

13 October 2016

Open Letter to Permanent Representatives to the UN: Recommendations on the Security Council Open Debate on Women, Peace and Security (WPS)

Dear Ambassador,

We write to you in advance of the Security Council Open Debate on Women, Peace and Security urging you to provide details on the progress your country has made on meeting its political, financial and institutional commitments made at last year's High Level Review on UNSCR 1325 (2000).

In 2015, three UN peace and security reviews, including the Global Study on UNSCR 1325, affirmed the long-made recommendations made by civil society to prioritize conflict prevention, strengthen women's participation in all decision-making around peace and security issues, substantially scale up the implementation of the women, peace and security agenda and increase investment in women's organizations. At last year's High Level Review on UNSCR 1325 and Security Council Open Debate on WPS, a record number of Member States participated in the debate. Of the 105 statements made by Member States, 65 percent included concrete commitments or positive statements on advancing women's meaningful participation in peace, security and political processes and 59 percent emphasized the importance of conflict prevention and women's role within this.

In your statement to the Security Council, we urge you to include updates across your domestic and foreign policies and where relevant in your capacity as a donor and troop and police contributing country. This should include sharing details on how you are working alongside women civil society organizations to implement the WPS agenda including the provisions of SCRs 2122 (2013) and 2242 (2015). Specifically, in regards to:

Women's participation in preventing and resolving conflict and post conflict rebuilding

We urge you to outline concrete steps taken to:

- Ensure the increased and meaningful representation of women in all peace, political and judicial processes;
- Support diverse women's civil society and women human rights defenders in conflict-affected countries to engage in local, national, regional and global decision making structures;
- Integrate women's substantive participation in the development and implementation of conflict prevention and countering violent extremism UN and national-level strategies in line with commitments made in UNSCR 2242 (2015); and
- Strengthen gender sensitive disarmament, demobilization reintegration programs and security sector reform initiatives.

Addressing humanitarian crises through a gender lens

We urge you to outline concrete steps taken to:

- Engage women from local communities in the design and implementation of protection of civilian strategies and humanitarian assistance;
- In line with international humanitarian law ensure access to the full range of medical, legal, and psychosocial and livelihood services, including sexual and reproductive services, without discrimination; and
- Implement effective asylum and legal protection mechanisms in accordance with international law, remove gender discriminatory nationality laws; and protect women and girls from sexual and gender based violence while in transit and in final destinations.

Strengthening justice, accountability and the rule of law

We urge you to outline concrete steps taken to:

- Support gender-sensitive security and justice sectors that are accessible to women and girls; uphold the rule of law; implement non-discriminatory laws, policies and practices; and increase women's recruitment, professional development and equitable access to promotion;
- Enable women's meaningful participation in national reconciliation and transitional justice mechanisms and ensure mediators supporting such processes advocate for diversity in participant representation as well as gender equitable reparations;
- Address, investigate and prosecute sexual exploitation and abuse committed by all UN and international staff by supporting calls for, or implementing, mandatory pre-deployment vetting and training; the equitable representation of women on conduct and discipline teams; more transparent reporting on allegations and investigations; and priority being given to survivor-centered responses which maintain confidentiality, minimize repeated trauma, and ensure rapid access to medical and psychosocial care;
- Ensure accountability for crimes perpetrated by all sides of a conflict, by supporting the documentation and investigation of human rights abuses, war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide, particularly for sexual and gender-based violations;
- Prevent and ensure accountability for attacks on women human rights defenders and women in public life as well as women who do not fill traditional gender roles and attacks on LGBT individuals; and
- Curb the flow of small arms and light weapons including through enforcing the Arms Trade Treaty, imposing arms embargoes, and implement SDG16.4 on reducing illicit arms flows in a way that reduces gender based violence

Developing and Implementing National Action Plans on 1325

We urge you to outline concrete steps taken to:

- Implement a National Action Plan which is robustly monitored and evaluated, well-funded and staffed, and inclusive of civil society in development, implementation and follow-up; and
- Align national security and gender strategies, including national strategies to counter violent extremism, with National Action Plans on UNSCR 1325 to ensure WPS aims are coherently and consistently supported.

Financing the WPS agenda

We urge you to outline concrete steps taken to:

- Allocate specific aid to efforts which advance gender equality and women's leadership, participation and protection;
- Increase predictable, accessible and flexible funding for women's civil society organizations working on peace and security at all levels, including capacity training to women civil society representatives engaging in peace processes;
- Ensure that counter-terrorism strategies do not restrict the work of women's rights organizations through overly restrictive legal, financial and reporting requirements; and
- Support women's participation in donor conferences to ensure interventions appropriately target the needs of women affected by conflict.

Last October, 71 Member States co-sponsored Security Council Resolution 2242 reaffirming that women's and girl's empowerment and gender equality are critical to conflict prevention and to broader efforts to maintain international peace and security. Co-sponsoring Security Council resolutions is a positive and symbolic step which then should be followed by UN and national-level implementation. We look forward to hearing how you are doing this.

Sincerely,

The NGOWG coalition members are: Amnesty International; CARE International; Consortium on Gender, Security and Human Rights; Femmes Africa Solidarité; Global Justice Center; Human Rights Watch; Inclusive Security; International Action Network on Small Arms; International Alert; MADRE; Nobel Women's Initiative; Oxfam International; Refugees International; Women's Refugee Commission; Women's International League for Peace and Freedom.