

19 October 2012

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

Dear Ambassador,

On 29 October, the UN Security Council will mark the 12th anniversary of the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000) by holding an Open Debate on Women and peace and security with a focus on, “The Role of Women’s Civil Society Organizations in Contributing to the Prevention and Resolution of Armed Conflict and Peacebuilding.” This debate is an opportunity for the Council and all Member States to take strong action on all women, peace and security obligations, and to redress gaps in implementation.

The focus on civil society reflects the central and pivotal role of women’s groups in the work of peace and equality. This year, women’s rights advocates from Afghanistan, Cote d’Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iraq, Libya, and South Sudan, through support from the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace, and Security, met with policy makers in New York in advance of key Security Council decisions. Women’s organizations and women’s rights in Syria and in Mali have faced particular challenges and risks this year, as their countries erupted in violence.

The messages of these activists echo the demands of our network regarding the urgency of supporting women’s rights defenders, and supporting women’s participation in peace processes, in all aspects of the rebuilding of judicial, security, and political institutions, and in constitution drafting. They highlight the absolutely vital role of civil society, particularly women’s civil society organizations, in the implementation of the women, peace and security agenda, and the necessity of supporting women’s civil society organizations politically and financially.

It is in this same vein that we remind Member States that this year’s Open Debate is not simply an opportunity to pay lip service to the work of women’s civil society actors on the issues on the women, peace and security agenda. It is the time for Member States, including Council Members, to move beyond words and commit to increasing their efforts to work with members of civil society – both domestically and internationally – to identify more effective methods and steps to address the many remaining implementation deficits. **In your statement for this Security Council Open Debate, and in your country’s work on women, peace and security, we urge you to undertake the following points:**

- Detail how you will ensure that in **all support you provide to peace processes, both formal and informal, you concretely champion full participation and the inclusion of women’s human rights in all outcomes.** Women are still largely excluded from these processes, which all too often are not informed by gender expertise, and lack necessary gender elements. This is demonstrated in

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; Women’s Refugee Commission; Women’s Action for New Directions; Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom.

recent data in the Report of the Secretary-General on women and peace and security,¹ and in current peace processes in Colombia and Myanmar. We urge you to **facilitate the inclusion of women, women's human rights, and gender expertise in the implementation of peace accords**, including in DDR programs, SSR efforts, judicial reforms, and political and constitutional reforms;

- Provide details on the **concrete support, including financial support, that you will provide to women's human rights defenders**. These women face particular risks in conflict situations, often with little recognition or assistance. This is evident in the serious danger posed to women's human rights defenders, including those in Afghanistan, the DRC, and throughout the Middle East. It is also reflected in the lack of accountability for violations of women's human rights, particularly violations of international humanitarian and human rights law;
- Address specifically how your country will **ensure national level implementation of women, peace and security obligations** which must be designed via a participatory, transparent process of drafting, implementation, funding, and monitoring, involving civil society and women's organizations at all stages. At the national level, national action plans can be a potentially effective tool for implementation when designed following a holistic, inclusive, and comprehensive process;
- **Regarding prevention, detail how your country will address the root causes of conflict**, including by tackling militarization and the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, as well as the underlying causes of human rights violations against women and girls in armed conflict, including gender discrimination. Member States and the Council, should, *inter alia*, support the inclusion of robust gender provisions in any forthcoming Arms Trade Treaty; and
- Detail the measures and steps your country will take to ensure that, when conflict prevention efforts fail, **women and girls affected by conflict receive the support, protection, and services** they are due. Details would be welcome regarding your state's efforts to address sexual violence in conflict, particularly ensuring these are long-term, systematic, and holistic projects that address survivor needs and perpetrator accountability, aimed at disabling the conditions that enable such attacks. This includes ensuring humanitarian efforts follow established good practice for gender-sensitive responses, which comprises specific support for those who are most at risk, including refugees, internally-displaced women and girls, those living with disabilities, and young women.

Finally, we ask you to recall that this open debate need not be yet another meeting held at United Nations Headquarters. This is an opportunity to recognize the invaluable contributions of civil society to international peace and security, and to take concrete steps to support these contributions. We call upon you to use this year's open debate to not just recognize the significant efforts made by women's civil society groups, but to identify how you can work with these groups to help realize the objectives of the women, peace and security agenda, which, as the Security Council has recognized, benefit not just women and girls but conflict-affected communities and countries as a whole.

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

Sincerely,



Executive Coordinator
NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security

¹ S/2012/732