

Letter to Ambassadors on Open Debate on Women, Peace and Security

15 October 2006

Dear Ambassador,

To advance the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 on women, peace and security in the year to come, the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security (NGOWG) respectfully submits the following recommendations and urges you to consider them in your statement at the Security Council Open Debate on Women's Participation in the Consolidation of Peace on 26 October 2006.

1. While the NGOWG commends the Security Council for efforts undertaken over the past year to implement SCR 1325 in its work – including consultations with representatives of Sudanese women's groups during the Security Council Mission to Sudan in June 2006 – the overall implementation of SCR 1325 by the Security Council remains low, and its use within the work of the Council remains infrequent. Noting that to date, the Security Council has no systematic way to ensure the integration of a gender perspective in its work, we urge you to:
 - Call on the Security Council to establish a focal point and an expert level working group on women, peace and security to ensure systematic implementation and integration of resolution 1325 within its work, including in all resolutions that establish or extend peacekeeping missions and in terms of references for Security Council mission trips and mission reports.
2. While welcoming the recent meetings of the UN Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) in support of peacebuilding processes in Burundi and Sierra Leone, we note the need to ensure that the PBC integrates core commitments to gender equality and women's participation in its work, as required by SCR 1325. We urge you to:
 - Call on the PBC to adopt an internal policy on gender mainstreaming in its structure and operations and to integrate a gender analysis in arrangements for the management, disbursement and use of the new Peacebuilding Fund;
 - Call on the PBC to create a permanent gender advisor position in the Peacebuilding Support Office, at the senior management level, staffed by an individual with extensive expertise and experience in gender and peacebuilding;
 - Call on the PBC to create mechanisms to facilitate the participation of representatives of women's civil society groups and networks in its country specific configurations.

Preceding this year's open debate, the NGOWG will release a report on the implementation of SCR 1325 in the work of the Peacebuilding Commission, which we hope will provide further insights and proposals on these issues.

3. Noting continued pervasive sexual and gender-based violence against women and girls by parties to armed conflict, most recently documented by the Secretary-General in his In-Depth Study on All Forms of Violence Against Women (A/61/122/Add), we urge you to:
 - Support the Study's recommendation in paragraph 397 that “[t]he Security Council intensify efforts to address gender-based violence against women and consistently monitor measures taken within the framework of the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 . . . [and] consider establishing a dedicated monitoring mechanism to increase the effectiveness of the Council's contribution to preventing and redressing violence against women in armed conflict”; and

- Request the Secretary-General to make further recommendations to the Security Council on specific means by which the Council could be more systematically informed of the use of sexual and gender-based violence in armed conflict and means by which the Council could more effectively bring an end to impunity and hold parties responsible for these violations accountable.
4. Noting that women and women's organizations continue to be largely absent from most peace negotiation processes around the world, in spite of SCR 1325's call for the involvement of women in the creation and implementation of peace agreements, we urge you to:
- Call on the Security Council, the Secretary-General and Member States to create mechanisms to ensure the inclusion of representatives of women and women's groups engaged in peacemaking and peacebuilding in all peace negotiations and processes.
5. With support of the United Nations, governments and regional organizations should develop action plans on women, peace and security using the framework of SCR 1325. The action plans should:
- Be derived from a gender-informed review of domestic and foreign policy;
 - Be developed in partnership with inter-departmental working groups including civil society; and
 - Contain specific and time-bound activities, targets and monitoring and reporting mechanisms.

However, to date, there is no clear place where governments or regional organizations can go to share best practices or to view model action plans on SCR 1325 or take stock of how governments and regional organizations have progressed in implementing SCR 1325 at the national or local levels. We urge you to:

- Call on the Secretary-General to develop concrete recommendations and guidelines for reporting on progress made in the development and implementation of national action plans and strategies on women, peace and security by October 2007.

We are confident that the aforementioned recommendations will do much to ensure accelerated implementation of resolution 1325. Should you wish to discuss this matter with us, please do not hesitate to contact our office at the address given above.

Thank you for your consideration and your concern regarding this issue.

Sincerely yours,

Gina Torry, Coordinator

Signed Members of the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security:

Boston Consortium on Gender, Security and Human Rights
Hague Appeal for Peace
Femmes Africa Solidarité
International Alert
International Women's Tribune Center
Women's Action for New Directions
Women's Environment and Development Organization
Women's International League for Peace and Freedom
Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children
United Methodists Women's Division

