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Women and peace and security

Report of the Secretary-General*

I. Introduction

1. The present report is prepared pursuant to the presidential statement dated 26 October 2010 (S/PRST/2010/22), in which the Security Council requested annual reports on the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000). The report follows up on the Secretary-General's directives to the United Nations and the five goals for the decade (2020 to 2030) laid out in the reports of the Secretary-General on women and peace and security from 2019 and 2020, paying special attention to the goal of turning the unconditional defence of women's rights into one of the most visible markers of the work of the United Nations on peace and security, and in particular the protection of women human rights defenders.

2. Despite normative agreement since the year 2000 and evidence that gender equality offers a path to sustainable peace and conflict prevention, we are moving in the opposite direction. Today, the world is experiencing a reversal of generational gains in women's rights while violent conflicts, military expenditures, military coups, displacements and hunger continue to increase.

3. Recent challenges to democratic and inclusive politics show once again that misogyny and authoritarianism are often mutually reinforcing and antithetical to stable and prosperous societies. In several countries, violent extremist groups and military actors have taken power by force, revoking previous commitments on gender equality and persecuting women for speaking up or simply for going about their daily lives. The present report focuses on women and girls in all their diversity and shows that the combination of misogyny and authoritarianism also lead to increased violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

4. One of the most extreme expressions of this oppression is in Afghanistan, where the Taliban have appointed a Cabinet comprised exclusively of men, have closed girls' secondary schools, banned women from showing their faces in public and restricted women's right to leave their own homes, among many other restrictions decreed in the past year. A majority of girls have been away from classrooms for more than 400 days and were turned away from their schools on what they thought would be their first day back. Nearly 20 million Afghan women and girls are being denied their basic

* The present report was submitted for processing after the deadline for technical reasons beyond the control of the submitting office.



human rights, and 51 per cent of women's organizations operating in Afghanistan have had to close.¹

5. Afghanistan is not the only place where there has been regression on women's human rights, dashed hopes, delayed reforms, unmet quotas and continued repression and violence against women and girls. In most conflict-affected countries, men hold power, women are structurally or directly excluded, and women's rights and freedoms are deliberately targeted.

6. In many countries, in particular conflict-affected countries, women are at the forefront of protests against authoritarian leaders and are firm in their refusal to accept political settlements that do not guarantee their rights. In some countries, women are notching victories, including more equal laws and advances in women's representation in decision-making. Women expect concrete actions towards their inclusion, and reject tokenistic meetings with women's groups or the insertion of language in deals without their direct participation.

7. The women and peace and security agenda is not just an answer to historic wrongs and marginalization, but an opportunity to do things differently. Opening the door to inclusion and participation would result in giant steps forward in conflict-prevention and peacebuilding.

8. This report is informed by data and analysis provided by entities of the United Nations system, including peace operations and country teams, inputs from Member States, regional organizations and civil society, and analysis of other globally recognized data sources. It presents an assessment of the current challenges and examples of pathways for change.

II. Goals for the decade on women and peace and security: protecting human rights and those who defend them

9. Across the globe, women human rights defenders have increasingly been targeted with attacks that silence their advocacy and prevent them from participating in public life. The ascendancy of extremist political actors and the resurgence of military coups and unconstitutional changes of Government have made the work of human rights defenders more dangerous. In response, the Security Council has called for measures to protect women's rights activists and their organizations.² In 2022, the Security Council held its first-ever formal meeting focusing on reprisals against women participating in peace and security processes. However, when civil society actors need long-term support so that they can strengthen their own safety measures, or emergency help for protection or relocation when most at risk, the response from their own Governments and international partners is often found wanting.

10. In 2021, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) verified 29 cases of killings of women human rights defenders, journalists and trade unionists in eight conflict-affected countries. This, however, is widely believed to be a huge undercount. For example, in Colombia alone, OHCHR received 1,116 complaints of threats and attacks against human rights defenders and organizations – nearly a third of which were against women, and reported the killing of 12 women human rights defenders, 7 of whom were indigenous women. In Yemen, the warring parties continued to persecute politically active women and sexual and

¹ Afghanistan Gender in Humanitarian Action Working Group, "Research on challenges, barriers and opportunities for women-led CSOs in Afghanistan's Humanitarian Crisis", 30 March 2022, United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women).

² For example, see Security Council resolutions [2467 \(2019\)](#), [2493 \(2019\)](#), [2542 \(2020\)](#), [2567 \(2021\)](#) and [2626 \(2022\)](#).

gender minorities. Syrian activists report that colleagues have considered suicide after fake pictures of them have been sent to their families. In the Sudan, many women have been targeted with violence, arbitrary arrests, and detention during their participation in the protests following the coup. In Afghanistan, many activists have been detained or harassed, and several have been killed or disappeared. Four women activists were arrested alongside their family members in January and February 2022 after they had participated in protests for women's rights. They were released after being held incommunicado for several weeks and following concerted pressure by the United Nations and the broader international community. In Myanmar, the military has killed hundreds of women protesters, including women human rights defenders, university students, rights activists for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer people, journalists and influencers. Thousands of women activists have been detained and there are several reported cases of abuse and ill-treatment during detention.

11. Attacks against women human rights defenders are extremely underreported and anonymized in official United Nations statistics. In general, women are much more likely than men to be targeted with sexual and gender-based violence and to be subjected to verbal abuse, surveillance and online violence. While all activists are targeted with defamation, smear campaigns and online and offline hate speech, the attacks against women human rights defenders typically target their personal behaviour, their moral conduct or their sex lives. Defenders of sexual and reproductive health and rights face extraordinary stigma and violence, as their work is often perceived as threatening traditional social and gender norms. Restrictive legislation against sexual and reproductive health information and services can amplify these risks. Those who attack women's rights activists are often emboldened by discriminatory laws. Defenders of the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex people can be specifically targeted for their activism as well as for their gender identity, sexual orientation or sex characteristics. Some women human rights defenders, in particular women with disabilities, are at particular risk of being falsely diagnosed with psychological disorders and being forcibly institutionalized into psychiatric facilities to silence them.³

12. Since 2018, more than a third of the women briefers invited to address the Security Council assisted by the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security have been subjected to reprisals and intimidation. When the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) surveyed the women civil society representatives who briefed the Council between January 2021 and May 2022, 9 out of 32 respondents reported reprisals. One woman reported that her colleague who assisted her with the briefing was arrested, detained and beaten and that they both had to leave the country. To date, she is unable to continue her human rights work due to the high risks to her personal safety. A prominent women's rights advocate reported that after her briefing, the Government of her country showed a film on television and social media in which her father and a colleague were forced to defame her. Not all survey respondents had undertaken a risk assessment and protection planning ahead of the meeting, and many of these were conducted by civil society instead of the United Nations or the inviting Security Council member. The development of guidance material to mitigate reprisals against civil society briefers by OHCHR and the formation of an informal group of Member States on the issue are welcome steps.

13. Women human rights defenders in crisis and conflict settings have limited access to funding. Responding to this gap, the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund established a funding window for women human rights defenders this year, which has

³ Analysis from an expert consultation organized by UN-Women, OHCHR, and the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security, 10–12 January 2022. See also "Women human rights defenders; OHCHR and women's human rights and gender equality" <https://www.ohchr.org/en/women/women-human-rights-defenders>.

already begun to provide direct logistical assistance to women human rights defenders at risk. Rapid and flexible funding should be made available from a range of funds and other sources for organizations that specialize in protecting human rights defenders, as civil society organizations continue to be the most reliable source of support for activists in peril.

14. Quarterly reports of peace operations play an important role in channelling information on violations and abuses against women human rights defenders to the Security Council. In 2021, 14 peace operations reported to the Security Council on violence targeting human rights defenders. Reports from the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia consistently contain sex-disaggregated data on killings of human rights defenders, in addition to mainstreaming gender considerations into the security analysis and recommendations. They also specify when leaders from certain ethnic groups or the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex community are targeted, which should become the norm for all reports on peace operations.

15. Beyond reporting, the United Nations must take all possible measures to protect women human rights defenders and their work. This includes taking immediate measures to address emerging threats. In recent years, the United Nations has issued public condemnations, conducted visits to women human rights defenders at risk to mitigate stigmatization, facilitated the establishment of networks of women human rights defenders, and supported the development of policies and laws for better protection. In Libya, the United Nations engaged with social media companies to fight misinformation and hate speech targeting women's rights activists. In Colombia, at least 4,000 women leaders benefitted last year from protection strategies developed under a programme by UN-Women to support women human rights defenders, and 499 people were supported by six active emergency funds. In Khartoum, OHCHR visited a prominent women human rights defender who had been detained and isolated for two weeks, and she was released on bail three days after the visit. Still, United Nations country teams and peace operations must invest more in prevention and be prepared to provide risk assessments and implement a more coordinated approach and systematic protocols when their support is needed.

16. In situations where women human rights defenders are at immediate risk, the international community's support strategies and response mechanisms are still inadequate and underdeveloped, as illustrated by the evacuations from Afghanistan following the Taliban takeover in August 2021. Many key tasks were left to civil society organizations who compiled lists of women at risk, linked them with Member States and others operating evacuation flights, and organized safe passage to the airport and even evacuation flights themselves. The lack of safety deterred many women activists from trying to access the airport and many did not want to leave without their families. There were reports of women activists being killed or arrested while awaiting evacuation. Interviews with civil society and Afghan women also reported that many resettlement schemes favour those who supported the military rather than those who built peace and advanced human rights and democracy – and are thus biased towards men. Most visa applications can only be processed from a third country, but women often lack the financial resources to gain travel documents for themselves and their families. Requirements to be accompanied by relatives who are men also complicated the application for passports and the travel, especially for single and widowed women. Many of those who succeeded to travel to neighbouring countries live in dire conditions while waiting for visas and are at risk of being deported back to Afghanistan.

17. Several Member States supported the evacuation and resettlement of thousands of Afghan women, including human rights defenders and former politicians, judges, journalists and others. For example, Canada has set up an Assistance to Women at Risk Programme for refugees, and others are prioritizing human rights defenders in asylum

applications. Some countries have reported that approximately half of evacuees and asylum grantees are women. However, many of them are still struggling to navigate bureaucracies and secure livelihoods and the ability to continue their work.

18. Practical measures to support human rights defenders and women's rights activists must include expediting and facilitating the approval of applications for asylum, temporary relocation, or protected status due to gender-related persecution, making rapid and flexible funding available for the protection of women peacebuilders and human rights defenders in emergency individual cases, and taking all measures necessary to enhance digital and physical security, in consultation with the affected individuals and civil society and tailored to the specific context and needs of the affected individual.

19. Above all, consistent, visible and explicit political support for activists and their work is a key factor in preventing attacks against them. Compromising on women's participation or visibility does not make them safer. The contrary is true: denying them space, access or funding because of safety concerns emboldens perpetrators and affirms their tactics.

III. Update on progress, gaps and challenges across the women and peace and security agenda: trends and emerging issues

A. Advancing gender equality and the meaningful participation of women in peace processes and political transitions

20. “[T]he modern history of the Sudan is littered with peace agreements that have failed because they excluded women”, stated the Regional Director of the Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa, Hala Al-Karib, during her 13 September 2021 briefing to the Security Council on the Sudan. “We must learn from our past mistakes, or else risk making them again.” Nearly all of the more than 200 women from civil society who have briefed the Security Council to date have made similar statements about women's exclusion and demand direct and formal participation in all stages of peace processes.

21. As recognized by the Secretary-General in his call to action for human rights, concrete measures are needed to overcome longstanding barriers and fast-track women's direct participation in peace and political processes. This requires concerted good faith efforts by the Special Envoys of the Secretary-General, Resident Coordinators, Advisers, Representatives, and their teams. It also includes actively engaging women's groups and women-led civil society organizations, integrating gender in political and conflict analysis, and putting specific measures in place to ensure women's equality in these processes.

22. High-level strategy meetings on designing and supporting inclusive processes continue to be organized by the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs. These meetings provide an opportunity to identify the measures with the most impact for each context and strengthen gender mainstreaming across mission work.⁴ For example, the United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan (UNITAMS) used their 2022 high-level strategy meeting to address the selection processes and representation of women in the next stage of the political process facilitated by UNITAMS.

⁴ See S/2019/800 and Security Council resolution 2493 (2019). In 2021, follow-up meetings were held on the Geneva International Discussion and Yemen and, in 2022, meetings were held on the Sudan and the Syrian Arab Republic.

23. In 2021, women participated as conflict party negotiators or delegates⁵ in all United Nations-led or co-led peace processes.⁶ However, women's representation stood at 19 per cent, compared with 23 per cent in 2020. In Cyprus, the Greek Cypriot leader and the Turkish Cypriot leader agreed on 15 January 2022 to "an action plan on ways to ensure women's full, equal and meaningful participation in the settlement process/an eventual settlement process". At the launch of this plan three months later, the leaders of both parties committed themselves to ensuring that at least 30 per cent of delegates in the technical committees will be women. Still, many obstacles remain. Civil society briefers to the Security Council have highlighted how men in power can in some cases actively undermine inclusion. In Yemen, the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General previously offered reserved, non-transferrable seats for Yemeni women. However, at that time, reserved seats were refused by the parties and there are still no women among the members of the committees formed as a result of the peace process. The absence of women was also evident in processes not led by the United Nations. For instance, in April 2022, there were no women among the nearly 30 delegates from armed groups from the Democratic Republic of the Congo participating in the Nairobi consultations. In the Chad peace talks in Doha in 2022 there was only one woman among over 50 participants.

24. The United Nations continued to take steps to lead by example. Along with a substantial overall increase in women leading missions' efforts to find political solutions to crises, women contributed as lead mediators in two of the five active United Nations led or co-led processes (the Geneva International Discussions and the Libyan dialogue). Women accounted for 43 per cent of the staff on United Nations mediation support teams in 2021.⁷ However, the promotion of gender equality is the responsibility of all staff and requires capacity to conduct quality gender analysis, both of which are essential to informing and making certain that gender equality initiatives are prioritized and supported across all stages of peace processes. In addition, transparent and routine engagement with women's organizations and feminist movements is key to mobilizing pressure for peace that prioritizes women's participation, protection and rights. In 2021, all five active United Nations-led or co-led peace processes consulted with civil society organizations and were provided with gender expertise. In Papua New Guinea, the President of the Bougainville Women's Federation was invited to join the Bougainville negotiation team for the United Nations-led peace talks.

25. Including women does not in itself ensure that gender issues are integrated into the process, so the United Nations is taking steps to provide gender expertise and strengthen the contributions of women's rights actors. In the Sudan, UNITAMS contributed to the formation of a five-woman observer team of gender experts and to their presence inside the 2021 negotiations between the transitional Government of the Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North Abdelaziz al-Hilu faction. The integration of gender issues was achieved by encouraging a minimum 40 per cent target in party delegations, as well as consulting, convening and ensuring the political participation of diverse women's rights advocates, as well as offering gender expertise to the Sudan mediation team. In addition to calling for women's participation in the delegations to the intra-Sudanese talks launched in May 2022, UNITAMS supported a process led by Sudanese women to form a stand-alone

⁵ In 2021, women were represented on 14 out of 18 conflict party delegations (77.8 per cent). This is compared with 8 out of 13 conflict parties in 2020 (61.5 per cent), 13 out of 27 delegations in 2019 (48.1 per cent), and 14 out of 19 delegations in 2018 (73.7 per cent).

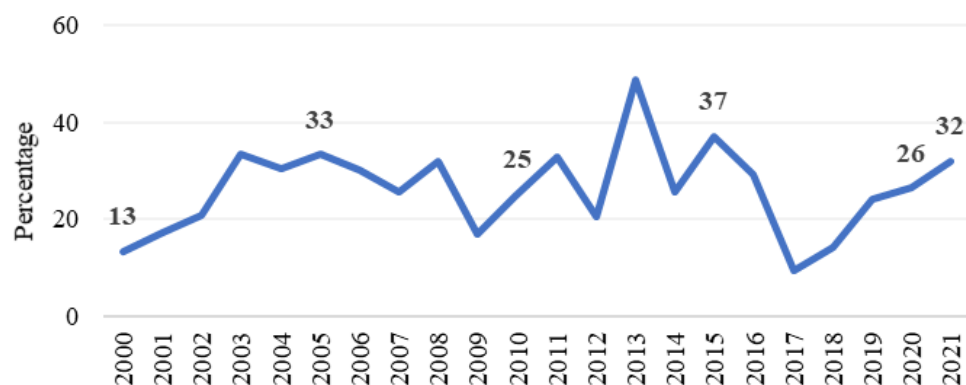
⁶ In 2021, the United Nations co-led five peace processes: Bougainville, Cyprus, Geneva International Discussions, Libya (Libyan Political Dialogue Forum and Joint Military Commission) and the Syrian Arab Republic (Constitutional Committee).

⁷ Since 2012, all United Nations mediation support teams have included women.

women's rights group comprised of 22 women from all regions of the Sudan to negotiate on the same footing as all other delegations. In Mali, the African Union and the United Nations supported women's engagement in regional mediation efforts during the political transition, including facilitating meetings between the African Women Leaders Network and the Heads of State of Ghana and Senegal that influenced subsequent decisions taken by the Economic Community of West African States.

26. In 2021, 8 out of 25 peace agreements (32 per cent) included provisions referencing women, girls and gender, an increase from 26 per cent in 2020 (figure I). This number is still barely above the average over the last two decades. There is also a broad range across the agreements in terms of comprehensiveness and issues raised. The stage or type of agreement, the involvement of the United Nations as a third-party, women's participation and civil society participation in peace processes, and conflict duration, all have an impact on the inclusion of gender references in peace agreements.⁸ Notably, in 2021, detailed gender provisions could be found in local agreements, such as the Lou Nuer-Dinka Bor-Murle Action for Peace agreement in Jonglei, South Sudan, where provisions seemed to be more contextually rooted in the community mediation processes preceding them. The Jonglei agreement also featured three women's representatives as signatories on behalf of their communities.⁹ The United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) supported women in Irumu territory in Ituri in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in their participation in the dialogue that resulted in a landmark local peace agreement between the Biru and the Hema communities.

Figure I
Percentage of peace agreements with provisions referencing women, girls and gender, 2000–2021



Source: PA-X Peace Agreements Database (2022). v. 6. University of Edinburgh, accessed June 2022.

27. The quality of a peace agreement is tested in its implementation and its potential to bring positive effects in people's everyday lives. Women's meaningful participation in the implementation phase, including in the design and work of dedicated mechanisms, is essential and needs to be advocated for more strongly. In Mali, on 2 September 2022, 15 additional women were appointed to the Agreement Monitoring

⁸ Laura Wise, "Peace agreements with a gender perspective are still an exception, not the rule", London School of Economics Women, Peace and Security blog, 18 June 2021; Agathe Christien, "What has happened to gender provisions in peace agreements?" Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security, 2 March 2020.

⁹ Laura Wise and Anna Asproni, "Gender Perspectives in peace agreements: time for a new approach?", 21 July 2022. Available at: <https://peacerep.org/2022/07/21/gender-perspectives-in-peace-agreements-new-approach/>.

Committee (Comité de suivi de l'Accord) (three women) and its subcommittees (12 women), increasing the percentage of women on the Committee from 31 to 38 per cent, after engagements by the Security Council, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) and Malian women's organizations. Such coordinated and joined-up advocacy should be standard practice in all United Nations supported processes.

28. Support by regional organizations and Member States for the equal and meaningful participation of women in peace processes has increased. Examples range from overt calls for women's representation and participation by lead actors engaged in mediating peace efforts, to the expansion of regional and national women's mediator networks and their engagement in conflict resolution efforts, to joined-up action by the Compact on Women, Peace and Security and Humanitarian Action and the Commitment 2025 initiative. However, women and local civil society organizations continue to face massive structural and practical barriers. The Women's Peace and Humanitarian Funds rapid response window on women's participation in peace processes and the implementation of peace agreements, which was established in direct response to the directives by the Secretary-General in 2019, provides a concrete tool for addressing some of those barriers. To date, the rapid response window has provided targeted and flexible support to 32 civil society organizations in countries such as Afghanistan, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Guatemala, Mali, South Sudan and the Syrian Arab Republic.

B. Gender-responsive peacekeeping and peace operations

29. The prioritization of the women and peace and security agenda in the Secretary-General's Action for Peacekeeping initiative and in mandates of peacekeeping operations is having a measurable impact, advanced through strong leadership and political advocacy coupled with increased gender expertise, analysis and data-driven accountability mechanisms. Women and peace and security is integrated across the Action for Peacekeeping Plus plan, the current implementation plan for the Action for Peacekeeping initiative.

30. The United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) contributed to increasing the representation of women in local peace and reconciliation committees from 21 per cent in 2020 to 34 per cent in 2021. In Mali, MINUSMA supported women's engagement in the political transition through women's situation rooms. Women played a central role in the national dialogue in December 2021. Consequently, the gender parity law was integrated in the revised electoral law in June 2022. The partnerships between the Missions and women's civil society organizations have been essential in creating such impact. In South Sudan, 48 per cent of participants in community-level peace negotiation activities supported by the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) were women.

31. To enhance the protection of women, MONUSCO supported women's participation in intercommunity dialogues through local networks of women and enhanced women's roles in community alert networks and local protection committees. Efforts to protect civilians by the Mission and local security forces became more gender-responsive when informed by women's mapping of threats and risks. The Mission's Corrections Unit supported the construction of women's wings in 9 of 11 priority prisons in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, with a focus on improving the health-care needs of women detainees. In Western Sahara, the Mine Action Service trained the Sahrawi Mine Action Women's Team, who in turn educated thousands of people on explosive ordnance risks and coronavirus disease (COVID-19) prevention. In South Sudan, UNMISS and partners facilitated the release, family tracing and

reunification of 36 women, 39 girls and 45 boys who were abducted because of intercommunal violence. In Abyei, the police component of the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA) set up a gender-based violence desk and appointed focal points in multiple locations, resulting in an 80 per cent increase in reports of gender-based violence. The mission continues to work with the Misseriya and Ngok Dinka communities to include more women in their decision-making mechanisms and engage the traditional chiefs to outlaw harmful traditional practices. Eleven women have been appointed to traditional courts in the Ngok Dinka community and one woman to the joint Misseriya and Ngok Dinka court in Amiet; women represent more than a quarter of volunteers in the 34 community protection committees. Their participation in peace conferences, however, remains at less than 10 per cent.

32. The United Nations continued to support the design of inclusive and gender-responsive disarmament, demobilization and reintegration processes and community violence reduction projects. Several peace operations established a minimum gender quota for beneficiaries of community violence reduction projects and promoted gender-sensitive eligibility criteria for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration processes. The percentage of women beneficiaries of community violence reduction and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration projects varies. In Mali, 50 per cent of the beneficiaries of community violence reduction projects were women, but only 23 per cent in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In Colombia, 74 per cent of women former combatants participate in productive projects, although they still face challenges related to a lack of inclusion in decision-making and an increasing caregiving burden.

33. Women's full, equal and meaningful participation across all operations improves mandate delivery. In the Occupied Palestinian Territory, a women-only explosive ordnance disposal team was dispatched to clear 30 sites, including emergency shelters, schools and medical centres following the airstrikes that took place during the escalation between Israel and militant factions in the Gaza Strip in May 2021. All but two schools were able to reopen within seven days of the ceasefire. In 2021, 60 per cent of staff recruited to implement Mine Action Service projects were women and the Chief of Operations in Mali is a woman, a historic first for the sector. In the Kivu regions of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the deployment of female engagement teams has facilitated communication between local populations and the Mission and led to better responses to conflict-related sexual violence. By reaching close to parity in deployments, the United Nations Volunteer programme has contributed to increased women's representation in peace operations. However, peacekeeping missions are not on track to reach parity by 2028 at all levels, and challenges in recruitment and retention of women persist.

34. Underrepresentation of women in the military component of multilateral operations remains stark. This underscores the importance of security sector reform efforts, from barriers assessments to gender quotas, reviews of human resources policies and recruitments, and repealing discriminatory laws. To address data gaps, the United Nations plans to develop a report on gender equality and the status of women in defence sectors around the world. In several contexts, United Nations missions continue to push for greater representation of women in the security forces of host countries. In the Central African Republic, women are now more than 25 per cent of the national police and almost 16 per cent of the gendarmerie. In Haiti, the representation of women in the police force increased by 21 per cent. However, women's representation in decision-making bodies that negotiate and implement provisions of peace agreements related to the security sector remains very low: less than 9 per cent in Mali, and no representation in Libya, to name a few. This imbalance has a profound effect in the institutional culture of security forces throughout the world.

C. Protecting and promoting the human rights and leadership of women and girls in conflict settings and humanitarian emergencies

35. The sharp deterioration of security is causing immense suffering to women and girls in conflict-affected countries. In Afghanistan, the number of people in need is expected to double in one year. Many families burn their possessions to stay warm during the winter nights and, in some cases, sell their girls to be married or trafficked in exchange for food. In Myanmar, after the coup, the number of people in need of humanitarian assistance and protection grew from 1 to 14.4 million, and half of the country's population is now below the poverty line. Sectors where women were the majority or had a prominent role, like the garment industry, the hospitality sector, and the civil service have been among the most impacted. Many girls have dropped out of school and may never return. The number of Sudanese facing acute hunger is expected to double this year and the growing humanitarian crisis is having a disproportionate toll on women, the majority of whom work in agriculture and the informal sector.

36. In Mali, gender-based violence cases increased by 40 per cent compared with 2020. In Burkina Faso, food insecurity was four times higher in 2021 than in 2020, and violence against women and girls has increased sharply. And as a result of the war in Ukraine, the largest movement of refugees in Europe since World War II is largely made up of women and children, and host countries and the international community are trying to address the elevated risks of trafficking and sexual exploitation, in addition to reproductive health-care needs. An estimated 265,000 women were pregnant in Ukraine in February 2022, and some of the first images of the war showed women giving birth in bomb shelters or being evacuated from maternity wards.

37. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the number of people experiencing acute food insecurity jumped from 15.6 million to 27 million in 2021. A third of United Nations-verified cases of conflict-related sexual violence in 2021 were documented there. Some 80 per cent of Syrians now require humanitarian assistance. Women and girls are especially affected by the water crisis across the north and northeast of the Syrian Arab Republic because they comprise 70 per cent of the agriculture workforce, and 25 per cent of Syrian households are headed by women, likelier to be food insecure or buy food on credit. More pregnant women are suffering from anaemia and malnutrition, and many babies die because there are not enough incubators or funding for nurses and midwives. Rates of child marriage, intimate partner violence, and even suicide among women and girls continued to increase. Globally, the proportion of women aged 20–24 years who were married or in a union before age 18 is 19.5 per cent.¹⁰ In some fragile and conflict-affected countries, like Chad or the Central African Republic, the rates of child marriage are three times higher than the world average.

38. In Yemen, pregnant women are unable to safely access emergency prenatal and maternal care, and one woman dies from childbirth every two hours from preventable causes. Yemeni women ration what they eat so that they can give more food to their children and are also most of the local first responders providing humanitarian aid to their communities, and yet face increasing mobility restrictions and requirements to be accompanied by a male relative, especially in the North. In Haiti, women make up approximately one third of victims of kidnappings in a recent wave of gang-related violence. The dire economic situation in Lebanon has plunged more than 82 per cent of the population into poverty. Among other things, birth control, contraception and

¹⁰ Data from 2021 or the most recent year for which data is available, source: Global Sustainable Development Goals Indicators Database, accessed July 2022.

screening tests have become too expensive for many young adults, leading to a wave of unwanted pregnancies, sexually transmitted infections and unsafe abortions.

39. Globally, 60 per cent of preventable maternal deaths take place in settings of conflict and displacement. Sexual and reproductive health and rights are fundamental to freedom of choice and the ability of women and girls to contribute to peace and security. Challenges against these rights are alarming because more restrictions and lack of access to reproductive health services will only lead to a rise in unsafe abortions, a leading cause of maternal death. In recent months, there have been steps backwards, but also forwards, as was the case in Colombia.

40. In 2021, the United Nations verified almost 3,300 cases of conflict-related sexual violence, 800 more than the previous year. The annual report of the Secretary-General on conflict-related sexual violence ([S/2022/272](#)) lists 49 parties credibly suspected of committing or being responsible for patterns of sexual violence in situations of armed conflict on the Security Council's agenda, and more than 70 per cent of them have appeared on this list for five or more years, without corrective action. The report of the Secretary-General documents the targeting of women in public life through sexual violence and threats as a strategy to silence, humiliate and discredit them, demonstrating the inextricable link between protection and participation. Eight years after the attack on Sinjar by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant¹¹ (Da'esh),¹² 200,000 Yazidis continue to live displaced in camps only hours away from their homeland, and 2,800 women and children remain in captivity, and the sale of Yazidi women still takes place online. In Libya, conflict-related sexual violence continued to be reported in detention centres, such as against five Somali girls in the Shara' al-Zawiyah detention centre in Tripoli, eventually released into the care of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) after persistent efforts by the United Nations. In South Sudan, hundreds of unidentified men attacked the Nuer refugee camp in Yei County in 2021, during which a health facility ran by a non-governmental organization was attacked and at least 19 women and girls were sexually assaulted in public and then brutally killed. In Ethiopia, many of the patterns observed by non-governmental organizations and a joint investigation by the United Nations and the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission show that these atrocities have been used as a tactic of war by parties to the armed conflict.

41. In 2022, a special report of the Secretary-General ([S/2022/77](#)) outlined the specific political, security and humanitarian challenges faced by survivors who become pregnant as a result of conflict-related sexual violence and by their children born of wartime rape. The challenges include discriminatory laws and harmful social norms, heightened vulnerability to conflict-driven trafficking, and the perceived association of pregnant women, survivors and their children with the enemy, which exacerbates stigma and endangers them. The report calls upon States to ensure women's equal rights with men in relation to the transmission of nationality to children, in line with article 9 of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), and to ensure comprehensive and quality multisectoral assistance for survivors of sexual violence, including regarding the safe termination of pregnancies resulting from rape and other sexual and reproductive health rights.

42. Rape and other forms of sexual violence against children in conflict settings increased by 20 per cent in 2021, with 98 per cent of survivors being girls. This was part of a worrisome trend of rising violations against girls in general, and not just sexual violence, but also abductions, killing and maiming. In 2021, one in three child victims was a girl. Barely a year earlier, the proportion was one in four ([S/2022/493](#)).

¹¹ Listed as Al-Qaida in Iraq (QDe.115).

¹² In line with General Assembly resolution [75/291](#).

43. Against this backdrop, the work of the United Nations and humanitarian partners in addressing the urgent health, economic, education and social welfare challenges facing women and girls, in all their diversity, is more critical now than ever. Ensuring that women and girls have immediate access to sexual and reproductive health care and gender-based violence prevention and response services requires both funding and political support. Such support is also essential to prioritize female-headed households and pregnant and breastfeeding women for food, cash and voucher assistance, and other direct aid. Access to vital services is not just insufficient, but directly affected by conflicts. In Ukraine, prior to 24 February 2022, 20 medical service delivery points and maternity hospitals were providing assistance to gender-based violence survivors, with the support of the United Nations Population Fund. Less than two months later, only nine such facilities were operational, owing to the damage from hostilities and staffing shortages.

44. A greater investment in local women's organizations in humanitarian responses, and a serious commitment to women's participation in decision-making, and not just service delivery, are crucial. From 2020 to 2021, there was a decrease in the participation of women in leadership and management structures in contexts involving refugees and internally displaced persons. However, increased engagement of local women-led organizations was reported in humanitarian planning in several contexts, including the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Ethiopia, Iraq, Yemen, Myanmar and the Syrian Arab Republic. Following the Taliban takeover in Afghanistan, the first United Nations senior official to meet with the de facto authorities was the Emergency Relief Coordinator, who insisted that women humanitarian workers needed to be allowed to operate and move freely, a demand that has been repeated in subsequent Security Council resolutions and statements.¹³ To address this, the humanitarian country team in Afghanistan set up a Women's Advisory Group for Afghan women in order to provide context-specific guidance. Similar access issues are also present in many other humanitarian emergencies. In Yemen, the Houthis (who also call themselves Ansar Allah) interfere with humanitarian aid distribution, including attempts to change beneficiary lists, determine geographic locations, or influence the selection of partners, which often affects women and girls' access to aid. This makes it even more important that women-led organizations have clear roles in the humanitarian cluster service and consistent participation in community-driven and bottom-up approaches. In 2021, only 9 per cent of all partners receiving funding from country-based pooled funds were women-led organizations. This was an improvement from previous years, but more needs to be done in this area.

D. Disarmament and arms control

45. Over the past year the links between the disarmament and women and peace and security communities was strengthened in response to skyrocketing military spending at the expense of human security. The risk of a nuclear weapon being used is now higher than it has been in three decades and, once again, the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference failed to reach agreement in August 2022. Cyberspace and outer space are emerging as possible domains of conflict, concerns about biological and chemical weapons use are heightened, and increasing autonomy in weapon systems are posing new challenges, which are rarely discussed or handled with sufficient gender analysis.

¹³ See, for example, Security Council Press Statement on Situation in Afghanistan of 24 May 2022 (SC/14902).

46. The Arms Trade Treaty obliges States parties to conduct an assessment that considers the risk of exported conventional arms being used in serious acts of gender-based violence before authorizing the export of such arms and their ammunition.¹⁴ However, there is a lack of data on States' application of the risk assessment criteria. Opposition to the inclusion of gender language in disarmament forums and national plans and policies persists, with some Member States arguing against it. Nevertheless, disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control bodies, such as the Seventh and Eighth Biennial Meetings of States on the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat, and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All its Aspects, have produced outcomes with progressive language on gender underlining the linkages with the women and peace and security agenda. The latest reporting on the implementation of the Programme of Action shows that 62 per cent of States that responded to gender-related questions indicate that gender considerations have been included in policymaking, planning and implementation processes.¹⁵

47. Currently, less than half of all national action plans on women and peace and security include specific actions on this issue, despite its importance for the realization of the women and peace and security agenda. Of the 13 States launching new national action plans in 2021, only France, Germany, Mexico, Kazakhstan and Uganda referenced disarmament, non-proliferation or arms control.¹⁶

48. In multilateral disarmament forums, wide gaps persist. For instance, only one in four of delegates taking the floor to speak at First Committee (Disarmament and International Security) meetings during the seventy-sixth session of the General Assembly women. The High Representative for Disarmament Affairs launched an updated gender policy (2021–2025) for the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs and consistently advocates for gender parity and inclusivity in multilateral forums, expert groups and panels. Women remain grossly underrepresented in many weapons-related fields, including technical arms control,¹⁷ and only 12 per cent of Ministers of Defence globally are women.¹⁸

E. Political participation and representation

49. Balanced political participation and power-sharing between women and men in decision-making is an internationally agreed goal, a human right and a priority firmly established in Our Common Agenda. However, the achievement of gender parity in elected and appointed positions globally remains far off-track, with progress impacted by structural barriers, systemic discrimination and a lack of political will. In several countries, military actors and violent extremist groups have taken power by force, threatening women's rights and progress on gender equality. Alarming, violence and attacks on women in public life are on the rise.¹⁹ The Independent Fact-Finding

¹⁴ Arms Trade Treaty, article 7.4.

¹⁵ United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs, Global implementation status of the Programme of Action. Available at: <https://smallarms.un-arm.org/statistics>.

¹⁶ WPS Focal Points Network, Global map of adopted national action plans. Available at: <https://wpsfocalpointnetwork.org/resources/>.

¹⁷ Hana Salama and Emma Bjertén-Günther, Women Managing Weapons: Perspectives for Increasing Women's Meaningful Participation in Weapons and Ammunition Management (Geneva, United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR), 2021).

¹⁸ United Nations Security Sector Reform Unit. Database on women in positions of Ministers of Defence. 2021. Database produced based on publicly available information.

¹⁹ See, for example, Sam Jones, "Violence targeting women in politics on the rise, new ACLED data show", 8 December 2021, ACLED; Inter-Parliamentary Union, "Widespread sexism and violence against women in African parliaments according to new IPU report", 23 November 2021.

Mission on Libya dedicated an entire section of its March 2022 report²⁰ to the string of assassinations, kidnappings and attacks against women politicians and activists and the chilling effect on their participation in public life. Earlier this year, the Minister of State for Women's Affairs of Libya was subjected to threats and widespread hate speech.

50. Data on women's political participation and representation show little change. Women comprise 26 per cent of parliamentarians worldwide and 21 per cent in conflict-affected and post-conflict countries. Women's representation in local positions is higher than at the national level, with women holding 34 per cent of elected seats in local deliberative bodies globally and 22 per cent in conflict-affected and post-conflict countries. As at July 2022, women were Heads of State or Government in only 27 countries.

51. Temporary special measures, including gender quotas, remain the most effective tool to increase or maintain the share of women candidates and elected officials. In conflict-affected and post-conflict countries with legislated gender quotas, women's representation in parliament stands at 24 per cent, compared with less than 18 per cent in countries where quotas have not been introduced. At the local level, where legislated gender quotas have been introduced, women's representation is 27 per cent compared with 11 per cent in countries without quotas. The United Nations is making more systematic efforts to encourage Member States to use temporary special measures to promote the political participation of women in line with the call to action for human rights made by the Secretary-General. These quotas are often not met, as seen in settings such as the Central African Republic or Somalia, in spite of significant efforts by both civil society and the United Nations. However, when properly implemented, they can be instrumental in driving significant change, such as the increased representation obtained by Colombian and Iraqi women in the latest elections. While none of the five bills proposing gender quotas in Lebanon for the 2022 parliamentary elections were adopted, those proposals show some momentum for increased participation of women in public life: three political parties have now adopted internal quotas.

52. Measures such as targeted appointments continue to be underutilized to advance women's representation in executive government positions. Women account for only 22 per cent of ministers globally and 18 per cent in conflict and post-conflict countries. Similar trends are observed for Government-mandated task forces to address high-priority issues. For example, in conflict-affected countries with COVID-19 task forces, women made up only 16 per cent of members.²¹ This overall lack of representation at the national level is mirrored across the decision-making tables of intergovernmental bodies; for instance, only 26 women permanent representatives have served on the Security Council between 1946 and 2022.²²

53. An evaluation of peace operations' support to electoral processes and political transitions²³ found that structural barriers systematically hinder women's equal participation in public and political life, deterring them from turning out to vote, or running successful campaigns. Insecurity and political violence targeting women trended upwards or remained high, including around elections, despite growing efforts to prevent and respond to threats. Notably, the evaluation found that the presence of participation activities focused on women and peace and security-focused

²⁰ https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2022-03/A_HRC_49_4_AUV.pdf.

²¹ United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), COVID-19 Global Gender Response Tracker database, available at <https://data.undp.org/gendert tracker/>.

²² Data collected by <https://www.scprocedure.org>.

²³ Office of Internal Oversight Services, Inspection and Evaluations Reports.

have a positive and statistically significant effect on women's candidacy rates. Several countries were supported by peace operations to prevent and respond to gender-based electoral violence. In Iraq, ahead of the 2021 elections, the United Nations supported the development of a new electoral code of conduct that addressed defamation and gender-based violence targeting women candidates and supported efforts to counter gender-based violence and hate speech during the election campaign, including establishing hotlines, assigning a dedicated judge to address incidents, criminalizing cyberattacks and providing protection for women candidates.

F. Economic recovery and access to resources

54. Women's inclusion in economic recovery is an essential element in the pursuit of peace and prosperity. Governments, international financial institutions and the private sector have all heard often-cited statistics about the multi-trillion-dollar impact that the gender gap in the workforce or the costs of violence and discrimination against women have on gross domestic product (GDP). And yet, this problem persists and has widened with the pandemic. In 2022, for every 100 men aged 25–35, 124 women are living in extreme poverty.

55. In Afghanistan, women's employment has plummeted since the Taliban takeover, resulting in an immediate loss of up to 5 per cent of Afghanistan's GDP. In Yemen, estimates indicate that empowering women, and in particular closing gender gaps in the workforce and in education, would have one of the highest impacts on the economy, improving GDP per capita by nearly 30 per cent by 2050. And yet, the rate of women's participation sits at a staggeringly low rate of less than 10 per cent, few Yemeni women have a bank account, and armed actors continue to enforce restrictions on their movement and activities. In Haiti, where more than 45 per cent of households are headed by women, 24 per cent of women lost their job after the COVID-19 pandemic started, compared with 15 per cent of men. Efforts to restart economies after war continue to be dominated by extractive industries, and large reconstruction programmes privilege sectors dominated by men.

56. Some initiatives are aiming to reverse those trends. In Colombia, women represent a significant share of the participants in programmes for substitution of illicit crops and the distribution of rural property titles in the context of the implementation of the peace agreement. Support from the Peacebuilding Fund has helped increase the number of women in land commissions in the regions of Dosso and Maradi in the Niger. In Iraq, banks reserve 25 per cent of business loans for women entrepreneurs, and Nepal provides women with tax exemptions in property ownership and free or low interest loans. In South Sudan, the World Bank announced a 70 million dollar grant for funding social and economic empowerment programmes related to women and girls.

G. Rule of law and women's access to justice

57. Two decades after the kidnapping and sexual abuse of Colombian journalist Jineeth Bedoya, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights issued a landmark ruling, finding Colombia responsible for her abduction, rape and torture in 2000. The Court ordered the Government to investigate, prosecute and punish those responsible and to protect all women journalists. The case exemplifies how national, regional and international human rights institutions form an important pathway to justice, truth and reparations for women and girls affected by conflict-related violations.

58. At the national level, in 2021, 70 per cent of conflict-affected countries reviewed had national human rights institutions fully or partially in compliance with the Paris

Principles. Less than one third of such institutions are led by women. At the international level, investigations mandated by the Human Rights Council all benefitted from dedicated expertise on sexual and gender-based violence and gender analysis of human rights violations, through a partnership between UN-Women, OHCHR and the non-governmental organization Justice Rapid Response.

59. During the reporting period, there were noteworthy steps toward criminal justice for crimes and violations against women and girls in conflict-affected contexts. A German court convicted Anwar R., a former senior official in the Syrian Intelligence Service, to a life sentence, as he was found guilty of co-perpetrating crimes against humanity, including torture, rape and aggravated sexual violence.²⁴ Another German court issued the first-ever conviction of a member of Da'esh for the crime of genocide. This conviction was based on the case of a five-year old Yazidi girl who had been enslaved and bought alongside her mother and then left to die chained up in 50-degree heat in Fallujah.²⁵ In Guatemala, a court convicted five former members of the paramilitary patrols of domestic slavery, rape and other forms of sexual violence committed against indigenous Maya Achí women in the early 1980s. The court also issued 12 individual and collective reparation measures, including economic compensation for the victims, setting up of health clinics in the survivors' communities and a public apology by the Minister of Defence.²⁶ In South Sudan, with United Nations support, the first specialized court on sexual and gender-based violence was inaugurated. To promote accountability, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict launched the Model Legislative Provisions and Guidance on the Investigation and Prosecution of Conflict-Related Sexual Violence.²⁷ UN-Women also produced a toolkit on identifying gender persecution in conflict and atrocities for documenters, investigators and adjudicators.²⁸

60. Women play a critical role in shaping rule of law institutions, whether as decision makers, as justice advocates, or as victim-survivors accessing justice. In November 2021, Hilary Charlesworth was elected to fill a vacancy in the International Court of Justice and became the fifth woman ever to hold that position out of 110 judges over the past 76 years. The leadership of victim-survivors in justice processes can be particularly powerful. In Guatemala, the role played by indigenous women in the Sepur Zarco case inspired other women to come forward and begin the journey to justice. In the Gambia, the testimony of Toufah Jallow in the country's Truth, Reconciliation and Reparations Commission, about her experience of sexual violence at the hands of the former president, sparked a nationwide movement to address violence against women and girls. Colombian women played a huge part in the successful conclusion of the work of the truth commission in June 2022 with a historic report that includes a specific chapter on women and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer persons.

61. Between 1 May 2020 and 31 December 2021, more than 36,000 women were able to access justice across 12 countries under a partnership between the United

²⁴ United Nations News, "Conviction of top Syrian intelligence official 'a landmark leap forward'", 13 January 2022.

²⁵ Relief Web, "UNITAD Special Adviser Christian Ritscher welcomes landmark genocide conviction of ISIL member", 30 November 2021.

²⁶ Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, "UN Special Representative Pramila Patten Welcomes Landmark Sexual Violence Verdict in Guatemala".

²⁷ Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, "Model Legislative Provisions and Guidance on the Investigation and Prosecution of Conflict-Related Sexual Violence", 18 June 2021.

²⁸ "Identifying gender persecution in conflict and atrocities: a toolkit for documenters, investigators, prosecutors and adjudicators of crimes against humanity", December 2021, UN-Women, Human Rights and Gender Justice Clinic City University of New York, Madre.

Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and UN-Women. The United Nations Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict provided direct support to Member States to close the accountability gap, including through missions to the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Libya. Joint United Nations programmes in conflict-affected countries have also sought to address the gender-justice gap. For example, the Somalia Joint Justice Programme supported the establishment of alternative dispute resolution centres to increase access to justice for women from marginalized groups.

H. Preventing and countering terrorism and violent extremism

62. The significant link between misogyny and terrorism or violent extremism is still often overlooked by policy responses. Misogyny is integral to the ideology and political identity of most terrorist and violent extremist groups and individuals, and it is manifested in their propaganda, recruitment tactics, and often their victims. In the northern Cabo Delgado province of Mozambique, more than 600 women and girls have been abducted by armed groups linked to Da'esh since 2018, with some released after the payment of ransom and some rescued by Mozambican and regional forces, and the remaining still missing, most likely sexually enslaved by the groups' members.²⁹ Terrorist and violent extremist groups continue to be very active in central and northern Mali, often imposing rules affecting women and using threats and terror tactics to enforce them; tactics include abducting and raping women or killing fathers refusing to give their daughters to their fighters in exchange for protection. Apart from persecuting politically active women, the Houthis (who also call themselves Ansar Allah) in Yemen have arrested and raped women who refused to attend their indoctrination courses and have detained and tortured people based on their sexual orientation and gender identity.

63. The growing counterterrorism infrastructure and legislation are, however, often used against women's civil society organizations, human rights defenders and journalists. Since 2019, the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism has intervened in over 119 cases in 20 countries on behalf of women human rights defenders targeted under the guise of counterterrorism. Between 2001 and 2018, 140 countries adopted counter-terrorism legislation. Fifty-eight per cent of prosecutions against human rights defenders in those countries were charged under such legislation (A/HRC/40/52). In October 2021, the Government of Israel designated six Palestinian organizations as terrorist organizations under the Counterterrorism Law of 2016, including the Union of Palestinian Women's Committees. In November 2021, several United Nations special procedures wrote to the Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to express concern around the alleged impact of a package of regulations targeting the registration, control and funding of the civil society sector, including under the guise of countering the financing of terrorism and the particular impact on women's organizations. In most of its resolutions related to counterterrorism, the Security Council reaffirms that Member States must ensure that any measures taken to combat terrorism comply with all their obligations under international law, in particular international human rights law, international refugee law and international humanitarian law.

²⁹ Human Rights Watch, "Mozambique: hundreds of women, girls abducted", 7 December 2021.

I. Climate change and its implications on peace and security

64. There is growing awareness that women and girls are distinctly and disproportionately impacted by the greatest threat of our time: the climate crisis.³⁰ The sixty-sixth session of the Commission on the Status of Women recognized “the disproportionate impacts of climate change, environmental degradation and disasters on all women and girls who are in conflict and post-conflict settings and humanitarian emergencies”.³¹

65. The United Nations has improved its capacity for assessing and addressing differentiated risks associated with climate change and insecurity. An interdisciplinary online course³² was launched this year providing open-source guidance for conducting analysis and designing programmes that place gender equality at the centre of climate action and peacebuilding.

66. Continued efforts are needed to transform awareness and knowledge into collective and urgent action. Research shows that extremely fragile states receive an average of 2.1 dollars per person in climate financing compared with 161.7 dollars in non-fragile States.³³ An even smaller amount of those funds reach women. Mainstreaming gender into climate security offers entry points for the Green Climate Fund, the Global Environment Facility, the Climate Investment Funds and the Adaptation Fund to achieve a greater impact through gender-responsive financing in fragile contexts.

67. Women’s organizations and networks are increasingly integrating climate risk analysis into their work. Local feminist groups in the Pacific, for instance, provide guidance to the Pacific Climate Security Network, which helps policymakers identify, assess and address regional and national climate security risks. Increased support to local organizations is needed to ensure such knowledge and expertise informs relevant policies, plans and programming.

68. Violence against environmental activists is deeply concerning. Many environmental defenders are also indigenous peoples, or members of local communities or minority groups. The 2021 sentencing of a former president of an internationally-financed hydroelectric company, Desa, for his role in the murder of Berta Cáceres, an indigenous environmentalist from Honduras, was an important albeit rare moment of accountability. The United Nations must do more to support the work of environmental defenders in fragile settings. For example, the United Nations Environmental Programme, UN-Women and other partners provided support to women environmental defenders protecting the Atrato River – a lifeline for local communities in the Department of Chocó in Colombia – from pollution and misuse.

69. A sustainable transition away from fossil fuels is our next great challenge. Transition strategies, policies and regulations offer an opportunity – and indeed an imperative – to address social injustice, marginalization and conflict long associated with energy extraction. Women’s meaningful participation in all levels of decision-making, including the design and implementation of energy transition plans, is essential to achieving a peaceful, just and inclusive future.

³⁰ Adrien Detges and others, *10 Insights on Climate Impacts and Peace: A Summary of What We Know* (Adelphi and Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research, 2020).

³¹ [E/CN.6/2022/L.7](https://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2022/20220617.unwomens66th.html).

³² Open online course on gender and environment. Available at: <https://unccelearn.org/course/view.php?id=39&page=overview>.

³³ UNDP, “Climate finance for sustaining peace: making climate finance work for conflict-affected and fragile contexts”, 2021, New York.

IV. Action to realize women and peace and security commitments

A. Planning for action and monitoring results at the national and regional levels

70. National action plans continued to be a critical tool for countries to prioritize women, peace and security in national and foreign policy. Seventeen years after the Security Council first called for them, over 100 countries and territories have adopted a national action plan.³⁴ Kazakhstan, Malawi, Mexico, Peru and the United Arab Emirates adopted their first action plans in 2021 and Morocco and Uruguay in 2022, bringing the number up to 103. Several countries renewed expired plans and more States have recognized the importance of addressing multiple forms of discrimination, including minority, indigenous and migrant rights, in their plans.

71. Action plans should be more streamlined with other plans, policies and strategies that address peace and security and women's human rights. The 91-member Women and Peace and Security Focal Points Network, which held its annual meeting in Geneva in May, with Switzerland and South Africa as co-chairs, issued a joint communiqué³⁵ which recognized “the need to establish synergy with plans and strategies that address emergency and humanitarian response, refugees and internally displaced persons, climate change, youth, peace and security, countering all forms of extremism and radicalization, issues of trafficking, the gendered impacts of small arms and light weapons, and gender-responsive early-warning systems”. Similarly, feminist foreign policies should advance the implementation of women and peace and security priorities and show clear linkages with national action plans. Nine countries, namely Canada, Chile, France, Germany, Luxembourg, Mexico, the Netherlands, Spain and Sweden, have developed or announced a feminist foreign policy.

72. Although 85 per cent of national action plans include a monitoring framework with indicators, assessing and capturing the impact of their implementation remains a weakness for most plans. Several still track progress only at the activity level, rather than at the level of impact and outcomes.³⁶ There is a need to integrate impact indicators in monitoring frameworks and strengthen capacity for data collection, monitoring and reporting to promote accountability. The success of national action plans and feminist policies must be measured by the impact that they have on the well-being of all women and girls, which is a powerful measure for overall societal health and the peacefulness of States and communities.

73. Regional organizations can play an important role in strengthening monitoring and reporting on women and peace and security commitments. Twelve regional and sub-regional organizations have action plans and strategies on women and peace and security with the Association of Southeast Nations expected to follow suit. The Office of the Special Envoy of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission on Women, Peace and Security provides technical and capacity building support to member States of the African Union to monitor progress in the region using the African Union Continental Results Framework. At the local level, UN-Women and civil society organizations, such as the Global Network of Women Peacebuilders and Coalition for Action on 1325, have continued to support the development of local action plans to localize global and national policies and commitments on women, peace and security.

³⁴ WPS Focal Points Network, Global map of adopted national action plans. Available at: <https://wpsfocalpointsnetwork.org/resources/>.

³⁵ The joint communiqué is available at: <https://wpsfocalpointsnetwork.org/geneva-meeting/>.

³⁶ UN-Women, *Corporate evaluation of UN-Women's support to national action plans on women, peace and security*, 2021.

74. July 2022 marked the first year of the implementation for the Generation Equality Action Coalitions and the Compact on Women, Peace and Security and Humanitarian Action. As at 30 September 2022, 184 signatories³⁷ have joined the Compact's mission. Its monitoring framework will keep the pulse on the rate of progress and provide a tool to identify opportunities for collaboration and joint action on issues and areas where gaps and challenges are evident.

75. Commitments, policy tools and coordination mechanisms must be fully activated when gender equality and women's human rights are at risk. This is where the test of their effectiveness lies. Human rights mechanisms can further enhance accountability, including by monitoring of threats and attacks against women human rights defenders in conflict and crisis affected settings. In 2021, several States reported and received recommendations on implementation in the context of the universal periodic review as well as their fulfilment of obligations under CEDAW, including general recommendation No. 30 on women in conflict prevention, conflict and post-conflict situations.

B. Leadership, coordination and accountability within the United Nations

76. The United Nations remains committed to delivering on the Secretary-General's 2019 directives and 2020 forward-looking goals on women and peace and security for the decade (S/2019/800 and S/2020/946). Foundational to this are efforts to bolster the underlying means of implementation, including: capacity for gender analysis and data collection, gender-responsive planning, technical gender expertise, commitment to parity, adequate resourcing and strong partnerships, including with women's civil society organizations.

77. Through the Secretary-General's internal decision-making bodies, additional decision-points have been adopted to operationalize the directives and other gender equality commitments. It was decided that a demonstrated track record on gender equality would be a requirement for those appointed as heads or deputy heads of missions. All senior leaders of peacekeeping and special political missions are, through their compacts, expected to promote and monitor the implementation of women and peace and security resolutions and integrate a gender perspective in all activities. Many United Nations entities launched new strategic plans, and several strengthened commitments to gender equality and the women and peace and security agenda with stronger indicators to track progress. These measures will result in action in areas where progress has been uneven, including the consistency and depth of gender analysis, efforts to meaningfully engage, consult and partner with diverse women's human rights actors and peacebuilders and the implementation of gender markers and financial benchmarks.

78. In follow-up to the 2019 directives and their compacts with the Secretary-General, more senior leaders are taking a stronger stance on the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda. For instance, upon taking office in 2021, the Head of MONUSCO reinforced the implementation of gender markers, convened a townhall meeting on the Mission's implementation of gender equality and women and peace and security commitments and established a platform for exchange with women's civil society organizations. In line with the 2019 directives, the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and the Department of Peace Operations are integrating United Nations system-wide and context-specific key messages on fast-tracking women's participation in peace and political processes into statements and

³⁷ <https://wpshcompact.org/signatory-members/>.

messaging by senior leadership. More work is needed, however, to ensure a system-wide approach by all senior leaders and to strengthen the quality of these messages. For example, while senior leaders routinely mention the existence of consultations with women's civil society groups, few provide a substantive update on those discussions or their outcomes in official reporting.

79. In its first-ever stand-alone resolution on United Nations transitions,³⁸ the Security Council requested the Secretary-General to ensure that women's full, equal, and meaningful participation, technical gender expertise, and a comprehensive gender analysis are included throughout all stages of mission planning, mandate implementation and review, and throughout the transition process. The new transition plan for MONUSCO is a good example, with a specific women and peace and security benchmark, and 40 per cent of the 83 indicators relating to gender issues. The mission leadership's engagement with women leaders was crucial to achieving this outcome.

80. The Peacebuilding Commission is advancing the implementation of its gender strategy with progress tracked through its action plan. In 2021, 20 out of 37 (54 per cent) meetings of the Peacebuilding Commission were informed by briefings from women peacebuilders.³⁹ In 2021, all three Peacebuilding Fund country eligibility packages integrated gender-responsive conflict analysis, compared with four out of five in 2020.

81. Effective implementation requires dedicated staff capacity and technical expertise. Of the 12 peacekeeping missions, 8⁴⁰ have gender units, with a total of 52 gender advisors and officers, but only 4⁴¹ hold positions at the senior level (P-5). Of five gender advisor posts vacant in peacekeeping missions in 2021, four had been filled by February 2022. Six⁴² of the heads of the gender units report directly to the Head of Mission, enabling strategic women and peace and security consideration in planning processes and political strategies. The number of both military and police gender experts and focal points increased in 2021. Across 20 special political missions, there were 148 staff engaged in providing gender expertise and support, including 31 full-time gender advisers. Seven special political missions had a senior gender adviser at the P-5 level, most of whom were funded through the regular budget. Among seven vacant posts of gender advisors or women's protection advisers in special political missions in 2021, four posts⁴³ remained unfilled as of July 2022. The Gender Standby Capacity Project of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee delivered 22 deployments of senior gender advisors to improve humanitarian responses. In 2021, UN-Women supported the implementation of women, peace and security focused initiatives in 76 countries across six regional settings and contributed to gender-responsive conflict analysis and rapid gender assessments in several conflict and humanitarian settings.

82. Challenges remain in mobilizing the required resources needed for senior gender advisers and gender affairs officers, as well as specific technical expertise such as data analysts. Some peacekeeping and special political missions have managed to close capacity gaps through extra-budgetary funded positions⁴⁴ or through gratis/seconded personnel.⁴⁵ However, these are often short-term solutions. Similar

³⁸ Security Council resolution 2594 (2021).

³⁹ https://www.un.org/peacebuilding/sites/www.un.org.peacebuilding/files/documents/2021_pbc_gender_strategy_and_action_plan_written_update_0.pdf.

⁴⁰ UNMISS, MINUSMA, MINUSCA, MONUSCO, United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), UNISFA, UNIFIL, and United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP).

⁴¹ MINUSCA, MINUSMA, MONUSCO and UNMISS.

⁴² MINUSMA, MINUSCA, MONUSCO, UNFICYP, UNMIK and UNIFIL.

⁴³ UNAMA, UNSMIL, UNSOM and UNMHA.

⁴⁴ MINUSCA and MINUSMA.

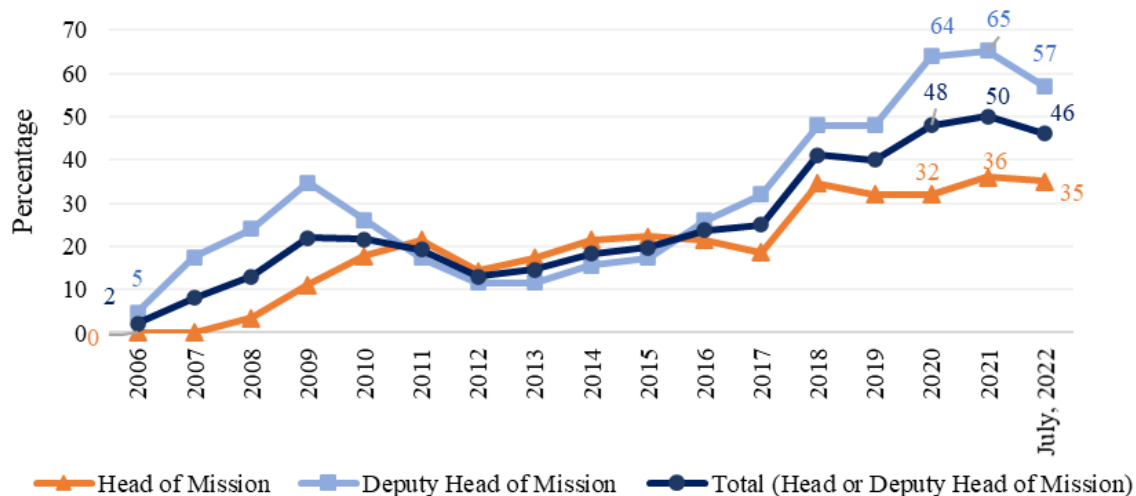
⁴⁵ MINUSMA and MONUSCO.

experiences are reported in the deployment of women's protection advisers,⁴⁶ and many other entities report challenges in securing adequate support for dedicated expertise, including specialists in gender-based violence prevention, and risk mitigation and response in humanitarian crises.

83. The United Nations remains fully committed to reach parity goals across the system. Significant progress has been made in women's leadership in the field. By July 2022, almost half of senior leadership positions were encumbered by women, though their representation was higher as Deputy Head of Mission (57 per cent) than as Head of Mission (35 per cent) (figure II). The disparity at Head of Mission level is higher in peacekeeping where the four military-led missions are all led by men. Women were leading 6 out of 13 special political missions (46 per cent) and two women were serving as Special/Deputy Special Envoy in December 2021. Among resident coordinators, 51 per cent are women, including 53 per cent in conflict-affected countries. However, currently only 32 per cent of civilian personnel at all levels in peacekeeping operations are women, and in some Missions women represent just one quarter of international staff.⁴⁷ This remains the Organization's widest gap to reach parity.

Figure II

Representation of women in United Nations mission leadership as a percentage of total posts, 2006–July 2022



Source: Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and Department of Peace Operations, August 2022.

Note: Given the small number of Head or Deputy Head of Mission positions, each appointment and departure of a senior leader significantly affects the gender statistics.

84. Since the adoption of the uniformed gender parity strategy 2018–2028, and as of 31 December 2021, the proportion of women staff officers and military experts on mission has increased from 12.3 to 19.8 per cent, the proportion of women individual police officers has increased from 22.3 to 30 per cent, and the proportion of women justice and corrections government-provided personnel has increased from 25 to 42 per cent (see figure III). Parity has also been reached among heads of police components. The progress reached in these categories is the result of many proactive measures taken by the United Nations and Member States. For example, the Police

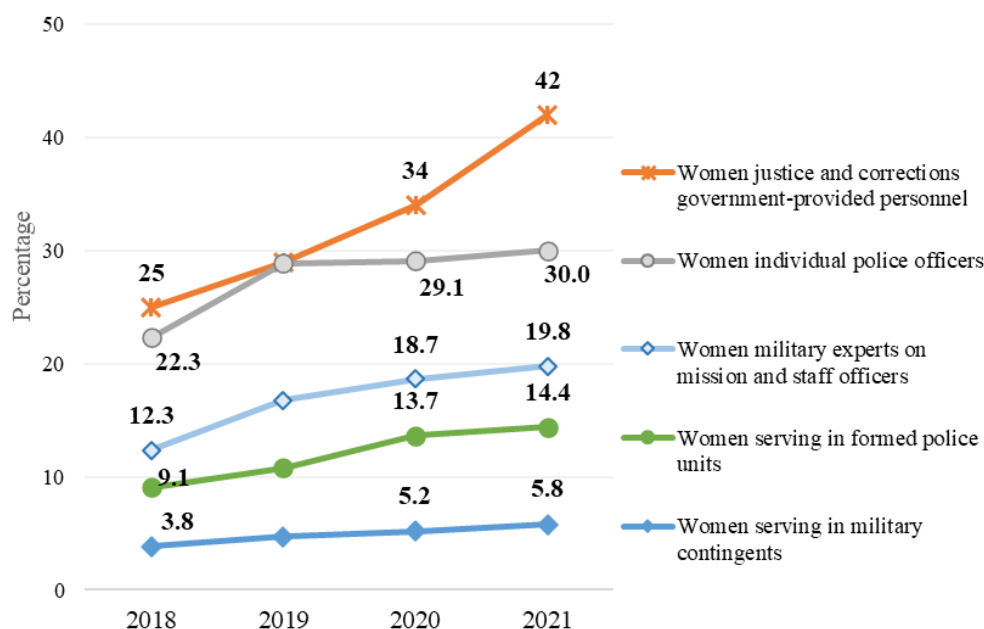
⁴⁶ Women's Protection Advisers are currently deployed in MINUSCA, MINUSMA, MONUSCO, United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), UNITAMS, UNMISS and UNSOM.

⁴⁷ United Nations, United Nations Secretariat Gender Parity Dashboard. Available at: <https://www.un.org/gender/content/un-secretariat-gender-parity-dashboard>.

Division now requires an assessment for mission service to be approved only when a Member State nominates women to make up at least 25 per cent of the candidates for the assessment. There is still a stark underrepresentation of women in military contingents, where women currently constitute only 5.8 per cent of troops. The United Nations has focused on creating an enabling environment conducive to gender equality, for example, through improved and gender-sensitive accommodations, training and guidance on addressing gender bias in peace operations, and surveys to identify the barriers faced by women during their deployment.

Figure III

Proportion of women in military and police personnel by type of position, and justice and corrections government-provided personnel in United Nations peacekeeping missions, December 2018–2021



Source: Department of Peace Operations, data accessed June 2022.

85. The Elsie Initiative Fund for Uniformed Women in Peace Operations helps accelerate the pace of progress. In 2021, the Fund approved 10 projects amounting to \$4.5 million from seven troop- and police-contributing countries and one United Nations peace operation. Some of the projects involve the deployment of “gender-strong” units, in which the number of women deployed is five percentage points above the targets set in the uniformed gender parity strategy. A grant to the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) allowed the mission to add women-specific accommodation buildings, bathrooms and a welfare area, while incentivizing troop-contributing countries to deploy more women.

86. The call to action for human rights made by the Secretary-General, Our Common Agenda and the upcoming independent review of the United Nations system’s capacity to deliver on gender equality as a core priority for all entities provide an opportunity to build on and scale up good practice and to ensure the system is fit for purpose, in particular when gender equality and women’s human rights are put at risk.

C. Financing for the women and peace and security agenda

87. Financing for prevention, peacebuilding and gender equality matters now more than ever. The deteriorating global security context coupled with the challenging global economic conditions precipitated by the COVID-19 pandemic have deepened inequalities and heightened instability. In this context, it is vital that all those committed to the realization of global goals regarding peace, development and gender equality find urgent and innovative solutions to address the funding shortfalls. It is deeply troubling that investments in weaponized security are growing while investments in human security, sustainable development, the realization of basic human rights and the protection of our planet are shrinking.

88. Contrary to the core commitment of the United Nations aimed at curbing military spending and investing in human security, global military spending continued to grow in the second year of the pandemic, reaching an all-time high of \$2.1 trillion in 2021. It was the seventh consecutive year in which spending increased.⁴⁸ Meanwhile, global development indicators, including on poverty, food, health and education, are trending in the wrong direction and humanitarian needs and requirements have risen to \$46.06 billion, in order to assist 202 million of the 303 million people in need around the world. The gap between requirements and funding is higher than ever.⁴⁹ For instance, in 2021 there was a 72 per cent shortfall in funding aimed at preventing and responding to gender-based violence in humanitarian emergencies.⁵⁰

89. Bilateral aid to fragile and conflict-affected contexts stood at \$48 billion in 2020.⁵¹ Of that aid, \$21.8 billion (42 per cent) was committed to support gender equality in these contexts – a share that remained steady as the COVID-19 pandemic hit (see figure IV). However, only \$2.3 billion was dedicated to gender equality as a principal objective, corresponding to 5 per cent of aid to fragile contexts. Contrary to the recommendations made by the Secretary-General in 2020 (S/2020/946), bilateral aid in support of feminist, women-led and women's rights organizations and movements in fragile or conflict-affected countries decreased: \$150 million (0.3 per cent of bilateral aid) in 2020, compared with \$181 million in 2019.⁵² Context-based analysis indicates that funding continues to be largely project-based, marked by year-to-year uncertainty, and misaligned between the priorities and needs identified by women's organizations and those of donors.⁵³ In a background paper⁵⁴ for the high-level meeting on financing for peacebuilding in April 2022, networks of women peacebuilders drew attention to the structural barriers faced by diverse women peacebuilders in accessing funds to support their work. The barriers include the scarcity of direct funding and the lack of opportunities for peacebuilders to influence decision-making about financing priorities.

⁴⁸ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, "World military expenditure passes \$2 trillion for first time" (25 April 2022). Available at <https://www.sipri.org/media/press-release/2022/world-military-expenditure-passes-2-trillion-first-time>.

⁴⁹ Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Global Humanitarian Overview (mid-year snapshot, 2022).

⁵⁰ Financial tracking system of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

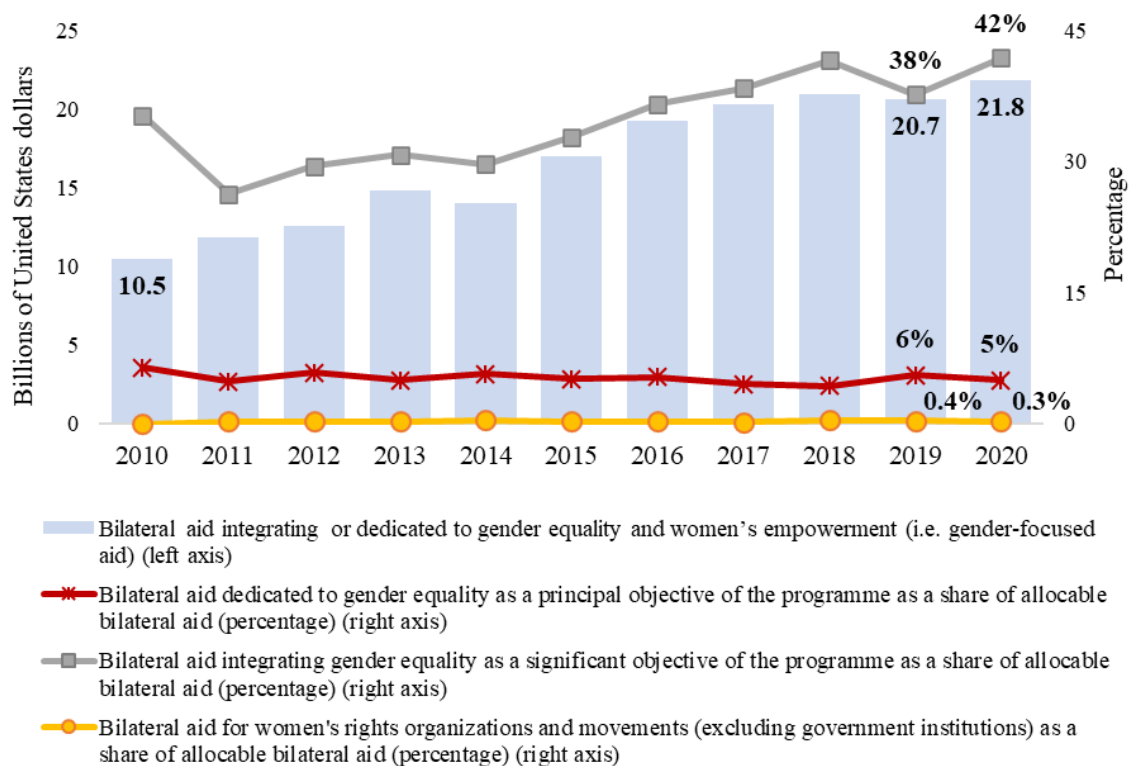
⁵¹ As at June 2022, the latest data available were through 2020.

⁵² Such aid is intended to support feminist, women-led and women's rights organizations and movements and institutions (governmental and non-governmental) in order to enhance their effectiveness, influence and sustainability, and is usually channelled through non-governmental organizations and civil society (over 50 per cent); multilateral organizations, including support for dedicated pooled funds such as the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund (roughly 20 to 30 per cent); the public sector; and research institutions. The data analysed excluded aid channelled through government institutions.

⁵³ See <https://thegenderhub.com/projects/donor-funding-and-wps-implementation/>.

⁵⁴ See <https://gnwp.org/wp-content/uploads/Fund-us-like-you-want-us-to-win.pdf>.

Figure IV
Bilateral aid in support of gender equality and women's rights in fragile or conflict-affected contexts, 2010–2020



Source: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Creditor Reporting System database, accessed 24 June 2022.

90. A small pool of donors provide most of the gender-specific aid and humanitarian assistance. Indications that more Member States are making cuts to official development assistance (ODA) in 2022 are thus alarming. Between 2018 and 2021, 87 per cent of gender-specific international humanitarian assistance came from just 10 donors, meaning that a cut from just one donor could considerably affect overall funding.⁵⁵

91. Information regarding how governments fund their women and peace and security activities, including the implementation of national action plans, remains inadequate. Analysis shows that most national action plans contain little or no information on budget or financing mechanisms, and that few have set aside funds specifically for monitoring, data collection and the evaluation of progress.⁵⁶ Proven ways of generating sustainable financing for the implementation of such plans include costing exercises, gender-responsive budgeting and the establishment of pooled funding mechanisms. The Women, Peace and Security Focal Points Network should explore how good practice could be replicated across national action plans and how

⁵⁵ See <https://devinit.org/resources/funding-for-gender-relevant-humanitarian-response/executive-summary/>.

⁵⁶ See, for example: Caitlin Hamilton, Nyibeny Naam and Laura J. Shepherd, "Twenty Years of Women, Peace and Security National Action Plans: Analysis and Lessons Learned" (University of Sydney, 2020). Available at https://www.wpsnaps.org/app/uploads/2020/03/Twenty-Years-of-Women-Peace-and-Security-National-Action-Plans_Report_Final_Web.pdf. See also Henri Myrtilinen, Laura J Shepherd and Hannah Wright, *Implementing the Women, Peace and Security Agenda in the OSCE Region* (Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, 2020). Available at <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/3/4/444577.pdf>.

the tracking of financing for the implementation of those plans can be improved, for instance through a women and peace and security marker.

92. Although many actors have struggled to establish baselines and systems for financial tracking, having benchmarks such as a target of allocating a minimum of 15 per cent of programmatic budgets to gender equality has been an important tool to advance financing for gender equality across the United Nations system and beyond. As part of the reform processes, the United Nations has committed to increasing resources for gender equality and to reviewing and improving systems for tracking financial allocations. Reporting on the United Nations System-Wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women show that less than half of reporting entities (41 per cent) had systems to track resources for gender equality (see [E/2022/62](#)). On a positive note, more entities reported having met or exceeded their target allocation on gender equality: 23 entities in 2021, compared to 16 in 2018. The United Nations Children's Fund, for instance, allocated 16 per cent of its funding in conflict-affected countries to programmes with gender equality as a principal objective. At 8 per cent, UNDP remains below target for funding dedicated to gender equality, and programming in conflict-affected countries is lagging further behind (2.7 per cent). In recognition of the urgent need to increase investment and accountability, the UNDP Crisis Bureau has re-committed to the minimum 15 per cent target in crisis contexts and is taking measures to deliver on this commitment.

93. In 2021, the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs invested a total of \$7.2 million (18 per cent of its annual multi-year appeal budget) towards advancing the women and peace and security agenda, exceeding its commitment to dedicate at least 17 per cent of its annual multi-year appeal budget towards gender equality initiatives. In the area of peacekeeping, four missions⁵⁷ apply a gender marker for quick-impact and trust fund projects so as to ensure that funding supports women's meaningful participation, while others track projects that are aimed at supporting gender equality and/or women and peace and security through other assessment tools. In 2021, UN-Women allocated \$126.7 million to peace and security programming, humanitarian interventions and disaster risk reduction, up from \$105.5 million in 2020.

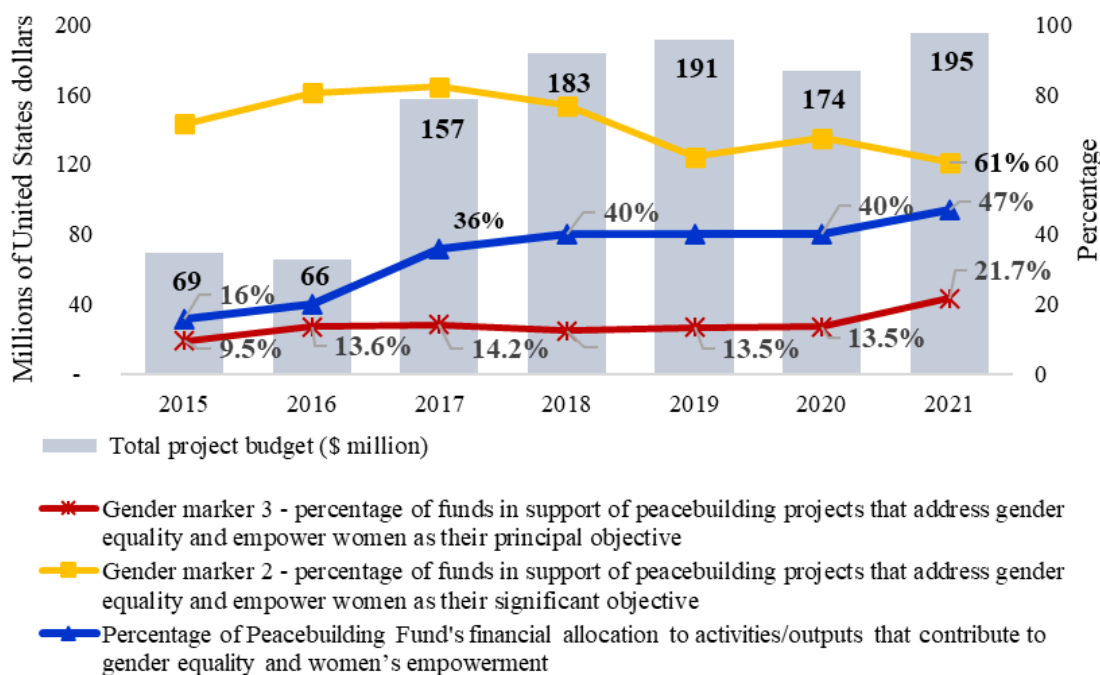
94. Since the United Nations country team gender equality marker was introduced in 2018, collaboration between the Development Coordination Office and UN-Women to develop related guidance has improved financial tracking. In 2021, 11 of the 23 country teams with joint workplans⁵⁸ in conflict-affected countries reported dedicating 15 per cent or more of their available resources to activities with gender equality as a principal objective. Nonetheless, continued work is required in order to expand the number of country teams reporting data of high quality.

95. The Peacebuilding Fund continues to provide inspiration for other pooled funding mechanisms in the process of introducing a gender marker. In 2021, the Fund allocated 47 per cent (\$92.3 million) of its total allocation to support gender equality, exceeding both its 15 per cent and 30 per cent financing targets for gender equality (see figure V). Several factors have contributed to this progress by the Peacebuilding Fund, including having committed senior leadership, making the tracking of gender-focused allocations a requirement, having a well-developed methodology and investing in gender and conflict analysis and in staff capacity for monitoring and reporting. In 2021, the Fund's Gender and Youth Promotion Initiatives allocated \$51.5 million for 38 projects across 23 countries, 19 of which had a dedicated focus on gender equality, compared with \$36.6 million in 2020.

⁵⁷ MINUSMA, MONUSCO, UNMIK, UNISFA.

⁵⁸ Data drawn from UN-Info (<https://uninfo.org/>) for the United Nations country team annual funding framework in 2021. Financial data tracked against the gender equality marker were available in 79 country team joint workplans, and 23 of them were in conflict-affected countries.

Figure V
Peacebuilding Fund allocations to projects promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women, 2015–2021



Source: Secretary-General's peacebuilding funding dashboard, accessed in June 2022. See also reports of the Secretary-General on peacebuilding and sustaining peace [A/72/707-S/2018/43](#); [A/73/890-S/2019/448](#); [A/74/976-S/2020/773](#); and [A/76/668-S/2022/66](#) and [A/76/668-S/2022/66/Corr.1](#), and data from the Peacebuilding Support Office of the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (July 2022).

Note: The financial allocation of 47 per cent in support of gender equality in 2021 (blue line with triangles) was tracked at the output or activity level, instead of at the project level. The percentage is calculated as the sum of financial allocations to projects with gender equality as a principal objective (i.e. gender marker 3 projects) and the allocations within gender marker 2 and gender marker 1 projects that contribute to gender equality.

96. The United Nations and donors are working to expand the gender equality marker to all funds. In 2021, only 18 multi-donor trust funds (37 per cent) and 32 joint programmes (48 per cent) had financial targets regarding gender equality. With respect to financial allocations, 25 multi-donor trust funds (51 per cent) and 47 joint programmes (71 per cent) allocated 15 per cent or more of their resources to programmes with gender equality as a principal objective.⁵⁹ Following strong advocacy from Afghan women leaders and gender equality advocates, the newly established Special Trust Fund for Afghanistan is building on established good practice in terms of gender-responsive financing. The fund requires that all entities commit to allocating a minimum of 15 per cent of their budgets to gender equality. Since its inception, the fund has allocated over 50 per cent of its funding to projects with gender equality as a principal or significant objective.

97. In 2021, the Central Emergency Response Fund approved \$256.9 million for projects marked by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Gender with Age Marker, indicating that gender was a consideration in the design of programming. Country-based pooled funds allocated \$707 million for projects with strong gender mainstreaming components, covering 20 country operations. Those developments

⁵⁹ Based on a survey by the United Nations Sustainable Development Group, for which responses were received from 70 per cent of the 164 active inter-agency pooled funds during the 2020–2021 period.

notwithstanding, both funding mechanisms currently lack gender equality financing benchmarks. The recent prioritization of and increase in funding could thus be a result of the commitment shown by current senior management, but have yet to be reflected in institutional commitments, which would ensure greater consistency.

98. The increased donor support to dedicated financing mechanisms such as the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund is welcomed. Since its launch in 2016, the Fund has mobilized over \$100 million and supported over 600 local women's civil society organizations in conflict-affected and humanitarian settings, almost half of which have received funding through the United Nations for the first time. The Fund has reached close to 17 million people across 28 countries around the world and has proven its agility to respond to new and emerging crises.⁶⁰ Uniquely, the Fund provides critical institutional funding to women's civil society organizations in order to safeguard their existence, strengthen their capacities and help them to adapt to evolving challenges. To date, 58 local women's organizations across 18 countries have successfully retained their staff as a result of core funding received to continue their critical work.

99. The extent to which funding from other mechanisms reaches locally-based and women-led peacebuilding organizations and their networks is unclear. More work is needed to better track this across funding mechanisms. Guidelines for country-based pooled funding mechanisms are currently being reviewed to improve access for local women-led organizations to such mechanisms and to promote the participation of women's organizations in governance arrangements, including advisory boards and project review committees.

V. Work of the Security Council

100. In 2021, 69 per cent of Security Council decisions included references to women and peace and security, five percentage points higher than in 2020.⁶¹ Nearly all the resolutions without such language were short technical rollovers. That percentage compares to 51 per cent in 2016, the first year in which countries invited women from civil society to country-specific meetings and the year in which the Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security started convening.

101. More women briefed the Security Council than ever before, with 62 women from civil society invited to brief the Council in 2021. By comparison, only 25 women from civil society briefed the Security Council between 2000 and 2015, and the highest number of women representatives of civil society in a single year had been four. Another record was reached in the percentage of women invited under rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, which also include briefers from the United Nations, regional organizations and other categories. In 2021, 44 per cent of the 354 briefers invited by the Security Council were women. Women are typically overrepresented among civil society briefers and underrepresented among briefers from the United Nations and regional organizations.

102. A significant development that contributed to these trends, between September 2021 and July 2022, was the fact that every elected Council member signed a commitment to prioritize women and peace and security during their rotating presidency. That initiative was spearheaded by the consecutive presidencies of Ireland, Kenya and Mexico. Every elected member that followed them, along with the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, in April 2022, and France, in September 2022, also joined the initiative. Their commitments included giving

⁶⁰ See <https://wphfund.org/>.

⁶¹ Such references were included in 63.16 per cent of resolutions and 83.33 per cent of presidential statements.

greater visibility to the agenda in their programmes of work when they hold the presidency, promoting the participation of women in Council meetings and taking specific measures to prevent reprisals against them, requiring United Nations briefers to include gender analysis in their statements, paying special attention to the recommendations of the Informal Expert Group or of women from civil society, and holding joint media stakeouts on these issues. During this period, there were four open debates on women and peace and security and several country-specific meetings devoted to gender issues.

103. In decisions of the Security Council, the language on women and peace and security has become more detailed and more specific and covers more areas, a development that has been facilitated by the greater integration of women and peace and security issues into the periodic reports submitted to the Council.⁶² For example, the Council now often advocates quotas and targets for women and sometimes explicitly requests gender expertise in the monitoring team of sanctions committees and gender analysis in their reports. In some cases, the Council has requested the parties to conflict to agree on an action plan, within a specific time frame, so as to ensure the participation of women, such as in peace negotiations in Cyprus, or has used more prescriptive language, such as demanding women's full, equal and meaningful participation in any peace talks in Yemen. In Council deliberations, women and peace and security issues are raised in most debates by at least half of the members of the Council and, on occasion, by nearly all Council members.

VI. Conclusions and recommendations

104. The present report has placed a special emphasis on our commitment to strengthen the international community's support for women human rights defenders, peacebuilders and members of civil society, including in situations of conflict. They are at the frontline of the daily struggle to advance the women and peace and security agenda, and we must do more to protect them. The United Nations will take active steps to address the findings in the report and to support women human rights defenders. I have requested relevant entities to do the following:

(a) **All relevant entities and departments will strengthen their responses to cases when individuals are at risk or have experienced reprisals.** This will involve better coordination and protocols, close coordination with the affected individuals and their organizations and networks, and stronger capacity and resources under the lead of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. I reiterate my call to action on human rights, which asks Resident Coordinators, United Nations country teams and heads of peace operations to develop partnerships and regularly consult with diverse civil society organizations and to work with host countries to contribute to a safe and enabling environment for women's organizations and women human rights defenders. I expect the leadership of peace operations and country teams to update me on an annual basis on the measures they have taken in this regard;

(b) **The protection of women human rights defenders is a collective moral responsibility. United Nations senior leadership will champion women**

⁶² In 2021, all 35 reports submitted by special political missions and 29 out of 30 reports prepared by the Department of Peace Operations contained relevant text. The improvement is also measured in the increase in language containing gender-specific information or data (31.8 per cent of paragraphs compared to 25.3 per cent in 2020 in reports prepared by the Department of Peace Operations and 16.3 per cent of paragraphs compared to 11.9 per cent in 2019 for reports prepared by the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs). It is also reflected in the number of reports containing women, peace and security specific recommendations: more than 90 per cent compared to more than 60 per cent only a few years ago.

peacebuilders and human rights defenders, in line with their respective mandates, and advocate on their behalf, including by addressing violent rhetoric and raising individual cases of harassment or arbitrary detention with state and non-State actors, as relevant. The importance of providing consistent and explicit political backing to women human rights defenders and their work cannot be overstated. Political support is most effective when it comes from many different actors echoing each other: from the Security Council and the Human Rights Council to United Nations leaders, United Nations country teams, peace operations, regional organizations and embassies in conflict-affected countries;

(c) **Relevant entities and departments will ensure dedicated follow-up on individual cases where necessary, not just so as to provide adequate support to the concerned individuals, but also to enhance accountability;**

(d) **Most importantly, the United Nations system will take steps to ensure that the risk faced by women human rights defenders is never used as an excuse to exclude them, and urge our partners to do the same, both because exclusion makes them less safe and because their right to participate and to express their independent views should be non-negotiable.**

105. I also make the following calls to action:

(a) **I urge Member States and regional organizations to use all forums, including the Security Council, to report regularly on steps to improve the enabling environment for women human rights defenders, provide both material and political support to their work and their organizations, and prevent and respond to specific threats or reprisals against them.** This should include the elimination of laws that restrict or criminalize their lives or their work and the enactment of legislation that protects the rights of women human rights defenders and peace activists in line with international human rights standards. In addition, Member States should implement measures to expedite and facilitate the approval of applications for asylum, temporary relocation or protected status as a result of gender-based persecution, and give due consideration to the long-term legal and financial needs of women human rights defenders in exile;

(b) **I encourage the members of the Security Council to consider mandating** that peacekeeping operations, special political missions and monitoring mechanisms linked to sanctions committees monitor and respond to risks, attacks, and reprisals against all human rights defenders and peacebuilders.

106. On the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of Security Council resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#), I proposed five ambitious goals for the decade ahead, and I intend to keep the United Nations focused in that direction. I urge our partners to do the same. So far, we are going backwards. Military spending is up, funding for women's organizations and the percentage of women in peace negotiations are down, and violence against women human rights defenders is on the rise. I issued recommendations for the United Nations system, Member States, regional organizations and the Security Council in my 2019 report ([S/2019/800](#), paras. 120–122). These recommendations remain as relevant as ever. Let us take the following action to reverse negative trends and deliver on our commitments on women and peace and security:

(a) **Insist on women's meaningful participation in all peacemaking, peacekeeping and peacebuilding.** Women's right to participation will be central to the New Agenda for Peace. The Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security, which comprises 65 Member States, has called for all United Nations-supported peace processes to require and ensure women's full, equal and meaningful participation. Next year's report on women and peace and security will be focused on that goal and will include an analysis of trend data across all peace processes and review in detail

all the latest efforts by the United Nations system, Member States and regional organizations, from incentives to targets and quotas, inclusive selection measures, independent delegations and other related measures. Where delegations exclude women entirely or relegate them to informal or advisory roles, United Nations mediation teams, Special Envoys and Special Representatives should insist on women's direct and formal participation and take specific steps to facilitate their meaningful participation and influence over the outcome of any given process;

(b) **Reject the continued rise in military spending.** United Nations entities will strengthen partnerships with civil society organizations to advocate with governments and parliamentarians regarding reductions in military spending and the reallocation of resources. This will include programmes to strengthen citizens' oversight of military budgeting and stronger advocacy and guidance on opportunities for gender-sensitive public expenditure reviews of the security sector;

(c) **Reverse the financing deficit for gender equality and the promotion and protection of women's and girls' human rights in conflict-affected countries.** United Nations entities will advocate with Member States and other stakeholders to ensure that donor conferences and other resource allocation processes set targets to address the financing deficit and insufficient quality of existing resources for this agenda. The targets will include ways to increase fivefold the funding levels directed at women's organizations and strengthen donor coordination. I expect the United Nations system to harmonize the implementation of gender equality markers and set financial targets for each entity, at the country team level, and in inter-agency pooled funding mechanisms;

(d) **Invest in high-quality data.** The advancement of the women and peace and security agenda is linked to the quality, accessibility and use of knowledge and data. We need a much stronger investment in monitoring and evaluation with a gender focus in United Nations peacekeeping operations, special political missions and country teams in crisis-affected settings and in enhancing national capacity on data production and use in fragile States. As part of my Data Strategy for Action by Everyone, Everywhere, the United Nations will strengthen and nurture partnerships with Member States and regional organizations to continue to close gender data gaps and strengthen the use of data on women and peace and security.