My first thought on Women Peace and Security is that there is not enough emphasis for a holistic approach to women involvement in peace and security. Women engagement must be at every phase, from prevention, management, resolution, and post conflict reconstruction. The safety of women is critical, particularly in the post-conflict context. Women security is more sustainable when they are effective participant at the negotiation table and post conflict rehabilitation. Women must avail themselves of the small window of opportunity during the transition period to mobilize and enhance their leadership capability to create the space that allow them to act as agents of change. The UNSCR 1325 and CEDAW are the two pillars supporting women; the linkage between those instruments is however weak.

Women engagement in post conflict does not happen in a vacuum; many variables that need to be considered. Women status in pre-conflict setting such as their level of participation in public life, access to health and education, the impact and strength of traditions, men and boys’ behaviors and attitudes towards women are all indicators of women ability to influence the warring factions during the conflict and influence the political process upon cessation of the hostilities. There are very few cases of women presence at the negotiation table which limit their ability, in the post conflict reconstruction planning, to have an impact on legislation and policies that promote a more equitable society. Women concerns are generally addressed in a mainstreaming exercise in national policies and programmes usually without an earmarked budget and accountability framework.

The civil sector has a significant role to play, providing that it can operate freely within a legal framework, to engage with government and local actors. First, as a knowledge broker Civil Society can not only facilitate the linkage between SCR1325 and CEDAW, but lobby for effective budgeting for policies implementation, and advocate for gender training and awareness on inclusiveness to ensure women representation at all levels of the political spectrum. Second, CSOs must have the ability to mobilize popular support to move forward institutional reforms that promote women as driver of peace in a people centered approach to security.