



SECURITY COUNCIL REPORT UPDATE REPORT



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Women, Peace and Security

Expected Council Action

On 29 October the Council will hold an open debate on women, peace and security. In a concept paper circulated by the president of the Council (S/2008/655), the issue of women's equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security—a main element of resolution 1325 on women, peace and security—was proposed as a possible theme for the debate.

The Council is likely to be briefed by the following speakers:

- Assistant Secretary-General and Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women Rachel Mayanja;
- Executive Director of the United Nations Development Fund for Women Inés Alberdi;
- a representative of the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security; and
- perhaps a representative of the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations.

A draft presidential statement prepared by the UK in consultation with China, the Council's president in October, was circulated to Council members on 17 October. The draft focuses on women's participation, reaffirms the Council's commitment to implementation of resolution 1820 on sexual violence, reiterates the need to increase the participation of women at all stages of a peace process and requests the Secretary-General to appoint more women to pursue good offices missions. It would also call on states and regional organisations to enhance the role of women in decision making in peace processes. Finally the Secretary-General would be asked to present a report on further implementation of resolution 1325 by October 2009.

Key Recent Developments

The latest report of the Secretary-General on women, peace and security was released on 26 September (S/2008/622). In it the Secretary-General provided an assessment of implementation of resolution 1325 by the Council, other intergovernmental bodies and regional organisations, and measures taken by member states, UN entities and civil society organisations to enhance national implementation of the resolution.

He said that progress was being made in incorporating gender perspectives in national policies, raising awareness, developing programmatic tools and enhancing women's participation in conflict prevention, peace processes, peacebuilding, peace support operations and security sector reforms and in combating sexual violence. He also provided an assessment of progress

made in the protection of women in particular against sexual and gender-based violence. He noted that despite efforts by the UN, violence against women persists. The Council and member states needed to send stronger signals to parties to conflict that perpetrators would be prosecuted and targeted sanctions should be considered as a means to restrain perpetrators. He added that reporting mechanisms to gather data on gender-based violence needed to be developed. Other recommendations for the Council included:

- dispatch focused missions to assess situations when it seemed that sexual violence was being used as a tactic of war;
- remind parties to conflict of their responsibility to protect women;
- focus on means to prevent or deter sexual violence;
- increase the use of Arria meetings; and
- strengthen the mandates of peacekeeping operations to prevent sexual violence in conflict and post-conflict situations.

On 19 June, the Council held an open debate at the ministerial-level on women, peace and security with a focus on sexual violence in situations of armed conflict, at the initiative of the US (S/PV.5916). The Council unanimously adopted resolution 1820 stressing that sexual violence as a tactic of war can significantly exacerbate situations of armed conflict; demanding all parties to immediately protect civilians from all forms of sexual violence; and affirming its intention to consider targeted sanctions against perpetrators. The resolution also requested the Secretary-General to develop guidelines and strategies to enhance peacekeeping operations' ability to protect civilians from sexual violence and systematically include observations and recommendations in this regard in written reports to the Council, as well as to submit a report by 30 June 2009 with information on the systematic use of sexual violence in conflict areas and proposals for strategies to minimise the prevalence of such acts with benchmarks for measuring progress.

The adoption of this resolution was warmly welcomed in many quarters as an important new development on the issue of women, peace and security. However, for some delegations resolution 1820 is seen as perhaps a step too far and this is being reflected in some push-back at this stage.

Between 29 June and 15 October, the Council adopted one presidential statement referring to resolution 1820 and sexual violence (on children and armed conflict), and seven resolutions with a reference to resolution 1820 (out of 21 resolutions), on Haiti, Liberia, Chad, Afghanistan, Sierra Leone, Sudan and Côte d'Ivoire. However, only one resolution (1828 on Sudan) demanded that the parties to the conflict immediately take appropriate measures to protect women and children from all forms of sexual violence in line with resolution 1820 and requested the Secretary-General to ensure, as appropriate, that resolutions 1325 and 1820 are implemented and to include information on implementation by the parties to the conflict in a report.

References to sexual violence and to resolution 1820 were prominent in Secretary-General's reports during this period. Out of 28 reports submitted to the Council, 16 referred to resolution 1820 and/or to cases of or recommendations to end sexual violence: Côte d'Ivoire, Afghanistan, Chad/Central African Republic, Haiti, Liberia, Chad, cooperation with regional organisations, Timor-Leste, Iraq, Sudan, Somalia, Darfur and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). However, the report on the DRC is the only one containing a specific paragraph for sexual and gender-based violence.

The DRC, where rates of sexual violence are particularly high, continues to be at the forefront of attempts to tackle sexual violence in conflict. In July, a human rights team, a part of the UN Mission in the DRC (MONUC), conducted investigations on reports of mass rapes committed by the Mai Mai militia in 2007. MONUC's human rights branch has also conducted training sessions for the Congolese police in order to ensure that victims and witnesses are better protected. MONUC had already trained the Congolese government forces, who were found by the UN to be one of the biggest human rights violators in the DRC.

The Issue of Women's Participation

Eight years ago in resolution 1325 the Council reminded the international community that the full participation of women in peace processes can significantly contribute to the maintenance and promotion of international peace and security. It recognised, in particular, their role in the prevention of conflicts, resolution of conflicts (peace processes and negotiations) and peacebuilding. The Council called for women's participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security. It also called on all relevant actors (member states and the UN) to increase women's representation at key decision-making levels as well as within UN field-based operations.

Since 2000, when addressing women, peace and security, the Council has often reiterated the need to promote equal participation and full involvement of women by the UN system, member states and all other relevant actors. Specific language has included:

- calling for an increase in the representation of women in all aspects of peacekeeping and peacebuilding operations and humanitarian response at all stages of a peace process, and urging the Secretary-General to strengthen his efforts to identify suitable female candidates for senior-level positions, including in the military and civilian police services (S/PRST/2004/40);
- expressing concern at the constant underrepresentation of women in formal peace processes and at the persistent obstacles to greater participation of women at the negotiating table and in developing and implementing post-conflict strategies and programmes (S/PRST/2005/52);
- requesting the Secretary-General to include in his reporting the progress being achieved on gender mainstreaming throughout UN peacekeeping missions (S/PRST/2006/42);
- recognising the need to include gender components in peacekeeping operations at all levels of operations (civilian, police and military), where possible (S/PRST/2006/42);
- expressing concern about the low number of women appointed as Special Representatives or Special Envoys of the Secretary-General to peace missions and urging the Secretary-General to appoint more women and urging member states to nominate women candidates for inclusion in a regularly updated centralised roster (S/PRST/2007/40); and
- requesting the Secretary-General to increase the profile and transparency of the appointment procedure, and to issue guidelines to member states on the process for nomination to senior posts (S/PRST/2007/40).

Resolution 1820 also focused on the persistent obstacles and challenges to women's participation in the prevention and resolution of conflicts. Violence, intimidation and discrimination were identified as relevant factors which erode women's capacity and legitimacy to participate in post-conflict public life. The resolution also pointed out the negative impact this has on durable peace, security and reconciliation and stressed the Peacebuilding Commission's

important role in ensuring consultation and effective representation of women's civil society in its country-specific configurations.

The Council has also addressed the issue of women's participation in the context of other thematic issues on its agenda:

- resolution 1327 and S/PRST/2007/31 on maintenance of peace and security;
- resolution 1366 on prevention of armed conflicts;
- S/PRST/2001/5 on peacebuilding and resolution 1645 creating the Peacebuilding Commission;
- women's representation is a key element of the aide-memoire for protection of civilians in armed conflict adopted in S/PRST/2002/6;
- S/PRST/2004/34 on the UN's role in justice and the rule of law;
- resolution 1625 on peace and security in Africa;
- S/PRST/2005/9 and S/PRST/2006/38 on West Africa.

More recently, while addressing the issue of mediation and settlement of disputes, the Council adopted S/PRST/2008/36 noting that women have an important role to play in the settlement of disputes and called upon the Secretary-General and the heads of regional and subregional organisations to take into account gender aspects for the selection of mediators.

Despite some progress made by some states in helping to increase the pool of women eligible for peacekeeping, and by the UN in hiring more senior women staff and gender advisers in peacekeeping missions, today women constitute only 2.2 percent of military personnel in peacekeeping missions. At UN headquarters, women account for 28.6 percent of higher category civilian staff in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. There is only one female Special Representative of the Secretary-General, serving in Liberia.

Specific proposals from civil society organisations for improving women's participation have included:

- the creation of a gender unit within the UN Department of Political Affairs;
- the creation of a Security Council mechanism to monitor in a systematic way progress in achieving equal participation in conflict prevention and peacebuilding;
- clear recognition by the Council that there is a link between increased women's participation and potential lower levels of sexual violence (in his latest report, the Secretary-General noted that "the deployment of women in peacekeeping forces, in police forces and among civilian personnel facilitates engagement with local women; enhances their access to social and psychological services, including trauma counseling, information sharing on sexual harassment, abuse and rape; and lowers the incidents of sexual violence and abuse");
- increased use by the UN of female mediators; and
- increased female contingents of peacekeepers.

Options

The draft presidential statement before the Council is a likely option. It is already a product of negotiated language between the UK and China.

Options for additional language could include:

- a specific recognition that the absence of women's participation in peace processes can have a negative impact on durable peace and security;

- urging increased representation of women in police contingents in peacekeeping missions in order to help investigate and prevent sexual violence; and
- acknowledging the Secretary-General's recommendations relevant to Council working methods on these issues (including missions and Arria meetings) and confirming its intention to keep these options under consideration in specific cases.

Key Issues

It seems that a major issue limiting Council action on participation at this stage is a sense by some delegations of an absence of options for achievable and effective implementation. Many, therefore, consider it desirable to request the Secretary-General to provide concrete information on obstacles and challenges to improved women's participation as well as recommendations.

Another issue that seems likely to arise during discussions is potential resistance to including reference to resolution 1820 in the presidential statement.

Council Dynamics

There were initial fears that there would be resistance to holding an open debate on women, peace and security in October on the basis that the issue had been on the Council agenda in June and those members with principled reservations about thematic issues in general would push for deferral. But agreement to hold the meeting and to adopt a statement proved possible and has been reckoned as a very positive development.

China's support of a presidential statement seems to have been motivated by the recognition that a statement was important, if only to maintain the mandate for the next Secretary-General's report on the implementation of resolution 1325. In addition, the specific issue of women's participation in peace processes is a theme that has wide support in the Council and is one China could support. In the past China has been supportive of the participation agenda and, during October 2007 debate, stated:

"It is necessary to enhance the participation of women in all stages of a peace process and to acknowledge their status and role so as to lay a firm foundation for peacebuilding and the realization of lasting peace. [...] They should enjoy greater participation and decision-making power with institutional guarantees. In recent years, the Secretariat has taken many positive measures to increase the ratio of female senior officials and female heads and staff of peacekeeping missions. We hope to see such efforts continue."
(S/PV.5766)

France, the UK and the US and the Europeans seem to agree that modest objectives are appropriate in the October debate given the achievements in June on resolution 1820 and the residual discomfort as a result of that. There is a sense that the timing is not right for additional language on controversial issues—impunity and sexual violence for instance. They, however, are adamant about a reference to resolution 1820 as they consider that 1820 is an integral part of the 1325 process. Resolution 1820 was adopted unanimously but it seems that there may be some resistance and some members may backpedal on what was agreed in June (there had been some initial reluctance to referring to resolution 1820 in the July presidential statement on children and armed conflict).

A number of delegations seem likely to address other themes in relation to implementation of resolution 1325 in their statements, such as sexual violence and protection issues.

Underlying Problems

While there is some momentum within the Council to continue to pursue the 1820 agenda further, challenges to implementation of resolution 1820 in the field remain. The problem of data collection seems particularly acute because of limited capacities and resources. Moreover, elaborating strategies for collecting information while not endangering the lives of the victims and the need to establish stringent restrictions to access the data are potential issues of concern. There also seem to be problems of effective coordination among all UN agencies currently seeking information on sexual violence. In some countries such as the DRC, the lack of knowledge or access to local health centres by victims is also a factor. Many victims do not seek assistance and this has an impact on statistics.

UN Documents

Resolutions on Women, Peace and Security

- S/RES/1820 (19 June 2008) stressed that sexual violence as a tactic of war can significantly exacerbate situations of armed conflict; demanded all parties to immediately protect civilians from all forms of sexual violence; and affirmed its intention to consider targeted sanctions against perpetrators. The resolution also requested the Secretary-General to develop guidelines to enhance peacekeeping operations' ability to protect civilians from sexual violence and systematically include recommendations in this regard in written reports to the Council, as well as to submit a report by 30 June 2009 with information on the systematic use of sexual violence in conflict areas and strategies to minimise the prevalence of such acts with benchmarks for measuring progress.
- S/RES/1325 (31 October 2000) expressed the Council's willingness to incorporate a gender perspective into peacekeeping missions and urged the Secretary-General to ensure that field operations include a gender component.

Other Selected Resolutions

- S/RES/1828 (31 July 2008) on Darfur demanded that the parties to the conflict immediately take appropriate measures to protect civilians, including women and children, from all forms of sexual violence in line with resolution 1820 and requested the Secretary-General to ensure that resolutions 1325 and 1820 are implemented by UNAMID.
- S/RES/1807 (31 March 2008) on the DRC, imposed sanctions against individuals involved in serious violations of international law including sexual violence in the DRC.
- S/RES/1794 (21 December 2007) on the DRC, requested MONUC to pursue a mission-wide strategy to strengthen prevention, protection and response to sexual violence and to regularly report on actions taken and progress achieved.
- S/RES/1645 (20 December 2005) created the Peacebuilding Commission, encouraged the Commission to consult with civil society, including women's organisations engaged in peacebuilding activities.
- S/RES/1625 (14 September 2004) on threats to international peace and security, stressed the need to strengthen the capacities of civil society groups, including women's groups, to promote a culture of peace.
- S/RES/1366 (30 August 2001) on the role of the Council in the prevention of armed conflicts, reiterated its recognition of the role of women in conflict prevention and requested the Secretary-General to give greater attention to gender perspectives in the implementation of peacekeeping and peacebuilding mandates as well as in conflict prevention efforts.

- S/RES/1327 (13 November 2000) was on the implementation of the report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations (S/2000/809), reaffirmed the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and in post-conflict peacebuilding, and fully endorsed the urgent need to mainstream a gender perspective into peacekeeping operations.

Presidential Statements on Women, Peace and Security

- S/PRST/2007/40 (24 October 2007)
- S/PRST/2007/5 (7 March 2007)
- S/PRST/2006/42 (8 November 2006)
- S/PRST/2005/52 (27 October 2005)
- S/PRST/2004/40 (28 October 2004)
- S/PRST/2002/32 (31 October 2002)
- S/PRST/2001/31 (31 October 2001)

Selected Presidential Statements Addressing the Issue of Women's Participation

- S/PRST/2008/36 (23 September 2008) on mediation and settlement of disputes, called upon the Secretary-General and the heads of regional and subregional organisations to take into account the gender aspect during mediators selection, as well as the approach and perspective that women can render in mediation processes.
- S/PRST/2007/31 (28 August 2007) on the maintenance of peace and security, stressed the need to carry out efforts to increase women's participation as contributors and beneficiaries in conflict prevention and peacebuilding.
- S/PRST/2006/38 (9 August 2006) on peace consolidation in West Africa, considered that women's civil society organisations have a role to play in supporting peace consolidation initiatives and that their efforts in this regard deserved to be supported.
- S/PRST/2005/9 (25 February 2005) on cross-border issues in West Africa, welcomed the growing and constructive partnership between the UN system and women's organisations.
- S/PRST/2004/34 (6 October 2004) on the role of the UN in justice and the rule of law, stressed the importance of the restoration of justice and the rule of law in post-conflict societies, and that such processes must be gender sensitive and open to the full participation of women.
- S/PRST/2002/6 (15 March 2002) on protection of civilians in armed conflict, included an aide-memoire for consideration of issues by the Council during deliberations on peacekeeping mandates, recommending in particular to include gender advisers in in peace operations, to expand the role and contribution of women in UN field-based operations and to increase the participation of women at all decision-making levels.
- S/PRST/2001/5 (20 February 2001) on peacebuilding, stressed the importance of mainstreaming a gender perspective into peace agreements and peacebuilding strategies and of involving women in all peacebuilding measures.

Latest Secretary-General's Report on Women, Peace and Security

- S/2008/622 (26 September 2008)

Selected Letters

- S/2008/655 (16 October 2008) was a letter from China enclosing the concept paper for the 29 October debate on women, peace and security.
- S/2008/402 (16 June 2008) was a letter from the UK enclosing the summary

report of the May 2008 Wilton Park conference on the theme “Women targeted or affected by armed conflict: what role for military peacekeepers?”

Latest Records of Open Debates on Women, Peace and Security

- S/PV.5916 and resumption 1 (19 June 2008) was an open debate at the ministerial-level on sexual violence in situations of armed conflict.
- S/PV.5766 and resumption 1 (23 October 2007) was the 2007 debate on women, peace and security.

Useful Additional Sources

- Recommendations for Peace-Making and Peace-Building: Securing the Contributions of Women and Civil Society, Salzburg Global Seminar and Initiative for Inclusive Security, September 2008
- Resolution 1325 Checklist: Women's Participation and Gender Perspectives in Security Council Resolutions, NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security <http://www.womenpeacesecurity.org/publications/>
- UN Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality: Information and Resources on Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/>
- Women's International League for Peace and Freedom: www.peacewomen.org