

Letter to National Women's Machineries Prior to the Adoption of SCR 1325

23 October 2000

Your Excellency,

As you know, The United Nations Security Council, under the Namibian Presidency, will hold an Open Session to discuss Women and the Maintenance of Peace and Security, on 24 October 2000. We are writing to encourage you to present a statement on behalf of your government supporting the Presidency's efforts to address this issue which is within the mandate of the Security Council. We feel this is a historic event and a significant opportunity to move the agenda forward. Thus, we would like you to consider the highest possible representation from your government at the Session and hopefully bringing a thematic expert from your capital.

The NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security (Amnesty International, International Alert, The Hague Appeal for Peace, The Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom), is hoping that the Open session results in:

- Gender issues being fully mainstreamed into the actions and operations resulting from the Council's decisions,
- Concrete measures to ensure that women play a greater role, at all levels, in peace support operations, conflict prevention and peace building; and
- Immediate steps, by the Security Council, to afford women and girls greater protection and assistance in situations of armed conflict;

To this effect the Working Group has put together a set of comprehensive recommendations for Council members which, if taken on board, could contribute in a significant way towards attaining the above. In particular, we would like to see a commitment to follow up the outcomes of the Open Session with a report on a) women's role in peacebuilding and, b) humanitarian issues and protection of women during peacekeeping and post conflict peace support operations. We are urging the Security Council to request the Secretary General to establish an Independent Panel of Experts to this effect with representation from the Secretariat, relevant agencies and civil society.

The Working Group has also suggested ways in which gender issues could be mainstreamed in the implementation of recommendations resulting from the Brahimi report. We recognize that the report offers opportunities for improving and enhancing the work of the UN Peacekeeping and Peace Support Operations. However, the gender perspective remains weak including the potential positive role of women and the impact of conflict on women and girls. We are attaching our recommendations for your information and consideration.

As you also know, immediately before the Open Session, the Namibian Presidency will also hold an "Arria Formula" for non-governmental organizations working in conflict areas to present their priorities and concerns to Council members. We are delighted at this initiative because it will offer the Security Council the opportunity to enter into dialogue with NGOs who are working directly with women and girls affected by armed conflict and who are themselves engaged in peace building initiatives in their communities and countries. Thematic experts from the NGO community and regional experts from a number of countries experiencing armed conflict or in the midst of post-conflict reconstruction will provide testimonies and present their perspectives on this important issue.

The NGO Working Group has put together a comprehensive pack of materials with all relevant UN official documents and reports produced by civil society. If you require any further information and/or copies of these documents please do not hesitate to contact Felicity Hill from WILPF, telephone 212-6821265 or Sanam Anderlini from International Alert at Sany@earthlink.net. We are very much looking forward your response to our suggestions and establishing a dialogue with you on this matter.

Yours sincerely,

Anne Burke, Amnesty International

Maliha Chishti, Hague Appeal for Peace

Maha Muna, Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children

Eugenia Piza Lopez, International Alert

Felicity Hill, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom