

# Increase women leadership in peace operations

## • Commodore Anokye advocates

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**T**HE highest-ranking female officer in the history of the Ghana Navy, Commodore Faustina Boakyewaa Anokye, has called for increased efforts to advance the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda and promote women in leadership positions in peacekeeping missions.

The naval officer who recently returned from a United Nations (UN) peacekeeping mission where she was

the Deputy Force Commander of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) emphasised the critical importance of women's full participation in international peace and security decision-making processes.

She was speaking at a film screening and panel discussion on women, peace and security hosted by the UN Information Centre in Accra.

It was in collaboration with the UN Gender Support Group and the Department of Peace Operations, as part of activities to mark the International Women's Day celebration in Accra.

The event, which is on the theme: "Advancing the Women, Peace, and

Security Agenda: Ghana's Efforts", highlighted the significant increase in the number of women participating in peacekeeping operations.

Statistics show a rise of women in peacekeeping from 20 uniformed women between 1957 and 1989 to over 6,200 as of September last year.

However, the slow progress, particularly in military contingents, where women constitute less than 10 per cent of peacekeepers worldwide was also a concern.

### Slow progress

Commodore Anokye highlighted how women bear the brunt of violent conflicts, underscoring the urgent need for their inclusion in all aspects of peace and security efforts.

She pointed out the glaring underrepresentation of women in key decision-making processes and called for a concerted effort to address the gap.

Referencing the UN's commitment to gender parity, Commodore Anokye stated that there was slow progress in increasing the representation of women in uniformed roles within peacekeeping missions.

However, she commended Ghana's efforts in exceeding the UN targets for women's participation in peace operations, citing the Ghana Armed Forces (GAF) as a beacon of progress.

Reflecting on her own journey in the military, she shared the challenges faced by women in traditionally male-dominated environments.

Yet, she expressed optimism about the positive strides made by the GAF in mainstreaming gender equality and inclusion, including the appointment of female generals and commanding officers.

The UN Resident Coordinator, Charles Abani, said Ghana stood as the largest single contributor of women to the United Nations peacekeeping mission.

He highlighted Ghana's pivotal role in promoting women's participation in peacekeeping, citing exemplary figures such as the late Brigadier General Constance Emeffa Edjeani-Afenu and Commodore Anokye, who along with others, had not only excelled in their roles but also been instrumental in advancing the UN Peace Security Agenda.

Considering the evolving nature of conflicts, he emphasised the need for inclusivity, with women at the forefront.

### Film show

The National Information Officer of UN Ghana, Cynthia Prah, said the event was to raise awareness about the importance of including women in peace and security efforts, promote gender equality, explore challenges faced by women peacekeepers, and amplify women's voices in peace-building processes.

A 13-minute film on the journey of a young Captain Esinam D. Baah's training in Ghana to deployment in Lebanon showcased the contributions of women peacekeepers.

Later, a panel, consisting of the Senior Gender Specialist at the UN Women, Afua Ansre; the Head of the Gender Policy Advisor Unit of the Ghana Armed Forces, Group Captain Theodora Agornyo; the Deputy Director of the Faculty of Academic Affairs and Research at the KAIPTC Women Peace Security Institute, Dr Emma Birikorang; the Senior Liaison Officer for Canada's Elsie Initiative Bilateral Partnership in Ghana, Bertha Desmennu, and Captain Esinam D. Baah of the Ghana Armed Forces, discussed strategies to address challenges and mobilise support for prioritising and investing in women's participation and leadership in peace and security efforts.



• Commodore Faustina Boakyewaa Anokye (left) addressing participants in the United Nations Information Centre in Accra