

16 October 2014

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

Dear Ambassador,

On the occasion of the 14th anniversary of the adoption of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and the open debate on Women, Peace and Security on 28 October, the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security calls for strong and progressive statements that address the full spectrum of the women, peace and security agenda, particularly related to forcibly displaced women and the full and meaningful participation of women in all peace, political and security processes.

As a coalition of civil society organizations, we work alongside women and women-led organizations in conflict and post-conflict situations as well as represent and work with refugee and internally displaced women and girls. The voices of women affected by these situations must be front and center in decision making processes undertaken by the international community, in particular the Security Council.

This open debate is an opportunity for all Member States to outline the concrete measures they will implement in their ongoing daily work to overcome remaining obstacles which currently hinder the full and systematic implementation of the women, peace and security agenda. In advance of next year's high level review and 15th anniversary of resolution 1325 (2000) Member States must commit to:

- Ensuring consistent senior political leadership to strengthen women's meaningful participation and leadership opportunities at all levels and in all contexts, including displacement;
- Ensuring dedicated resourcing for the advancement and effective implementation of the women, peace and security agenda, particularly for civil society groups working at the local level; and
- Supporting the Security Council and holding it to account regarding consistent and effective implementation of its resolutions on women, peace and security.

In your statement to the Security Council, we urge you to:

- Provide details regarding your efforts to support **women's leadership and participation**, with a focus on women in forced displacement settings. The participation of women refugees and IDPs in decision-making in displacement settings remains a serious challenge. Women and adolescent girls should fully participate and be consulted systematically in humanitarian programming and access to services. Further, women's meaningful participation and leadership must also be guaranteed in decision-making structures and committees within camps, in non-camp displacement settings and in broader political, security and peace processes. We must listen to, invest in and build the capacity of women-led civil society organizations that are critical to addressing the issues we grapple with in this debate. Women's voices are also essential in identifying durable solutions, including voluntary return to their areas of origin.
- Discuss your support for **gender-sensitive and comprehensive protection efforts, multi-sectoral responses and humanitarian assistance** that provide livelihood opportunities, medical, legal, psychosocial assistance and reproductive healthcare which afford women and adolescent girls greater control over their lives. Women and girls who are refugees or internally displaced are more likely to be targeted for all forms of gender-based violence, including domestic violence and early, child and forced marriage. For those with disabilities or those who head households, the risk is even greater. Efforts to document, investigate and prosecute sexual and gender-based crimes, including in refugee settings, must be supported through technical assistance and financial contributions and conducted in line with ethical guidelines. It is essential to ensure sexual and reproductive health care services are accessible and responsive to the particular needs of women and girls in these settings. Emphasis must be

placed on building capacity for law enforcement to respond to and hold perpetrators accountable under national and international human rights and humanitarian law under all circumstances, including in displaced settings. Barriers, including discriminatory laws, policies and practices must be removed to ensure that survivors can access justice, remedies and reparations.

- Provide details on concrete support including financial assistance, which you will provide to **women human rights defenders**. Concerted efforts must be made to empower women human rights defenders, who play a vital role in all countries. This must include support for those who work with refugee and IDP women and girls and those who seek to improve access to justice and reparation for survivors of gender-based violence. These defenders face particular risks in conflict situations, often with little recognition or assistance. Their work in advocating for women's human rights, including accountability for violations and abuses, is critical.
- Elaborate on your efforts to promote women's role in **conflict prevention** and underline the importance of gendered analysis of the causes and consequences of conflict and displacement. The complex causes and consequences of forcible displacement are gendered, and require gender analysis and gendered responses.
- Discuss steps you are taking to ensure the role of women in **combating violent extremism and terrorism** is supported. Women at all levels of society are critical in combating violent extremism and terrorism. All actions taken to prevent and respond to these threats should ensure women's full and meaningful participation in these efforts as well as account for the need to better address the impact of violent extremism and terrorism on women and girls. The number and conditions of women IDPs and refugees has been exacerbated by the ongoing threat from violent extremists, who have deliberately sought to displace families and communities. This exponentially increases women and girls' protection risks in already volatile situations. Despite the critical roles women have played in these conflicts as both preventers and perpetrators of terrorist acts, women's voices and participation are too often excluded, ignored or avoided in efforts and strategies to combat, reduce and prevent extremism. Support for women-led civil society efforts working to address these issues must be prioritized, along with women's participation in security sector reform and in efforts to strengthen rule of law.
- Discuss your engagement with and support for **next year's high-level review and the 15th Anniversary of the adoption of SCR 1325 (2000)**. This review is a crucial opportunity to assess the implementation challenges that exist in relation to the agenda and recommend concrete ways to overcome them. We urge States to ensure that women, peace and security is integrated into the goals, targets and indicators of the proposed sustainable development goals and the broader post-2015 agenda, and to build on existing commitments, indicators and targets already in place, including CEDAW General Recommendation 30, the Beijing Platform for Action (Area E), the UN's 7 Point Action Plan, the WPS Global Indicators and national actions.

We call on the Security Council and all UN Member States to use a gender lens to address the challenges faced by women who have been forcibly displaced and to recommit to working towards the full implementation of the women, peace and security agenda. Thank you for your continued support.

Yours Sincerely,



Louise Allen
Executive Coordinator

The NGOWG on Women, Peace and Security advocates for the equal and full participation of women in all efforts to create and maintain international peace and security. Formed in 2000 following the adoption of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), the NGOWG now focuses on implementation of all Security Council resolutions that address this issue. The NGOWG serves as a bridge between women's human rights defenders working in conflict-affected situations and policy-makers at UN Headquarters.

The NGOWG coalition members are: Amnesty International; Consortium on Gender, Security and Human Rights; Femmes Africa Solidarité; Global Justice Center; Human Rights Watch; The Institute for Inclusive Security; International Rescue Committee; Refugees International; Women's Refugee Commission; Women's Action for New Directions; Women's International League for Peace and Freedom.