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UN: SECURITY COUNCIL ACTION SPELLS HOPE FOR WOMEN IN WAR

Resolution 1888 on sexual violence in war, adopted unanimously by the UN Security Council today, could substantively improve the situation of women in conflict, the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security said.

“Nine years ago, the Security Council first recognized specific international obligations to women in conflict situations by adopting resolution 1325. But, these women continue to be targeted for sexual violence, and have largely been excluded from the talks to end conflicts,” said Sarah Taylor, Coordinator of the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security.

Today’s resolution establishes a system of added protection and support to end sexual violence in war. This includes a team of experts which can be deployed immediately to conflict affected situations, and a new leader, a Special Representative, to bring the UN’s response together.

“Coordination is key. Both the Special Representative and the team of experts will hopefully be a catalyst for change. They need to take cohesive and meaningful action in countries such as Afghanistan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Chad, Democratic Republic of Congo, Myanmar, Sudan, and all conflicts where sexual violence against women is rife.” said Taylor.

The Security Council has asked the Secretary-General for urgent proposals to dramatically improve the UN’s response to sexual violence. A key question is how to ethically gather timely information on sexual violence, thus allowing the Council to effectively and fairly address the issue.

“We look forward to analysis that draws significantly on the expertise of civil society working with survivors on the front line in the struggle against sexual violence,” said Taylor.

In a nod to the fact that perpetrators of sexual violence rarely are brought to justice, the resolution also requests the UN system to name warring parties responsible for using rape as a weapon of war.

“Impunity is the name of the game when it comes to rape in war. We could see real reductions in the use of sexual violence in conflict if commanders and their soldiers are held accountable for their crimes,” said Taylor.

In its resolution, the Security Council rightly emphasizes that all UN Member States treat survivors of sexual violence with dignity, and that these survivors are provided with effective protection and support throughout the justice process, as well as full reparation for their suffering.

Background

Under the Security Council Presidency of the United States of America, resolution 1888 was unanimously adopted on 30 September 2009, and was co-sponsored by more than 60 UN Member States.* Resolution 1888 builds on the principles and obligations in previous Security Council Resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1820 (2008) on women, peace and security.

The NGOWG on Women, Peace and Security advocates for the equal and full participation of women in all efforts to maintain and 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.

NGOWG members are: Amnesty International; Consortium on Gender, Security and Human Rights; Femmes Africa Solidarité; Global Action to Prevent War; Global Justice Center; Hague Appeal for Peace/Peaceboat US; Human Rights Watch; International Action Network on Small Arms; International Alert; International Rescue Committee; International Women's Program at the Open Society Institute; International Women's Tribune Centre; 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.

* The cosponsors of this resolution are: Albania, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Benin, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Canada, Chile, Costa Rica, Cote d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Denmark, Djibouti, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, India, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Liberia, Lichtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Mexico, Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Nigeria, Norway, Panama, Poland, Portugal, the Republic of Korea, Romania, Rwanda, Senegal, Serbia, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United Republic of Tanzania and the United States of America.