

2020 CIVIL SOCIETY ROADMAP ON WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY



BACKGROUND

The NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security (NGOWG) is an independent advocacy coalition consisting of 18 international NGOs that advocates for the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in all efforts to create and maintain international peace and security.

Our members work alongside women and women-led organizations in conflict and post-conflict situations in over 50 countries and work directly with over 200 NGOs and 75 networks of civil society actors and activists. Our members^a represent a broad spectrum of fields spanning the entire peace and security spectrum, including: human rights and women's rights, humanitarian assistance, disability rights, refugees and forcibly displaced populations, international humanitarian law, disarmament, security sector reform and transformative justice. This breadth of issue expertise, along with our joint expansive global civil society networks, enables us to develop and promote country-specific policy recommendations that positively impact the lives of women affected by conflict to Member States and United Nations (UN) leadership.

Formed in 2000 to call for a Security Council resolution on Women, Peace and Security (WPS), the NGOWG now focuses on implementation of Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) and all subsequent WPS resolutions; provides regular expert policy guidance on WPS; and monitors and holds the Security Council and other relevant actors at UN Headquarters accountable for their obligations under the WPS agenda.

For 20 years, the NGOWG has been working to bring the voices of women's rights defenders into policy discussions held at UN Headquarters in New York and has played a vital global role in raising awareness of the WPS agenda and pushing for results-oriented international security policy that has a positive impact for women whose lives have been affected by conflict.

The **2020 Civil Society Roadmap on Women, Peace and Security** outlines key priorities and recommendations to the UN, Security Council and Member States in 2020 and beyond.

^aCurrent members of the NGOWG are: Amnesty International; CARE International; Center for Reproductive Rights; Consortium on Gender, Security and Human Rights; Cordaid; Global Justice Center; Global Network of Women Peacebuilders; Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict; Human Rights Watch; International Alert; MADRE; Nobel Women's Initiative; OutRight Action International; Oxfam International; Refugees International; Women Enabled; Women's International League for Peace and Freedom; and Women's Refugee Commission.

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2020 Civil Society Roadmap on Women, Peace and Security

Introduction

“As the author, Rebecca Solnit has said, ‘hope is not a lottery ticket you can sit on the sofa and clutch, feeling lucky. It is an axe you break down doors with, in an emergency.’ The emergency is now.”

[Loune Viaud, UN Security Council Briefing on Haiti, April 2019](#)



In October 2020, women activists, peacebuilders, and human rights defenders along with UN Member States and agencies, will celebrate the 20th anniversary of the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) and the establishment of the WPS agenda.

20 years since the adoption of Resolution 1325, despite the fact that conflicts disproportionately impact the health, safety, and human rights of women and girls, they remain excluded from decision-making processes that determine their future. Specific provisions on women and gender were almost universally absent from ceasefire and peace agreements resulting from UN-led or co-led processes in 2018. Nearly five years since the three peace and security reviews in 2015, only 50% of the recommendations on WPS directed towards the UN have progressed, and only two recommendations out of 30 were fully implemented ([S/2019/800](#)). Meanwhile, within the very bodies tasked with protecting human rights and maintaining international peace and security, we have witnessed increasing and direct attacks on core principles of international humanitarian and human rights law, including as they apply to sexual and reproductive rights, and sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression or sex characteristics (SOGIESC).

As we highlighted in our [Policy Brief 2018](#), the Security Council is far from meeting its WPS obligations 20 years since the inception of the agenda. Despite some progress, WPS is often tokenized and only addressed at the most superficial of levels.

- **The continued ad-hoc and inconsistent implementation of the WPS agenda over the last two decades by the Security Council reflects a selective approach to WPS and a lack of accountability for meaningful implementation of the agenda.** Without civil society briefers raising WPS issues in their statements, our analysis shows that there would be far fewer references to WPS and that those references would be less substantive. We found a clear correlation between civil society briefers raising specific WPS issues, and those issues being addressed by Council members.¹
- **The Security Council continues to make decisions based on information that is mostly gender-blind.** Less than 10% of WPS references in reports of the Secretary-General could be considered “analytical” — failure to embed intersectional, gender-sensitive conflict analysis in reports of the Secretary-General is contrary to guidance provided on reporting and internal good practice.²

- **Women’s experiences tend to be instrumentalized at the Security Council**, and violations of women’s rights are used to illustrate the seriousness of specific conflict situations and justify certain Council actions, rather than to meaningfully promote protection of women’s rights. Women’s participation in peace and security processes is also instrumentalized by use of the argument that their participation is necessary in order to make peace processes more effective, rather than that women have a right to equal participation in all areas of decision-making.³

Over the last 20 years, several studies have found that gender inequality is a key predictor of conflict and instability — gender inequality increases the likelihood of conflict, and countries with weak human rights standards “are more likely to have militarized and violent interstate disputes.”⁴ A recent analysis found that 79% of armed conflict in situations for which there is data on gender equality took place in contexts with medium, high or very high levels of gender discrimination.⁵ Relatedly, strong feminist movements are also predictors of, and contributors to, efforts that reduce gender inequality.⁶ Addressing gender equality, as well as inequality more broadly, is therefore essential to preventing conflict, and requires, at its core, protection and promotion of human rights and efforts to address discriminatory structures and institutions.

In addition, as has been widely recognized and as we highlighted in our article on why [women’s rights must be central to responses to COVID-19](#), the current pandemic is amplifying existing gender, racial, economic and political inequalities, and impacting those most marginalized, including people with diverse SOGIESC, people with disabilities, the elderly, the poor, and the displaced. Women are impacted due to their role as primary caregivers or healthcare workers, and are often less likely to be able to meet their own needs due to structural inequalities. As for women and girls in conflict-affected communities, COVID-19 is likely to hit them harder — as [recognized](#) by the UN Secretary-General, there has been an alarming surge in gender-based violence (GBV); combined with restrictions to essential services, such violence compounds existing risks for women and girls.⁷ The current pandemic underlines why preventing all forms of GBV against women requires ensuring the autonomy of those who are targeted and the full scope of their human rights, as well as the importance of enabling them to lead and contribute to the solutions to the crisis, rather than only seeking to protect them from violence.

The upcoming anniversary of the WPS agenda must be a call to action to the UN, Security Council and Member States to redouble their commitment to fully implement and advance the WPS agenda, defend the full scope of human rights, and galvanize efforts to address clearly identified gaps.

As a coalition dedicated to peace, gender equality and women’s rights, we firmly believe that the following **6 principles** should guide any action:

- **Every conflict and crisis has specific gendered dimensions**; there is no situation in which gender equality and women’s rights are not relevant. We advocate for the systematic incorporation of gender analysis and WPS obligations, including as enshrined in the ten WPS resolutions,⁸ in all conflict and crisis work, particularly within the country-specific discussions on the Security Council’s agenda, not only in thematic discussions on WPS.

- **Gender equality and human rights are legal obligations in conflict-affected situations**, and violation of these rights must be recognized as an early warning sign and a root cause of conflict. The WPS agenda is both a peace and security issue, and a critical part of the human rights agenda. We therefore advocate for a rights-based approach to addressing all dimensions of the WPS agenda and for clear and outspoken leadership by the UN, Security Council and Member States on the importance of gender equality and human rights in maintaining peace and security.
- **We cannot achieve sustainable peace without the full, equal and meaningful participation and leadership of diverse women in all levels of decision-making.** There is no substitute for direct participation of women in all aspects of peace and security, yet civil society continues to be regularly consigned to observer or other ad hoc roles despite the [Global Study on the Implementation of Security Council 1325 \(2000\)](#) specifically calling for an end to this practice.⁹ In addition, although parity in representation is an important first step in addressing gender inequality, it is not the fulfillment of feminist leadership, nor is it a substitute for fully implementing all components of the WPS agenda. Ensuring meaningful participation also requires dismantling the barriers to participation for the majority of women, not just supporting a small number of women to reach leadership positions.
- **An intersectional approach to gender equality is fundamental to the WPS agenda, and to the NGO Working Group’s (NGOWG) work.** We recognize that race, ethnicity, religion, class, SOGIESC, age, marital status, pregnancy status, disability, migratory status, geographic location, economic status and other characteristics can be sources of both oppression and resilience, and intersecting forms of discrimination reflected in structural barriers must be recognized and addressed in order to achieve gender equality and the vision of the WPS agenda. Yet women are primarily referred to as a monolithic group throughout the work of the Security Council — our analysis showed that the experiences of particular groups of women and girls comprised less than 7% of all references in outcome documents and 6% of all references in reports of the Secretary-General in 2019, reflecting little acknowledgment of the unique challenges they face. Enabling the participation of diverse women — representative of a range of backgrounds and identities, including women with disabilities, women of diverse sexual orientation and gender identities, as well as women of diverse ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds — is critical in order to ensure gender equality, and that “women” are not treated as a homogenous group.
- **Civil society, including conflict-affected communities, peacebuilders, women-led and women’s rights organizations, and human rights defenders, are an integral part of the WPS agenda.** Ensuring full and meaningful participation of diverse civil society organizations and representatives requires timely, systematic, transparent, inclusive, and substantive consultation in formal and informal processes in order to ensure that any action addresses clearly identified gaps and delivers real change to communities affected by conflict.
- **Without real accountability, there can be no real progress.** As was highlighted by all three peace and security reviews undertaken in 2015¹⁰ and reinforced by the independent assessment commissioned by the UN in 2019, greater accountability of all actors, particularly senior UN leadership and Member States, is a requirement for real progress on the WPS agenda. This requires fundamental recognition that addressing gender inequality is both an international legal obligation and a collective responsibility of the UN. Prioritizing

and resourcing for women’s human rights, establishing clear standards for performance and implementation, as well as raising the cost of failure to implement, are essential for driving forward the WPS agenda.

With the above principles in mind, below we share concrete recommendations on how the UN, Security Council and Member States can advance WPS in **five key areas** in advance of the 20th anniversary of the adoption of Resolution 1325.

- 1. Prevention of conflict.** Take decisive action to prevent conflict, end violence and avert crisis, including by addressing gendered drivers of conflict and instability.
- 2. Women’s meaningful participation.** Ensure women’s full, equal, and meaningful participation in all aspects of peace and security.
- 3. Human rights defenders, peacebuilders and civil society space.** Defend the legitimacy of the work of all human rights defenders and peacebuilders and their role in promoting peace and security, and effectively prevent and address attacks against them.
- 4. Gender equality and the human rights of all women and girls, including access to comprehensive sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR),** must be central to maintaining international peace and security.
- 5. Accountability for implementation.** In addition to ensuring implementation by Member States, promoting system-wide accountability of the UN for implementation of the WPS agenda.

I. Prevention of conflict



“It is hypocritical to condemn human rights violations and express horror at the new violence, while then also selling arms to Myanmar and seeking explorative licenses to mine its natural resources. Member States committed to conflict prevention and sustaining peace cannot turn a blind eye to state-sanctioned ethnic minority persecution, discrimination or other human rights violations, including sexual violence, for trade.”

Razia Sultana, UN Security Council Open Debate on Sexual Violence in Conflict, [April 2018](#)

Preventing conflict and sustaining peace are not simply matters of ending war and violence – they must address the root causes of conflict. Addressing securitization and militarization, arms proliferation and the political economy of war; protection, fulfillment and promotion of human rights, including gender equality and women’s human rights; justice, accountability and the rule of law; inclusive sustainable development, and ensuring a free and open civil society must be core objectives of any action taken to address country-specific crisis situations.

As enshrined in the UN Charter, it is the primary responsibility of the Security Council to maintain peace and security – this includes taking decisive action to prevent conflict and avert crises. Security Council members should support timely and decisive action aimed at protection of civilians, and preventing or ending the commission of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes, in accordance with international law.

Gender equality and women’s human rights are essential in all conflict-affected situations, and violation of these rights is both a root cause and an early warning sign of conflict. The [Global Study on the Implementation of Security Council 1325 \(2000\)](#) emphasized the need for the WPS agenda to be viewed both as a peace and security issue and a critical part of the human rights agenda. It highlighted women’s human rights and gender equality as central to the maintenance of international peace and security, and that they are the responsibility of all intergovernmental bodies, including the Security Council. The Security Council must reaffirm human rights, including the rights of all women and girls, and of those most marginalized, as central to all conflict prevention efforts in order to fulfill its responsibility to maintain international peace and security.¹¹ Women’s “empowerment” and other human rights issues must not be instrumentalized to advance geopolitical interests or to justify militarized approaches to resolving conflict.

In addition, **threats and violence against activists, including women human rights defenders, must be treated as an early warning sign of escalating conflict or instability.** Threats and reprisals against civil society activists can be early warning signs of instability. In 2019, women human rights defenders and activists in Brazil, Chile, Honduras, Iraq, the Philippines, Sudan, Nigeria and Uganda were killed or attacked;¹² this violence coincided with increased repression of human rights and violence within each of these countries.¹³ Increased targeting of human rights defenders, who are a critical source of information regarding emerging human rights emergencies, can be an important

indicator of potential conflict as it indicates a desire by governments to prevent information regarding the situation at the local level from reaching the international community.¹⁴ Member States must not repress human rights defenders, and provide financial, political and other forms of support to foster non-discriminatory and open space for civil society, including for women and other marginalized groups, to enable local leadership and to bolster their capacity to contribute to building peace.

Why is gender equality essential for preventing conflict and building peace?

- As outlined in the [2030 Agenda](#), **gender equality and protecting and promoting women's rights are fundamental principles** underpinning sustainable peace.¹⁵ Sustainable Development Goals [5](#), [10](#), and [16](#) are closely interlinked and intertwined, reinforcing the inter-related nature of addressing inequality, dismantling discrimination and fostering peace.¹⁶
- Inequality, exclusion and concentration of power and wealth, are root causes of conflict and violence; yet over the last thirty years, inequality within countries has increased and **progress in advancing women's rights and gender equality has stalled** or even regressed.¹⁷
- There is clear evidence showing that **gender inequality is a key predictor of the occurrence and recurrence of armed conflict**.¹⁸ In countries that have lower levels of violence against women, higher labor market participation of women, and fewer income disparities, interstate or internal conflict is far less likely to be initiated.¹⁹
- **Social and political inclusion is central to fostering more peaceful societies**; this cannot be done without eliminating discriminatory laws and ensuring the participation of all members of society, including women, which has been shown to be an important aspect of building peace.²⁰
- Undermining and eroding **women's economic and social rights**, including restrictions on women's participation in the economy, right to inheritance and property, and financial exclusion, worsens income inequality and overall outcomes for families and communities, and contributes to the root causes of conflict and war.²¹

Source: [Pathways for Peace: Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict](#)

Recommendations

To the UN:

- ❑ **Require gender-sensitive conflict analysis and an analysis of root causes of conflict in all UN programming and decision-making, including conflict prevention, humanitarian programming, preventing violent extremism, peacebuilding, peacekeeping and development efforts.** All UN entities, including the Department of Peace Operations (DPO), the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA), the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), must ensure that all gender-sensitive conflict analysis meets certain minimum standards, which reflect existing standard operating procedures, policies and commitments.²² Such analysis must be translated into gender-sensitive programming, inform humanitarian needs assessments, and be included in all country- and region-specific reports of the Secretary-General and briefings delivered by senior UN officials. All conflict analysis must include a robust, intersectional discussion of gender, including gender norms,

sexual orientation and gender identity, take into account diverse ethnic, cultural and religious identities, and be grounded in sex-, disability- and age-disaggregated data. As part of carrying out gender-sensitive conflict analysis efforts, and in order to ensure all programming is reflective of local realities, all UN entities, including DPO, DPPA, OCHA, UNDP and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), must be required to regularly and meaningfully engage with women’s civil society organizations, activists, peacebuilders and human rights defenders through all stages of such processes.²³

Women, Peace and Security under COVID-19

Require rights-based and age-, gender- and disability-sensitive pandemic responses: COVID-19 responses must be grounded in data disaggregated by gender, age and disability, and intersectional analysis that recognizes the gendered impact of the crisis. Where this data does not yet exist, the Security Council must request it to inform its own response to the pandemic.

- ❑ **Require all senior officials across all UN entities to uphold gender equality and human rights as a fundamental part of their prevention mandate, including in public statements and policy frameworks.** Given the primacy of conflict prevention in the mandate of the UN, senior officials, including the Secretary-General, should regularly and publicly champion gender equality, call for the promotion of all human rights, including comprehensive sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), in all efforts to prevent conflict at all levels, and call out governments that undermine these rights. Senior officials must consistently emphasize gender equality, human rights and the political primacy of women’s full, equal and meaningful participation across all peace and political processes, in all discussions with government officials, and further reinforce their necessity in establishing and strengthening institutions, legislation and policies. This should also be reflected in all internal planning and policy frameworks, including in the areas of sustainable development, humanitarian action and peacebuilding.
- ❑ **Invest in early warning systems that are gender-responsive, disability-accessible and inclusive to avert crises and prevent conflict.** Programming and decision-making processes, including within the Security Council, must be informed by regular assessment of early warning indicators that are context-specific, gender-sensitive, disability-accessible, evidence-based and developed in partnership with local communities.

To the Security Council and Member States:

- ❑ **Defend the centrality of gender equality and the full scope of human rights of all women and girls in all international peace and security processes and all outcome documents.** This includes calling for gender equality and human rights to be at the center of negotiations in the context of all peace processes. This also requires including specific provisions in the mandates of all peace operations that call on them, along with UN Country

Teams, to monitor and report on violations and abuses of human rights, including violations of all women’s human rights in line with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). In addition, this should also require both peace operations and Country Teams to consult with women’s civil society organizations as part of their mandate to protect and promote human rights.

- ❑ **The Security Council has the primary responsibility to maintain international peace and security.** Its members should support timely and decisive action aimed at preventing or ending the commission of genocide, crimes against humanity or war crimes. They should publicly pledge not to vote against a credible draft resolution before the Security Council aimed at halting or preventing such crimes, in line with the [Accountability Coherence and Transparency Group’s Code of Conduct \(A/70/621\)](#).²⁴ Relatedly, members of the Security Council and Member States must not enable arms transfers when there is a substantial risk that they may be used to “commit or facilitate serious acts of gender-based violence or serious acts of violence against women and children,” in line with the [Arms Trade Treaty \(ATT\)](#). Members States must also intensify efforts towards reducing the flow of small arms and light weapons (SALW) by implementing all relevant treaties and protocols, including the ATT, Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Their Parts and Components and Ammunition ([A/RES/55/255](#)), and the [Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects](#) (UN PoA).²⁵

Women, Peace and Security under COVID-19

Protect civilians and ensure principled humanitarian access to all people in need: Demand cessation of attacks against civilians, healthcare workers and humanitarian actors, which violate [international humanitarian, criminal and human rights law](#) and [Security Council Resolution 2286 \(2016\)](#). Support the [Secretary-General’s call](#) that national authorities designate humanitarian workers as essential, given their direct and indispensable role in delivering life-saving assistance.

- ❑ **Respect, protect and fulfill all obligations under international humanitarian and human rights law, unequivocally condemn any violations, including abuses targeting women and girls, by all parties to armed conflict, and ensure accountability of perpetrators.** This should include consistently condemning direct and indiscriminate attacks on civilians, deliberate targeting of schools, hospitals or other civilian infrastructure, denial of sexual and reproductive health services, and arbitrary denial of humanitarian access, all of which undermine women’s human rights. Ensure that there are consequences for state and non-state actors who deliberately violate or disregard international obligations, including through accountability mechanisms. Consistently support the creation of international, independent investigative mechanisms in situations of armed conflict. Commit to making the reports of such mechanisms public to bring greater transparency to the Security

Council's work in pursuit of accountability for grave violations and to deter future violations. Encourage parties to armed conflict to decisively and transparently investigate allegations of civilian harm committed by their forces.²⁶

- ❑ **Center deliberations and decision-making regarding the formation, review and drawdown of peace operations on long-term approaches to sustaining peace, including gender-sensitive analysis of the root causes of conflict**, in line with [Resolution 2282 \(2016\)](#). This entails the inclusion of provisions related to gender-responsive early warning and peacebuilding in the mandates of peace operations, and ensuring that capacity for gender-responsive peacebuilding is prioritized during any transition. In this respect, the Security Council should regularly request, deliberate and draw upon the specific advice of the Peacebuilding Commission and ensure complementarity of efforts.
- ❑ **Intensify efforts to employ gender-sensitive small arms control as part of arms embargoes to safeguard against proliferation and diversion**. Explicitly call for all associated expert groups to carry out intersectional gender-sensitive analysis of the role that small arms play in exacerbating conflict and undermining peace and security, and call for detailed information related to arms transfers that violate the ATT and thus contribute to violations of [international humanitarian law](#), including gender-based violence.

II. Women’s full, equal and meaningful participation in all aspects of peace and security

“Madam President, let me be clear: there can be no democracy in Syria without women’s full, equal and meaningful participation or without codifying women’s rights and gender equality in any political process. Yet, these fundamental issues continue to be overlooked in formal, high-level processes to this day.”

Sabah Alhallak, UN Security Council Briefing on Syria, November 2019



The exclusion of diverse women²⁷ from peace processes is unacceptable and results in peace agreements that do not reflect their rights, expertise, experiences or needs. Overwhelming empirical evidence confirms that inclusive peace processes are more durable, and that the participation of civil society, including women’s organizations, makes a peace agreement 64% less likely to fail.²⁸ When women have a *meaningful* influence over the process, their participation has a positive impact on peace, security and the durability of peace agreements.²⁹ The exclusion of women, therefore, undermines peace. This means that (1) women must be included in all stages of all peace and security processes, and (2) women’s rights and gender provisions must be a collective responsibility of all actors.

Full, equal and meaningful participation means direct, substantive, and formal inclusion of diverse women in positions of power so that they can influence the outcome of negotiations and other processes as well as their implementation. Consultation without the opportunity to influence the outcome of discussions is not meaningful; it must, therefore, include being able to set and shape agendas as well as experience tangible benefits from engagement.³⁰ Full, equal and meaningful participation must also be systematic, timely and transparent, and not limited only to peace negotiations, but inclusive of monitoring of agreements, political processes, constitution-building, economic development, transitional justice and reconstruction, as well as disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) and security sector reform (SSR). While informal, advisory, ad hoc or other means of inclusion besides formal inclusion can be useful, they are not, and must never be presented as, a substitute for direct, formal participation of women in leadership roles and decision-making structures and processes.

The meaningful participation of diverse women in all stages of all processes cannot be negotiated in each context or left to the efforts of individual actors; it must be a system-wide, fundamental component of all operations, and a clear directive to all UN agencies. This should be prioritized, resourced and institutionalized, including by providing relevant financial and political support, with clear procedures to ensure accountability and transparency when processes exclude women. We urge the UN, Security Council and Member States to support peace processes that include the meaningful participation of diverse women and to call out any processes that fail to do so.

What is the status of women’s meaningful participation in peace processes?

- **Formal peace processes have systematically failed to include women.** Between 1992 and 2018, women only made up 3% of mediators, 4% of signatories and 13% of negotiators in major peace processes.³¹ Further, only two women in history have ever served as chief negotiators: Miriam Coronel Ferrer of the Philippines and Tzipi Livni of Israel; only Coronel Ferrer has ever signed a final peace accord as chief negotiator.³²
- **Women’s participation in informal peace processes is considerably higher;** 71% of informal peace processes surveyed in a recent study show “clear evidence of involvement” from women’s groups.³³ Participation in informal processes, however, is not a substitute for formal participation.
- Connecting the tracks within peace processes, and also **ensuring women’s full, equal and meaningful participation in formal roles with influence and authority, is critical** to ensuring inclusive processes are the starting point for a country emerging from conflict; failing to do so replicates exclusion and discrimination that contribute to conflict and violence.³⁴

Recommendations

To the UN:

- ❑ **Make direct participation of diverse women a requirement in all UN-led or co-led peace processes, and actively advocate for and support the leadership of diverse women from local communities in line with State obligations to ensure women’s full, equal and meaningful representation in all stages of peace processes.** These obligations are expressed in the [Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women \(CEDAW\)](#) and [CEDAW General recommendation No. 30 on women in conflict prevention, conflict and post-conflict situations](#), and emphasized in Resolutions [1325 \(2000\)](#), [1820 \(2008\)](#), [1889 \(2009\)](#), [2106 \(2013\)](#), [2122 \(2013\)](#), [2242 \(2015\)](#), [2467 \(2019\)](#), and [2493 \(2019\)](#).³⁵ All peace processes must include full, equal and meaningful participation of diverse women and fully integrate a gender perspective. Where delegations exclude women, UN mediation teams, Special Envoys and Special Representatives should insist on women’s direct participation and take specific steps to facilitate and ensure their participation in a way that gives them the opportunity to influence the outcome of any given process. Symbolic, superficial, advisory, last-minute, informal or ad hoc representation through advisory boards or other observer status must never be presented as substitutes for direct participation. Explicit language on the need to include diverse women in all stages of peace processes must be included in all senior compacts, terms of reference and directives to all senior UN leadership. In addition, UN mediation teams, Special Envoys and Special Representatives must regularly consult with women’s civil society, as called for in [Resolution 2122 \(2013\)](#) and outlined in the Department of Peace Operations’ [Gender Responsive United Nations Peacekeeping Operations Policy](#) and the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs’ [Women, Peace and Security Policy](#).

- ❑ **Take concrete steps to ensure that women do not face retaliation for their participation.** Prevent and respond to women who face reprisals for participating in peace and political processes, including elections, at all levels. Ensure that all planning and decision-making is gender-sensitive and takes into account measures to mitigate such risks.
- ❑ **Regularly review UN-led or co-led peace processes, and make the results publicly available, in order to assess the inclusivity of such processes, boost accountability of UN staff and leadership for promoting women’s meaningful participation, and identify concrete ways to support participation and avoid exclusion in the future.**

Women, Peace and Security under COVID-19

Require women’s full, equal and meaningful participation and leadership: Recommend that all COVID-19 decision-making bodies are inclusive, gender-balanced and include dedicated gender expertise. All response design, implementation and evaluation should involve local civil society, particularly women-led organizations and those working on human rights.

To the Security Council:

- ❑ **Actively support women’s full, equal and meaningful participation and refrain from supporting new peace processes that exclude women.** Include explicit language calling for the full, equal and meaningful participation of diverse women in all thematic, country- and region-specific outcome documents, mandates of peace operations, and in any public statements. Call for the removal of all barriers to participation, including logistical, technical, legal, accessibility-related and financial barriers; proactively ensure accessibility of peacemaking spaces and communications, and address threats and violence against women participating in peace and security processes. Emphasize at all relevant opportunities that participation in informal processes or advisory roles can complement, but is never a substitute for, structured, direct participation in formal processes.
- ❑ **Security Council members and Member States must hold the UN accountable for ensuring the direct participation of diverse women in peace and political processes within, and between, all formal and informal peace tracks.** This includes asking UN leadership to brief the Security Council on specific efforts and strategies to ensure meaningful participation, highlighting the extent to which processes are gender-sensitive, and holding UN leadership accountable when they fail to ensure inclusive and representative processes.

To Member States:

- **Ensure that peace processes or negotiations they host or fund have diverse women’s full, equal and meaningful participation in decision-making roles, in formal and informal processes.** Member States supporting peace processes should ensure the full, equal and meaningful participation of women and women’s civil society organizations by providing timely support and proactively funding their participation in peace processes, in line with [Resolution 2242 \(2015\)](#).³⁶

III. Human rights defenders, peacebuilders and civil society space

“The threat of reprisals and retaliation for participating in politics or carrying out human rights work, combined with a lack of accountability for such acts...has effectively forced women out of public life.”

Marwa Mohamed, UN Security Council Briefing on Libya, September 2019



How has the Security Council addressed civil society?

Over the last 20 years, the Security Council has **reinforced, acknowledged and highlighted the role of civil society more than 500 times in adopted resolutions and presidential statements**, calling for Member States and the UN to work with civil society in conflict prevention efforts, peacebuilding, provision of humanitarian assistance and peace processes.

Yet, despite this broad acknowledgement, the Security Council has failed to adequately address the threats to civil society, including women’s groups, or human rights defenders (HRDs), who are often targeted directly for violence or harassment, including through the use of security or counter-terrorism legislation. This mismatch between stated ideals and action is one of the clearest gaps in the Security Council’s implementation of the WPS agenda. There were no references to women human rights defenders (WHRDs) in any outcome documents adopted by the Security Council in 2018 or 2019; further, references to HRDs decreased in outcome documents in 2019.

Source: NGOWG [Policy Brief 2018](#)

WHRDs refer to all women — including Indigenous defenders, defenders from cultural, ethnic and religious minorities, those with diverse sexual orientations, gender identities, gender expression and sex characteristics (SOGIESC) — who defend any human rights, as well as people of all genders who defend gender equality and women’s rights.³⁷ **The work of WHRDs and peacebuilders is integral to the promotion of human rights, prevention of conflict and ensuring sustainable and inclusive peace.**

WHRDs and peacebuilders face threats and attacks due to their real or perceived identities and the issues they advocate for, particularly when they are perceived as challenging patriarchal norms or existing structures of power. In 2019, 40 WHRDs were killed for advocating for the protection and promotion of human rights.³⁸ WHRDs and peacebuilders today work in environments that are hostile to many of the issues they work on — including gender equality, sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) and the rights of people with diverse SOGIESC, which compounds the effects of already closing space for civil society. Threats and attacks on HRDs in Colombia disproportionately impact Afro-descendant and Indigenous leaders, women leaders, and leaders promoting the Peace Accord.³⁹ Since 2016, approximately 23% and 9% of

assassinated HRDs and social leaders, respectively, were Indigenous and Afro-Colombian, while 13.96% of total victims identified as women.⁴⁰ WHRDs have, therefore, increasingly become targets of violence and threats, including gender-based violence (GBV), in retaliation for their work.

Moreover, **threats and attacks on WHRDs and peacebuilders serve as a deterrent to their participation and leadership**, especially in contexts where women must already overcome cultural, political, economic or other barriers to entering public life.

There is also a clear trend of states using counter-terrorism or national security as a rationale to curtail anything that is perceived as dissent or criticism of governments, often presenting WHRDs as security threats. Increasingly, some states are trying to use the UN counter-terrorism architecture and the growing body of Security Council resolutions focused on counter-terrorism, as a basis for restrictions on civil society and crackdowns on HRDs, which can have far-reaching consequences as they place binding obligations on all countries.

Threats to HRDs and peacebuilders undermine global efforts to prevent conflict and sustain peace. The lack of recognition for the legitimate work of HRDs creates a context that enables all kinds of attacks to take place. Member States must, therefore, not only ensure protection from reprisals, including for cooperating with UN bodies, but when required, speak out publicly against such attacks to send an unequivocal message that they will not be tolerated. It is vital that the Security Council and Member States publicly recognize and promote the legitimacy of the work of all HRDs and peacebuilders and the role they play in defending human rights and promoting peace and security.

Impact of counter-terrorism and security legislation on civil society

- More than **140 countries around the world**, the majority of the world's population, have counter-terrorism or security legislation that can be utilized to target civil society and HRDs.⁴¹
- Between 2005 and 2019, **66% of all communications** to the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism were on the use of counter-terrorism laws and policies to restrict civil society space, indicating an intentional targeting of civil society by governments around the world.⁴²
- According to Front Line Defenders, **58% of the cases** in which they provided direct support to HRDs in 2019 included charges under security or counter-terrorism legislation.⁴³

Recommendations

To the UN:

- ❑ **All relevant UN entities and experts, including senior officials, such as Special Representatives of the Secretary-General, Humanitarian Coordinators and Resident Coordinators, should issue statements of condemnation in response to violent rhetoric and crackdowns on civil society, including on WHRDs and peacebuilders.**

- ❑ **The UN must, in the context of its conflict prevention and early warning efforts, and its human rights monitoring and reporting, monitor all attacks and threats of violence targeting WHRDs and peacebuilders. This should occur across the UN system, including by peace operations.** Attacks and violence should be taken as a sign of escalating instability or potential conflict. Monitoring efforts should include robust data collection that is intersectional, disaggregated and considers the identity of the HRD, as well as the issues and populations they work with. Information and analysis must be included in reports of the Secretary-General on country- and region-specific situations, and provide analysis of any attempts to restrict the activities of women civil society leaders and HRDs. As part of efforts to monitor these threats, UN system entities at the local level must consult with diverse women’s civil society organizations and HRDs. In contexts where legal recognition and registration of organizations working on these issues is impossible, adopt alternative measures to ensure diverse inclusion including, but not limited to, consulting with organizations inside and outside of the country that have partnerships with organizations and individuals working in these areas.

To the Security Council:

- ❑ **Support the participation of civil society briefers, including peacebuilders and HRDs, at the Security Council.** Actively invite and support diverse women civil society briefers on all country situations, prioritizing invitations to briefers who have been independently selected by civil society organizations, networks and coalitions. Council members should provide political and financial support as required, including any assistance or diplomatic support to obtain visas in order to brief UN bodies such as the Security Council. With a view to coherence and inclusivity, consider more diverse and independent sources of information from women-led and women’s rights groups, as part of their deliberative process, including civil society alternative reports submitted to other UN bodies, such as the Committee on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women, the Universal Periodic Review, as well as formal and informal civil society briefings.
- ❑ **Include provisions in the mandate of peace operations requiring the monitoring and reporting of attacks, threats and killings of HRDs, including WHRDs, and further require all peace operations to meaningfully consult with diverse women’s civil society organizations** in all aspects of mandate implementation, including conflict prevention, protection of civilians, peacebuilding, and electoral support, as called for in [Resolution 2122 \(2013\)](#) and outlined in the Department of Peace Operations’ [Gender Responsive United Nations Peacekeeping Operations Policy](#) and the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs’ [Women, Peace and Security Policy](#).
- ❑ **Prevent reprisals against civil society representatives, including peacebuilders and HRDs, for cooperating with UN bodies.** Recognition of the legitimacy and value of HRDs in promoting peace and security can be an important deterrent against attacks or reprisals against them, and can contribute to an enabling environment for them to continue to carry out their work safely in the long-term. For this reason, public recognition of the legitimate role of HRDs, including women’s civil society, and condemnation of all attacks against them, including in the context of counter-terrorism efforts or for cooperating with UN bodies such

as the Security Council, can be expressed in outcome documents and public statements. When reprisals occur for engaging with UN bodies, the agency, concerns and safety of the HRD, and the context in which they work, must be at the center of any response, which should be gender-sensitive and crafted in consultation with the defender at risk. Finally, it is critical that any avenues for civil society participation or contributions to the work of UN bodies remain dedicated and independent spaces for women civil society, and any efforts to mitigate or respond to reprisals must never compromise their participation. Any response by the Security Council or other UN bodies must comply with international standards, principles and recommendations made by relevant UN experts such as the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders.

- ❑ **Reinforce and support the recommendations of experts**, such as the Special Rapporteur on Counter-terrorism and the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders, in relevant discussions and outcomes on country- and region-specific situations, including by calling for governments to refrain from using counter-terrorism and national security policies to target and restrict HRDs, including WHRDs.

To Member States:

- ❑ **Ensure a safe and enabling environment for civil society** in which WHRDs are protected, supported and their legitimacy is recognized. Adopt and implement legislation that recognizes and protects the rights of WHRDs, peace activists and humanitarian personnel, such as freedom of expression, association, assembly and other civil liberties in law and practice. Eliminate all laws that restrict and criminalize the work that HRDs do, as well as the issues and populations with which they engage, including counter-terrorism and national security legislation, which is often used to unduly attack, restrict and otherwise criminalize the work of HRDs. Adopt and implement gender-sensitive protection measures to enable both the participation and safety of WHRDs.

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Defend civil society space: Call on all Member States to [uphold international human rights and humanitarian law](#) and refrain from enacting indefinite or disproportionate emergency measures that limit or entirely curtail the right to movement, assembly and information, or impose undue restrictions on civic space or the work of civil society and HRDs, including women's rights organizations, as part of pandemic response.

IV. Promotion of human rights, including sexual and reproductive health and rights



“Lack of sexual and reproductive rights...undermines bodily autonomy and women’s right to choose when and how many children to have; women in Sudan have an average of 4 children, many having their first child before the age of 18 —when they are still children themselves.”

Alaa Salah, UN Security Council Open Debate on Women, Peace and Security, October 2019

Women’s human rights, as articulated in the [Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women](#) (CEDAW), the Beijing Platform for Action, and reinforced in resolutions adopted by the Security Council, are the fundamental principles guiding the WPS agenda. Further, in 2015, the [Global Study on the Implementation of Security Council Resolution 1325 \(2000\)](#) highlighted women’s human rights and gender equality as central to the maintenance of international peace and security. Yet in the current political environment, we have witnessed increasing and direct attacks on core principles of international humanitarian and human rights law, including as they apply to sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), and sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics (SOGIESC), in the very bodies tasked with protecting human rights and maintaining international peace and security, such as the General Assembly and the Security Council. Given the global pushback on these rights, dedicated attention to sexual and reproductive health (SRH) in conflict-affected settings is necessary.

Addressing gender-based violence (GBV) against women and girls is an integral part of the WPS agenda. All efforts to address GBV must promote holistic implementation of the WPS agenda and focus on upstream prevention and a rights-based approach, not only a protection framework. GBV is a symptom of broader inequalities and cannot be addressed without getting at the root causes of conflict and prioritizing women’s participation both in identifying trends as well as envisioning solutions at all levels; their needs and priorities should drive decision-making at the Security Council.

A “**survivor-centered approach**” means that those who are engaged in addressing GBV prioritize the rights, needs and wishes of survivors of sexual and gender-based violence, and place them at the center of designing adequate services to ensure their rights by addressing their needs. A critical component of a survivor-centered approach is the right of survivors to health care and comprehensive support that is accessible and delivered without discrimination, including sexual and reproductive healthcare, psychosocial support, legal services, access to justice, as well as support for livelihoods. SRHR is a fundamental part of a survivor-centered approach.

SRH services are essential in conflict and post-conflict contexts. SRH services, which include contraception, intrapartum care for all births, emergency obstetric and newborn care, post-abortion care, safe abortion care, clinical care for rape survivors, and prevention and treatment for HIV and other sexually-transmitted infections, are essential in conflict and post-conflict contexts.

Access to SRH services is not a voluntary commitment — states have international legal obligations⁴⁴ to respect, protect and fulfill these rights, and SRH services must be recognized for their obligatory and enforceable nature. States have an obligation to ensure non-discriminatory access to services for all persons, including SOGIESC people, and are expected to proactively develop laws, policies and programs to prevent and eliminate discrimination, stigmatization and violence that hinders access to SRH.⁴⁵ The SRHR of all women and girls in conflict-affected settings are protected by multiple, complementary bodies of international law, including international humanitarian law, international human rights law and international criminal law.

Denial of SRHR can have serious consequences for the health and lives of all women. For example, without access to contraceptives, including emergency contraception, unintended pregnancies and unsafe abortion will increase, contributing to further increases in maternal death and disability in crisis settings. Denying or imposing barriers to access safe abortion in these settings undermines women’s reproductive autonomy and violates the rights to life, health, privacy, equality and freedom from torture or ill-treatment. Without access to comprehensive SRHR, the lives of women and girls are at risk, left unprotected, and they cannot fully and meaningfully participate in peace processes, conflict resolution and peacebuilding efforts, thereby undermining the realization of all four pillars of the WPS agenda.

Why are sexual and reproductive health and rights essential in conflict settings?

- As a result of poor conditions and lack of qualified care, more than 500 women and girls die every day during pregnancy and childbirth.⁴⁶
- In some fragile, conflict-affected and crisis situations, women are twice as likely to experience violence, with 65% of women reported having experienced sexual or physical violence.⁴⁷
- Issues related to sexual and reproductive health are among the leading causes of mortality and morbidity among women of childbearing age, with countries affected by fragility and crisis accounting for 61% of maternal deaths worldwide.⁴⁸

Recommendations

To the UN:

- Ensure accountability for violations of sexual and reproductive rights** by meeting clearly established obligations to provide non-discriminatory access to SRH services and care in all crisis situations and conflict and humanitarian settings.
- UN system entities must include detailed information, sex-, age- and disability-disaggregated data and analysis on efforts to address SRHR** in all reports of the Secretary-General on country- and region-specific situations, as well as thematic issues.

Women, Peace and Security under COVID-19

Maintain essential health services: Urge Member States and the UN system to maintain and prioritize non-discriminatory and comprehensive access to essential health services, including SRH in line with the Minimum Initial Services Package in accordance with [international humanitarian and human rights law](#), as well as psychosocial support and other mental health services.

- ❑ **UN senior officials must speak out publicly and regularly to ensure that there is no ambiguity regarding the obligation of states to guarantee, as a matter of right, access to the full range of SRH services without discrimination, in conflict-affected and humanitarian settings.** All senior UN leaders must reinforce the importance of the full range of women’s human rights, including sexual and reproductive rights, in all public statements and as a priority in their decision-making and public messaging.

To the Security Council:

- ❑ **Defend SRHR in both thematic and country-specific discussions and any outcome documents.** Reinforce previously agreed language on SRHR and ensure full implementation of all WPS resolutions. Outcomes that undermine, damage or fail to advance the core tenets of the WPS agenda, or endorse anything less than full implementation, are unacceptable.
- ❑ **Reinforce that a holistic survivor-centered approach to addressing, responding to and preventing GBV must be rights-based and designed with reciprocal communication in partnership with affected populations.** The Security Council should call for all governments to uphold their obligations to recognize that GBV services, including SRH services, are essential services and must be accessible in a safe and user-friendly way, including by allocating budgets and support for staff. The Security Council should reinforce this understanding in all relevant outcome documents adopted on country- and region-specific situations.
- ❑ **Reinforce recommendations articulated by independent experts and expert groups in country- and region-specific discussions and outcomes, including those resulting from human rights treaty bodies and special procedures.**

Women, Peace and Security under COVID-19

Prevent and respond to GBV: Take necessary measures to prevent, address, and document all forms of GBV, particularly intimate partner violence and other forms of domestic violence, recognizing that violence against women, girls and other marginalized groups will increase due to the need for voluntary quarantines, social distancing, curfews and closure of non-essential services. Member States and donors must strengthen and fill gaps in the provision of local GBV survivor-centered referral systems and services.

V. Ensure system-wide accountability across the UN for implementation of the WPS agenda

“The UN and Member States should not be giving support to peace processes that exclude women, because if we take a stand on this, things will change. We know that such processes have limited chances of bringing durable peace. It is therefore important that you intervene decisively.”

Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Executive Director of UN Women, October 2019

As outlined at the start of this document, accountability of all actors, particularly Security Council members and Member States, for WPS implementation, is critical to advancing the agenda. Recommendations to Security Council members on priority areas are outlined throughout this report.

System-wide accountability of the UN for WPS implementation is equally important. As noted by the Secretary-General, in the five years since the three peace and security reviews were conducted, out of 30 total WPS recommendations for which the UN is the primary implementing stakeholder, only 50% have progressed, and only two recommendations have been fully implemented.⁴⁹ The [independent assessment](#) that reviewed progress in implementing the WPS recommendations and informed the findings of the 2019 report of the Secretary-General highlights multiple recommendations as requiring progress or actively regressing, including:

- Accountability of senior UN leadership;
- Participation of women in UN-backed peace processes;
- Inclusion of gender provisions in peace agreements;
- Strengthened gender-sensitive conflict analysis and its application for planning and resource allocation;
- Recruitment of senior gender advisers across the UN system;
- Consultations with women’s civil society organizations across peace and security settings and in humanitarian responses to inform analysis, planning and monitoring of progress and implementation;
- Allocation of a minimum of 15% of peacebuilding funding to gender equality and women’s empowerment, and the ability of entities to track and report on gender equality funding allocations.

This assessment also identified three factors influencing lack of implementation of the above recommendations:

- The degree to which gender and WPS is prioritized and resourced;
- The availability of gender expertise to drive progress at senior levels and across political and technical components;
- The lack of accountability for meeting WPS commitments across the UN system.

In 2020 and beyond, the NGO Working Group (NGOWG) will prioritize advancing several of the key recommendations from the three peace and security reviews that are regressing or where

further progress is needed, as well as recommendations aiming to address the three factors identified as the root causes for failure to fully implement WPS by the UN system. The lack of accountability across the UN on WPS was highlighted as a key factor contributing to lack of implementation; the NGOWG will, therefore, advocate for system-wide accountability for WPS in the following key areas and advancing relevant recommendations made by the independent assessment in this regard.

Senior UN leadership must be held accountable for implementation of WPS. As underlined by the independent assessment, there are currently no repercussions for senior leadership who fail to fully implement their WPS obligations, consider WPS a priority concern, or who perform below a minimum standard on gender. It notes that “progress on the WPS agenda requires moving beyond relying on individual will, to proper system-wide institutionalization of accountability.” This applies to all senior leaders, including the heads of UN departments, offices, programs, funds; peacekeeping, political and peacebuilding missions; and special and personal envoys deployed in specific conflict situations. For example, Special Envoys should emphasize the importance of including women in delegations when they invite conflict parties to negotiations and also ensure they are updating the Security Council on progress in this respect. The heads of the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA) and Department of Peace Operations (DPO) should prioritize the implementation of internal gender strategies, which mandate the mainstreaming of gender across the work of each office. Special Representatives and their teams are required to adhere to a range of operating procedures that require regular consultation with civil society organizations, including women’s rights and women-led organizations, in carrying out work across the entire mandate of a peace operation. The strength of these internal policies, however, is undermined by the lack of repercussions for senior leadership who uphold them. Finally, in relation

Is the UN delivering on WPS in 2020?

In 2020, the Secretary-General should report back on progress made on the [nine actions that were to be taken immediately by the UN system](#) as prescribed in 2019:

1. Reflection of WPS in all compacts, terms of reference and directives for senior leadership.
2. Inclusion of strong messaging on women’s human rights, women human rights defenders (WHRDs), and WPS in public statements by senior leaders.
3. Inclusion of gender equality and WPS as both cross-cutting and integrated goals in all planning and implementation processes across the UN system.
4. Reporting to the Security Council on engagement with women’s groups and inclusion of gender-responsive conflict analysis in all information provided during briefings and in written form.
5. Meaningful engagement with diverse women’s human rights actors, including WHRDs, in fragile, conflict and crisis affected settings by all UN entities.
6. Make progress in meeting the target goals for programmatic budgets on gender equality, in line with existing commitments.
7. Facilitation of strategic meetings on ways to ensure mediation processes are inclusive with each special envoy or special representative and other experts.
8. Promotion and facilitation of meaningful participation of women in all peace processes led by the UN.
9. Identification of resources to support the meaningful participation of women in peace negotiations and implementation of peace agreements.

to the public statements and priorities of the Secretary-General, it is also important to recognize that achieving parity within the UN system and in peacekeeping should be recognized as distinct priorities that are not the fulfillment of the full scope of WPS provisions and are not a substitute for integrating a gender perspective into the work of relevant UN entities.

UN leadership and entities must be held accountable for women’s direct participation in peace processes and the implementation of peace agreements. There is growing evidence that women’s participation in peace negotiations increases the durability of peace and that deals reached without their inclusion do not last. However, too often, ad hoc attempts to include women in symbolic, observer or advisory roles are held up as achievements rather than as stop-gap measures that have become necessary due to failure to directly include women in formal and structured ways from the beginning of a peace or political process. Advisory roles should be recognized as complementary, not as a substitute for direct participation, and should never be pursued as the primary engagement strategy by any UN entity. Special Envoys must be held accountable for failing to execute direct participation strategies and mediation support teams must include gender advisers as mandatory. Further, Special Envoys and their teams must take active steps to analyze barriers to women’s participation and identify entry points, and must be made to report on what specific measures were implemented to promote women’s participation. Failure to ensure accountability for taking concrete steps to facilitate women’s direct participation means that women’s participation will be demoted in favor of patriarchal philosophies of mediation that prioritize engagement with warring parties and cessation of conflict over inclusive peace processes.

How is senior UN leadership currently reporting on women’s meaningful participation?

Our analysis of the statements delivered by senior UN officials — namely, Special Representatives and Special Envoys — during meetings on nine country-specific situations in 2019 revealed that while most statements referenced women in some way, **only 28% of those references were to women’s participation.**⁵⁰ In line with their obligations under [Resolution 2122 \(2013\)](#), senior UN officials speaking during meetings on Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria and Yemen provided the most concrete examples of specific efforts undertaken to engage with women and women’s groups, or recognized the important work being done by women’s groups in conflict resolution and peace processes. Although these senior UN officials spoke of efforts to engage women in informal mechanisms parallel to peace processes, **the vast majority of statements failed to recognize the challenges related to women’s participation in formal roles within peace processes.** There was recognition that it was important for women to participate formally, but almost a universal failure to identify the barriers to this participation.

Notably, senior UN officials speaking during meetings on CAR, DRC, Libya, Mali and Sudan spoke the least about women, peace and security overall, and further largely overlooked issues related to women’s participation.

Importantly, the majority of more substantial references were delivered by senior UN officials who have been particularly engaged with civil society, including women’s groups.

Peace agreements must include robust, comprehensive gender provisions. As noted in the independent assessment, the majority of agreements do not include provisions on women, girls or

gender, and in 2018, none of the UN-led “ceasefire or peace agreements included gender-related or women-specific provisions.” The assessment also noted that the quality of gender provisions in recent agreements is inconsistent. These alarming downward trends point to the need for dedicated attention to ensuring gender-inclusive processes and agreements, especially those led, co-led or otherwise supported by the UN.

Gender advisers and gender-sensitive conflict analysis must be prioritized and resourced. In 2018, 10 out of 15 peacekeeping missions had gender units, with only three senior gender advisers. Further, only eight of these units were reporting directly to the offices of the Heads of the Mission, as called for in the 2015 peacekeeping operations review. Gender advisers are critical to ensuring gender analysis is conducted, prioritized and funded, and that the UN system is therefore able to effectively respond to situations of conflict that are impacting the rights of women and girls. Our analysis reveals that having a mandate to address WPS correlates with the almost universal inclusion of some information on WPS in reporting. As a result, it is clear that there is an ongoing need for the Security Council to explicitly include provisions in future mandates that call for WPS to be mainstreamed, in addition to component-specific provisions on women’s meaningful participation and women’s and girls’ protection including in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR), security sector reform (SSR), rule of law, and protection and monitoring of human rights. Despite emphasizing this point across all three peace and security reviews, the [independent assessment](#) reported “defunding and downgrading of gender adviser posts” within peacekeeping missions between 2016 and 2018, and that as of June 2019, only four of the 14 peacekeeping missions had senior gender adviser posts at the P5 level. Every peacekeeping mission must have senior gender advisers, who should be located in the offices of Special Representatives and Envoys. It is important to note that the responsibility for implementing WPS provisions in mandates does not lay solely with gender advisers, women’s protection advisers, gender focal points, or any other gender experts. The ultimate responsibility for the mainstreaming of WPS must lie with the mission leadership as prescribed by [Resolution 2242 \(2015\)](#).

Consultations with civil society by peace operations must be regular, mandatory and meaningful. Currently, consultations with women-led civil society by peace operations missions are neither “mandatory nor systematic, and there is no evidence of how it then informs further action.” Our analysis shows that missions with a mandate to engage with women’s groups and civil society organizations reported on such engagement more frequently and in more detail than those missions lacking a specific mandate for engagement.

WPS must be prioritized and resourced across the UN system. Another key deficit contributing to poor implementation of the WPS agenda by the UN system is the “degree to which gender and WPS is prioritized and resourced.” There is a need to double UN funds dedicated to gender equality more broadly and specifically to WPS. The UN target of 15% of funds to be earmarked for programs that further gender equality and women’s empowerment in peacebuilding contexts by 2020 should be a minimum first, and not a final, target. The funding provided under this target should be long-term, and the target should also be accompanied by indicators about the accessibility of funds to grassroots women’s organizations and the extent to which local women’s organizations have been included in priority and program design. Full implementation requires adequate, sustained and predictable resourcing of the WPS agenda, including funding to local civil society implementing the agenda.

Recommendations

To the UN:

- ❑ **Hold UN senior leadership accountable for WPS implementation.** As advised by the independent assessment, the Secretary-General should commit to updating and making publicly available the compacts for senior leadership — all Special Envoys, Special Representatives to the Secretary-General, Resident Coordinators, Humanitarian Coordinators, Senior Advisers and other senior managers throughout the UN system — to reflect WPS as a key priority. Special Envoys should be requested to regularly report on their efforts to explore all available avenues to support the direct participation of diverse women in peace processes. In addition, Special Envoys should also publicly report on the gender composition of all negotiating parties.
- ❑ **Prioritize, resource and politically support recruitment of gender advisers.**⁵¹ Prioritize and fund systematic recruitment and appointment of senior women's protection advisers and gender advisers, and ensure they are located in the offices of all Special Representatives, Special Envoys and strategic assessment or review teams. Publicly report on deployment in order to ensure greater transparency on which posts are filled and which remain vacant.
- ❑ **Fund gender equality and the WPS agenda.** Meet the target of 15% of funds being earmarked for programs that further gender equality and women's empowerment in peacebuilding contexts by 2020, and increase the target to 30% after 2020 with a view to further increasing it in the future.

To the Security Council:

- ❑ **Ensure all peace operations have robust, holistic and comprehensive mandates to address WPS.** Include provisions in all peace operations mission mandates that call for gender to be a cross-cutting issue, in addition to specific language with regard to the need for effective protection and full, equal and meaningful participation of women and girls within each mandate component. Additionally, the Security Council should explicitly require the integration of WPS as a cross-cutting issue in all reports of the Secretary-General on country-specific and regional situations, as well as thematic issues; this analysis should be accompanied by sex-, disability- and age-disaggregated data. Further, all peace operations must be mandated to consult regularly with diverse women's groups as part of implementing their WPS mandate.

Is the Security Council delivering on WPS in 2020?

In 2020, Security Council members should report back on the [immediate actions that they were urged to take by the Secretary-General](#) in 2019:

1. Raise WPS issues in statements delivered during both country and thematic meetings.
2. Include concrete language on WPS in all mandate renewals.
3. Require all reports to include specific information on progress towards achieving goals relevant to WPS.
4. Track and follow-up on the implementation of recommendations by the Informal Expert Group (IEG) on WPS and civil society briefers.
5. Circulation, by the IEG on WPS, of a comprehensive update on progress, including on country-specific situations.
6. Call for adequate resourcing and gender expertise for all sanctions expert groups and monitoring teams.

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