

“The Role of Women’s Civil Society Organisations in Contributing to the Prevention and Resolution of Armed Conflict and Peacebuilding”

Civil Society Recommendations to UN Member States and the UN Security Council in advance of the 2012 Open Debate on Women Peace and Security

On Friday 30 November 2012 the UN Security Council will hold its annual Open Debate celebrating the anniversary of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325) on Women Peace and Security. This year’s theme for the debate is “the Role of Women’s Civil Society Organizations in Contributing to the Prevention and Resolution of Armed Conflict and Peacebuilding.” The Open Debate has been rescheduled from last month, when weather conditions and related damage in the New York area prevented any public engagements.

We as civil society organisations around the world have been looking forward to hearing from UN Member States on the theme of this year’s Open Debate and were present in New York to monitor the debate in October. We are pleased that the debate has been rescheduled and would like to offer the following five recommendations to UN Member States and the Security Council as they prepare their statements.

We, the undersigned, believe that the theme of this year’s Open Debate is an appropriate call to the UN and its Member States to re-focus on conflict prevention, as an essential aspect of the full implementation of UNSCR 1325. The Resolution calls on Member States to “ensure increased representation of women at all decision-making levels in national, regional and international institutions and mechanisms for the prevention, management, and resolution of conflict” and to “incorporate a gender perspective into peacekeeping operations.” Conflict prevention, then, is not just about preventing gender-based violence in conflict, but rather emphasises the *active* roles women are playing to prevent and resolve armed conflict, and hence the need to involve them in all processes that strive to achieve a lasting peace.

Considering the essential role women’s civil society organisations play today in preventing violent conflict around the world, we call on the UN and its Member States to:

1. Ensure a systemic collaboration with civil society in developing and implementing National and/or Regional Action Plans on UNSCR 1325

Several processes developing National Action Plans/NAPs to implement UNSCR 1325 have included civil society input from the ground up, with civil society groups organising themselves to pool their expertise. UN Member States involved in NAP and regional processes should build on best practice examples of systemic collaboration with civil society. This collaboration needs to extend to the implementation stage too. In implementing their action plan, Member States should ensure that national level decisions are again “localised” to matter at the community level; a process which civil society organisations are well placed to bridge.

2. Work with security actors and institutions to apply UNSCR 1325, particularly to advance a preventive and human security approach to security sector governance

In synergy with the theme for the 2012 “16 Days of Activism” Campaign, we reiterate the need to ensure greater accountability of military spending with the view that more resources should instead be allocated to enhance the human security of communities. Several examples of resourcing and applying ‘1325’ principles to dialogues & trainings in military institutions by women’s civil society organisations can be found in the South Asia region and beyond. Another source of inspiration to Member States is the Conflict Prevention and Human Security Framework and the Pacific Regional Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security adopted by Pacific Forum

Leaders, which demonstrates a willingness to engage with civil society actors – and women peacebuilders in particular – to advance collaborative peacebuilding practices and enhance Human Security for All.

3. Build on the engagement of local women’s civil society organisations in developing peace accords and at the start of any formal peace process

The negotiation and mediation expertise of women is often located at the community level – and this is where the UN and its Member States need to solicit it. Today, a lot of formal peace processes at regional and global level still engage through frameworks that make it difficult to incorporate local experiences, and women and their experiences in particular. Alternative approaches such as that of the International Contact Group on Mindanao have started a new trend, acknowledging the contributions of informal participants and local expertise to benefit formal peace processes as a whole.

4. Engage with Regional Intergovernmental Organisations to develop regional mechanisms of collaboration with women’s civil society organisations

While National Action Plans to implement UNSCR 1325 are an important vehicle to highlight women’s contributions to conflict prevention and peacebuilding, they have a limited scope and limited resources to influence conflicts at regional level. Regional approaches to conflict prevention, such as the Pacific Regional Action Plan on Women Peace and Security, acknowledge stakeholders from the local to the regional level and are a vehicle to address the regional nature of conflicts today. They can also help boost or build a bridge for action plans at national level.

5. Actively involve youth to ensure a sustainable approach to implementation and in periods of transition

A sustainable approach to conflict prevention and peacebuilding needs to involve a diverse range of stakeholders and future generations in the development of relevant policies and practices. This is also true for processes including UN mission drawdowns and transition periods from peacekeeping to peacebuilding since these processes take considerable time and often span two or more generations. Involving youth also opens up spaces for innovative practices, including working with men as allies and utilising social media.

The active inclusion of women’s civil society organisations in all conflict prevention approaches means using the full potential of civil society expertise on conflict prevention and peacebuilding.

The following organisations and networks align themselves with this statement:

Association of War Affected Women, Sri Lanka
Center for Women's Global Leadership, Rutgers University
CEIPAZ-Fundación Cultura de Paz, Spain
FemLINKPACIFIC, Fiji
Global Campaign for Peace Education, Japan

Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict, The Netherlands
Initiatives for International Dialogue, Philippines
International Center on Conflict and Negotiation, Georgia
International Civil Society Action Network/Global Network of Women Peacebuilders (ICAN-GNWP), USA

International Peace Bureau, Switzerland

MENA Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict

Nada Drobnjak, Former Chairwoman of the Gender Equality Committee -Parliament of Montenegro, Steering Committee Member of the Regional Women's Lobby for Peace, Security and Justice in South East Europe

Nansen Dialogue Centre, Montenegro

Nansen Dialogue Centre, Sarajevo

Nansen Dialogue Centre, Serbia

Peace Boat, Japan

Permanent Peace Movement, Lebanon

Saferworld, UK

SIGNIS, the World Catholic Association for Communication, Belgium

Women in Alternative Action - Cameroon (WAA)

Women in Peacebuilding Network Nigeria/WIPNET, Nigeria

Women Making Peace (WMP), South Korea

Women Peace Initiatives - Uganda (WOPI-U)

Women Peacemaker's Program (WPP), The Netherlands

World Federalist Movement-Institute for Global Policy/WFM-IGP

This statement was published and signed during the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence Campaign (25.11. – 10.12.2012). It is available online at: <http://www.peaceportal.org/web/taking-women-beyond-1325/home1>

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