possible future gender and peacebuilding research agenda.

I am certain that with all of the varied and expert experience and commitment in this room, the workshop will prove a success.

Before turning it over to Pam, may I suggest that we now take a round and introduce ourselves?