

22 October 2011

**OPEN LETTER TO PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVES TO THE UN:
RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE SECURITY COUNCIL OPEN DEBATE ON WOMEN
PEACE AND SECURITY**

Dear Ambassador,

On 28 October, Nigeria will host an Open Debate on Women Peace and Security, marking the 11th anniversary of the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), with a focus on the theme, “Women’s Participation and Role in Conflict Prevention and Mediation”. This anniversary presents an opportunity for the Council and every UN Member State to take further action to ensure full implementation of SCR 1325 and all relevant Women, Peace and Security obligations.

The past year has seen progress in some areas of implementation, including increased efforts to report on progress and challenges to the women, peace and security agenda. However, in key areas of implementation, particularly regarding women’s “representation of women at all decision-making levels in national, regional and international institutions and mechanisms for the prevention, management, and resolution of conflict” (SCR 1325, OP1; also OP 8), action remains lacking. **In your statement to the Security Council for the Open Debate, and in your country’s work on Women, Peace and Security, we urge you to undertake the following points:**

- Last year’s 10th anniversary commemorations included the Commitments to Action conference, which many of you assisted with and attended.¹ We urge you to report on progress made to date and on plans to address remaining gaps, and to ensure that all commitments are results-oriented, measurable, and designed in consultation with civil society.
- It is frustrating to once again note that women and women’s rights are not consistently included peace talks and in peace accords, and that there appears to be little sense of urgency to address this. There is now a body of work as to how to include women in these processes, and how to include women’s rights in peace agreements.² We look to you as Member States, including members of the Security Council, to ensure that these concrete steps are finally taken, including by recommending women candidates as mediators, supporting the inclusion of women negotiators, and using your good offices to ensure women’s rights are integral to peace agreements. Member States are strongly urged to agree to concrete measures to ensure the meaningful engagement of women and civil society, and the inclusion of their concerns, in all peace processes.

¹ See PeaceWomen for list of commitments and analysis of progress: <http://www.peacewomen.org/commitments/>

² See, *inter alia*: Carla Koppel, “Supporting Women in Negotiations: A Model for Elevating their Voices and Reflecting their Agenda in Peace Deals,” 2009, The Institute for Inclusive Security; UN Women, “Women’s Participation in Peace Negotiations: Connections between Presence and Influence,” 2010; The Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue project on Gender and Mediation <http://www.hdcentre.org/projects/gender-mediation>

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

The NGOWG coalition members are: Amnesty International; Consortium on Gender, Security and Human Rights; Femmes Africa Solidarité; Global Action to Prevent War; Global Justice Center; Human Rights Watch; The Institute for Inclusive Security; International Action Network on Small Arms; International Alert; International Rescue Committee; Refugees International; International Women’s Program of the Open Society Foundations; Social Science Research Council; United Methodist Women’s Division, General Board of Global Ministries – United Methodist Church; Women’s Refugee Commission; Women’s Action for New Directions; Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom.

- In post-conflict situations, it is vital that Member States ensure women can exercise their right to help shape their government and its policies, including in the implementation of peace agreements and the reform and restructuring of political institutions. We urge you to strongly support women's empowerment in these efforts, including by ensuring a safe environment for women to fully exercise their rights in electoral processes, support for women political candidates, and the embedding of women's rights in constitutions.
- Unfortunately, research by the NGOWG demonstrates that the Security Council does not consistently meet its women, peace and security obligations. We urge all Member States to ensure that the Security Council uses its authority to ensure all resolutions, including mission mandates and renewals, consistently integrate and substantively advance the Women, Peace and Security agenda.
- In all UN discussions and decisions that may have an impact on the protection and promotion of the rights of women, it is critical to ensure that women and their priority recommendations are included. One such example is the 2012 UN Conference on the Arms Trade Treaty. We urge all Member States to ensure that respect for international humanitarian law and human rights law, and the principles of Security Council resolutions on Women Peace and Security, are fundamental to this and all relevant international agreements.

Earlier this year, the NGOWG consulted with Women, Peace and Security activists from around the world, asking them what concrete Women, Peace and Security achievements they wanted to see from the international community in the next 10 years. The answers were clear: accountability; women engaged equally at all levels of decision-making in peace-building and prevention efforts; support and funding for the civil society actors who do so much of this work in the field.

You have the opportunity to demonstrate your commitment to these goals by, *inter alia*, supporting women's empowerment in Afghanistan, in the Democratic Republic of Congo, in Libya, and in many other communities affected by conflict. On the occasion of this 11th anniversary of 1325 and in the months that follow, we look forward to you taking the bold steps necessary to ensure women are enabled to assert their right to determine the peaceful futures of their communities.

Please do not hesitate to contact us for additional information or to discuss these issues further.

Sincerely,

Sarah Taylor
EXECUTIVE COORDINATOR
NGO WORKING GROUP ON WOMEN PEACE AND SECURITY