Monday 16 October 2017

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

Dear Ambassador,

As we approach the 17th anniversary of the adoption of SCR 1325 (2000) and the annual Security Council open debate on women, peace and security (WPS), we take this opportunity to reiterate the fundamental principles enshrined in the WPS agenda and urge each Member State to more consistently promote and abide by them.

Gender equality, women’s empowerment and protection of women’s rights, are intrinsic to sustainable development and conflict prevention. Women’s meaningful participation in conflict resolution, humanitarian efforts, peace processes, peacebuilding, elections, security sector reform, and political processes are also fundamental to sustaining peace. These principles are integral to the WPS agenda and must be central to the broader discussions within the United Nations (UN) system on sustainable development, and peace and security. A robust and diverse civil society, encompassing women’s organizations, women human rights defenders, activists, and women leaders, is also essential. As is an enabling environment for women civil society leaders with inclusive and non-discriminatory national justice, political and security institutions, legislation and policies which are grounded on the rule of law, equality and human rights.

Despite the commitments contained in the eight WPS resolutions adopted by the UN Security Council, the positive rhetoric espoused every October, and a wealth of evidence on the importance of ensuring gender equality and women’s participation in peace and security efforts, implementation of the agenda remains fragmented and regularly loses out to other political considerations. This ad-hoc approach can be seen even in the context of country situations which are the focus of significant attention by the UN Security Council and investment from the international community.

For example, in Afghanistan, an internationally celebrated National Action Plan on 1325 (2000), was adopted in July 2015 but has not yet been operationalized, due to a lack of resources and government action, hindering its implementation. There remains an immense gap between policy and the lived realities for women engaged in the peace process and advocating for women’s rights. Presently, only 11 out of 70 members of the restructured High Peace Council are women, and over the last year there was a 25% increase in targeted and deliberate killings of women in public roles including human rights defenders, teachers and politicians who are seen to be failing to conform to prevailing social gender norms. During the 2017 mandate renewal for the UN Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) the Security Council voted to remove provisions referencing women’s rights and participation, as well as references to girls’ education.

In the Central African Republic, where UN officials are warning that the intensifying violence could risk a repeat of the devastating crisis that gripped the country four years ago, an estimated 44% of women and 40% of girls have been raped, often targeted by perpetrators who suspect them of being a different religion or of interacting with people on the other side of the sectarian divide. Reports of sexual exploitation and abuse by peacekeepers continue. Women remain largely excluded from peacebuilding and reconstruction efforts, all while the Senior Gender Adviser role in the peacekeeping mission there was downgraded to a junior post as a result of peacekeeping budget cuts.

In Yemen, a massive humanitarian catastrophe is unfolding against a backdrop of a dire human rights situation, exacerbated by the transfer and use of weapons without regard to weapon bans or risks. Yemeni women and girls make up 62% of the 4 million people with acute malnutrition and reported cases of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) against women have gone up by 65% since March 2015. Women activists and women in public life face threats to their physical safety, driven in part by conservative rhetoric which supports restrictive gender roles that
narrowly define the role of women in public life. However, women across Yemen are leading the way in sustaining community cohesion and promoting peace at the local level, including within their families, in humanitarian work, with psychosocial support, and in civic life. Local women-led organizations are supporting internally displaced populations, negotiating with militia leaders to release prisoners of war, and finding strategies for surviving sieges. However in the formal peace process, women remain absent. Only seven women were invited to participate in the 2016 UN-led talks on Yemen in Kuwait and only as observers.

In Colombia, local women activists and human rights defenders continue to defy death threats and SGBV to mobilize around the implementation of the peace agreement. They are working to safeguard and promote their rights, including those of Indigenous and Afro-Colombian women, ensuring zero tolerance for SGBV, and demilitarizing and disarming society as a whole. Similarly, in Nigeria and South Sudan, women risk their lives daily to be part of security and humanitarian relief deliberations.

In Iraq, the National Action Plan on 1325 remains unfunded and unimplemented, and in conflict-affected parts of the country, women remain highly vulnerable to SGBV and sexual exploitation even after the retreat of ISIS. Women are also largely excluded from Iraq’s reconciliation and reconstruction process but are working at local levels, providing front line services and engaging in grassroots peace work, as are the women in Syria. In Iraq and Syria, local and international groups are documenting war crimes amounting to genocide, as well as human rights abuses committed against women, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex persons, and other marginalized groups who are persecuted for defying traditionally prescribed gender roles.

Globally, women, children and youth make up approximately 80% of the 65 million people forcibly displaced. Displaced women and girls experience disruptions to their education and livelihoods and it is estimated that 1 in 5 displaced women have experienced SGBV. Despite these attacks, survivors struggle to access medical, legal, and psychosocial and livelihood services, including sexual and reproductive health services, without discrimination, and continue to face gender discrimination, despite its prohibition in international humanitarian law.

It is not enough to express support for the WPS agenda and then remain silent in the face of brutal crack downs and attacks on women civil society and women human rights defenders; overlook the exclusion or sidelining of women from political and security processes; not denounce national developments which undermine the status of women and their rights; or allow gender-related provisions to be cut from mandates and budgets.

Member States committed to conflict prevention must become standard bearers in safeguarding women’s rights. They must lead the way, both domestically and throughout foreign policies and aid, on gender equality, inclusion and non-discrimination regardless of race, religion, sexual orientation and gender identity, ability, age or another status. Women who are part of efforts to develop early warning signs of violent conflict, leading local initiatives to counter and prevent violent extremism and providing essential services to survivors should be supported in a way that prioritizes their strategic objectives based on their own assessments of local needs. Further, attention must be paid to ensuring counter-terrorism and financing regulations do not impede or restrict their work in challenging all actors that play a role in fueling violence and abuse. There must be accountability for grave human rights violations, including crimes of SGBV that amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity, and genocide, as well as curbing the flow of small arms as prescribed in the Arms Trade Treaty and other legal instruments. Holistic implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development will also strengthen the WPS agenda by ensuring policy coherence between efforts to implement Goal 5 on gender equality and women’s empowerment and Goal 16 on promoting peaceful, just and inclusive societies.

Women across conflict and crisis situations continue to face extreme threats to their safety and barriers to their participation, but nevertheless, they persist in advocating for their inclusion, their rights, and their solutions to be heard and acted on. Women and women’s organizations from conflict-affected countries need political and financial support from the international community, not empty promises.

Sincerely,
1. 1325 Network Finland (Finland)
2. Abes Development Organization for Women and Children (Yemen)
3. Abjad Center for Studies and Development (Yemen)
4. ACDemocracia (Ecuador)
5. ACTED (France)
6. ActionAid International
7. Address for Social Development (Yemen)
8. ADDROSMIL (Democratic Republic of the Congo)
9. Adéquations (France)
10. Advocacy for women in peace and security-Africa (Kenya)
11. Advocates for Youth (United States)
12. Afq Foundation for Development (Yemen)
13. Afghan Australian Development Organisation (Australia)
14. African Care RY (Finland)
15. African Centre for Democracy and Human Rights Studies (The Gambia)
17. African Sky (Netherlands)
18. After Bruce (United States)
19. Aid Organization (Bangladesh)
20. Akjah Reconciliation and Development Network, 100 Women Achievers (India)
21. Al - Mohsenin Charity Development Foundation (Yemen)
22. Al - Wajdan Foundation for Development and Rehabilitation (Yemen)
23. Al Basma Relief and Development Organization (SORD) (Yemen)
24. Al-Aman Organization for Blind women Care (Yemen)
25. Albanian Society for All Ages (ASAG) (Albania)
26. All Girls Foundation (Yemen)
27. Alliance Against Trafficking in Women and Children in Nepal (Nepal)
28. Alliance des Imams du Corridor Nord pour le Développement Humanitaire (AICNDH) (Burundi)
29. Alliance of Inclusive Muslims (AIM) (Switzerland)
30. Alliance of Solidarity for the Family (ASFF) (Seychelles)
31. Amal Watan Organazation (Yemen)
32. AMARA (Cambodia)
33. American Pakistan Foundation (United States)
34. Amnesty International
35. Ansifni Foundation For Development (Yemen)
36. Arab Women Organisation (Jordan)
37. Arkan Organization for development (Yemen)
38. Asociación Ciudadana por los Derechos Humanos (Argentina)
39. Asociación Mujeres por la Paz (Spain)
40. Association du Developpement et de la Promotion de Droits de L’homme (Mauritania)
41. Association for Women with Social Problems (Albania)
42. Association of War Affected Women (Sri Lanka)
43. Association pour la Protection de l'Environnement et le Developpement Durable de Bizerte (APEDDUB) (Tunisia)
44. Asuda (Iraq)
45. Aswat Nissa (Tunisia)
46. Australian Civil Society Coalition on Women Peace and Security (Australia)
47. Baader Foundiation for Development (Yemen)
48. Bahrain Center for Human Rights (Bahrain)
49. Banteay Srei (Cambodia)
50. Belqees Foundation for Development (Yemen)
51. Best Future Foundation (Yemen)
52. BWPD (Burundi)
53. CADIRE CAMEROON ASSOCIATION (Cameroon)
54. Calcutta Research Group (India)
55. Canadian Federation of University Women (Canada)
56. Capri’s Place (Nigeria)
57. CARE International
58. Centa for Organisational Development (Nigeria)
59. Center for Reproductive Rights (United States)
60. Center Women and Modern World (Azerbaijan)
61. Centre for Health and Social Justice (India)
62. Chanan Development Association (Pakistan)
63. Child and Green Foundation (Nigeria)
64. Children Are Reason Enough (Ghana)
65. CHOICE for Youth & Sexuality (Netherlands)
66. CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation (South Africa)
67. Coalicion Mexicana por la Corte Penal Internacional (Mexico)
68. Coalition Ivoirienne pour la CPI (Côte d’Ivoire)
69. Code Development Foundation (Yemen)
70. Combatants for Peace (Israel)
71. Conciliation Resources (Global)
72. Consejo de Seguridad y Justicia de las Familias-Pueblo de la Nación Argentina (Argentina)
73. Consortium on Gender, Security and Human Rights (United States)
74. Cordaid (Netherlands)
75. Corporacion Centro de Apoyo Popular (CENTRAP) (Colombia)
76. Corporación Humanas Centro Regional de Derechos Humanos y Justicia de Género (Colombia)
77. Counseling Line for Men and Boys (Albania)
78. Counseling Line for Women and Girls (Albania)
79. COURAGE2D AGSHDE (Cameroon)
80. CUNY Law School (United States)
81. Cyprus Women’s Lobby (Cyprus)
82. DA HAWWA LUR (Pakistan)
83. Danish United Nations Association (Denmark)
84. Defense for Rights and Freedoms Foundation (Yemen)
85. Democracy Today (Armenia)
86. Dorcas Aid International (Netherlands)
87. Dorcas Aid International (Netherlands)
88. Double Hope Films (United States)
89. Dr. Denis Mukwege Foundation (Netherlands)
90. DRC Congo à la Carte (Netherlands)
91. East Africa Law Society (Tanzania)
92. Echoes of Women in Africa Initiative (ECOWA) (Nigeria)
93. Ecumenical Church Leaders Forum (Zimbabwe)
94. Ekta (India)
95. El Nadim center for psychological rehabilitation of violence victims (Egypt)
96. Enga Women In Coffee (Papua New Guinea)
97. Enjaz Foundation for Development (Yemen)
98. Enwan Foundation for Social Development (Yemen)
99. Equality Heals Africa (Uganda)
100. Equality Now (United States)
101. Facilitating Peace (United States)
102. Federacion Mujeres y Municipalidades America Latina (Peru)
103. Feminist Majority Foundation (United States)
104. femLINKpacific (Fiji)
105. FIFEF (Democratic Republic of the Congo)
106. Forum for Women and Development (FOKUS) (Norway)
107. Fondation Scelles (France)
108. Fondo de Acción Urgente - América Latina (Colombia)
109. For All Foundation (Yemen)
110. Foudouf Foundation for Peace and Development (Yemen)
111. Free Southern Foundation for Development (Egypt)
112. Fundacion para Estudio e Investigación de la Mujer (Argentina)
113. Gaia, Centro de las Mujeres (Venezuela)
114. Gender Action for Peace and Security (GAPS) (United Kingdom)
115. Gender and Mine Action Programme (Switzerland)
116. Gender Concerns International (Netherlands)
117. Gender Development Research and Studies Center (Yemen)
118. Gender Equality Initiative in International Affairs at the Elliott School, GWU (United States)
119. Generations without Qat (Yemen)
120. Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace & Security (United States)
121. Global Center on Cooperative Security
122. Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect (United States)
123. Global Fund for Women
124. Global Justice Center
125. Global Network of Women Peacebuilders
126. Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC)
127. Gramin Punarnirman Sansthan (India)
128. Grandmothers Advocacy Network (GRAN) (Canada)
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130. Habitat for Rights and Development (HORD) (Yemen)
131. Hands Across the Divide (Cyprus)
132. Haus Of Khameleon (Fiji)
133. Homeland Hopes for Defense and Coexistent Development (Yemen)
134. Honorary Development of Charity (Yemen)
135. Human Development Center (Somalia)
136. Human life for Development and Relief (Yemen)
137. IAMANEH Switzerland (Switzerland)
138. Impact for Change and Development (Nigeria)
139. Impunity Watch (Netherlands)
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<td>248. Proceso de Comunidades Negras (PCN) (Colombia)</td>
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<td>252. Radha Paudel Foundation (Nepal)</td>
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<td>253. Rainbow Pride Foundation Fiji (Fiji)</td>
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<td>220. Niger Delta Women's movement for Peace and Development (Nigeria)</td>
<td>254. <a href="mailto:Reaccion.climatica@gmail.com">Reaccion.climatica@gmail.com</a> (Bolivia)</td>
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<td>221. Nigerian Coalition for the International Criminal Court (NCICC) (Nigeria)</td>
<td>255. Reach All Women in War (RAW in WAR) (United Kingdom)</td>
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<td>222. No Peace Without Justice (Belgium)</td>
<td>256. Red de Educación Popular Entre Mujeres América Latina y Caribe REPEM (Colombia)</td>
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<td>223. Noel Sylvester (Sri Lanka)</td>
<td>257. Refugees International</td>
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<td>224. Norwegian Church Aid (Norway)</td>
<td>258. Regards de Femmes (France)</td>
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<td>225. Older Womens Network Netherlands (Netherlands)</td>
<td>259. Rehabilitation Center for torture victims &quot;Memoria&quot; (Moldova)</td>
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<td>226. ONGDH Forum de la Femme Menagere &quot;FORFEM&quot; (Democratic Republic of the Congo)</td>
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<td>227. Operation 1325 (Sweden)</td>
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<td>262. Réseau Féministe &quot;Ruptures&quot; (France)</td>
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<td>229. Organization of Women's Freedom in Iraq (OWFI) (Iraq)</td>
<td>263. Reseau Genre et Droits de la Femme &quot;GEDROFE&quot; (Democratic Republic of the Congo)</td>
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<td>265. Réseau pour le Leadership de la Femme en Centrafrique (RELEFCA) (Central African Republic)</td>
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<td>266. Rural-Urban Women And Children Development Agency (Ghana)</td>
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<td>233. Pacific Women's Watch (NZ) (New Zealand)</td>
<td>267. Rutgers (Netherlands)</td>
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<td>234. Parents Circle - Families Forum (Israel)</td>
<td>268. S.O.S. Sexisme (France)</td>
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<td>269. Saferworld</td>
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<td>236. Participatory Human Rights Advancement Society (Bangladesh)</td>
<td>270. Salam for Democracy and Human Rights (Bahrain)</td>
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<td>238. Pax Christi International (Belgium)</td>
<td>272. الانقسام الاجتماعي صنعاء مؤسسة Sana'a Social Development Foundation (Yemen)</td>
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<td>274. الانقسام حقوق الإنسان Sawasia Human Rights Organization (Yemen)</td>
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<td>241. Peace Track Initiative (Yemen)</td>
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<td>243. الشعبية النضالى منظمة People's Aid Organization (PAO) (Iraq)</td>
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278. Shamwari Yemwanasikana (Zimbabwe)
279. Shan Women's Action Network (SWAN) (Thailand)
280. Sisters Arab forum for Human Rights (SAF) (Yemen)
281. Sisters of Charity Federation (United States)
282. Smash Strategies (United States)
283. مؤسسة الاغاثة والاجتماعية (Social and Human Rights Relief Foundation Yemen)
284. Social Charitable Center Women and Modern World (Azerbaijan)
285. Society for Feminist Analyses AnA (Romania)
286. Society of Catholic Medical Missionaries (United States)
287. Soroptimist International Great Britain & Ireland
288. SOS Center for Youth Capabilities Development (Western Sahara)
289. Support Trust for Africa Development (STAD) (Netherlands)
290. Survival Advocacy Network (Sanfiji) (Fiji)
291. المرأة السورية لحقوق الإنسان (Syrian Women Association (Syria))
292. انسانية VAD Development Organization (Yemen)
293. Tamazight Women Movement (Libya)
294. Tearfund (United Kingdom)
295. Teresa Biscosi (Lebanon)
296. The Center of International Humanitarian Law & Human Rights (Yemen)
297. The CVE & Reintegration Initiative (United States)
298. The Democratic School (Yemen)
299. تعايش الشروط The Foundation of Civilization and Civilization (Yemen)
300. The Gender Agency (Australia)
301. The Gulf Centre for Human Rights
302. الإنسان للأمن The Human Security Foundation (Yemen)
303. The International Movement Against All Forms of Discrimination and Racism (IMADR) (Global)
304. The Judith Trust (United Kingdom)
305. The MATCH International Women's Fund (Canada)
306. The New Zealand Federation of Business and Professional Women (New Zealand)
307. The Regional Coalition for WHRDs in the Middle East and North Africa
308. The Right to Development Foundation (Yemen)
309. The WomanStats Project (United States)
310. TIYE International (Netherlands)
311. Tobe Foundation for Rights and Freedoms (Yemen)
312. Together We Build it Organization (Libya)
313. Toronto Women's City Alliance (Canada)
314. Tunisian Coalition for the ICC (Tunisia)
315. Union Internationale des Avocats (UIA) (France)
316. UN Women National Committee UK (United Kingdom)
317. Union of Palestinian Women's Committees (Palestine)
318. University Hospital (Republic of Somaliland)
319. University Women of Europe (Netherlands)
320. Urgent Action Fund for Women's Human Rights (United States)
321. عثمان VAD Development Organization (Yemen)
322. Useful to Albanian Women (UAW) (Albania)
323. USOFORAL (Senegal)
324. للتنمية VAD Development Organization (Yemen)
325. Vanuatu Young Women For Change (Vanuatu)
326. VIVAT International (United States)
327. VOICE MALE Magazine (United States)
328. We Can (Yemen)
329. West African Civil Society Forum (WACSO) (Nigeria)
330. Wider Security Network WISE (Finland)
331. Widows for Peace through Democracy (WPD) (United Kingdom)
332. WILPF Australia
333. WO=MEN, Dutch Gender Platform (Netherlands)
334. Womankind Worldwide
335. women & sustainable peace (Netherlands)
336. WOMEN ACROSS FRONTIERS (United States)
337. Women Africa - Women Initiative for Leadership Strategy & Innovation in Africa (Nigeria)
338. Women Development Group (South Sudan)
339. Women Empowerment Initiative (United States)
340. Women Empowerment Organization (Iraq)
341. Women Engage for a Common Future (WECF) (Germany)
342. Women Engage for a Common Future (WECF) (Netherlands)
343. Women for Peace and Democracy Nepal (WPD Nepal) (Nepal)
344. Women for Progress (Iraq)
345. Women for Women's Human Rights (WWHR) - New Ways (Turkey)
346. Women in Adult and Vocational Education (WAVE) (Australia)
347. Women In International Security (WIIS) Italy (Italy)
348. Women Initiative For Peace & Good Governance (Nigeria)
349. Women Leadership Institute (Iraq)
350. Women League of Burma (Myanmar)
351. Women of Kazakhstan (Kazakhstan)
352. Women Peacemakers Program (Netherlands)
353. Women Refugee Route (Global)
354. Women Thrive Alliance (United States)
355. Women's Consensus - Women's Legal Organization (Yemen)
356. Women's Federation for World Peace (Australia)
357. Women's Global Network for Reproductive Rights (Mexico)
358. Women's Information Consultative Center (Ukraine)
359. Women's Institute for Alternative Development (WINAD) (Trinidad and Tobago)
360. Women's Political Academy Sri Lanka (Sri Lanka)
361. Women's Problems Research Union (Azerbaijan)
362. Women's Initiatives for Gender Justice (Netherlands)
363. Women's International League for Peace and Freedom
364. Women's Refugee Commission
365. World Council of Rights and Freedoms (Yemen)
366. World Federalist Movement - Canada (Canada)
367. World Federalist Movement - Institute for Global Policy (United States)
368. World Federation of Ukrainian Women's Organizations WFUWO (Canada)
369. Wppi Kuwait (Kuwait)
370. WREPA (Kenya)
371. Women's UN Report Network (WUNRN) (United States)
372. Yayasan Gender Harmony (Indonesia)
373. Yemen Businesswomen Council (Yemen)
374. Yemen Center for Human Rights Studies (our rights) (Yemen)
375. Yemen Family Care Association (YFCA) (Yemen)
376. Yemeni Women Union (Yemen)
377. Yemen Observatory for Human Rights (YOHR) (Yemen)
378. Yemen Organization for Women's Policies (YOWP) (Yemen)
379. Yemen Professional and Businesswomen Development organization (Yemen)
380. Yemen Sama Development Foundation (Yemen)
381. Yemen Women Union (Yemen)
382. Yemeni Development Network (Yemen)
383. Yemeni Development Network for NGOs (YDN) (Yemen)
384. Yemeni Federation for Human Rights (Yemen)
385. Yemeni Feminist Consensus for Peace and Security (Yemen)
386. Yemeni Organization for the Promotion of Integrity (Yemen)
387. Yemeni Women Union (Yemen)
388. Youth Leadership Development Foundation (YLDF) (Yemen)
389. Youth without Borders Organization for Development (Yemen)
390. Zimbabwe National Council of Young Men's Christian Association (Zimbabwe)
391. Zonta International